

CHANGE THRIVERS

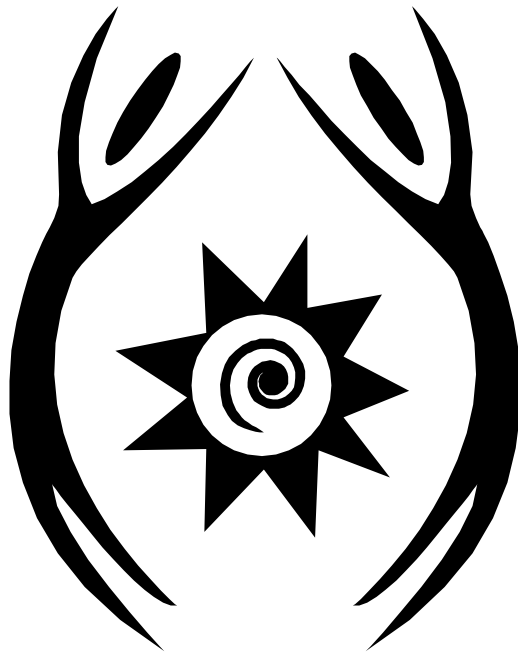


*Your Resource Guide
for Making Change Work*

Afsaneh Noori

Change Thrivers

Your Resource Guide for Making Change Work



Afsaneh Noori

2006

Change Thrivers – Your Resource Guide for Making Change Work

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EARLY REVIEWS

"Change Thrivers gave me a new perspective on my life and the way I've been living it. Afsaneh Noori has wisdom, wit and ample research to back up her experience. Change Thrivers is an effective blend of theory, experience and practical exercises that are fun and fulfilling. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to live life with power, awareness and self-determination."

Cara Gubbins, Ph.D.

Award-winning author of *The Dolphins of Hilton Head* and Co author of *Power Stories: Everyday Women Creating Extraordinary Lives*

"A number of books help us through the change process, but this one is different! It addresses the sometimes fearful subject with intellect and compassion. Afsaneh brings her spirit to everyone she meets and now she brings it to "Change Thrivers" an excellent resource guide. Highly recommended!"

Fran Powers

Founder of Powerstories theatre and Co-Author of *Power Stories – Everyday women creating Extraordinary Lives*

"I have done a lot of personal development seminars, read several books and research articles on empowering individuals through change, and I would rank Afsaneh Noori's book, Change Thrivers in the top 10! The impact of her personal experiences, the insightful exercises and the thoughtful quotes throughout, make this a book that gets you involved and empowered to make change happen for the better. Do yourself a favor and get into this book today."

Susan List Mike, MD

Psychiatrist and Co-Founder of Joyful Genius, Where Moms Start Smart!

"Change Thrivers de-mystifies the process of change. Afsaneh Noori combines the academic knowledge of the process with the experiential tools for growth. She weaves powerful personal stories that allow the reader to relate to her own life experiences. Change is no longer something to fear, but rather something to embrace and celebrate!"

Susan Freeman

Vice-President and Executive Search Consultant, Meridian Partners

"Change Thrivers present workable techniques for readers who desire to smooth their pass through shaky transitions and the transformations that they might face in life. With significant experience to draw from, Afsaneh Noori speaks to her readers as a wise and compassionate friend."

Jessica Greene
Writing Consultant

***This Resource Guide is dedicated to my son,
Adrin Khachikian.***

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My everlasting appreciation and indebtedness to my parents, Ali and Fatemeh Khajeh-Noori—my father for giving me a strong foundation to build my life on and my mother for being a tower of strength, a role model, and always supporting me.

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Change Thrivers

Your Resource Guide for Making Change Work

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INTRODUCTION

"Yet one does not discover the passage to be made without taking the time to glance backward over one's life. By reflecting on that series of apparently unrelated actions that constitute our own story, we should become conscious of a pattern. By 50 the formlessness has taken form. The pattern of our lives is as clear and repetitive as the narrative of a novel."

