

THE CHANGE CYCLE

“Often, people facing change resemble a couple packing their car for a vacation to a specific destination, yet with no idea about how to get there and no map to assist them.

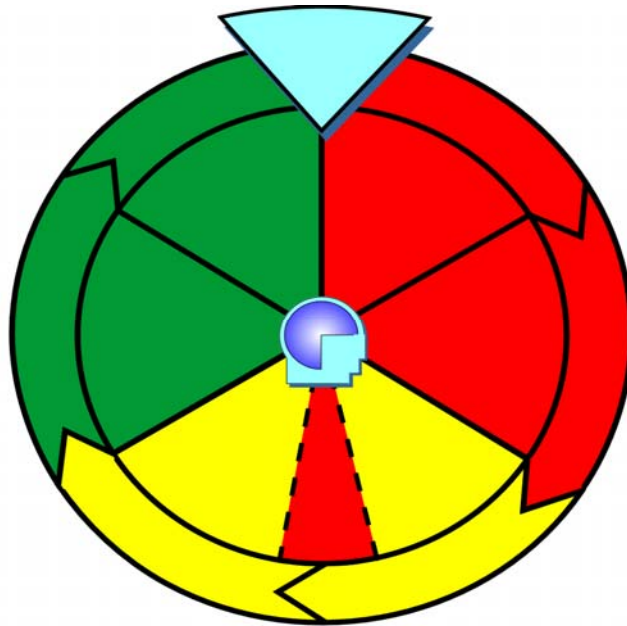
You can imagine what must be happening in the brain in order to prepare for the trip. Since there is no route, no plan, no map, then the logical conclusion of the brain is to look through its memories for past vacations and by using association skills and schema, to retrieve historical information. This can be very cumbersome. If you have been on a camping trip in the mountains and a vacation on the beach, then your brain pulls up all “vacation” information and you will find yourself putting everything from suntan lotion and a beach ball to a down jacket and wool socks in your suitcase.

Our journey through change often resembles this. We begin it with no map, very few skills, and a file clerk in our brain who is retrieving our historical change experiences. If that history happens to be saved as negative (and often is), then we’re also predisposed to perceiving the journey as not being any fun or bad.

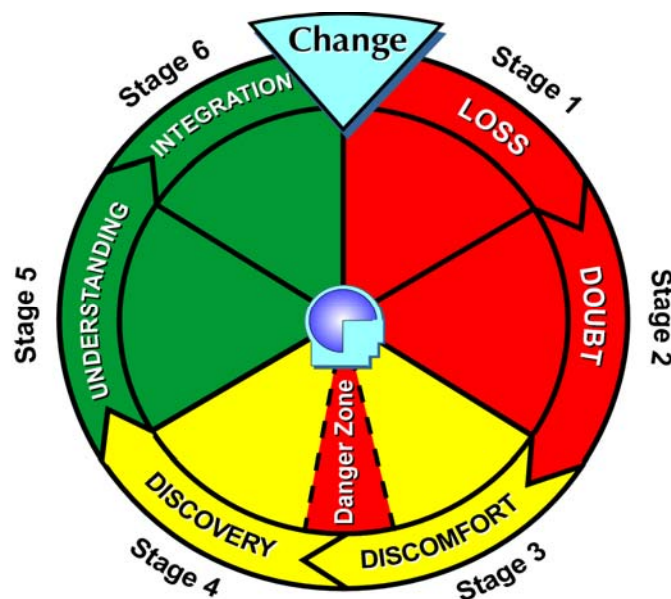
Now that you have learned how your filing system works, you need a good, clean, accurate, and easy-to-use *change map*. The Change Cycle™ is that map. It exists within you, and now is the time to learn how it will help you determine where you are and in what direction to move, anticipate possible problems or slow-downs, and measure the distance from where you are to where you want to be. Basically, it enables you to plot the quickest, easiest, lowest risk way to get through any change.

The Change Cycle™ map is depicted as a circle to show the continuous and cyclical nature of change in our lives. The first humans noticed cycles in the days and nights, the weather and their own bodies. These observations led to the need for and the development of time to mark the seasons and cycles. Clearly, everything in nature is process-driven and therefore cyclical. The migration south of some birds during the winter months or the hibernation of bears follows cycles that are predictable and are

