

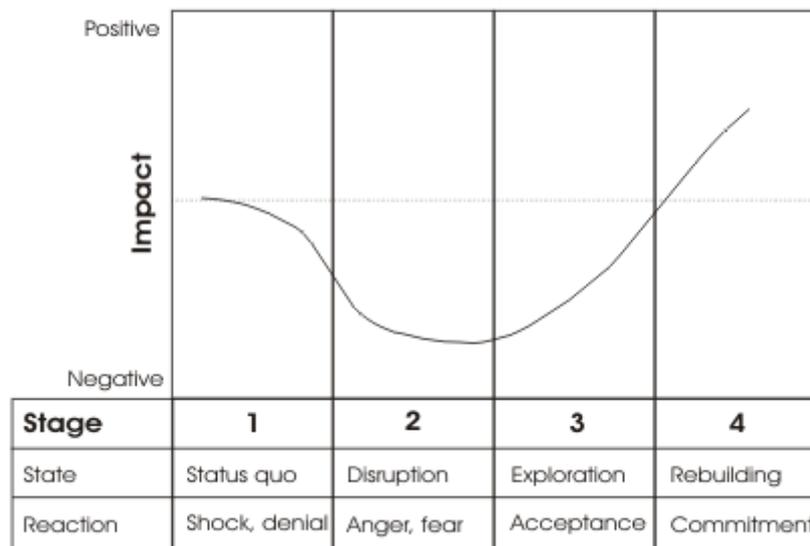
## THE CHANGE CURVE

The Change Curve model describes the four stages most people go through as they adjust to change. Sometimes this is given the acronym SARA.

When a change is first introduced, people's initial reaction may be shock or denial, as they react to the challenge of the status quo. This is **stage 1** of the Change Curve (S = SHOCK).

Once the reality of the change starts to hit, people tend to react negatively and move to **stage 2** of the Change Curve (A = Anger) they may fear the impact, feel angry, and actively resist or protest against the changes. Some will imagine, “awfulise” or wrongly fear the negative consequences of change. Others will correctly identify real threats to their position. As a result, an individual experiences disruption which, if not carefully managed, can quickly spiral into chaos.

Figure 1: The Change Curve



For as long as people resist the change and remain at stage 2 of the Change Curve, the change will be unsuccessful, at least for the people who react in this way. This is a stressful and unpleasant stage. It is much healthier to move to stage 3 of the Change Curve, where pessimism and resistance give way to some optimism and acceptance.

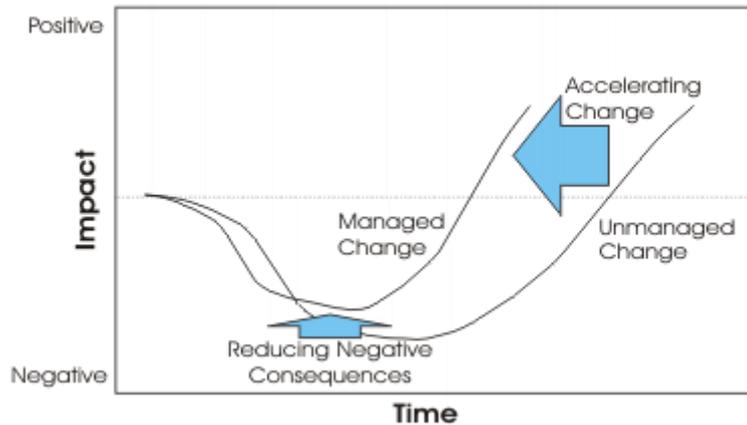
At **stage 3** of the Change Curve, people stop focusing on what they have lost (R = Reality). They start to let go, and accept the changes. They begin testing and exploring what the changes mean, and so learn the reality of what is good and not so good, and how they must adapt.

By **stage 4**, they not only accept the changes but also start to embrace them; they rebuild their ways of working (A = Acceptance). Only when people get to this stage can they really start to reap the benefits of change.

## Using the change curve

With knowledge of the Change Curve, you can plan how you will minimize the negative impact of change and help yourself adapt more quickly to it. Your aim is to make the curve shallower and narrower, as you can see in figure 2.

Figure 2: Using the Change Curve



As change occurs, you can use your knowledge of the Change Curve to identify with what is happening to you and decide what help you need, depending on where you are on the curve. This will help you accelerate change, and increase the likelihood of your success.

Actions at each stage are:

### Stage 1:

At this stage, you may be in shock or denial. Even if the change has been well planned and you understand what is happening, this is when reality of the change hits, and you may need to take time to adjust. Here, you may need information, need to understand what is happening, and need to know how to get help.

This is a critical stage for communication. Make sure you are open to communication offered, but also ensure that you are not overwhelmed by it; you may only be able to take in a little at a time. Make sure you know where to go for more information if you need it, and do not be afraid to ask any questions that you have.

### Stage 2:

As you start to react to the change, you may start to feel concern, anger, resentment or fear. You may resist the change actively or passively. You may feel the need to express your feelings and concerns, and vent your anger.

Try to remind yourself of the reasons for the change, and go back to any communication and information that you may have received. Everybody's reaction to change is very personal and can be emotional, and sometimes takes people themselves by surprise. Try to watch or monitor yourself and your reactions during this stage.

### Stage 3:

This is the turning point for you. Once you turn the corner to stage 3, you come out of the danger zone, and are on the way to making a success of the changes. As your acceptance grows, you may need to test and explore what the change means. You will do this more easily if you are helped and

supported to do so, even if this is a simple matter of allowing enough time to explore your options. Be aware that this stage is vital for learning and acceptance, and that it takes time. Do not expect to be 100% productive during this time, and build in some contingency time so that you can learn and explore without too much pressure.

**Stage 4:**

This stage is the one you have been waiting for! This is where you embrace what has happened and feel comfortable with your life. You may start to feel productive and efficient, and the positive effects of what has happened become apparent.