

Changing Your Environment – 10 Brain Hacks to get back control

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Many of us say we like change but change can also bring the feeling of terror, particularly if it's unexpected or if we can only imagine a bad outcome. That physical churn in the pit of your stomach, an increased heart rate, dry mouth, panic, nausea, or just a feeling of complete overwhelm.

These physical feelings are caused by the flood of adrenalin and cortisol that are triggered almost instantly by any type of change that our brain has predicted could be bad for us. And anything new could be bad for us, especially if the brain has no data to be certain of a good outcome. Next we attach an emotion (story) to these physical feeling such as 'scared', 'anxious', 'worried', and 'uncertain'. We are mostly not conscious that this is happening because it happens so quickly. Logic is hijacked in favour of emotion and we respond emotionally rather than rationally. It's called the amygdala hijack. If you don't believe me then tell me how you reacted the last time you felt angry and someone told you to just 'calm down'.

The good news? You can hack this process with these stealth-like Ninja hacks.

Part 1: Get the logic you switched back on.

Write down a current challenge you have that requires a different approach and try applying each hack listed.

Hack 1. How do you physically feel?

Notice any physical sensations like the stomach knots and racing heart. This is the first indication your subconscious brain is predicting danger. Your body is being flooded with adrenalin and cortisol.

Hack 2: What is the story (emotion) you are experiencing?

Scared, anxious, worried, or uncertain? These are the emotions you've attached to the physical feeling. This is the story your brain is creating for you about the change.

Hack 3: Remember that emotion beats logic. Every time.

If you are feeling and responding with emotion it's hard to respond logically. How are you responding?

Hack 4: Calm the emotion down using the physiological sigh.

Two breaths in through the nose (it will feel weird) and one long exhale through the mouth. Repeat 3 to 4 times. It uses your diaphragm to hack your brain and convince it that all is well. It's a self-soothing method it feels weird but it works. Every time.

Now you are ready to apply some logical thinking

Part 2: Changing your response

Hack 5: Don't focus on the problem/change.

Instead do something tactile, make bread, go for a run, or clear out a cupboard. Do something that will use your brain in a different way, ideally with physical movement too. It gives your subconscious brain time to think about the change in different ways which can provide fresh data and insights. The physical movement also helps your brain think you are moving forward towards a goal and past the problem.

Hack 6: Remind yourself that your reality isn't everyone's reality.

Reality is just your perception of the outside world. The great news is this means you can change your reality! You can choose, to some degree, the story you tell yourself about something. That scary feeling in the pit of your stomach is no different from the butterfly feelings of something that you're excited about. The only difference is the story you've attached to the feelings. For many things in life, you can, with practice, choose the story you want to tell.

Hack 7: Tell everyone.

Once you've reframed the story, write it down. Now say it out loud. Next, tell other people. The more you repeat a story the more it will 'feel' real and you will start to lean into the change rather than trying to run away from it. This is because your brain now has some 'good' data to suggest the change isn't quite as bad as it originally thought. You will also start to feel like you 'own' the change and there might even be some great opportunities within it.

Hack 8: The brain likes certainty.

This means it can trick you into sticking with the status quo even if the status quo isn't good for you. The familiar feels safer than an unknown. Even if the familiar is bad the brain can predict how bad it will be with a level of certainty and the brain prefers certainty over the uncertainty of change. This is why we put up with bad bosses and jobs for so long rather than leaving for an unknown future.

Hack 9: Treat your doubts like difficult people.

We all know people who get in the way of the things we want to do, and we all have a way of getting past them. Treat your doubts the same way. They aren't real, they're just predictions the brain has made. It's

hard to imagine the unknown future, but it's really easy to imagine what might go wrong. It's also very hard to challenge your own thinking but if you think of the doubts as difficult people you'll soon find a way past them that reduces their impact.

Hack 10: Even change you are excited by can be scary.

This is again because it's easy to imagine the things that could go wrong, and you are leaping into the unknown which your brain has little information about. You can hack your brain on this one by imagining that future, once the change has happened. Sense the future as much as you can, what it looks, sounds, and feels like. You want to have the 3D technicolour version in your mind. Again, tell others about it. The more you can do this the more new 'positive' data the brain has in relation to the change which will ultimately reduce the feelings of panic, worry, and anxiety because it will start to feel more familiar.

These are 10 simple hacks you can learn to do but you need to practice. Practice on small things. If you fail, don't beat yourself up, just try again, and again. Each time you try it will get a little easier. Each step you take will reduce the (subconscious) brain-induced fear. Each step is a stealth-like move to trick your brain into thinking differently enabling you to maximise the opportunity and reduce the uncertainty of almost any change you are facing.

Don't be caught out by things you can't control

Do be a Change Ninja and act in speed with these top brain hacks to Ninja the change in your life. For more tools and techniques, you can also try 'The Change Ninja Returns – and this time it's personal'. A book full of real stories and new approaches, one that will give you the fresh insights you need to make the changes you want to make in life.

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