New Passages—Mapping Your Life across Time by Gail Sheehy

When I was a young girl, I often daydreamed about my future. Time and again, I thought about the course that my life would take and wondered what it would be about. I even calculated the year I would turn 50 and questioned what I would see and how I would feel when I looked back at my life.

Last year I celebrated my 50th birthday. Looking back, I am amazed at the intensity of my years. I often joke with my friends about having crammed several lifetimes worth of experiences into one. As I ponder the years, the over-riding theme of my life has been about rapid, constant, and enormous change. Some changes were so immense that they altered the course of my life forever as they transformed me personally. Many were joyful, but some were heartbreaking. Yet the common factor was that they all made me stronger as they taught me about the changing nature of life.

At the age of twenty, I was forced by my parents to move from Iran to the United States. They were protecting me from an unsuitable interfaith marriage that promised to end badly since neither group would accept the married couple. I left Iran forever. The time that it took for the airplane to carry me over the ocean is all that it took for my world to change completely. In twenty-four hours, I was in a world where people spoke a different language, had a different culture, ate different food, looked different, and had a very different belief system than the one I grew up with. My new world had a different landscape, different smells, and different sounds. I was a foreigner to this land and to survive I had to adapt.

Only a few years later, Iran's revolution brought another transforming change. The revolution had a profound impact on my family and our life style. Since my father was a retired general in the army of the Shah, we had to break all ties to Iran. That meant that we could no longer go back to Iran safely—even for a visit. In fact, several of our relatives who still lived there were executed. My father's younger brother, an active general in the army was among them.

We experienced great financial loss as a result of the revolution. Beforehand, my family was wealthy and enjoyed a very comfortable life style. When the new regime took hold, my parents lost all their belongings still in Iran, which was the bulk of their possessions. I

watched my parents' lives change from abundance to having enough to survive. I was in the last year of engineering school and suddenly I had to find a way to pay my own tuition and expenses—my parents could no longer support me.

Of course, as the years went by, I lived through my share of expected personal changes and challenges. I experienced marriages, divorces, raising children, the “empty nest”, illnesses, and losing loved ones. I watched my father die a slow death attached to machines for 9 months after an auto accident. I went through the agony of my brother's sudden death from a heart attack.

Around my 40th year, I decided to leave my well-paying corporate job to start my own consulting business. I felt strongly that I had to take charge of my professional life and see what I could do on my own. The years following that decision have been filled with both triumphs and challenges. I have experienced prosperous times and also times where I was not sure how I would make the next mortgage payment.

There were some changes in life that I thought I would never recover from. They were so profound that their impact plunged me into months and months of depression. I fell in the black hole of despair—I took scary and dark “Shadow Walks”. But each time, I found my way back to the surface and I brought something valuable from my trip into the darkness. With each change, I grew and became a healthier version of myself. I learned that the most important outcome of any change is to like the person that looks back at me in the mirror.

Like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, I overcame the adversities and reinvented myself over and over. Through it all, I discovered that I have a choice on how I emerge from each change—beaten and broken, or strong and thriving. I know that as long as I live, I will face more changes. Some will delight me and some will bring pain. But I no longer fear change because I feel that I am now **change-ready**. I know what to expect and I know how to care for myself and my loved ones as I transition in life. That is a very empowering feeling—one that I believe I have to pass on to others.

Gail Sheehy, in her book *New Passages*, considers the fifties as the passage to the age of mastery and the birth of second adulthood. “The fundamental shift for women entails moving toward repossessing their intellectuality and originality of thought, sharpening their instrument and critical skills, and mastering the complex environments where they now hope to operate. Mastery is an accumulated inner strength.” Many people at this age feel the need to impart the fruit of their experience to others.

Like many others, my greatest desire at this age is to share with others what I have learned about life—in the hope that I might ease the pain of change for them. Thriving while in the throes of change is a choice that we all have. That is the reason for writing this Resource Guide. I want to help others learn and practice ways to become Change Thrivers.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

The progression of this Resource Guide provides for each chapter to build on the information in the previous chapters. The design mixes information, quotes, and personal stories to demonstrate the points. You can use this Resource Guide either to work through a specific change or to learn the skills of becoming a Change Thriver.

