# Normal Emotional Reactions to Change and Transition

## Emotion: Sadness

**How to Recognize**
- Sulking
- Associating with old friends and practices
- Resisting new friends and practices
- “I used to be…” “It used to be…”

**Underlying Issues**
- Hanging on to the old ways
- Sense of the rug being pulled out

**Positive Aspects**
- Preserving important past practices
- Avoiding discarding the baby with the bath water

**Supportive Behavior**
- Lots of exploration and time to talk
- Open-ended questions

## Emotion: Fear

**How to Recognize**
- Questioning
- Worrying, catastrophizing
- Overly detail-oriented
- Can’t set priorities
- Trivial pursuits

**Underlying Issues**
- Confusion over where he or she fits in

**Positive Aspects**
- Clarifies key issues
- Flushes out underlying problems

**Supportive Behavior**
- Provide information and details
- Clarify priorities
- Develop framework, goals and plans

## Emotion: Withdrawal

**How to Recognize**
- Quit/retire on the job
- Minimum commitment
- Won’t discuss or ask questions
- Loss of interest or initiative
- Hard to find

**Underlying Issues**
- Wait it out until normality returns

**Positive Aspects**
- Pull back and reflect

**Supportive Behavior**
- Gentle confrontation
- Listen and be persistent
- Take the initiative

## Emotion: Anger

**How to Recognize**
- Raised, intense voice
- Walks out
- Sabotage
- Back stabbing
- Misery loves company

**Underlying Issues**
- Loss of significant portion of reality

**Positive Aspects**
- Gets the issues out

**Supportive Behavior**
- Permit/legitimize venting

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From *Life Changes: Growing through Personal Transitions* by Sabina A. Spencer and John D. Adams
Strategies for Managing Change in Your Life

1. **Figure out what is actually changing.**
   Look at the big picture and tie it back to the details of everyday reality. Look at the specifics, rather than getting overwhelmed by the generalities.

2. **Decide what is really over for you.**
   What are you going to have to let go of? What are you likely to lose? Take time to mourn your losses.

3. **Distinguish between current losses and old wounds.**
   Some feelings are reactions to the present and some are triggered by the ghosts of past losses that have never been properly dealt with. Remind yourself: that was then and this is now.

4. **Identify your continuities**
   Not everything is ending. It is a piece of your life, not the whole that is coming to an end. Protect or restore the parts of your life that are not threatened by your current losses.

5. **Recognize the symptoms of “The Pit.”**
   You may feel empty, dead, flat, inert. You may feel confused and lost. These are all normal reactions to being at this stage of change.

6. **Take time outs.**
   Build quiet times for yourself and find places that can be a retreat from the uncertainties of the transition.

7. **Use this time as an opportunity to take stock.**
   Look at your priorities and see if they still make sense to you.

8. **Look at yourself creatively.**
   Take a new view of your interests, abilities, resources, and temperament and see where they lead you.

9. **Consider your possibilities in a new light.**
   Break out of the mindset in which everything is just the way it is or should be.
### Reactive and Proactive Responses to Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reactive response</th>
<th>Proactive response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s terrible</td>
<td>It’s a challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’re powerless</td>
<td>We have the power to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have to protect ourselves and our unit</td>
<td>We need to build trust! Involve other units and people to get ideas and share problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The here and now is what counts</td>
<td>What we need are ideas for future alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They’ve got to do something about it</td>
<td>Here’s a chance to demonstrate our creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why don’t they listen to us?</td>
<td>Let’s ask for a meeting to share our ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This new system is worse than the old</td>
<td>The new system is different than the old and it will take some time to get used to it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Adapted from Ronald Lippit and Gordon Lippit
For One Ummah Consulting

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