



Chosen and 'unchosen' change

Adapted from Elizabeth Gillard's unpublished paper 'Understanding the effect of change – chosen and 'unchosen' change', Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Curriculum connections

Use of this learning and teaching activity may contribute to achievement of elements of the Standards. Indications of relevant Domains and Levels in the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* are provided to assist teachers to make decisions about the appropriateness of the activity for their students.

Refer to introductory notes for VELS curriculum connections which define the relevant standards in greater detail.

Victorian Essential Learning Standards Domains and (Levels):

Health and Physical Education (6)
Humanities – Geography (4)

Duration: 1 hour

Setting: The classroom

Summary

This activity encourages students to consider their resilience to change, understand the types of change being faced by farmers and discuss strategies to cope with different types of change.

Student outcomes

This activity will enable students to:

- Understand the difference between chosen and 'unchosen' change
- Learn about the types of change farmers may need to make to respond to climate change
- Reflect on how they personally respond to different types of change
- Discuss strategies that can support resilience to different types of change.

Background notes for teachers

Heraclitus the Greek philosopher believed '*the one constant in life is change*'. Yet despite the constant nature of change, we often find change stressful and difficult. In a time where changes in the climate are accelerating, affecting global and regional area, changes in the way we manage the land and the way in which we produce food will also need to occur. It will be essential that the community has the capacity to deal with change.

Charles Darwin recognised the importance of resilience and coping with change when he wrote '*it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one that is the most adaptable to change*'.

This activity introduces students to the idea that there are different types of change:

- Chosen (the change that I choose)
- 'Unchosen' (the change that chooses me)

It encourages students to consider how they can use different resilience strategies to respond to these types of change. Resilience is the process and positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity. Specifically, the activity encourages students to adopt a strengths based approach to respond to different change situations.

Materials

- Student Worksheet: Chosen and 'Unchosen' Change (one per student).

The activity

1. Introduce this activity by discussing as a class the difference between:
 - *Chosen change* (the change that I choose) eg becoming friends with someone new or starting to play a team sport
 - *'Unchosen' change* (the change that chooses me) eg illness or injury, falling out with friends, having to move school or losing your job.
2. Discuss with students the idea that these situations both involve change but that how we people feel about these changes will often differ. As a class discuss two very different scenarios relating to changes that farmers may need to make to respond to climate change.
 - A *chosen change* could be to take advantage of drier times by developing an arid landscaping business.
 - An *'unchosen' change* may be a reduction in the availability of water for pasture irrigation has forced farmers to diversify their business – grow different crops and/or different breeds of cattle.

In the chosen change situation people may go through the following stages:

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| Relief that the decision has been made. This stage may take a few minutes or a week or two. | Exploration of the new opportunities due to the change. Excited and wanting to find out more. | Reaction to the change – cold feet. May be mild or strong scared, angry, anxious or confused feelings. | Acceptance of the positives and negatives of the change and commit to making the change. | Resolution to do what is required to make the change work. |
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In the 'unchosen' change situation people may go through the different stages:

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| Negation or denial that the change is happening (a very natural response to this change) | Self Justification and strong feelings of anger, depression, hurt. Why should I have to change? It's not my fault! The worst stage of all. | Acceptance of the positives and negatives of the change and commit to making the change. | Exploration of the new opportunities due to the change. Wanting to find out more. | Resolution to do what is required to make the change work. |
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3. Discuss other scenarios that farmers may face, how they may feel about these situations and the factors that you think would make the situations easier:
 - Dealing with one change at a time – it can be harder to deal with more than one 'unchosen' or chosen change at a time
 - Not rushing into making decisions when in the negation, self justification, or reaction stages as decisions may be rushed or not well thought through
 - Communicating well with people around you so that they can understand and support you going through the change
 - Take the time to fully process the change and the feelings associated with the change so that you can move on.

4. Hand out the student worksheets detailing the different stages that people may feel or go through for each type of change. Encourage students to fill in the student worksheet with personal examples from their past of each type of change and how they felt at each stage. Student may have moved through some of these stages very quickly or even skipped some of the stages.
5. As a class discuss some of the action, resilience strategies or events that helped the students 'move on' when the change was occurring.
6. One resilience strategy that you may wish to discuss as a class is a strengths based/positive psychology approach. Students can access for free an online questionnaire *Strength survey for children* (measures 24 character strengths for children) through the University of Pennsylvania.

Click on www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu scroll down to *engagement questionnaires* then click on *VIA Strength Survey For Children*.

This questionnaire will identify the top character strengths for each student. Students can think about how they can use these strengths to cope with change.

For example: if the chosen change is to incorporate more exercise in your life and one of your top strengths is *citizenship, teamwork and loyalty* you will probably find it easier to meet your goal by joining a sporting team.

If the 'unchosen' change is being forced to move schools or towns, and one of your top strengths is *capacity to love and be loved* then it will be important that you stay in contact with your old friends but also take action to move into the 'exploration' stage and meet new people and create new friendships.

*Note: there is also a questionnaire for adults VIA Survey of Character Strengths (measures 24 character strengths) that you may wish to undertake yourself as a teacher.

7. For each of the personal chosen and 'unchosen' change examples that they have written about in the worksheet, ask students to consider how they have (or could have) use their character strengths as a resilience strategy during the time of change.

Related LandLearn activities

'Exploring Values' activity found in the **Planning for Sustainable Land use** booklet on the *LandLearn Resources CD*.

Student Worksheet: Chosen and 'Unchosen' Change

Stages of Chosen Change

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| Relief that the decision has been made. This stage may take a few minutes or a week or two. | Exploration of the new opportunities due to the change. Excited and wanting to find out more. | Reaction to the change – cold feet. May be mild or strong scared, angry, anxious or confused feelings. | Acceptance of the positives and negatives of the change and commit to making the change. | Resolution to do what is required to make the change work. |
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My example: _____

How I felt at each stage: _____

How I used my strengths to cope with this change: _____

Stages of 'Unchosen' change

| | | | | |
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| Negation or denial that the change is happening (a very natural response to this change) | Self Justification and strong feelings of anger, depression, hurt. Why should I have to change? It's not my fault! The worst stage of all. | Acceptance of the positives and negatives of the change and commit to making the change. | Exploration of the new opportunities due to the change. Wanting to find out more. | Resolution to do what is required to make the change work. |
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My example: _____

How I felt at each stage: _____

How I used my strengths to cope with this change: _____