

CHANGE AND LOW ENERGY

By Wayne Deeth

Change is inevitable...BUT the KEY is how well you recognize and manage your response to it. God has given us a clear framework for living. Jesus came so that we may have abundant life (John 10:10). Any change though, especially change that is imposed, can generate levels of low energy. Low energy, or fatigue, is not a problem in itself.

In fact, the awareness of our low energy is a gift from God. It is His invitation to come and allow us to understand how He can meet our needs through the work of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Understanding what causes low energy is not simple. Low energy can result from a combination of one or all of these three areas:

1. Physical
2. Emotional/Mental
3. Spiritual

PHYSICAL

This is about our body not running at its optimal. This is the starting point in exploring our low energy in the midst of change. Perhaps you may be experiencing symptoms such as -

- chronic tiredness or sleepiness
- headache
- dizziness
- high blood pressure
- shortness of breath
- sore or aching muscles
- muscle weakness
- slowed reflexes and responses
- impaired decision-making and judgement
- moodiness, such as irritability

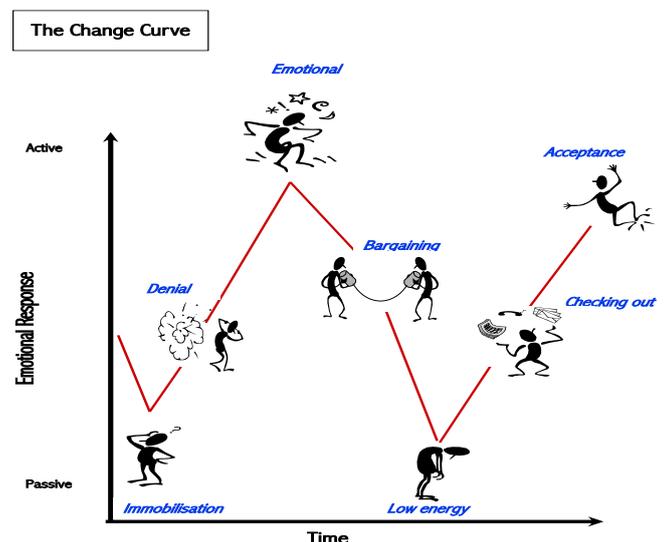
So, be aware of your symptoms – patterns and triggers, and then discuss with your GP and ensure you are as open and honest as possible with them.

EMOTIONAL/MENTAL

Our emotions are a normal part of life. God has designed our emotions to allow us to navigate life well and worship Him to the full. So, emotions are a normal response to any change, like the birth of a child or grieving. We all experience a similar roller-coaster pattern of varying emotions. However, the duration, intensity and our individual expressions of our emotions are different depending on: our personality, what's happening around us now (the change itself); as well as our past experiences.

The Change Curve: the change curve helps us to understand the emotions that people may go through when changing. When faced with change in the workplace or in their personal lives, most people go through a predictable range of reactions.

Change is never smooth, easy or quick... and since it involves many uncertainties and turbulence it can only be represented graphically as nonlinear.



- **Denial:** For most people– in denial– change is not easy to accept and they try to ignore thinking and talking about it. Since change is interpreted as uncertainty or insecurity, people shift their attention to the past and familiar feelings that make them feel secure.
- **Emotional:** Resistance to change begins as people realise that the change is actually taking place and there is no way to avoid it. During this stage of the change curve feelings like; anger, self-doubt, fear and anxiety can build, which can significantly slow the personal change process...
- **Exploration:** This stage of the change curve is about 'bargaining' and 'testing', where we start to become part of the change. This is where we start learning new ways so as to constructively contribute towards change. A fresh wave of thinking where we understand the rationality of the change, including the current benefits and future opportunities the change will give us. It's mostly an exploratory stage where people are experimenting with the change to determine their positioning and ensuring what they will get out of it.
- **Acceptance:** Acceptance is the final stage of the change curve as personal productivity and emotional normalcy is restored. We begin to feel more in control and committed to the new realities - engaged, co-operative, and help progress the new normal.

The change curve illustrates the typical emotions and reactions that people go through during change. However, when people know that change is a transition to a new normal, they can be empowered through the Holy Spirit to be proactive in taking responsibility in the change. This leads the change process to be a positive experience of – increased faith, sense of achievement and acceptance.

