

EP4C MODULE 1

TASK 1: GETTING YOUR HEAD AROUND CHANGE

LEARNING GROUP 1 BRIEF

The purpose of this exercise is simple. If we are as OD practitioners to have a meaningful, positive effect on organisational transformation processes, we need to build a deep understanding and mastery of change.

Each group will be exploring a different model of the change process, either at the personal or organisational level. Your task is to provide the other groups with a brief overview of the model and its relevance to their work.

You have 20 minutes to explore the model and work out how to present it in a meaningful way to your colleagues. Be as creative as you like in how you do so, but your presentation should take no more than 5 minutes and should answer the following questions:

1. Why is this model relevant to our work?
2. How can we use/adapt it to further our practice?

The model your learning group is working with is the Change Curve. Various versions of this model exist (often arising from loss or bereavement), but the most used version in organisation change work is by John Fisher. Attached overleaf.

Discuss what you make of the model and where the key learning points are for you and the rest of the group. Why is it called “The Process of Transition”?

JOHN FISHER'S PERSONAL CHANGE MODEL - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Here are some helpful questions and answers which John Fisher provided regarding his personal change 'Transition Curve' model which is described above and featured on the diagrams linked from this page:

1) How do we recognize what phases we are in?

Part of the problem is that we do not recognise which element of the curve we may be in. The goal of the 'manager'/change agent is to help make the transition as effective and painless as possible. By providing education, information, support, etc. we can help people transition through the curve and emerge on the other side. One of the dangers is that once we are caught up in the emotion of the change we may miss the signs of threat, anxiety, etc. and 'react'/cope by complaining or attempting to make things as they were (and also increase our stress levels as a result).

2) Does everyone go through all the 9 phases, or will there be people who will say, begin their personal transition from the depression stage instead of the anxiety stage?

I would argue that we transit through all stages (although the old caveat of some of these stages may be extremely quickly traversed and not consciously recognisable applies). In the main the theory proposed a linear transition and each stage builds on the last so we can see our perception escalating in 'severity'/importance as we go into the trough of depression via a small impact on our sense of self (anxiety) through a greater realisation of impact/meaning (fear, threat) and then an understanding that (potentially) our core sense of self has been impacted and our 'self belief system' undermined to an extent (guilt, depression). Now if someone is going through multiple transitions at the same time these could have a cumulative impact and people could go through the initial stages almost simultaneously - it then becomes a case of more 'evidence'/information supporting previous negative self image and compounding the impression.

3) Is it possible that some people might skip some phases, as in, after the anxiety phase, they go on to the fear phase, instead of the happiness phase?

The happiness phase is one of the more interesting phases and may be (almost) passed through without knowing. In this phase it is the "Thank Goodness, something is happening at last!" feeling coupled with the knowledge that we may be able to have an impact, or take control, of our destiny and that if we are lucky/involved/contribute things can only get better. If we can start interventions at this stage we can minimise the impact of the rest of the curve and virtually flatten the curve. By involving, informing, getting 'buy in' at this time we can help people move through the process.

4) Do the phases take place in the particular order that you have published?

I have not undertaken any structured experimental research per se, however anecdotal and 'participant observation' would imply that this is a fairly robust model. It is also

partially based on [Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's bereavement concept \(five stages of grief model\)](#) which has widespread acceptance. However...

5) How does the transition take place? For instance, suppose I know that I am in the anxiety phase. So when does it transit into the next one, that is, the happiness phase?

As with question 1, it is more a case of helping people through the process as effectively as possible. Also each person will experience transition through the curve at slightly different speeds (and we may be at different places on different curves - depending on just what is happening to us at the time). As above, much of the speed of transition will depend on the individual's self perception, locus of control, and other past experiences, and how these all combine to create their anticipation of future events. Much of the transition is done subconsciously. It may not be initially noticeable and only becomes clear if we look back and reflect on our situation. If we do adopt an introspective approach and recognise where we are in the process, our reaction will depend on our personal style of interacting with our environment and how 'proactive' we feel we can be at seeking out support, or leaving the organisation, as appropriate. Obviously should we feel disempowered this may well cause us to descend further down the slide into a deeper depression; reinforced by our perceived helplessness and all the implications associated with that.

John Fisher 2006