



For Marilou and César.

*I hope this survival guide will enrich
your life journey in a valuable way.*

SURVIVAL GUIDE

FOR TIMES

OF CHANGE

Florence Pérès

25 change hacks to better cope
with change and challenges at
work and at home

Lannoo
Campus

This book was originally published as *Survivalgids voor tijden van verandering*
LannooCampus, 2023.

D/2023/45/526 – ISBN 978 94 014 0399 3 – NUR 800

Cover design: Steve Reynders
Cover portrait Author: Ioannis Tsouloulis
Interior design: Margo Togni

© Florence Pérès & Lannoo Publishers nv, Tiel, 2023.

LannooCampus Publishers is a subsidiary of Lannoo Publishers, the book and
multimedia division of Lannoo Publishers nv.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced and/or made public, by means of
printing, photocopying, microfilm or any other means, without the prior written
permission of the publisher.

LannooCampus Publishers
Vaartkom 41 box 01.02
3000 Leuven
Belgium

P.O. Box 23202
1100 DS Amsterdam
The Netherlands

www.lannoocampus.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Diagram: Help! Change! What should I do?!	8
Intro	10
1 The basics	20
1. Why wouldn't this happen to me?	26
2. You shouldn't be too optimistic!	31
3. Focus on what you can control	39
4. Let go of the future /'The Not Knowing is easy'	48
5. Jump or wait out the storm?	56
2 Train your brain	66
6. Get going with your BEBS	69
7. Upgrading your mind in real-time	80
8. Don't fire a second arrow!	88
9. Climb back on your camel!	94
10. Hack your reptilian brain!	101
3 Self-efficacy	112
11. Hello, bad day!	115
12. Unleash the Victor in you	123
13. A lobster doesn't take Xanax	129
14. Appetite for failure	136
15. What a calligraphy course has to do with an open & learning mindset	141
4 Anticipate	150
16. Look at signals in time	152
17. Take one second ahead	158
18. Improvise and MacGyver it	164
19. What farmer Jermaine and lowering your expectations have in common	169
20. Winter training	176

5 Step-by-step plan	184
21. First comb the spaghetti	186
22. Out of balance? Take stock!	191
23. Where is that yellow button!? The Z-of-Change: Take inventory!	201
24. Promoting a problem	215
25. Being stuck in routine is fine	225
Afterword	232
Annexes	236
Change hacks overview	237
The Survival Guide for times of change at a glance	240
Literature	242
Acknowledgements	244

START

Many unknowns and much uncertainty

The Rumsfeld matrix
(H24)

Do I have all the data?/
Is it known-known?

Is there an opportunity?
(H5)

NO

What is interesting here?

YES

Go to: **ADDRESS IT!**

*Too many aspects? /
Too difficult, too heavy? /
Too much chaos & confusion?*

Comb the spaghetti
(H21)

IS IT WITHIN YOUR POWER?
(H3)

NO

YES

*Fait accompli? /
Imposed change?*

Z-of-Change
(H23)

- 1) Neutral zone
- 2) Pros
- 3) Cons
- 4) Evaluation cons

HELP! CHANGE!

