

ONE SMALL STEP CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

by Robert Maurer, PH D.

The Philosophy is Simple

Great change is made through small steps

And the science is irrefutable.

Small steps circumvent the brain's built-in resistance to new behavior.

“A peaceful and simple way of handling all the difficulties in our lives.
You will breathe a sigh of relief as you read it.”

~ Susan Jeffers,, Ph. D. Author of *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*

The Kaizen Method

As you probably know, Japanese businesses - which rebuilt themselves on the bedrock of small steps after the war - soon rocketed to unheard-of levels of productivity. Small steps were so successful that the Japanese gave them a name of their own: kaizen. p 30

I {Robert Mauer} believe that the kaizen approach is a highly effective method of **building new neural connections in the brain**. As one client often said to me, “The steps were so small I couldn’t fail.” 35

While the steps may be small, what we’re reaching for is not... 38

We have 3 separate brains: brain stem, midbrain, and cortex

1. At the bottom of the brain is the **brain stem**, known as the reptile brain
2. Sitting on top of the brain stem is the **midbrain**, also known as the mammalian brain
3. The third part of the brain is the **cortex** and it wraps around the rest of the brain

BRAIN STEM

It wakes you up in the morning, sends you off to sleep at night and reminds your heart to beat. 40

MIDBRAIN

It regulates the body's internal temperature, houses our emotions, and governs the fight-or-flight response that keeps us alive in the face of danger.

- The midbrain is where you'll find a structure called the **amygdala** (a-MIG-duh-luh). It controls the fight or flight response, an alarm system we share with all other mammals.

The real problem with the amygdala and its fight or flight response today is that it sets off alarm bells *whenever* we want to make a departure from our usual, safe routines. 41

- The hippocampus is located in the midbrain and it decides what information to store and what to retrieve. Its main criteria for storage is **repetition**, so asking that question over and over gives the brain no choice but to pay attention and begin to create answers. 60

CORTEX

It is responsible for the miracle of being human. 41

Results from my informal laboratory of patients and corporate clients suggest that **questions are simply better at engaging the brain. Your brain wants to play!** A question wakes up your brain and delights it. Your brain loves to take in questions. 61

**What shapes our lives
are the questions we ask,
refuse to ask,
or never think to ask.**

~ Sam Keen p.59

Tiptoe Past Fear

By asking small, gentle questions, we keep the fight-or-flight response in the "off" position. Kaizen questions such as, "*What's the smallest step I can take to be more efficient?*" or "*What can I do in five minutes a day to _____*" allow the brain to focus on problem-solving and eventually, action.

Ask a question often enough, and you'll find your brain storing the questions, turning them over, and eventually generating some interesting and useful responses. 65-6

Shhh. Don't Wake the Amygdala

Make your questions small, and you reduce the chances of waking the amygdala and arousing debilitating fear. When fear is quiet, the brain can take in the questions and then pop out the answers. 67

- *If LifeWave were my first priority, what would I be doing differently today?*
- _____
- _____

Try to see kaizen as a process that is never done. Don't put it in a drawer, forgotten, once your goal has been reached.

Kaizen invites you to see life as an opportunity for continuous improvement, for every-higher standard and expanding potential. 219

Just as a record-setting marathon runner will continue to search out ways to shave another second off his or her best time, you can seek out strategies to constantly sharpen your life's game. 219

We can respect ourselves by taking small steps toward improving our health and relationships; we can **respect others by asking them small questions**. This is not easy to do, and only you can determine the place of kaizen in your world.

But as you incorporate kaizen into your routines and discover its power, you will have begun to answer a profound question: **What more important task does this life hold than to draw out the possibility in each moment!** 221

SHHH...DON'T WAKE THE AMYGDALA!

By asking small, gentle questions, we keep the fight-or-flight response in the "off" position.