All chapters contain exercises to help you apply the message of that chapter to your own experiences. You can either write your reflections in your book or use your personal journal to work through the activities. For additional copies of each activity sheet contact me at my website www.ChangeThrivers.com.

Change Thrivers

Your Resource Guide for Making Change Work

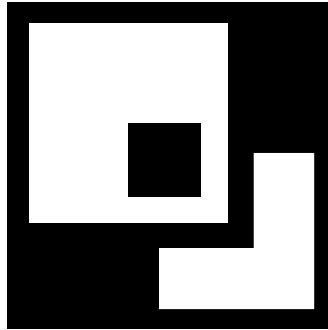
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CHAPTER 1—A FRAMEWORK FOR PERSONAL CHANGE

"It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power."

Alan Cohen

A Framework for Personal Change

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

Henri Bergson

Human nature seeks the comfort and safety that stability brings us. However, everything in the world is constantly changing, so stability is relative. Of course, not all changes are created equal; change comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some of these changes are very real to you because of their direct impact on your life. Some do not even attract your attention. Change can be scary when it threatens to upset the balance of your life and cause you to experience instability and confusion.

Every life is filled with changes—some are minor and incremental, while others are major and transformational. It does not matter how old you are; if you have reached adulthood, you have experienced a variety of changes in your life. No doubt you can recall both minor change events and major transformational changes. You consider some of these life transitions successful while others have left you beaten. Yet, you have made it through them all. There is no question that you can handle change. After all—what is the alternative?

You Have a Choice

"You must welcome change as the rule but not as your ruler."

Denis Waitley

Life is constant change and you cannot prevent change from happening. Your choices result from the way you navigate through life changes. How you respond to change depends on the kind of change and your own nature and belief system. Reactions can vary based on the frequency, speed, and intensity of changes in your life. The degree of control, your involvement, and the impact of a change on your life are also determining factors in your response. Changing a brand of toothpaste, using a new computer program, or adopting a new accounting system are minor changes that do not affect the overall direction of your life. But getting married, having a baby, facing a grave illness, or losing a job are major changes that can transform you personally and profoundly impact the course of your future.

Working through change is a personal process and often differs for each person. Some people need to talk about it, others may worry about the worst possible outcome, and still others may feel a need to control events. Some individuals want to face changes squarely, while others prefer to bury their heads in the sand as long as possible. People react to change in their own way, but common to all people is the key role emotions play in their response to major life changes. When you face great change, expect to feel fear, anxiety, and loss of control. These feelings are natural, human, and—most important—they will pass.



"There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul."

Arnold Bennett

Society and its organizations have traditionally downplayed the importance of emotions. Expressing emotions, except for anger, is still considered weakness. People are not taught or encouraged to understand and work through their feelings. Most individuals discover early in life that a show of emotions can make them vulnerable, so many learn to hide their feelings from fear of getting hurt.

However, whether you wear your emotions openly or hide them in the closet, they are the force behind many decisions and actions. All life involves emotions; the more significant a moment in life, the more intensely you experience the accompanying emotions. To navigate change successfully, you have to recognize and make space for your feelings and those of other people. You have to keep in mind that emotions are powerful; they give internal directions for growth, survival, and avoidance of pain. Not to feel is not to be alive!

Significant emotional events trigger change because they engage you at the feeling level. When your emotions are engaged, they energize you and encourage your willingness to change.

Reactive vs. Proactive Responses to Change

"Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy

Change can be difficult when you are afraid of the outcome. Past experiences and fears can prevent you from taking control of your behaviors and actions, which you need to do to make successful changes. Major change is never easy or painless, but you can influence how well you come out of it.

You may not be able to stop a change, but you can always choose your responses and actions to manage change. You have two choices in responding to change. You can either view change only as a danger to avoid—or you can embrace it as an opportunity. You can either be Reactive and defend against change or be Proactive and make the change work for you. Being Reactive means you let change happen and then you respond or adapt to it. In this case, you perceive change as a loss or threat. Being Proactive means you plan for change and are open to new ways of doing things. In this instance, you see change as an opportunity. Each life transition, regardless of its degree of success, has valuable lessons imbedded in it about your choices in dealing with change.



"Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better."

Martha Beck

Learning to pay attention to your emotions, becoming aware of your automatic responses to change, and consciously deciding on your reactions, can make your next transition smoother. You can change your habits by learning and practicing effective behaviors. Instead of being swept away by fears, you can choose your perception, attitude, and actions to ensure a successful transformation.

10 Factors to Remember About Change

1. There are three triggers that cause people to actually choose change: pain, payoff, and perception.
2. Change creates insecurity and confusion.
3. Change is giving up one thing for another.
4. Giving up something involves loss.
5. Change is emotionally charged.
6. People cannot fully move on to the new until they process the feelings that accompany the loss.
7. People resist most changes to some degree. The more negatively the change is perceived, the more it is resisted.
8. Resistance allows time to sort out new information.
9. Often change is resisted out of fear of the future, not love of the past.
10. To manage change you must understand the role and importance of emotions.

Your Personal Change Timeline

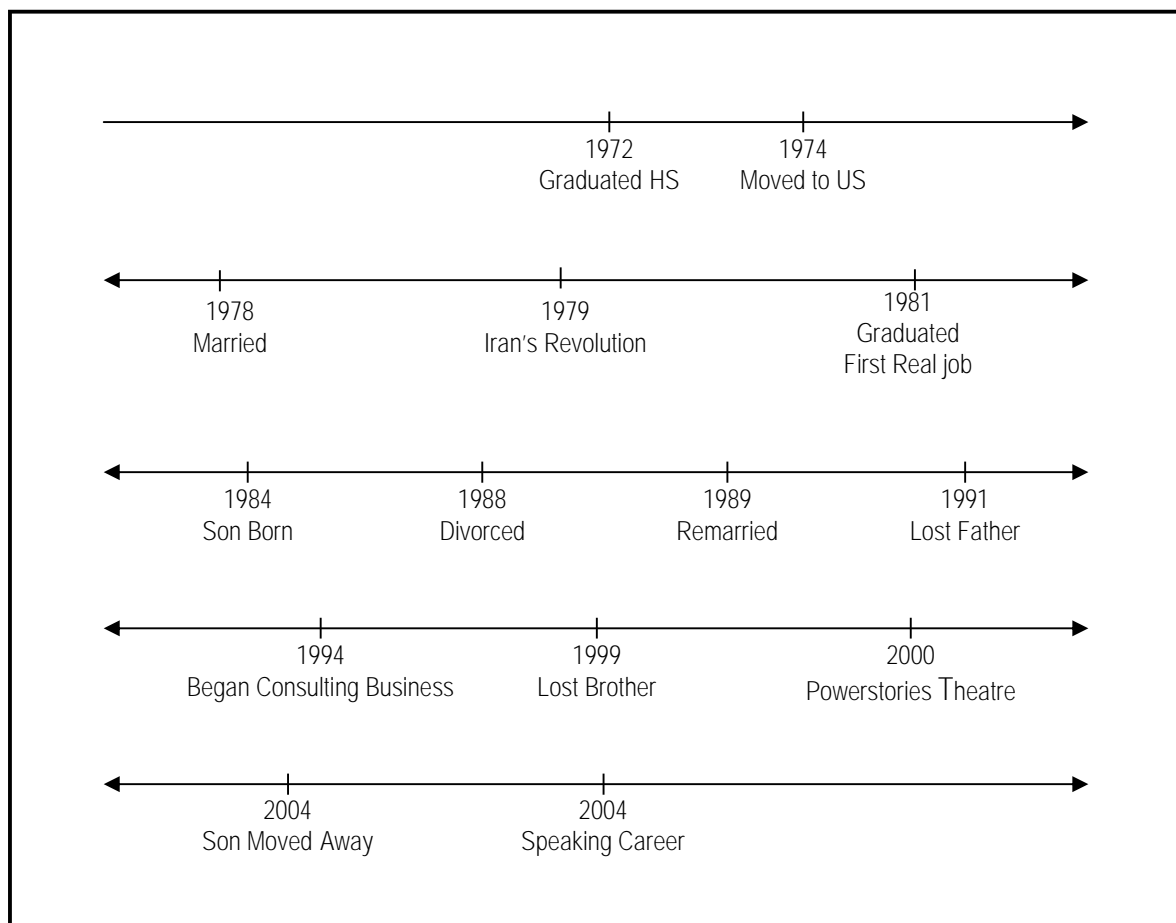
Objective:

