

Spare Me Some Change

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“Time for a change of scenery,” we told ourselves before arranging for a trip to Maui. Most of us have said something like, “I’ve changed my mind,” “I’ve changed my heart,” “You’ve changed.” “We have a change of address,” “The leaves have changed color,” “Our relationship is in a rut; it’s time for a romantic change,” “This job has become boring, I need change and challenge,” or “Yes, I changed my undies!” These familiar lines sound like a rousing support of change—it’s good for us.

The inventor, printer and scientist, Benjamin Franklin, said, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.” So what’s up with all the talk about *resistance* to change?

Here are some assumptions to consider:

- Change is a constant trend from Eve eating The Apple to Apple computers.
- Change requires energy to adapt. Hence even pleasant change can deplete.
- People typically embrace change they choose or participate in creating.
- People typically enjoy the occasional change that is a pleasant surprise such as lunch out, permission to leave work early or a birthday acknowledgment.
- People typically resist change *forced* upon them that is problematic to their pace or lifestyle. Note *forced*. Inconvenient and distressful change can range from Hurricane Katrina to demands to work overtime to traffic detours.
- People typically resist change of the unknown. They prefer to be informed and have a sense of personal mastery or control.
- The pace of change is increasing. Technology is obsolete before it is out the Future store door. My great grandparents’ lives were very similar to my grandparents’ on the farm. My parents’ lives were significantly changed by World War II, the telephone, central heating, plumbing and electricity. My life is dramatically different than my parents’ with encouragement to speak up, an egalitarian partnership, computer literacy, and women colleagues in all fields including truck drivers, lawyers, ministers and doctors. Our children live in cyberspace, sleep with their Palms and expect to easily travel the world, and eventually the universe.

Many of the above points provide guidance for managers and those responsible for leading change. Leadership courses include the topic of change. Acknowledging the increased speed of change, Jim Clemmer, author of *Growing the Distance*, offers a workshop called Leading @ the Speed of Change

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in which he explores how people react when on *the change train*. He suggests some people thrive on change, others put up with it and some end up whining. Here are some tips for giving up the whimper and going beyond survival:

- Expect and accept change.
- Believe you have the capacity to change. Know your potential and exercise it.
- Say “no” if you’ve thought over the *opportunity for change* and absolutely decided it is not good for you or your loved ones.
- Notice if you resist change out of old thinking such as “We’ve always done it this way.” or “I can’t,” “It sounds hard.”
- If you conclude that fear is hindering your adjustment, mutter to yourself, “I can feel the fear and do it anyway.”
- Expect a mistake rate increase when adjusting to change.
- When change is at an unusually fast pace, keep as many other daily routines in place as possible. Don’t initiate other changes such as signing up for an accounting class or beginning a rigorous diet.
- Take extra time for self nurturing, considering that change requires an extra output of energy to re-establish routine and flow.
- Eat balanced meals. Exercise and rest when possible.
- Maintain order visually at work and home.
- Delegate and share the load.
- If the load gets so heavy you don’t have space or energy for a smile or laugh, it’s time to re-evaluate.
- Regularly make life improvements and embrace possibilities to please and satisfy yourself and your loved ones.
- Grab opportunities for new learning, new responsibilities, new challenges, new places, new connections and a new you!
- Consider what responsibilities, challenges, places, activities and people you could say “goodbye” to, to make space for desired change.

To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you want to see at work, home and community.”

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