

TIME for CHANGE



5 Actions You MUST Take to Lose Your Fear of Change and Ensure the Life Change You Make Will Last.

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There are as many changes that occur during the course of our lives, as there are stars in the sky and quite a number of these maybe changes that we really do not have much choice in the matter... The biggest barrier between us living a contented, emotionally well adjusted life, is an inability to adjust to, or willingly embrace CHANGE.

Change can be overwhelming at times, unwelcome and difficult to bear, such as experiencing the death of a loved one, or suffering a life changing injury. In other cases, change may be imposed upon us from decisions made that we have no input or say- such as a management level at work, or on a national scale from political 'powers that be'. When we get retrenched from our job, you can safely say that it was not of our own choosing.

Yes, a fact of life is that not all change seems fair, it can leave us feeling powerless, victimised, sad and angry. But we still control how long those negative feelings last for and how we choose to re-direct that emotional energy to avoid letting circumstance start dictating a negative slide in our life.

Some change creeps upon us while we are busy focused on other things- such as losing the love of your spouse and hearing a sudden request for divorce, or loss of connection with your kids- whilst you may have simply been busy making money and 'putting food on the table'. Both of these 'changes' would have had plenty of warning signals, but you were either not conscious enough at the time to see them, or the fear of self-reflection or career change was too overwhelming and scary. So at this other end of the spectrum, we may be in denial, preferring not to admit that something NEEDS to change.

The next stage is when we begin recognising the need for change in our life, but perhaps can't figure out how to make it happen, or we attempt to change but somehow can't make it 'stick!' It's easy to commit to making a change and set a goal to achieve, but even easier to lose heart and focus each time we hit an obstacle that we did not expect. This is a common reaction to challenge during change- we often give up as soon as we confront the first hurdle- and it comes from lack of faith in your staying power, lack of confidence in your abilities, doubting the reason you have taken action and the uncertainty that begins to grow when you are moving through unfamiliar territory. This can apply whether you are trying to break a bad habit, lose weight, develop a new daily routine, change your career or start a new business... and it will keep you caught on a repetitive rollercoaster ride of short term success followed by failure.

It is an absolute fact of life that some changes we do have control over and some we don't. But it is also a fact, that some people will bear the burden of ANY form of change far better than another person- not only that, but in some instances they positively embrace the opportunity for change or accept and are grateful for inopportune happenings! WHY is this?

There are several reasons, one of which can be attributed to our brains hardwiring and genetic pre-disposition when we were born... but this really is the least influential. The other reasons are entrenched in learned behaviour and beliefs, based on past experiences, induction, observation of others reactions and the subsequent meaning we have given to certain challenges and change. Have you noticed how we all react to what happens to us, in *very* different ways?

Let's take an example of a very common, unexpected mishap that may occur in the course of an ordinary day.... A person who was crossing the street with a friend on their way to have coffee, tripped on the curb, falling down to their knees awkwardly, dropping a couple of books into the gutter and putting a small rip in the knee of their jeans. They did not hurt themselves beyond their ego and their friend couldn't help but burst out laughing at their mishap. How would you react? Would you laugh it off thinking you were just a clumsy clod, 'stuff' just happens and roll with it? Would you seek to place the blame on someone- maybe your friend had accidentally bumped into you (or someone else you had not seen behind you) or for the 'silly' cyclist which passed at the time and distracted you, the sun in your eyes....would you just dust yourself off, ask for a cloth when you get to the coffee shop to wipe your books over with, comment your jeans look more trendy now with a hole in them... OR would you allow it to disrupt your whole day? Would your demeanor change because you are now really peeved and grumpy

that your jeans were new and now are dirty and look crappy with a rip- you walk straight past that man with a donation box for the Deaf and Blind Foundation- all you can think of is- 'yeh I must've been blind to trip like that!' You pass on your impatience to the waitress in the coffee shop, when you think you are not being served, but really she is a bit nervous to come near you with steam coming out your ears...it seems that your day has taken a nose dive for the worse as your coffee is served up luke warm, you lose a filling on a pecan nut in your muffin and your friend wishes she hadn't caught up with you because she now feels guilty that she caused all of this 'mess'- after all, she was the one who had invited you for coffee!

There are two powerful forces at work here...

1/ Your **choice of HOW you react/respond to events** which happen to you in life from minute to minute- this is underpinned by your perspective (beliefs).

2/ What **you remain focused on post- reaction**. This will largely dictate what happens next. You can call this the Law of Attraction-which would be correct to some degree on an energetic level- but we are also speaking on an immediate physical and mental level, which, when you focus on certain negative thoughts, words and emotions, you will ensure that there is a much higher chance that more of the same negative 'stuff' will happen to you, simply because of the way you continue to behave in 'the moment' and any further attitudes & emotions which fester or flow, post trauma/challenge/failure/accident/problem.

So we have come full circle to consider that all levels of change, whether they are desired or undesired, can be effected negatively or positively by the thoughts we hold about them. And the fact that we sometimes choose NOT to think about some issues, does not result in the issue going away, it just leads to more unwanted change (or loss) of a different nature.

