Approaching Change Management

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With last month’s focus on Anxiety, Metal Health, and Attendance, I think it is fit that we integrate Change Management into this discussion as it is the change in our lives, personal or professional, that is usually the catalyst for the anxiety and mental health issues we experience. Change occurs at all levels of the system - in the workplace, at home and/or school, culturally, politically, and more.

As a project management practitioner and process improvement specialist, it is my job to monitor and manage change at all levels of the system. From that experience I know that small, insignificant changes over time, consistent or not, can be easy to dismiss, but can make big impacts on the work and the people. Emotions begin to run high, people and teams become disengaged, and feelings of exhaustion and frustration set in.

One of the most helpful tools I have come to rely on is communication and ensuring that all communication is authentic and transparent. It may not be what we want to hear, but honesty is vital. Sometimes the most important person I am communicating with is myself in the recognition that some kind of change is occurring, that I may be feeling uncomfortable with it, and feelings of anxiety are settling in about adding one more thing to my already full plate or having to pivot one more time.

Only then can I be valuable to the teams I work with and discuss how to address the change through genuinely listening, capturing others’ ideas, collaborating, and then taking appropriate action, individually and collectively. Changes may impact hard requirements, but it’s knowing how to integrate soft skills when working with team members that makes the biggest difference in successfully managing change at all levels.

Three articles are included for those interested in reading further:

[It’s time to link Change Management with mental health](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/its-time-link-change-management-mental-health-tim-willott), Tim Willott (2021)

[The Impact of Change on Employee Mental Health](https://tapintosafety.com.au/the-impact-of-change-on-employee-mental-health/), Tap into Safety (no date)

[How Change Management in business affects mental health](https://www.safetyforward.co.uk/how-change-management-in-business-affects-mental-health/), Safety Forward (2021)