

Managing individual reactions to change

People often experience predictable emotional responses during significant change. The Kübler-Ross Change Curve provides a practical way to understand these reactions, from early resistance through to acceptance.

Responses vary by individual and context. People may move through stages at different speeds, and it is not always a one-way journey. It is common for people to move backwards when new information emerges, timelines shift, workloads increase or uncertainty rises.

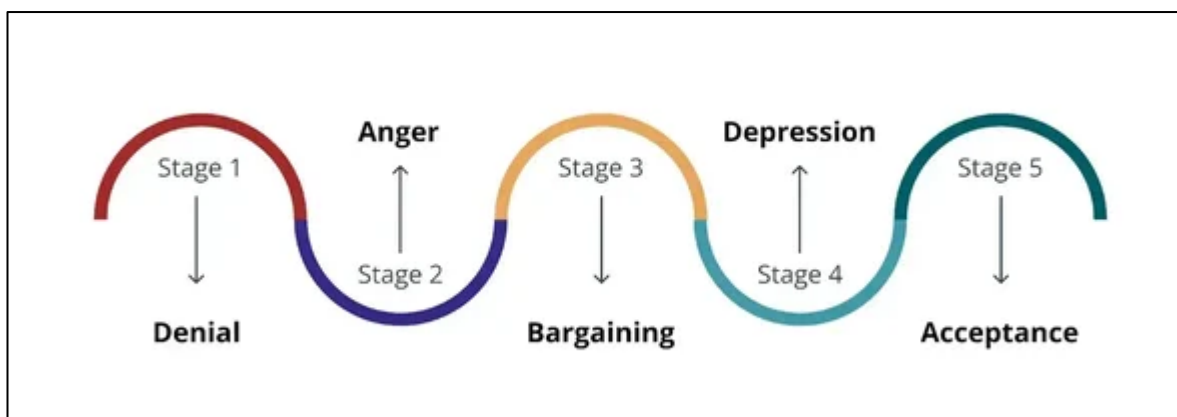
Leaders can reduce psychosocial risk during change by providing clarity, listening and responding to concerns, managing workload impacts and ensuring practical support is available.

The Kübler-Ross Change Curve

The stages of the Kübler-Ross Change Curve, as adapted by Prosci, provide a useful way to understand common emotional responses people may experience during change.

Learn more about the Kübler-Ross Change Curve (Prosci)

<https://www.prosci.com/blog/kubler-ross-model-change-management>



Practical ways leaders can support people through the change curve

Denial

- Communicate early and clearly about what is changing, what is not changing and why.
- Repeat key messages and provide a reliable update rhythm.
- Be honest about what is not yet known and commit to when updates will be provided.
- Check understanding and address misinformation quickly.



Bringing it all together

Change Management Toolkit

Anger

- Acknowledge emotions and concerns without becoming defensive.
- Listen actively and respond with empathy and respect.
- Help people understand what the change means for their role and how they will be supported.
- Provide clear pathways for questions, feedback and escalation.

Bargaining

- Invite practical feedback and suggestions, and be clear about what is negotiable and what is not.
- Clarify expectations, next steps and how decisions will be made.
- Provide the tools and capability supports people need to succeed, such as training, job aids, coaching.

Depression

- Watch for signs such as withdrawal, low energy, disengagement or drops in performance.
- Maintain regular check-ins and create safe opportunities for people to talk.
- Reinforce priorities, provide practical support and manage workload impacts.
- Focus on confidence and capability.
- Support learning and expect temporary dips as people adjust.

Acceptance

- Expect some setbacks.
- Reinforce new ways of working and recognise progress and positive behaviours.
- Continue coaching and feedback to prevent drifting back to old habits.
- Capture lessons learnt and embed supports into business as usual (BAU), including procedures, training, measures and clear ownership.