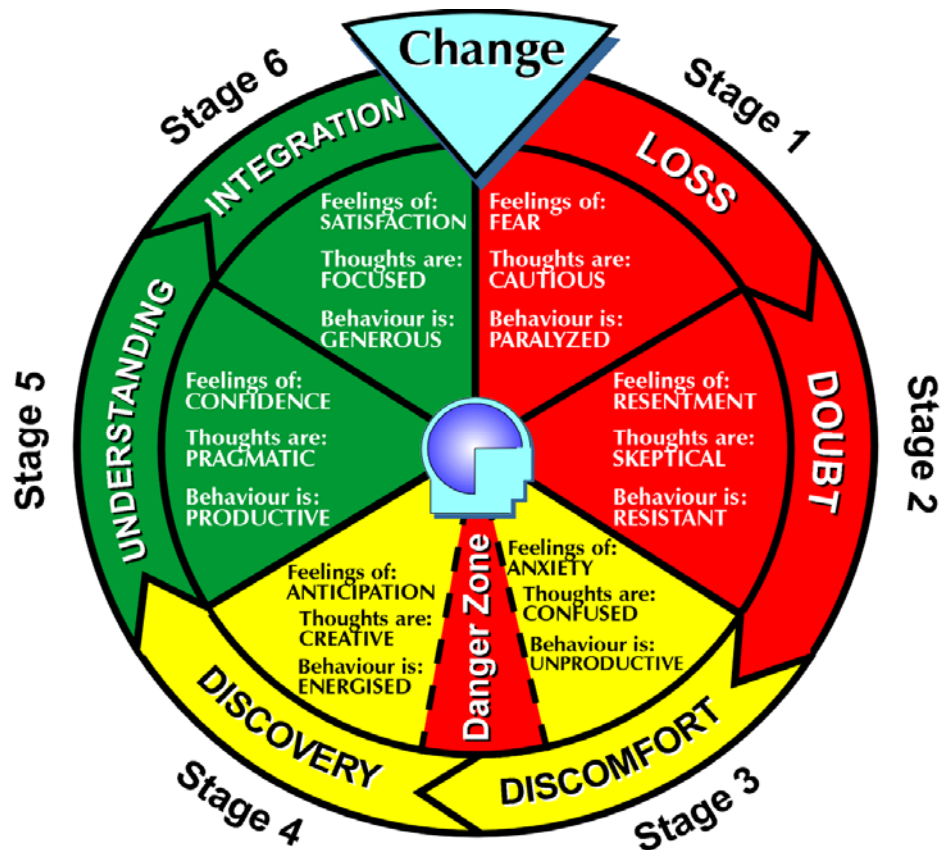
designed to assist them in responding to the changing seasons. Because we are a part of the same forces of nature that created other animals, we too operate on cycles in some parts of our lives.



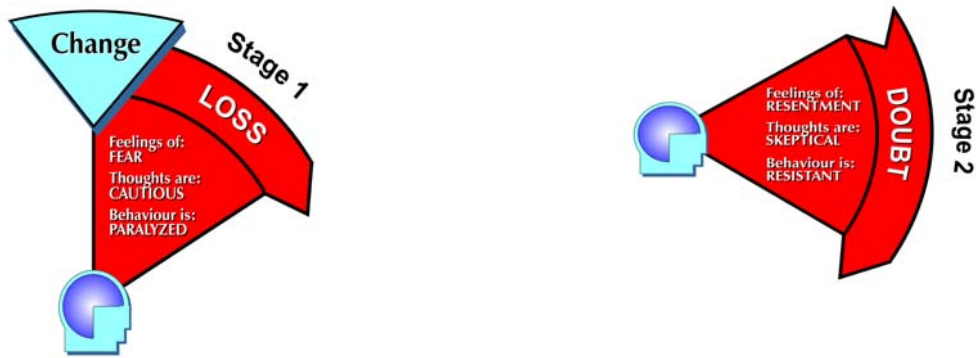
When a change enters your life, (shown as the blue triangle at the top centre), the Change Cycle™ begins. Because all change affects you at the emotional, behavioural, and mental levels, understanding your feelings, behaviours, and thoughts becomes the vital tool in assisting you to take personal responsibility for the changes you face. In the centre, there is an image of the brain, because the unconscious mind works in a sequential way (with or without the conscious mind's awareness), to sort out the new experience.



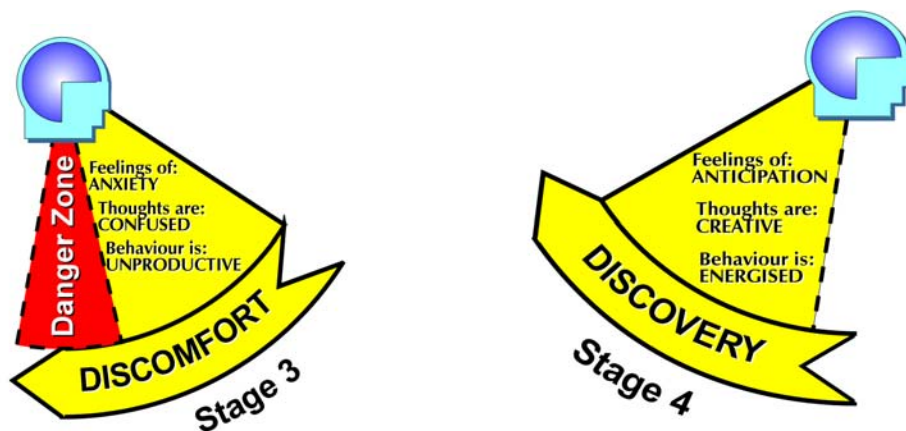
The Change Cycle™ model represents the series of six “Stages” you will pass through in dealing with any change. The outside ring, Loss, Doubt, Discomfort, Discovery, Understanding, and Integration, indicates what the primary experience is for each stage. Each of the six Stages is shaped like a pie piece and the colours, red, yellow, and green, are used to symbolically indicate a traffic light. The first two Stages and The Danger Zone are the colour red to warn you to stop and be observant of potential danger coming from other directions. Stages 3 and 4 are yellow to signal the need for some amount of caution. Your responses in the yellow Stage will probably be similar to what you do when faced with a yellow light when driving. Do you immediately slow down to stop, knowing that the red light is next, or do you hit the gas and get through the intersection quickly? Stages 5 and 6 are green to indicate freedom of forward movement.



