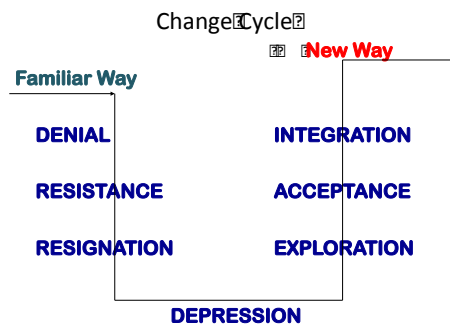


How Do You Respond to Change?

In the day-to-day practice of medicine as well as in nearly every aspect of life, productively responding to change can be challenging. Change in contemporary life can be unrelenting. Too often changes seem arbitrary and pointless and keeping up with the sheer volume of changes can be exhausting and onerous.

CPOE is a paradigm shift in the practice of medicine – not just because of the specifics of the computerized approach but also because it heralds a new direction in the practice of medicine. For some physicians these changes make sense; in fact the changes might even be welcomed. Other physicians might feel imposed on, resentful, and resistant. Our internal response to change can be located on a Continuum of Acceptance between “Eager Embrace of Change” – “Active Resistance of Change.” *When faced with a significant change that wasn't your idea, what is your “default response”?*

Nearly everyone needs some time to adjust when change occurs. The Change Cycle below depicts the internal psychological components of change. As creatures of habit, for better or worse, we can get comfortable with the Familiar Way. When change is announced it can trigger **Denial** – “*I don't believe it - this can't be happening.*” Denial can give way to **Resistance**, which can be active-aggressive or passive-aggressive. At some point **Resignation** can set in...the change can't be stopped. A feeling of powerless can often lead to **Depression**. At some point during the Resignation or Depression stage an **Exploration** thought occurs; which is to say that the person entertains the possibility that there might be some positive aspects associated with the change. Experiencing the *possibilities* can open the door to **Acceptance**. As acceptance deepens **Integration** occurs and soon the New Way becomes the Familiar Way once again.



When it comes to accepting change, emotion trumps logic nearly every time. So if you want to make any unwanted change easier on yourself, it will be necessary to allow yourself to “feel the feelings” associated with change and trust that the New Way will, in time, become the Familiar Way. Depending on the type of change it may surprise you how fast you can move from the Familiar Way to the New Way. The change cycle does not need to be a lengthy or ugly – but it must be emotionally honest. Failure to acknowledge the emotions can lead to getting stuck in Denial, Resistance, Resignation, or Depression.

What are the changes that you are facing...where on the Change Cycle are you?

Thanks for reflecting.