



BeWell

Monash psychologists supporting Monash teams

Psychological wellbeing program for employees



Acknowledgement of Country

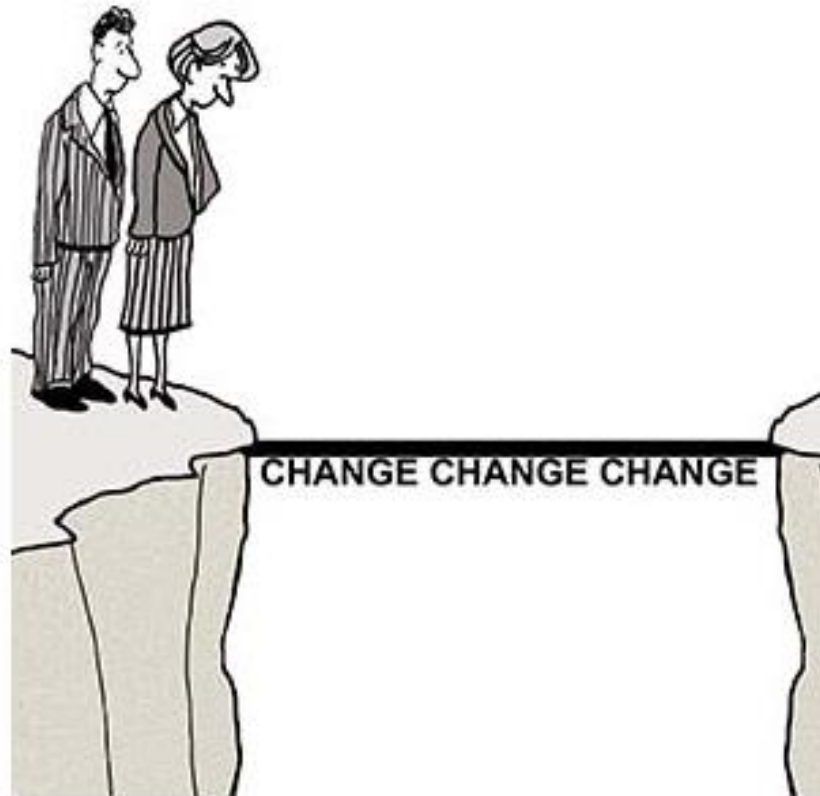
In the spirit of reconciliation Monash Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

How do people respond to change?



Change is scary



Why is change difficult?

- We like routines, they take less brain energy and this means we can use that energy for other daily tasks (Dunn, 2000).
- Therefore change to routines requires increased focused attention and we have to stop our automatic responses, and then do something different.
- When routines change it can lead us to become confused and unsure which can be overwhelming emotionally (Tsaousides, 2020).
- Removing our reliance on routine can remove our emotional safety net (Tsaousides, 2020).
 - It can introduce more uncertainty in what we can expect during work hours.
 - We can lose our comfort and security



How do we cope with change at work?

- To cope with change in the workplace individuals have the options of using problem solving strategies or emotion focused strategies (Callan, 1993)
- Problem focused strategies are designed to eliminate the stressor.
 - Good when available, but what about when not?
 - Controllable v Uncontrollable worry
- Emotion focused strategies aim to help individuals reduce the intensity of their emotional responses to a situation (Scott, 2020)

How do people respond to uncertainty?



We like to have certainty even if we need to create it



Why do we like certainty?

- Certainty has a motivation force which encourages us to turn our beliefs into actions (Tormala & Rucker, 2015).
- We make better decisions when we experience the emotions associated with certainty compared with the emotions of uncertainty (Bagneux, Font & Bollon, 2013).
- Interestingly that neutral emotions also produced better decision than emotions with uncertainty (Bagneux, Font & Bollon, 2013).
- Conclusion – certainty and its emotions help us make decisions and engage in life

Why is uncertainty difficult?

- Evolution has developed a brain which searches for order and predictability (Sweeney, 2020). It derives comfort from this predictability and discomfort when the search is unsuccessful.
- With an increase in uncertainty our brains struggle to make sense of the world and this often leads to feeling anxiety (Sweeney, 2020).
- Therefore we experience greater anxiety from uncertainty, this is physiologically uncomfortable, cognitively distressing and fatiguing.
- Difficulties tolerating uncertainty cross a wide spectrum of individual and psychiatric difficulties (Bottesi et al., 2019).
- Therefore many of us get into a cycle of worry continuing to search for answers which will generate certainty. And become more uncomfortable with each failed search (Centre for Clinical Interventions).

