

# How can I be more adaptable in this constantly and rapidly changing world?

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Adaptability is a life skill that impacts so many aspects of our lives: our stress levels, our ability to keep up socially and whether we thrive professionally. Change is one of the few certainties we have in life, so we need to have positive, effective ways to deal with it. Yes, change is happening *everywhere* and we cannot respond to all of it. You need to identify the areas of your life and work that are most impacted by your lack of adaptability. Use those areas as a starting point for change; if you see positive changes in high impact areas of your life, you will be encouraged to practice adaptability in broader areas of your life.



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Here are a few practical tips for developing adaptability:

## Face your current thinking

When you catch yourself shooting an idea down or resisting something new, take a moment to consider what mental scripts are influencing your behaviour. Mental scripts have been formed over your lifetime and are so automatic that you have to decide intentionally that you want to challenge them. For example, ask yourself if 'X' is the right approach because it really is or because that is simply the way it has always been done. Doing things because they have worked in the past should ring alarm bells: it is what caused the downfall of Nokia, Blockbuster and other big names in industry. Beware of stereotypes, prejudices and anything else that may be limiting your thinking and openness to something new or different.

## Face your fear

Resistance to change usually stems from an underlying fear. We all fear failure, humiliation, loss of power/control and rejection, and these fears, whether rational or not, can be debilitating. Identify the fear(s) that may be preventing you from embracing change and ask, "What is the worst thing that could happen if I acknowledged the fear and did something new anyway?" Another powerful question is "What will the long-term impact be of failure / humiliation / losing control in this context? Will it even matter six months from now or will my life be better?"

## Face your habits

Do you habitually insist on going "by the book"? Is this necessary for every issue? Might you enhance your productivity if you paid more attention on getting to the results rather than blindly following process? What would happen if you applied standard procedures more flexibly? What would the impact be if you started asking questions like "What if we tried it this way, this time?" Habits make us feel comfortable and in control but they do not always serve us in a rapidly evolving world. Move out of your comfort zone and you will grow, guaranteed!

## Face your point of reference

Look for places or situations where adaptability has served people and organisations. If you build a portfolio of positive examples, you will be more inclined to "lean in" (to use a phrase coined by Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg) to change. Opening your awareness to where adaptability has worked will make the idea more appealing and you will build a toolkit of good ideas that you can put into practice. Use the ideas of others until adaptability becomes second nature.

## Face your approach

Live in the present moment, but plan for the future. You will most often run into trouble with change when you spend much of your time worrying about the past. Looking backwards too much will not serve you. Focus instead on "what next" or "where to from here". Looking forward with positivity and hopefulness will help you act differently.

## Embrace the constants in your life

Adaptability and change can be exhausting. Replenish your energy stores in the solace of things that do stay the same. While nothing in life is permanent, there are certain things you can count on. If you think of these things when you're in need, it just may provide you with comfort.

## ABOUT DEIRDRE ELPHICK-MOORE

Deirdre Elphick-Moore, has an Honours Degree in Psychology and over 10 years of international experience in human capital management at Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley. Co-founding The Office Coach in 2009, she now focuses on personal and workplace effectiveness training and development. Her relaxed, engaging style encourages people to learn more, remember more and apply more in their workplaces, as well as inspiring to consistently better themselves in the work place. Contact her on [deirdre@theofficecoach.co.za](mailto:deirdre@theofficecoach.co.za).

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