



Task Sheet

Discussing Reactions to Change With Your Team

A group exercise to help team members explore their emotional reactions to change.

This group exercise is designed to help team members affected by change understand how they feel about it and take positive, actionable steps towards it. The exercise will take up to one hour to complete and requires 10 minutes of advance preparation time. If a significant change is the topic of discussion, such as an organizational restructure, you may need to allow more than one hour for the exercise itself.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this exercise participants will be able to:

- Identify and articulate their emotional responses to change.
- Understand the perspectives of other team members regarding the change.
- Identify strategies to help them feel more positive about certain aspects of the change.
- Create a shared action plan for managing these aspects of change effectively.

How to Use This Exercise

This exercise should be run shortly after the announcement of a change in your team, department or organization. You might also want to run it a second time, either during or after the implementation of the change, to find out how team members' feelings about it have evolved.

During the exercise, team members identify which aspects of the change make them feel negative, neutral or positive emotions. The team then reflects on what might help them feel more positive about the aspects of the change that they currently associate with neutral or negative emotions.

The exercise can be run as an in-person event, or conducted online.

What You'll Need

In-person Session:

- Flip chart and pen
- Adhesive putty or tape
- Large and small Post-it™ notes
- Pens for participants

Online Session:

- Access to an online collaboration space, e.g., Miro or Mural.



Preparation (Allow 10 Minutes)

Before the exercise begins, write the following headings and their associated emotions on three pages of the flipchart paper and stick them up on a wall (or use large Post-it™ notes to create the same). If you are running the exercise online, set out the information in three sections on your collaboration space.

Negative Emotions

- Frustrated
- Angry
- Worried
- Concerned
- Anxious

Neutral Emotions

- Confused
- Uncertain
- Ambivalent
- Apathetic
- Undecided

Positive Emotions

- Happy
- Pleased
- Relieved
- Optimistic
- Excited

What to Do (Allow up to 30 Minutes)

1. Introduce the exercise and the learning outcomes.
2. Give each person a pad of Post-it™ notes and a pen. If you are delivering the session online, ensure everyone has access to the relevant workspace for the collaborative tool you are using.
3. Draw participants' attention to the Negative, Neutral and Positive sheets (or online equivalents). Ask the group if there are any emotions they think are missing from any of the three lists, and add these as appropriate. But don't spend long doing this.
4. Now invite team members to consider **which aspects of the change** make them feel **any or all of these emotions**. This is about thinking about the different elements the change involves.

Ask team members to write each of these aspects of the change on separate Post-it™ notes. For example, it might impact an individual's roles and responsibilities, or require them to learn new skills.

5. Once participants have written down all the aspects of the change they can think of, ask them to attach their Post-it™ notes to the emotion they most associate with it. For example, a participant might feel confused about how the change will affect their responsibilities, but excited about the opportunity to develop new skills.

6. Work through the three emotion types in turn. Discuss which aspects of the change have been matched to which emotions. Why does this particular aspect of the change make some people feel this way? Do others feel differently about it? Encourage everyone to talk through their responses.

Draw on your knowledge of the change to address any concerns that are raised during the conversation, and to answer any questions that team members might have. Bear in mind that you may not know, or be able to tell them, everything about the change at this time.



Review (Allow 30 Minutes)

Now ask team members to reflect on the aspects of the change that have been associated with **negative or neutral emotions** during this exercise. What would it take for team members to feel more positively about each aspect of the change?

Encourage team members to focus on small-scale, practical steps that could be undertaken relatively easily; these might be actions that team members could undertake independently, or that you, as a manager or leader, might need to take.

Examples of these steps might be for team members to have access to additional information about the change or to relevant development and support.

Team members might also want to think about changes that could be made to internal systems or procedures that would make it easier for them to adapt to the change on a day-to-day, operational basis.

Once a set of relevant actions has been agreed, identify who should be responsible for implementing each one – for team member actions, ask for a volunteer to take the lead on putting each action into practice – and agree on an appropriate timeframe for doing this.

You or your team members can use the downloadable Action Plan to record this information. There's a worked example at the end of the Action Plan.

Finally, arrange to meet with the team again in 3–4 weeks' time to review progress against each of the actions, and to find out how the team members are now feeling about the change in light of the steps that have been taken.