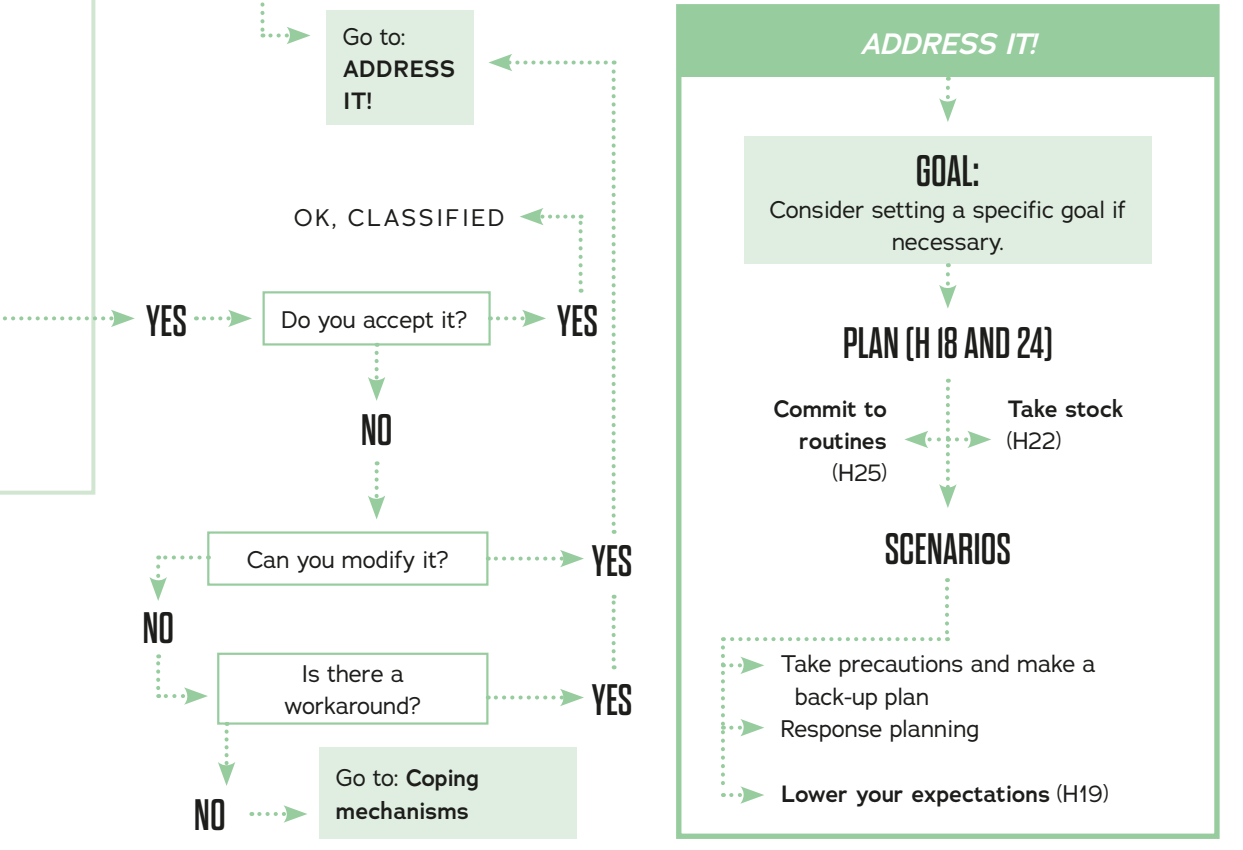
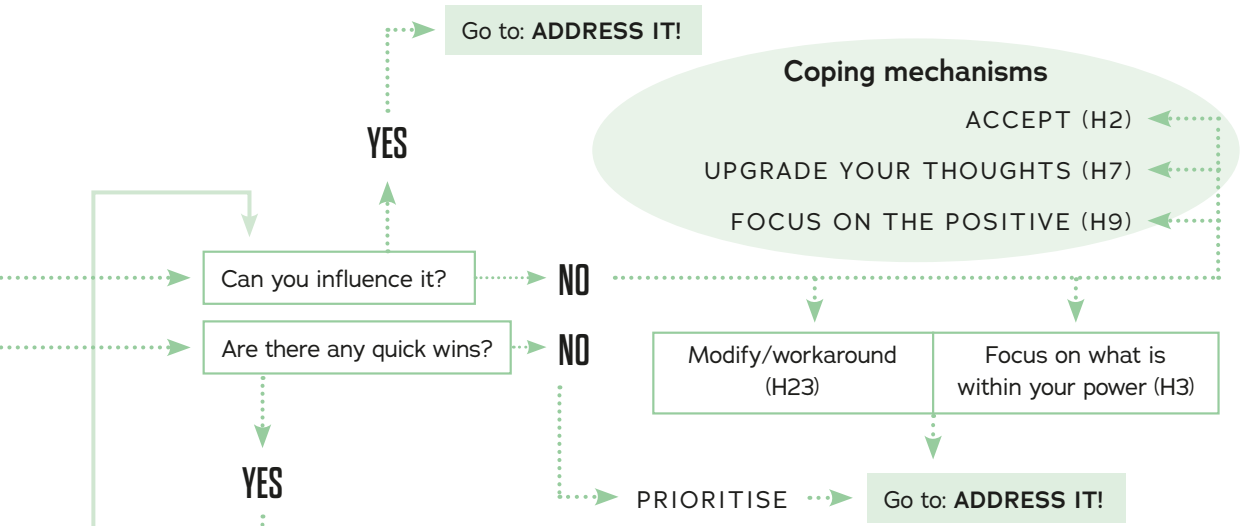
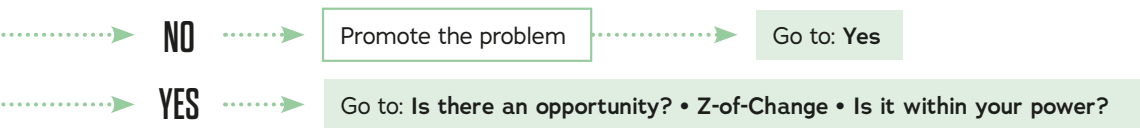
OH NO! ADVERSITY!