So HOW do we cope better with adjusting to change; lose our fear of change; stick true to our new commitments and achieve lasting positive change?

Let's dive right in shall we...

1st Action: BECOME AWARE of the MEANING you give to your EXPERIENCES and conscious of your Perspective.

Challenge and Change are *neutral* experiences, it is your perspective which colours them positive or negative. Take responsibility for the meaning you are choosing to place on your experiences. Despite their sometimes ugly appearance or beautiful allure, it is the meaning we place against them which dictates what thoughts we have about them. Our interpretation of challenges and changes make them positive or negative, worse or better, harder or easier, just by the type of energy we direct into them, the thoughts we think about them and the words we use to describe them.

It sometimes helps to acknowledge that many challenges we face during the course of our life are not 'singling us out'- all of us at some time for instance will have to face similar challenges such as grief and loss. Knowing we are 'not the only ones', helps us a little more to bare a burden for a time and allowing oneself to feel emotions which rise to the surface is important, rather than trying to deny them. Dealing with the pain of *any* type of loss is made easier by finding a stage of acceptance and creatively filling the negative loss we feel with something else which we consider to be more positive- holding tight to past memories or experiences that have coloured our life, but taking actions that help to transform our loss instead into something far more productive, which generates self-awareness, insight and potentially the birth of something new. This applies equally to the loss of a job, relationship, business or even kids growing up and leaving home- not just personal grief.

Our acceptance that change and challenge are neutral, gives us the choice about what we 'do with them'. One thing we can be certain about, is that they will always provide us with an opportunity to grow in some form- even when we are resisting them, detesting them, or failing to conquer them, we gradually learn more about ourselves for having had them. Life's essence and vitality is dependent on such growth that comes from change- without growth in some form, we shrivel, give up, become despondent- we are no longer being stimulated and energised with new experience or reflections. The old saying that 'every cloud has a silver lining' aptly reminds us there is always good to be found amidst the bad and we often forget that wherever there is a beginning, there will always be an ending, eventually. In essence, *without change, we would not be the person we are today, nor have the opportunity to grow into the person we are capable of becoming.*

2nd Action: TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHANGE YOU NEED and be absolutely clear about YOUR motivating WHY!

For change to last long term, you MUST want your change *really* bad. Get informed and understand why it is the outcome you want!

If fear blocks your forward movement, gain a better understanding of that which you are conscious of fearing the most. Seek clarity in your awareness about your problem and all the possible approaches you could take, as well as be honest with yourself about the outcome you are truly hoping for. Try to gain a fresh, new perspective on any 'risks' you consider you would be taking, by being thoroughly informed before discounting an idea. 'Risk' can often be overemphasised when we lack clear motivation towards achieving an outcome, coupled with a lack of familiarity about the task ahead of us- we then use it conveniently as an excuse for avoidance.

It is also not productive to blame anyone else or circumstance. You alone are responsible. It is important to stop ourselves going around and around in circles ruminating over the same old issues and placing the power upon waiting for someone else's action to make everything better, without us taking positive proactive steps to encourage such change. Understand the limitations inherent in blaming someone else for a certain current situation- you can't MAKE someone else change, nor can you control or convince them to believe your beliefs either- you can only control how you choose to communicate and/or respond to someone and gradually come to understand what you will or won't tolerate in your quest to find happiness. Try to develop a greater level of self belief and reliance, so you become your number one decision maker in the face of lack of support from others. Remember...you are responsible for giving yourself permission, no-one else.

There is nothing stronger to ensure your commitment, when you gain clarity about WHY you need this change in your life- it is your supreme motivation- but it will be far more effective if you WRITE it down and pin it up on the wall. Many psychological studies have been undertaken on the topic of what is known as "Implementation Intentions". This research has proven that you are 2-3 times more likely to stick with a new habit or change, when you have written down, not just your intention, but why you are doing it, when and how. (Ref. The British Journal of Health Psychology).

3rd Action: Cultivate POSITIVE EXPECTATION but dust it with a sprinkle of REALITY.

You must first believe that positive change is indeed POSSIBLE and develop an inclination to expect the best, before you can conceive of solutions or develop creative ideas. This flows on to support a more consistent attitude which is able to rise above the challenges that befall you along your path and develop habitual patterns of naturally troubleshooting issues, rather than moving straight into defence mode of thinking you have failed- and the reality is that you WILL be tested!

The motto here is: ***'Expect the best, learn from the worst, readjust your focus, then keep on taking forward action towards your intended goal'***.

Know and accept that there WILL be challenges along the way (life is never all smooth sailing), but it is how you respond to or perceive them that makes all the difference. Failure is only a failure if you stop trying or give up. "If you hate starting over...STOP giving UP!" This is why planning, strategising and being as well informed as one can be is important, but it is not the be all and end all-you cannot factor all the possible outcomes and you will simply need to be ready to adapt and be flexible in the face of unexpected encounters.

Successful or consistently happy people have not simply been lucky enough NOT to hit road blocks on their road in life- they have experienced failures and challenges along the way, but not let them 'ruffle their feathers' or prevent them continuing on, reaching for their goals!

