

# THE SATIR CHANGE PROCESS

A Model For Individuals, Groups & Organizations During A Change Process

# The Satir Change Process

## 1. LATE STATUS QUO

### Description:

Everything is going along as usual. Things feel familiar and predictable and mostly in balance. But, what does each part pay to maintain that balance?

UNHEALTH: Some parts are paying much more than they are getting. You may hear people say "That's the way I do it here", or "It's our way", or "It's the only way", or "It's the Synergy way."



### Body Responses:

People in this stage may be experiencing anxiety, generalized nervousness, gut problems such as constipation or ulcers. They may have a difficult time locating any specific cause for the ailments.

**Feelings:** familiar, comfortable, safe, unsafe, balanced, bored, restless, dread, anxious, trapped, devalued

### Healthy and Helpful Coping Ideas:

- Look at the cost to you and others for maintaining the balance in the old status quo, e.g. health problems, boredom, stagnation, out of touch with present reality, unhealthy coping such as smoking.
- Ask yourself if there is a need to change - preferably from your own perspective as well as from outside perspectives.
- Think of positive possibilities for the future from change; not only negative, fear generating ones.

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## 2. FOREIGN ELEMENT

### Description:

Something new arrives from outside that cannot be ignored, though you may try. You may try to deny the foreign element, because FAMILIARITY IS MORE POWERFUL THAN COMFORT. You may say or hear people say, "This isn't really going to happen.", or "They can't be serious.", or "No way."



### Body Responses:

People in this stage may be protective and defensive. They look frozen. They may be holding their breath or hyperventilating. Their senses are diminished, so that they don't see or hear things they usually notice. They may have trouble staying in the present.

**Feelings:** denial, protective, defensive, confused, off balance, afraid, shocked

### Healthy and Helpful Coping Ideas:

- Breathe!
- Acknowledge your feelings are real.
- Try to separate your imagination from reality.
- Acknowledge that the change is real.
- Open up to the possibility that the new end state will be different, not necessarily worse; perhaps better.
- Evaluate what you'd like to stay the same vs. change. Identify what you'd like to keep vs. let go.
- Accept that confusion is normal. You don't know exactly what will happen.
- Identify resources and skills you have to help yourself.
- Know that fear is normal. Seek help to face your fear and not be paralyzed by it or panicked. Try to understand what is underneath the fear.
- Understand the effect of the change on you may be different than for others.

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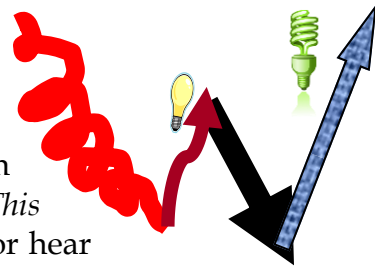
## 3. CHAOS

### Description:

Things are in disarray.

Old predictions no longer work.

Old expectations are not fulfilled. People try random behavior, or revert to even earlier behavior patterns. *This is not the time to make long term decisions.* You may say or hear people say, "This is crazy", or "I feel crazy" or "I can't take this."



### Body Responses:

People in this stage are afraid and vulnerable. Their old survival fears and behaviors may be aroused. They may revert to unhealthy or dangerous coping. They may become extremely defensive and alienated. They may be shaky, dizzy, off balance, and generally suffer problems of the central nervous system, such as nail-biting, mysterious rashes, or panic attacks. Back, head, and neck problems are common. Awareness may oscillate between very high and practically zero.

**Feelings:** angry, afraid, vulnerable, incompetent, alienated, defensive, off balance, crazy, unaware, hyperaware, all over the place

### Healthy and Helpful Coping Ideas:

- Understand that your feelings are normal.
- Re-center yourself with familiar things when you feel too far off balance.
- Listen carefully and caringly to yourself and others. Ask "what will happen if..."
- Try to separate past from present. Acknowledge what's not going to happen.
- Avoid long term decisions, i.e., leaving, suicide.
- Identify what you want/need and ways to get it.
- Stay in touch with others and with current reality.
- Try new ideas until you hit on one that transforms how you are changing and moves you out of chaos and into the next stage.