How can I use the change curve? Here are a few pointers:

First, use it to understand that **negative emotions during change are normal** and, most of the time, they are transient (i.e. they will pass). This is very helpful in supporting yourself or others during change, especially if the change is well outside your comfort zone.

Second, use it to **show empathy and communication** with people going through change, for example; some people get stuck in the negative emotions or they feel like a victim (helpless) and that, in the long term, will be counter-productive and self-hurting. Whereas by taking responsibility and understanding the change curve process people can be motivated and become proactive in moving quickly to the positive states shown on the change curve.

Third, use it for **feedback and learning** by checking periodically where people are on the change curve and how they are moving along it (or not). This can help people to develop or maintain their perspective and be more objective which will help reduce the intensity of any negative emotions they are feeling. It also helps develop the integration of new habits into our lives.

Adrenalin and emotions

For those that value creativity, entrepreneurial activity or innovative problem solving, change can be very exciting, especially in the beginning phase of change. At change initiation there is a lot of energy used in understanding the change, exploring the change and then making it happen. This takes a lot of energy, especially when surrounded by others going through immobilisation or emotional resistance of the change. This burst of energy is the result of adrenalin, our body's response to a perceived threat or an opportunity to avoid a threat, i.e. making the most of change, not letting it 'beat' them.

However, this is hard to maintain over time and when the surge of adrenalin runs its natural course through the body there inevitably comes a time of exhaustion – low energy, as the body adjusts to different hormone levels.

Living 'out of our comfort zone'

A preference is what you like, your comfort zone. You may prefer reading over watching movies. This doesn't mean you won't sometimes choose or be pressured to choose movies. But in general, you will prefer to choose reading. There are no right or wrong preferences. Reading is not better than watching movies; each has its strengths and its problems. Most people have the ability to do both, even if they don't like one or the other.

Living in your comfort zone (your preference) is natural. It uses up very little energy because we don't have to think about it and is enjoyable. However, the opposite is experienced when we start living OUTSIDE of our comfort zone (your non-preference). You are quite intentional (even disciplined) about what you do (making you think harder). It takes a lot of effort to persist and we get exhausted quickly. Your activity is not as much fun anymore. Often in change we are challenged to function out of our comfort zone. This is mentally much harder work and over time, low energy is a consequence.

SPIRITUAL

The relationship we have with our heavenly Father can be challenged at a time of great change. The tiredness we may be feeling and how we are responding to the changes may influence our spiritual walk.

In the midst of change, even multiple imposed changes:

the Pessimist will comment – “My cup is half empty” and

the Optimist will comment – “My cup is half full”,

But the Psalmist responds, “My cup runneth over” (Psalm 23:5).

In change, not responding like the Psalmist could be described as ‘spiritual dryness’.

Signs of Spiritual Dryness

‘You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.’ Psalm 63:1

Here are some signs that through change we might be becoming spiritually depleted.

1. Giving while empty or weary

A sign of spiritual dryness is that we are no longer giving to others out of a sense of fullness. We feel empty or weary—our inner tank is running dry.

2. Our faith is no longer contagious

When we are spiritually dry, it affects our relationship with those who do not know Jesus. We are not bubbling over; we have lost our joy. According to David in the Psalms, it is the joy of our salvation that results in us leading people to God. (Ps 51:12-13)

3. God feels distance

When we are spiritually dry, there can be a gradual distancing from God. This means that as we go through change(s), we can become overly self-reliant and seek more control which leads to an escalating energy depletion. God is, in fact, continually speaking to us. However, sometimes we neglect to tune in. (Ps 139:17-18)

4. Our spiritual lives are in a rut

We lack the excitement we once had in our relationship with God. Our devotional life—connection to God through the Bible and prayer—has either been reduced to a rote exercise, is occasional, or has ceased to exist at all.

5. A contributing event

The state of spiritual dryness does not always creep up on us slowly. Changes imposed on us, trials or sudden trauma can result in us being depleted spiritually, as well as in other ways (see change curve).

If you can relate to any of these 5 signs of spiritual dryness, can we encourage you to talk about it with a friend who will come alongside you and offer spiritual support, helping you in reconnecting with God and allowing the Holy Spirit to meet your needs.

REACH OUT...

If any information in these notes has resonated with you it may be helpful to contact:

- your GP, or health professional
- a trusted friend
- Connect Group leader
- A member from St Jude’s Staff (4862 4383)