

## MANEUVERING CHANGE FATIGUE

*by:*

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Change is usually present in our organization. Specially now, change happens rapidly – without regard for our mental well-being – and that can be overwhelming and exhausting, especially for teachers. Change fatigue has the potential to impact them and their performance, that is why it is important to find out the appropriate steps to help teachers address it.

In the workplace or in school, change fatigue can appear as if confusion, stress, burnout or maybe passive aggressiveness. Change-related fatigue is typically the result of top-down, management-driven change efforts – or where teachers must adjust their behavior but don't understand why it's necessary.

Even when teachers understand the rationale behind change initiatives, this weariness can set in when there is an excessive amount of change that feels beyond their control (e.g., adjustments required during the COVID-19 pandemic).

When teachers seem stressed or teacher engagement has dipped, the cause might not be readily apparent. As leaders, we may notice when teachers experience change fatigue like constant questioning of the intentions or a general distrust of your change management team. Recognizing these attitudes once we are communicating with them, we will be able to address it promptly. When left unaddressed, however, change fatigue can spread rapidly to other teachers, creating a toxic work environment permeated by distrust.

As a pacesetter who can help teachers who struggle with change, here are some strategies for overcoming change fatigue:

## 1. Reach out and acknowledge teachers' feelings

When teachers are pushing back or if you know they are not happy, reach out and show empathy for a way they are feeling. Let them know that you realize that changes are going to be hard. Then, point them toward the specified goal, and help them imagine that future state through a positive lens.

## 2. Celebrate small wins

When leading change initiatives, small victories will become big victories over time. With teachers who struggle with change, reinforce even the smallest of successes as often as you can. Point out when teachers are on track with their work and attitude, encouraging them to stay the good momentum they are doing.

## 3. Acknowledge contributions and nurture a way of ownership

Sometimes it helps once we highlight teachers' contributions and the important role their feedback can play as you implement change. Explain that you simply consider them to be key stakeholders and that your decision making is influenced by their insights. When you make them feel included in the planning (and not just the implementation) process, teachers gain a greater sense of ownership and should reengage as a result.

These positive approaches to handling teachers' change fatigue tend to work and get them back on track quickly. After all, emotional intelligence healthy redirection and future-mindedness are often just as contagious as the worst case of change fatigue.

### *References:*

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