4th Action: *RECOGNISE your STRESSORS and diligently start to De-stress.*

Stress is your greatest block to putting most of these actions into place. When you are suffering from negative physical and mental stress, you do not see the world in the same light. Now perhaps you are saying, well of course you are going to be stressed if things are not going as you'd like in your life...and yes, this is entirely my point... stress can be your greatest gift as an indicator telling you that something needs to change! Use it as your strong motivation to find a solution to the problem which is causing you stress and emotional discord. There has been much research undertaken over the years about the nature of stress and a few facts are very pertinent. It is not the object of this report to go into detail regarding all the physiological effects here, but we do know that when you are suffering from excessive amounts of negative stress, you are not a good problem solver...you do not concentrate as well...you lose your ability to be creative...you are not solution oriented...you become less patient, tolerant and insightful...it also get's increasingly harder to feel positive, happy emotions. This is why it can be so hard to gain clarity about your problems, let alone identify positive solutions to them! Is there any wonder you are doomed to fail enacting long term changes whilst you are suffering chronic stress?

Finding your way out of your stress cycle and back into a more relaxed state, takes a multi-angled approach and can be done in the following ways:

- Recognise your stress symptoms and be aware (and honest) about the effects they are having on your body. Remember...we only get granted one body in this life time and it is up to us to look out for it- you can't expect anyone else in your life to join the dots...you must connect with the needs of your own mind and body.
- Get clear on the main source(s) of your stress-we call these our 'stressors'. It can be helpful to keep a journal within arm's reach throughout your day and simply make a quick note when you are feeling heightened emotions, particularly tense, or overwhelmed.
- Learn strategies to manage and lessen the impact of such stress on your mind and body- both preventative strategies, as well as methods to help disperse the stress you feel, when you are feeling it.
- Decide which of your stressors can be tolerated long term; which ones need to be managed better and dealt with more productively if you are to lessen their negative impacts; and which ones will no longer will be tolerated or given a place in your life at all.

Remember that stress has effects on the body far beyond any symptom we are conscious of. Stress has been said to be one of the main triggers of almost 95% of diseases we suffer!

5th Action: DEFINE and ALIGN yourself with who you are BECOMING, not who you have been.

Your past should never define you- your current focus and belief will direct you to where you are going- make sure this is a place you want to be! Unfortunately we often prefer to label ourselves as something. 'I'm a recovering alcoholic'; 'I am a divorcee'; 'I have always had trouble losing weight'; 'I suffer from a depressive disorder'; 'I am just an employee'; in fact as a society, we are quite obsessed by compartmentalising who we are and how we think and act. So if this is the case, we might as well roll with this inclination, but I think it is especially important to get 'labels' serving us, rather than us serving them.

Consider yourself as the person who has already achieved what they want- for instance, instead of referring to yourself as a 'recovering alcoholic'.... think of yourself rather 'as a person who chooses not to consume alcohol'. That refers to your change as a positive conscious decision and statement, rather than a negative experience you are battling everyday of your life and still reminding yourself of, ('recovering' is a word saying that you are 'still' in the recovery process and 'alcoholic' is the constant reminder of the negative state you were in.) This may seem just a play on words, but in fact words have great power and are the basis for all our thought processes and repetitive ideas and beliefs-sometimes subconsciously so. We create powerful emotions in connection with words, story and song, so craft your language in a way that supports the You that you know you ARE now, or are committed to the process of becoming.

Support the BEST version of you by using powerful catalysts of change such as: positive affirmations; visualisation or vision boards; journaling about how it feels to be already doing and being the Best You. The trick here, is not to wait until the day comes that you have done it all- support yourself instead through the whole process of change, by imagining you have already achieved your goals, that way you can help overcome any resistance that may arise and deal with such personal self sabotaging thoughts in advance. (After all- if you cannot first imagine yourself undertaking change or being any different to how you are or feel right now- how on earth do you think you will achieve it?)

The 5 Actions we have discussed will enable you to become a person who can:

- Smoothly navigate change.
- Lessen the impact and duration of negative emotions.
- Recognise change/challenge as an opportunity to grow and better understand yourself- your strengths and weaknesses.
- Acknowledge personal limitations, but seek to develop the courage to face your fears by becoming informed and creating clarity about your 'why'.
- Understand the importance of reducing and being more conscious of negative stressors in your life.
- Accept that failure only exists when you say it does. If you embrace life, injecting enthusiasm into your actions, when something does not work out, you simply pause...reassess and continue moving forward with greater knowledge under your belt and can be grateful for the insight you have gained from experience.
- Using your imagination and empowered self, will always give you a more positive and creative attitude towards any experience you are exposed to, rather than allowing yourself to become a victim of circumstance.

Oh and don't forget one more thing...this could technically be classified as the 6th and Final Action really...Remember that nothing Changes, until YOU decide to TAKE ACTION!

Thankyou for reading this and being pro-active and interested to learn new ways to direct Your Health, Your Life and Your Choices.

“Your personal Road to Happiness is one where you direct all your energies and focus into those things you have the power to change and stop ceaseless worry about those things outside of your control.”

Here's to your happy life. 😊

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