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## 4. INTEGRATING and PRACTICING

### Description:

People begin to see a new possibility, a light at the end of the tunnel. They begin practicing using this new possibility and integrating it into the rest of their environment. Chaotic feelings diminish, and for a few moments of clarity, everything looks like it will be “solved”, perhaps by turning some of the old ways upside down. You may talk about, “the other way” in comparison to “my way.”



### Body Responses:

Some people describe this stage as “feeling like school children again.” There is some giddiness and also some anxiety that the good feeling will disappear as easily as it came. People are easily disappointed when things do not work out perfectly the first time. They need much support.

**Feelings:** awkward, giddy, frustrated, hopeful, good yet a little anxious, easily disappointed, cautiously optimistic

### Healthy and Helpful Coping Ideas:

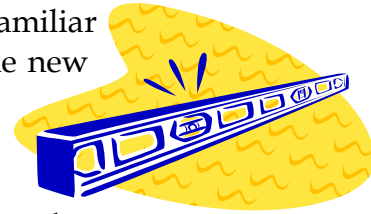
- It's okay to feel some excitement; if you feel too giddy, calm and center yourself. Understand that emotional swings are normal during this phase.
- Recognize what's working well and keep practicing it; Acknowledge set backs are real and normal. Don't punish yourself or blame others.
- Think of ways to integrate new and old - not either/or; all good/all bad.
- Let yourself rest, relax and re-center by doing familiar things.
- Put things in perspective, don't expect perfection. Acknowledge your efforts.
- Be gentle with yourself and others.

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## 5. NEW STATUS QUO

### Description:

A new set of expectations and predictions evolves. Unfamiliar things become more familiar. You may talk about, “the new way” as opposed to the “old way.”



### Body Responses:

As this stage develops, people are calm, their posture and breathing improves, senses are alert so that they notice little things. They feel competent again and have a sense of accomplishment.

**Feelings:** familiar, calm, centered, in balance, competent, deeper awareness of yourself and your surroundings

### Healthy and Helpful Coping Ideas:

- Give yourself time for your batteries to re-charge before making another change if you can.
- Understand your new status quo.
- Acknowledge your success and effort.
- Express appreciation to yourself and others.
- Learn how you dealt with this change so you can use it during future changes.
- Put this change into perspective. Recognize this is not the end of change. Change is a process that will continue. There will be a next change.

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## THE META-CYCLE

### **Description:**

After many complete change cycles, individuals learn how to go through change more swiftly and with less trauma. When this happens, the introduction of a foreign element may sometimes create more excitement than anxiety. Depending upon where individuals are in their own meta-cycle, they may react differently to a change.

### **Body Responses:**

By the third or fourth similar cycle, people begin to feel juicy with excitement at the prospect of a new cycle of change. They feel alive, healthy and creative. People who are not in this state may be frightened or put off by those who are. People who are experienced change agents feel such high self-worth and coping ability that they are able to support in a helpful way those to whom the prospect of change is a threat.

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## Generally Healthy and Helpful Support

The Satir Change Process does not say that change will always follow all five stages. The change process can be interrupted at any stage. For example, people can deny the foreign element and try to return to late status quo. Or they may start into integrating, then plunge back into chaos without enough support. Thus, if you want to help yourself and others through change, here are some healthy and helpful ways to support:

- Listen appreciatively to yourself and others
- Respond clearly and honestly
- Set clear boundaries between yourself and others
- Be willing to struggle with your own chaos and let others struggle with theirs
- Interact with respect and empathy
- Activate possibilities in yourself and each other
- Ask for support for yourself
- Offer your support to others; don't inflict it on them
- If you are the person introducing a change for others, recognize that you are not going through the same change as they are.



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