

# The Mind's Eye

Fresh Perspectives on Emotional Health

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**Q.** What are some ways to cope — or help a loved one cope — with extreme change?

**A.** Change can rock our world and leave us wondering how we will restore our lives. Whether sudden illness, loss of employment, automobile accident or natural disaster, we all experience events beyond our control. At times like these, we may shift into “automatic pilot,” quickly assessing our most urgent needs, setting aside our emotions, and focusing only on those tasks that will get us back on track. Our adrenaline keeps us moving, and constant motion holds our emotions in check.

The moment comes at last when we realize the immediate crisis is over. For the first time, we allow ourselves to take in the magnitude of what has happened and begin the complicated process of integrating change into our lives. We start to pick up the pieces. Finally, we make the decisions and solve the problems that were disregarded during the crisis.

If you are coping with change, these very simple guidelines can help you during this difficult time:

- Take care of yourself in body, mind and spirit.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat simple, nutritious foods that are easily prepared.
- Take a walk to lower your stress level and clear your mind.
- Ask for help.

If you are a friend wanting to help another cope with change, these guidelines may help:

- Provide immediate support if you are present when the change happens.
- Look up phone numbers, and gather any needed information.
- Determine if your friend needs a hug or interaction with others.
- Check in as time goes by, and listen to their needs.
- Identify specific tasks you are willing to do, and ask which would be most helpful. For instance, deliver a homemade meal, wash the dishes, walk the dog, or mow the lawn.

Change can be difficult, but knowing what to expect and how to cope can help.

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