SH*T! PROBLEM!

5) Action: is it important?

NO

The 'H' in the diagram stands for change hack and refers to the relevant chapter.





INTRO

Why this book?

Expect change

‘Change is the only constant’, we all know the famous phrase by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. I prefer ‘*Change is the default state of life*’. Anyway, change is omnipresent and happens all the time and in all aspects of our lives: getting married, moving, changing jobs, getting fired, being pregnant, experiencing a broken heart, getting seriously ill, sending children off to college, a new manager, going through a merger, embarking on a long-term foreign assignment, using a new software system, facing inflation, going through a divorce, dealing with a new and unknown virus, war, climate change...

Nothing stays as it was, everything flows (panta rhei)

Everyone is confronted with change. If you are alive, no doubt you have already faced hard times, and if not, you surely will. Sometimes the change means adversity; other times it is something good. Sometimes it’s by choice or planned; other times, it’s unexpected and highly inconvenient. And even when change is carefully prepared, the results can still be completely unexpected.

There are those small, everyday changes and there are very significant life events. Both socially, personally and at work, where difficult times for organisations often mean even more difficult times for their employees.

Life is full of surprises and ‘disasters’ but it also has beautiful moments, fortunately. If you make the comparison with the sea, life is sometimes calm, but more often turbulent. There is no point in wishing there were no waves, nor in trying to tame them. A pandemic recently collectively woke us up from the illusion of safety and control. *So you cannot tame the waves, but you can learn how to surf.* Learn to deal with both small and big waves, with small and big changes. And that is what dealing with life entails. That is what being resilient means. Change just happens and there is no point in resisting it; the key is choosing how to deal with it.

Change happens all the time, including right now. While you're reading this, all sorts of things are changing in your body. However, the speed of change around us is unprecedented. So is the quantity. And all these different types of change bring uncertainty and stress. How do you deal with this? How can you learn to handle all the challenges in life and at work and how can you gain resilience? Moreover, how can you even *grow* in difficult and changing situations? It won't come as a surprise that a lot has to do with adopting a certain *mindset*; what your beliefs are, how you think, and how you view things. And you can change that. *Emotional flexibility* is also a crucial skill in dealing with change, obstacles, setbacks, problems, and difficulties. I cover some concrete techniques in this book.

But this book aims to go beyond providing tools to change your mindset and better regulate your emotions. Indeed, this book focuses specifically on dealing with change in particular and the challenges that arise from it. Besides techniques to become more resilient and mentally and emotionally flexible, you will also find philosophical reflections, as well as very practical models for tackling change, even in a team setting for work-related changes.

Ultimately, the goal is to become *more resilient and agile* and to experience less stress from change. To be less 'bothered' by it and even benefit from it, because those who welcome change and can adapt to the new situation lead an easier life, experience less anxiety, uncertainty, mental and emotional strain and achieve greater success.

So learn how to surf, or 'navigate'. The latter implies you need 'tools' like a compass or GPS. And that's precisely what you'll find in this book. Tools to navigate, and more specifically 'CHANGE HACKS' – by which I mean simple principles, concrete handles or insights to:

- 1) experience less stress in general, but especially as a result of change;
- 2) better handle change and setbacks;
- 3) grow in times of change or adversity;
- 4) detect the possibilities that come with each change, the opportunities that each crisis presents, and seize the chances that arise in the process.

When you apply the change hacks in your life, you will gain resilience, and even *adaptive* resilience. I'll explain this in a moment.

Some change hacks are founded on ancient philosophical knowledge and practices, adapted to our modern times. Others are based on the latest scientific insights on resilience and the workings of the brain. I also use both my own practical experience in dealing with change at work and in personal life, as well as examples from my surroundings.

What is resilience and adaptive resilience?

