

Phase 1: Denial

This phase of change occurs when a person first hears about the change. It is self-protection against the impending change. Denial attempts to make people feel secure in the past and helps them deny any feelings or emotions that the past is about to end. To the naked eye, the person in denial appears calm and collected, and others may not even recognize the inner turmoil that person is experiencing.

Individuals in Denial:

- Avoid the topic of change
- Blame others or outside forces
- Do not see the big picture
- Seem to act as if nothing is bothering them

Negative Impact of Denial:

- Late in planning
- Delay what is going to happen anyway
- Lost opportunities
- Blocking needed change

Phase 2: Resistance

Resistance is a normal and natural reaction to change. The Resistance phase begins when a person can no longer deny what is happening. During resistance, the change is disruptive to a person's life. At the crux of resistance is the fact that one is being asked to make a significant change, but has no guarantee that the change will turn out well. As compared to the Denial phase, it is easier to recognize when one is in active resistance. A resister will express his/her feelings and thoughts and look distressed and unhappy.

People in Resistance:

- Refuse to go along
- Say, "It will never work"
- Complain and whine
- Demonstrate anger verbally, visually, or vocally

Negative Impact of Resistance:

- Loss of energy on current assignments and projects
- Diminished respect for sponsors
- Not starting a project that needs to get done
- Focus on past failures
- Quality may suffer

Phase 3: Exploration

Once a change is recognized as vital or necessary for the organization, people enter the Exploration phase. People do not necessarily like the change, but they understand the need and may begin to see the bigger picture or see the change from the perspective of others. The change is no longer viewed as a threat to their security. They may recognize it as an opportunity for the organization.

People in Exploration:

- Focus away from themselves and back to the workplace
- Begin to picture what the future would be like with a new change
- Are in learning mode
- Say, "We can make it happen if we..."

Positive Impact of Exploration:

- Generate new and different approaches
- Take risks
- Work with others
- In the mindset of creating solutions

Phase 4: Commitment

The commitment stage begins when a person adapts to the new change and feels comfortable in the new change situation. It becomes the status quo. People tell war stories about the way it used to be and how difficult it was to get to the new. During this phase, as with exploration, the focus is on the external world. People's fears, biases, and insecurities are no longer in play.

People in Commitment:

- Are secure with what they do
- Feel responsible for the change and its continued success
- Are into continuous improvement
- Learn how to handle change more efficiently the next time

Positive Impact of Commitment:

- Productivity and quality increase
- Morale is high and work is viewed as more enjoyable
- People feel good about themselves
- People are more change-ready