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## STRATEGIES FOR **NAVIGATING** LIFE CHANGES

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Changes in life can bring a lot of stress and anxiety, but I've found that these 3 strategies can help.

**By Jody Moore**

It's one of the most remarkable tools ever created. It's faster and more efficient than any computer, and it changes based on the things it learns about the world. It's something that everyone, regardless of wealth or status, has access to, and you can't buy it in a store or online. It's more complicated than we know, and I have very good news for you:

You have one. Heavenly Father gave it to you. It's your brain.

The human brain is amazing. For example, think about when you brush your teeth. I have young kids who I am still trying to get to brush their teeth consistently, but I myself have it mastered. I do it without anyone reminding me to because my brain has programmed it in as part of my routine. When I brush, I don't have to Google which end of the toothbrush to put the toothpaste on—my brain automatically puts it on the bristly end. I can brush my teeth while listening to a podcast, negotiating with my children, or reading a book because my brain automatically knows what to do.

This ability to function on autopilot serves us very well most of the time, but what about when we are going through changes that are a part of this life? Sometimes we experience changes we hadn't planned

on, like divorce or the unexpected death of a loved one, but even when life is right, we still face changes in life like new towns, new jobs, graduating college, getting married, having babies, and more.

The truth is, for some of us our brain doesn't like change. It requires a lot of energy to deal with change because we can't operate as unconsciously as we're used to. Combine this with the emotions that often accompany change, and it can sometimes feel unbearable.

Luckily, we can take what we know about the brain and work with it to minimize anxiety and feelings of overwhelm. Over the years, I have identified three strategies that help people navigate anxiety and change that I would like to share with you.

### **STRATEGY 1: Narrow your view.**

Change means unknown. Sometimes the brain becomes overwhelmed if there are too many unknown variables. It fears the unknown because it believes there could be danger ahead.

Thanks, brain, for keeping us alive.



The best way to navigate change, I've found, is to narrow your view to what you do know. The more emotional and extreme the change is, the narrower your view needs to be. If you unexpectedly lose a job, your brain might want to figure out all sorts of things. How will you pay your bills? How will you find another job? When will you find one? How painful will that process be? What will people think?

Many of these questions we don't have answers to right now, but we don't really need to. What's next? Are you going to make it through the end of the week? That's all you really need to know right now.

Sometimes when we're in deep emotional pain, we just need to focus on one day at a time. What will you make for breakfast? Let's just begin there.

Narrow your view to get to peace, and from there you will find answers. The Lord will guide you if you seek Him and trust in Him. "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers" (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10).

### **STRATEGY 2: Focus on the future, not the past.**

The brain likes to go to the past because it has memories to pull from, but your future is going to be different than your past, and that's a good thing. Ruminating on what





went wrong or even reminiscing about “the good old days” at the expense of today is easy to do, but not useful.

When I had my first baby, I was overjoyed about having this little person in my home and couldn’t believe how much I loved him. But I also felt overwhelmed with how much care he required and my inability to live my life as freely as I had before. I kept thinking about how life used to be simpler. I thought about how I used to be able to shower and do my hair each morning. I thought about how I used to like my body better. I thought about how I used to be more well-rested and therefore more fun. I felt awful when I focused on my past like this.

Eventually I realized I could not find answers in the past. I had to focus on the future. I had to start visualizing myself doing the things I wanted to in my life, but with a baby. I had to tap into the person I wanted to become, not the person I used to be. This is not always easy, but it’s available if you’re willing to open yourself up to possibility.

The Lord has told us:

“Ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

“And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours” (Doctrine and Covenants 78:17–18).

### **STRATEGY 3: Be compassionate with yourself.**

Change can put the best of us in a spin. You may be feeling a lot of emotions. Some of the most toxic things we can tell ourselves are thoughts like, “I wish I wasn’t so emotional; I should be dealing with this better,” or, “I am so sorry that I’m not stronger.”

Wishing that you were less emotional does not make change easier. It only adds shame or guilt on top of the other challenges you are already facing. Self-compassion is the key.

Compassion says, “Of course this is challenging! It’s OK to struggle,” and, “I love you anyway.” Please say these things to yourself. Don’t add to your pain by thinking you shouldn’t be in pain.

Heavenly Father sent us here to earth to help us become more like Him, which I can only imagine means we need a tremendous amount of growth. If I want to grow my muscles, I must lift heavy weights. The resistance of those weights causes my muscles to break down just enough that when they rebuild they come back even stronger.

Our spirits are like this too. We require a certain amount of resistance so we can come back stronger than we were before.

The Lord explained it this way: “My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:31).

Change is one way that this life molds us so that we can become more like our Father in Heaven. Be nice to yourself in times of change. This human thing is tough to do sometimes. ■