Resilience is defined as the ability to cope with adversity and uncertainty, being able to bounce back (quickly) after setbacks or a stressful period (*bouncing back*). In addition to bouncing back, there is a number of other views or characteristics of resilience: that you can endure or withstand an unfavourable situation and that you can ‘maintain stability’ when things get turbulent, i.e. that you are *resilient*. Other definitions refer to the ability to ‘*recover*’ easily in the face of change and adversity. Still others talk about being *flexible*. In any case, they are all based on key ingredients that make us resilient: an optimistic thinking style, the ability to regulate emotions, perseverance, being able to put things into perspective and having an open mind.

Being resilient is not an exceptional capacity for our species. We all have this ability, which is an encouraging thought. This is how we collectively recover surprisingly quickly from war, natural disasters, and pandemics. However, at the individual level, the degree of resilience varies more. Why is it that one person navigates through change more easily while another can only go into survival mode, get exhausted, or experience depressive feelings? Although a portion of our resilience is genetically determined and influenced by our environment and circumstances, we can influence a substantial part of it ourselves.

This book is about developing and cultivating skills and a mindset to become more resilient, specifically in the context of change. It’s about using different ways and strategies when things don’t go as expected. I’m actually taking it a step further and aiming for *adaptive* resilience because, in addition to resilience, *agility* is indispensable, as well as the ability to adapt easily.

In other words, adaptive resilience refers to *successful adaptation* to (unfavourable) circumstances and new situations. It is the ability to respond *effectively and quickly to changing circumstances* and succeed in doing so by embracing change rather than resisting it. Moreover, it enables us to *find opportunities in challenges*.

Adaptive resilience is what we truly need in a world full of change. It includes, in addition to the ingredients and characteristics of resilience mentioned above, three more aspects:

1. You are able to adapt appropriately *in the moment*, i.e. ‘*in real-time*’ as events unfold. You make decisions and take actions adapted to the situation at that moment. These are referred to as ‘*situational adaptive strategies*’.
2. You apply the principle of ‘*bouncing forward*’. This is the process by which you consciously absorb and incorporate the experiences, insights and skills that arise from changes or setbacks to prepare yourself for new challenges. It means you are not just returning to your original starting point, but you are moving forward. You have grown thanks to those previous experiences.
3. The last one is a combination of both, ‘*adjusted bouncing*’. Unlike ‘*bouncing forward*’, which implies a straight line forward, it is the capacity to evolve towards a new goal or changed context over a longer time span, based on changed life insights or a new life situation.

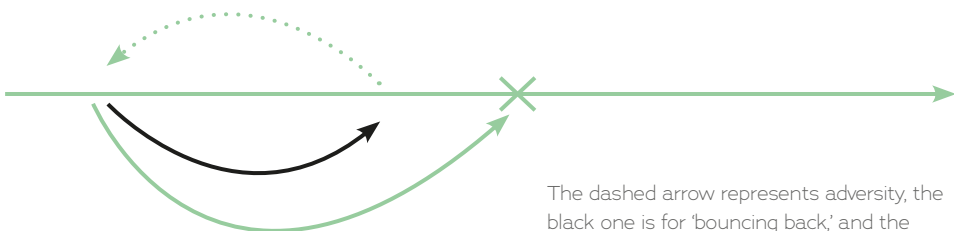
A few examples will make the different parts clearer:

1. *Applying situational adaptive strategies in real-time*

In a burning plane, most people do not perish due to the fire, but because they try to exit through the door they entered. Being situationally adaptive means looking for the exit where you have the best chance of survival: the nearest exit where there is no fire.