Worry to prevent uncertainty

- Worry is often used to try and create predictability
- So people keep worrying because they believe this is the only way to generate certainty and believe we are in control.
- This can lead to a loop of increasing worry when the goal of generating predictability is unsuccessful.
- The outcome is increasing anxiety with the unending cycle of worry.

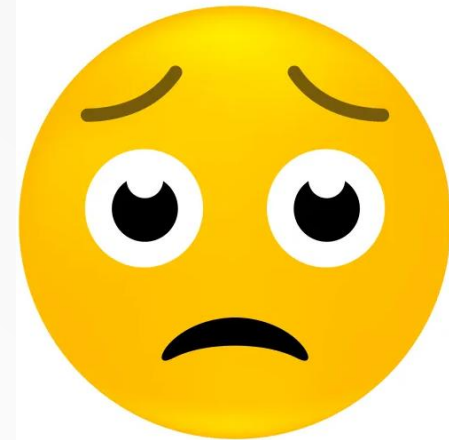
How can we cope with Change



Identify what are the main emotions about the change



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Don't judge yourself for your feelings

What would you tell a
colleague if they felt the
same way?

It's okay to be upset.

It's okay to be angry.

It's okay to feel stuck.

It's okay to feel confused.

It's okay to feel lonely.

It's okay to feel hurt.

It's okay to cry.

It's okay to not be okay.

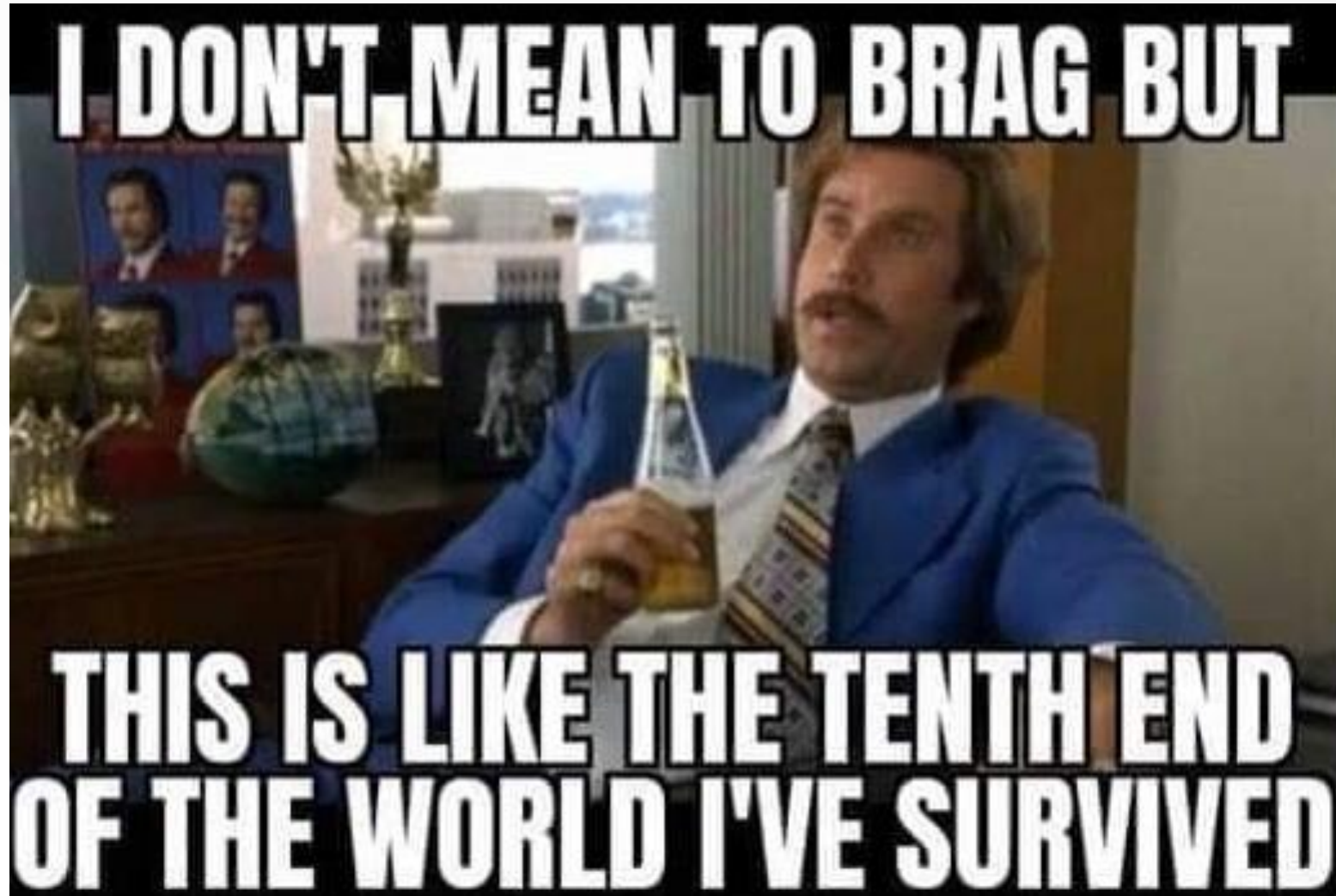
Above all, be kind to yourself and
refuse to let negative feelings
trigger you into waging war on
yourself.