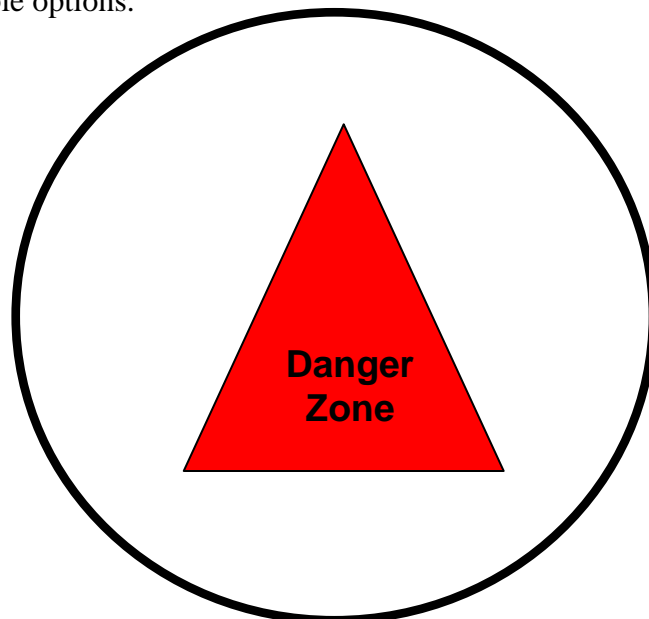
In each Stage, the primary feeling, behaviour, and mental aspects of your response to change are listed. Remember, each characteristic is representative of a wide range of possible thoughts, feelings, or behaviours and, of course, all three are happening simultaneously.



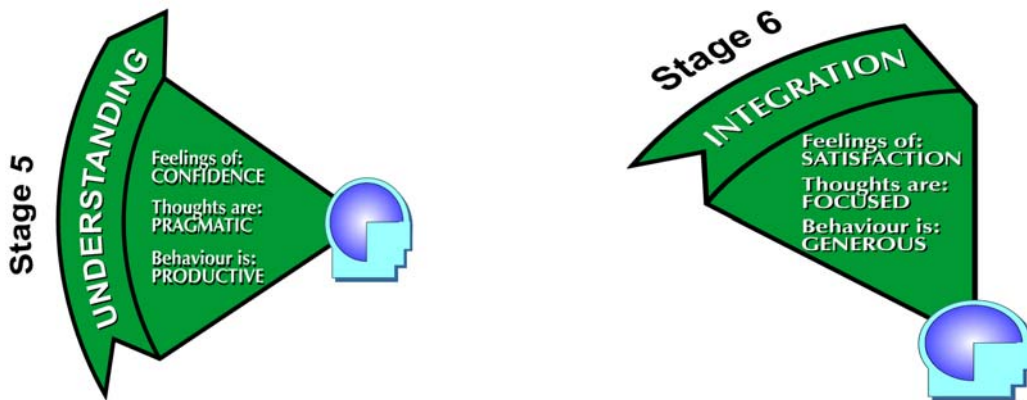
During the red Stages, 1, Loss and 2, Doubt, your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are consistently converse or opposite to what you need to accomplish in order to move forward. Moving through your fears to find safety is the foundation for the successful completion of any change.



Stage 3, Discomfort, and Stage 4, Discovery, are yellow to symbolise the need for caution. During Stage 3, forward motion is critical in order to create the momentum to “turn the corner” through The Danger Zone and move toward the green Stages. Stages 3 and 4 are the beginning of your shift to assimilating new information and working with it to formulate viable options.



Looming at the bottom of the Change Cycle™, and between Stages 3 and 4, is The Danger Zone. Beware. The Danger Zone is where your inability or unwillingness to continue forward progress (because of confusion, lethargic behaviour, or anxiety) recreates fear and a lack of safety, thus looping you back to Stage 1. This typical pattern of looping you back to Stage 1 is one of the reasons your long-term memory has encoded negative experiences with change. This coding can be updated by adding successfully completed change experiences.



The final Stages, 5, Understanding, and 6, Integration, are green. At this point, the original change has become such a part of the individual that it is unlikely to be labelled as a change at all.

By using the Change Cycle™ as your navigation map, you will be able to identify your needs and utilise your skills to complete your change processes in a healthier and more positive way.”

Excerpt from: “The Secret to Getting Through Life’s Difficult Changes.”

Lillie R. Brock and Mary Ann Salemo, 1994