2. *Bouncing forward*

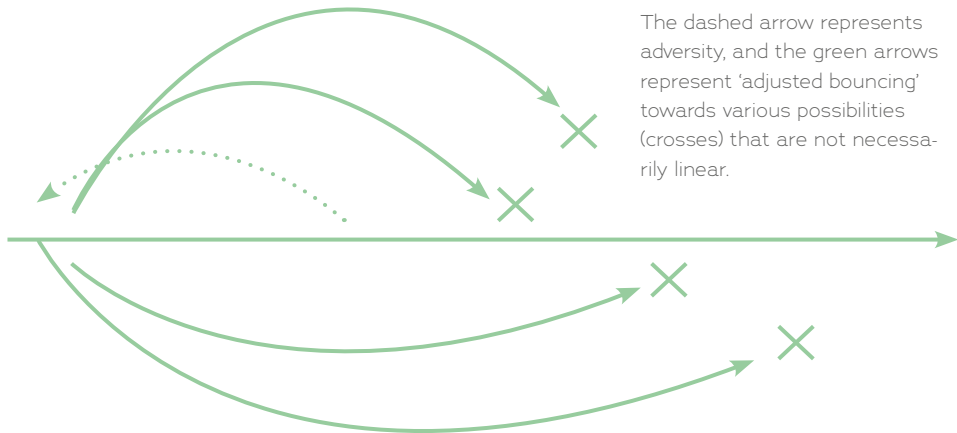
After a relationship break-up, you do not return to where you were before that relationship, but you have grown and learned more about yourself in the process. You are further ahead after the starting point.



The dashed arrow represents adversity, the black one is for ‘bouncing back,’ and the green one for ‘bouncing forward’ towards a point (cross) indicating growth.

3. *Adjusted bouncing*

After burnout, few people return to the situation as it was before they dropped out. So it is not 'bouncing back', but neither is it necessarily forward as in linear. After all, you can make other choices, and even fundamentally change course in your work and/or private life.



These three components that define *adaptive resilience* are not only indispensable when dealing with disruptive change, but also add great value in our daily lives. For instance, the work environment is a daily challenge for our resilience because you have to collaborate with others, which may result in problematic or at least complicated interpersonal interactions. It also involves dealing with other people's mistakes, criticism, stress, deadlines, operational issues, and demanding or dissatisfied customers. Moreover, the workplace often faces competitive pressure, changes in the market, and changes within the organisation itself. This makes the workplace a (potential) source of stress but also of opportunities, challenges, and growth!

Dealing with change or changing yourself?

Change from the outside often means change from the inside. It is because of a serious medical problem that we get a 'wake-up call' and decide to adopt healthier lifestyle habits. It is through a severe setback such as bankruptcy, an accident or going through a serious illness, that we start looking at life differently. More consciously and with more focus on what really matters.

With this book, I hope to encourage you not to wait for setbacks or difficulties to occur, but to proactively work on a mindset that allows you to better cope with life's 'situations.' To practise and experiment now with techniques and change hacks so you can use them more easily during periods of change in your private life or at work. To gain insights to increase your adaptive resilience now. These 25 change hacks will also help you deal with change *in real-time, right in the middle* of the challenge, when it occurs.

This is a different starting point than when you pursue personal or professional goals. In that case, you initiate changes in your life yourself. Think of changing your habits when you want to lose weight or stop smoking. Although this is not the subject of this book, it is more than likely that you will adopt other habits and undergo personal change once you start using the change hacks.

So there is an inevitable interaction between experiencing or preparing for change and thereby changing yourself, and between initiating change yourself and thereby experiencing change as a result. Either way, change from outside and from within always interact, in both directions.

In summary

What this book has to offer you:

- ↳ Learnings such as the benefits of better coping with change, the link between stress and change and misconceptions about change.
- ↳ 25 change hacks (in the form of insights, principles, concrete tools or models) to become adaptively resilient.
- ↳ Associated exercises to put the principles into practice.
- ↳ Experiences, cases and testimonials drawn from (professional) life.
- ↳ A step-by-step guide to dealing with change: although no situation and no person is the same, we can give some very concrete steps to deal with common events (e.g. I have a new boss, I am changing jobs, I am being promoted, I can no longer meet my targets because the material is not delivered, I am living with a new partner ...).

Each change hack is fully explained in a separate chapter. I recommend you follow their order as some build on others. But you can also read the chapters in any order and start with the change hacks that appeal to you most.

At the end of each section, you can also work on ‘My change’, where we apply the five change hacks associated with each section to a change or setback you are going through now or that is coming up. Let’s get started by identifying these changes!

MY CHANGE

Before we dive into the change hacks, I would like to ask you to take a moment to reflect on the following questions. Where it says 'change', you might as well fill in 'problem' or 'setback'. Note on question 2: If you're not currently going through (significant) change, you can also anticipate an upcoming change.

1) How do you usually feel when you're confronted with change?

2) What change(s) are you currently experiencing? Describe up to three.

1.

2.

3.

**3) How are you dealing with them at the moment? How do you respond?
What feelings do you have about them?**

1.

2.

3.

— 1 —

THE BASICS