Image from <https://quotesgram.com/img/it-s-ok-to-have-feelings-quotes/4950253/>

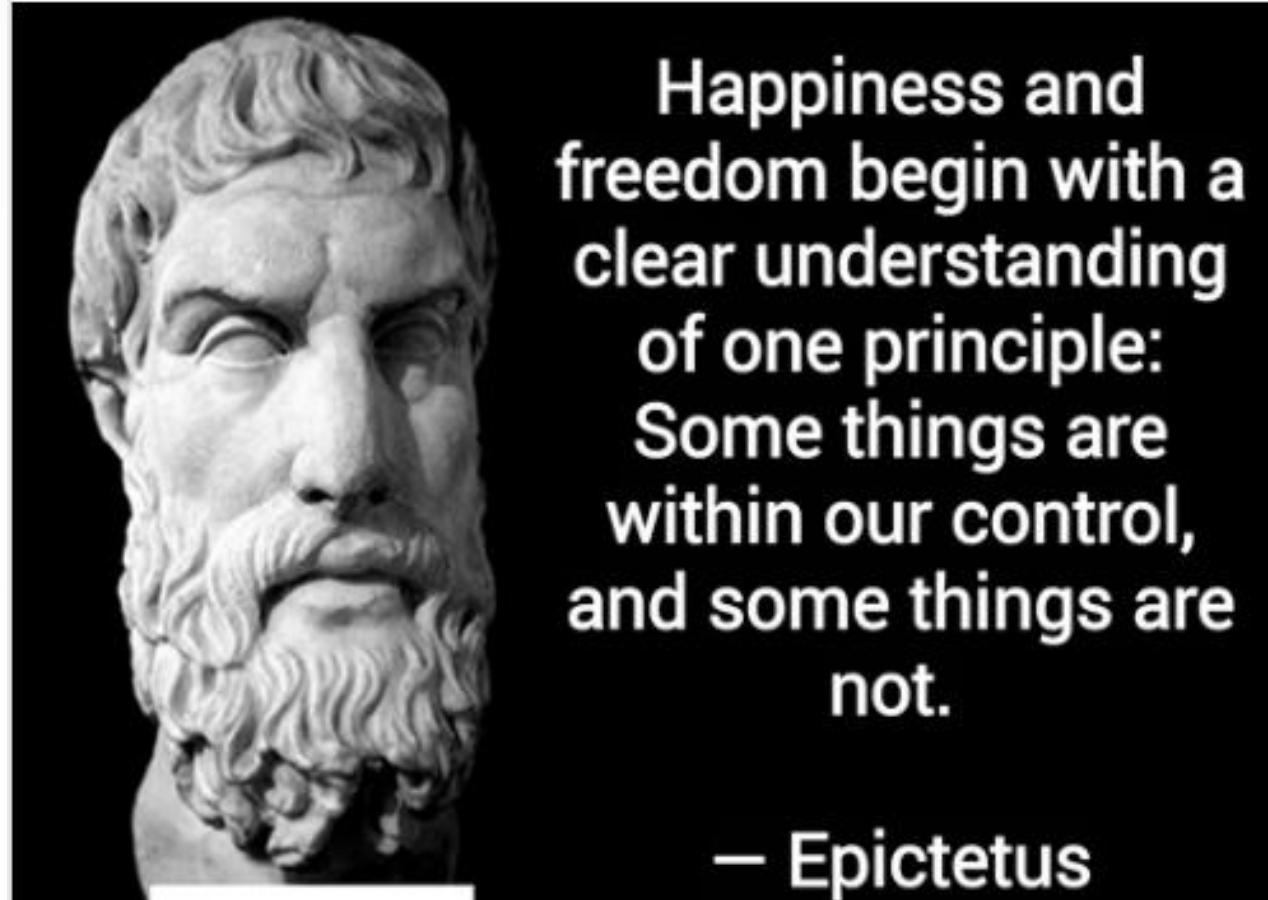
Investigate the reasons for your emotions

