

# HOW TO BE AN *EFFECTIVE* CHANGE AGENT

State Council on Developmental Disabilities

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# Change is vital to life

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“If we don’t change, we don’t grow. If we don’t grow, we aren’t really living.”

— Gail Sheehy

# Small changes matter just as much as big changes

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“Things don’t have to change the world to be important.”

— Steve Jobs

# Change requires commitment

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

# What is a “Change Agent”?

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Cambridge Dictionary:

A Change Agent is a person who encourages people to change their behavior or opinions.

# What is a Change Agent's primary responsibility?

Identifying the need for change within a system and proposing/supporting solutions.

## **An effective Change Agent must understand and be conscious of two things:**

1. Where the system is now, and
2. Where the change will take the system.

# What is a Change Agent's primary responsibility?

Identifying the need for change within a system and proposing/supporting solutions.

# Today's objectives

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1. Understand the role of a Change Agent
2. Understand the dynamics of how change impacts yourself and others
3. Understand what you can do to support change and be an effective Change Agent

# The challenge of being an effective Change Agent

“There is no more delicate matter to take on hand, more dangerous to conduct, nor more doubtful in its success, than to set up as a leader in the introduction of changes.”

— Niccolo Machiavelli

# The challenge of being an effective Change Agent

“For [they] who innovate will have for [their] enemies all those who are well off under the existing order of things, and only lukewarm supporters in those who might be better off under the new.”

— Niccolò Machiavelli

# Acknowledge the need for change

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“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

— James Baldwin

# Why do people resist change?

1. People are afraid they will lose control and/or autonomy
2. People naturally distrust uncertainty, prefer the known and fear the unknown (“Better the devil you know than the devil you do not know.”)
3. People are inherently creatures of habit and change can be disruptive
4. Change requires more work (at least at the front end)
5. The need for change is not communicated effectively
6. An honest belief that the old or traditional approach is the best way

# The three most important factors in effectively managing change

1. Communication
2. Communication
3. Communication

# What is “communication”?

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The American Heritage Dictionary

The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.

## Research by Albert Mehrabian found the communication of feelings and attitudes is:

55% nonverbal (e.g., eye contact),  
38% vocal (e.g., tone of voice), and  
7% words.

**The #1 communication skill a Change Agent must master in order to be effective is:**

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**LISTENING!**

# Word Anagram

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A word formed by reordering the letters of another word.

For example, reordering the letters of the word “night” results in the word “thing.”

# The value of listening over talking

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“If we were meant to talk more than listen, we would have two mouths and one ear.”

— Samuel Clemens

# An effective Change Agent

1. Listens actively (mindfully listens to the speaker's words and voice inflection without responding internally)
2. Keeps an open mind
3. Guards against unconscious/implicit bias
4. Listens for the feelings being expressed
5. Takes brief notes for later recall
6. Uses a "feedback loop" during the conversation to paraphrase what they understand the speaker is stating
7. Recaps the speaker's main points, position, thoughts, and ideas at the end and requests confirmation
8. Pays attention to what message the speaker's body language is sending (e.g., slouching, looking at their phone, facial cues, shuffling through paperwork, looking off into space)

# Emotional Intelligence (EI)

“Emotional Intelligence, a different way of being smart, is a key to high performance at all levels... It’s not your IQ [intelligence quotient], it’s how you manage yourself and your relationships.”

— Daniel Goleman

# Goleman's four EI domains

1. Self Awareness
2. Self Management
3. Social Awareness
4. Relationship Management

# What is Self Awareness?

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The ability to recognize and understand your own emotions, including the effect of your actions, behaviors, and emotions on other people.

# To be self aware

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1. Recognize your strengths,
2. Recognize your weaknesses,
3. Be open to new information and experiences, and
4. Grow and learn from your interactions with others.

# To improve your self awareness

1. Pay attention to your thoughts,
2. Pay attention to your emotions,
3. Practice mindfulness,
4. Reflect on experiences,
5. Request constructive feedback,
6. Keep a journal, and
7. Engage in positive self-talk.

# Positive Anger

“Anybody can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person to the right degree, at the right time, for the right reason and in the right way – that is not easy.”

— Aristotle

# How to use/harness Positive Anger

- Admit your angry feelings to yourself
- Take deep breaths to calm yourself
- Take a break and do something physically vigorous or creative — when you engage in physical or mental exercise, you help dissipate your anger
- Prepare to confront the person or situation that caused you to feel angry **AFTER** you have calmed down

# Objectives

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# Questions/Take Aways

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