- Understand the thoughts or reasons behind each emotional response
 - Why do we have to change when other staff don't (Anger)
 - Will this be a permanent change and I'll never get to do my old job again (Anxiety)
 - I'm going to miss working with my clients and or team (Sadness)
- Gather some information to assess the accuracy of the response.
 - Maybe the team will remain together
 - Maybe there will be new ways to engage with the role
 - Maybe the likelihood of not returning to my role is much lower than my anxiety would suggest
 - But maybe not....don't hide from reality (Don't try and force a positive view)
- Check is this type of thinking new or a habit from the past? If a habit what has history told you about the accuracy of these patterns.

Check for catastrophising thinking or going to the worst case scenario.



Work out what you can do during this time



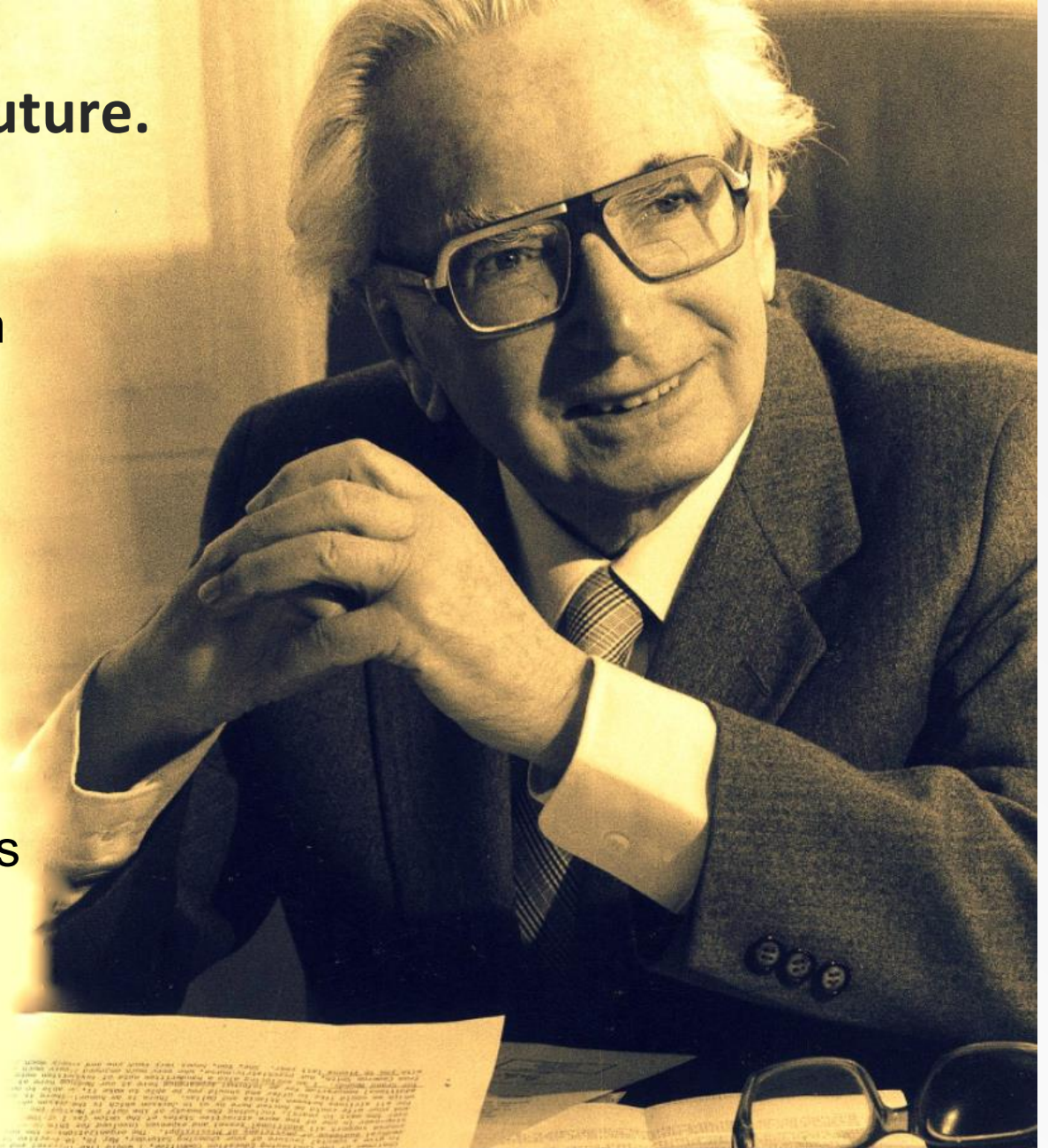
Accept the past, but fight for the future.

“The one thing you can’t take away from me is the way I choose to respond to what you do to me. The last of one’s freedoms is to choose one’s attitude in any given circumstance.”

— Viktor E. Frankl

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

— Viktor E. Frankl



Choosing a response

Maintaining values based work

ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) - is a mode of therapy which encourages individuals to focus on living a values-congruent life.

- Values remain constant regardless of goal (or outcomes) being achieved.

This can be used in the workplace

- Identify your core working values (note these are different to workplace goals).
- Values are a personal guide, and there are always values which can be enacted at work, even when our roles are constrained by systemic limits.
- Values for work may be compassion, persistence, honesty, supportiveness, forgiveness etc.

Provides a individuals a compass when the workplace guides have changed

How can we cope with Uncertainty



Acknowledge Uncertainty

- Let's name it and acknowledge how the uncertainty influences you personally
- Stop, Pause and Acknowledge – Dr David Clarke, Program Director of Mental Health
- Practice the “acceptance of uncertainty” around work practices going forward. Acknowledging this ambiguity will help you maintain honesty with yourself (& others) and help accept the uncertainty of the situation. Failing to accept this will result in fuelling yet more anxiety



People prefer the certainty of
misery to the misery of uncertainty.

Virginia Satir

quotefancy

Image from <https://theycanteatya.com/on-certainty/>

Challenge your belief that you need certainty

- You can challenge your need for certainty by asking:
 - Can I ever really achieve certainty?
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of demanding certainty?
 - Do I predict bad things when I'm uncertain? Could good things be just as likely to happen?
 - What is the probability of what I predict happening?
 - Are there times I can tolerate uncertainty? What do I do then?
 - How do others tolerate uncertainty? Can I learn from them?

Habituation - Practice the “acceptance of uncertainty”

Initially uncertainty is often paired with increased anxiety.

Controllable v uncontrollable worry (this is why we want an answer)

Role of habituation to anxiety for “uncontrollable” worry is for the anxiety to diminish the longer one sits with the anxiety.



What helps to not respond?

- Manage anxiety in the body
 - Breathing techniques
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Manage worry in the mind
 - Mindfulness techniques such as 5-4-3-2-1
 - Listen to music
 - Find an activity that maintains your attention



The Zen Master, The Boy, & The Horse

- In this village, a little boy is given a gift of a horse. The villagers all say, “Isn’t that fabulous? Isn’t that wonderful? What a wonderful gift.”
- The Zen master says, “We’ll see.”
- A couple years later the boy falls off the horse and breaks his leg. The villagers all say, “Isn’t that terrible? The horse is cursed! That’s horrible!”
- The Zen master says, “We’ll see.”
- A few years later the country goes to war and the government conscripts all the males into the army, but the boy’s leg is so damaged, he doesn’t have to go. The villagers all say, “Isn’t that fabulous? Isn’t that wonderful?”
- The Zen master says, “We’ll see.”

Contact details and hours of operation



Bookings and enquiries

- 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- Phone: 0418 905 414
- Email: bewell@monashhealth.org



Service delivery hours

- 8am to 7pm Monday to Friday
- Weekends by arrangement



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