To create a visual representation of the changes in your life and to examine your responses to them.

Process:

1. Review the example below
2. Create a Timeline of your life on the next page
3. Starting with your birth, mark the time of the major changes in your past and note any future changes that you might be anticipating.

Example:



[illegible]

Reflection - Timeline

Write your thoughts, observations, and conclusions from creating your personal change timeline...

Thoughts...

Observations...

Conclusions...



CHAPTER 2—BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHANGE

"People must learn that the entirety of one's adult life is a series of personal choices and decisions. If they can accept this totally, then they become free people. To the extent that they do not accept this, they will forever feel themselves victims."

*Scott Peck
The Road Less Traveled*

Behavioral Responses to Different Types of Change

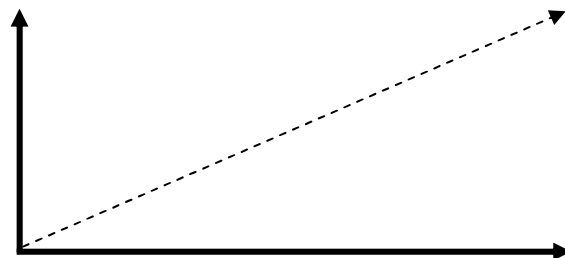
"Any transition serious enough to alter your definition of self will require not just small adjustments in your way of living and thinking but a full-on metamorphosis."

Martha Beck

Types of Change

Not all changes are created equal. Life changes generally fall into one of three categories—Developmental, Transitional, or Transformational change.

Developmental changes are relatively simple, incremental changes that have starting and finishing points. They are usually a change in routine and you don't have strong emotional attachment to them. Rather than resisting, you are more likely to "adjust" to them as they happen. Daily life is filled with this type of change. It can be as simple as a change in plans, or more complicated such as using a new inventory program at work or buying a new car.



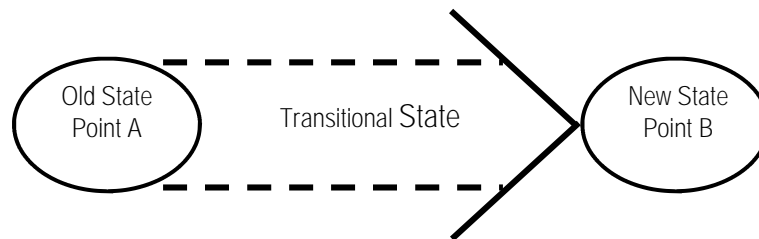
Developmental Change

Steady incremental changes or improvements to what already exists.

Transitional changes are about implementing a new "known" state. They are bigger and more complicated changes that require planning and management skills, but will not impact the direction of your life. The beginning and ending in this type of change are usually known. The challenge comes in finding the best way to get from Point A to Point B. Clarity and Planning Skills are the important success factors in managing this type of change.

It is essential to be clear about the current reality (Point A), as well as the desired outcome (Point B). It is also critical to create a Transition Plan with step-by-step actions. If this transition impacts other people, communicating and including them is crucial in helping them through this change effectively.

Transitional changes can range in complexity and emotional impact. Depending on the content of the change and its personal impact, you may or may not have an emotional attachment to the outcome. This type may be a one-time change like moving to a new home or office, starting a new job, or starting a new business. Transitional change can also be changing the way you do something—like deciding to go back to school or implementing a new companywide program. Many of the personal changes in your life fall into the transitional category.

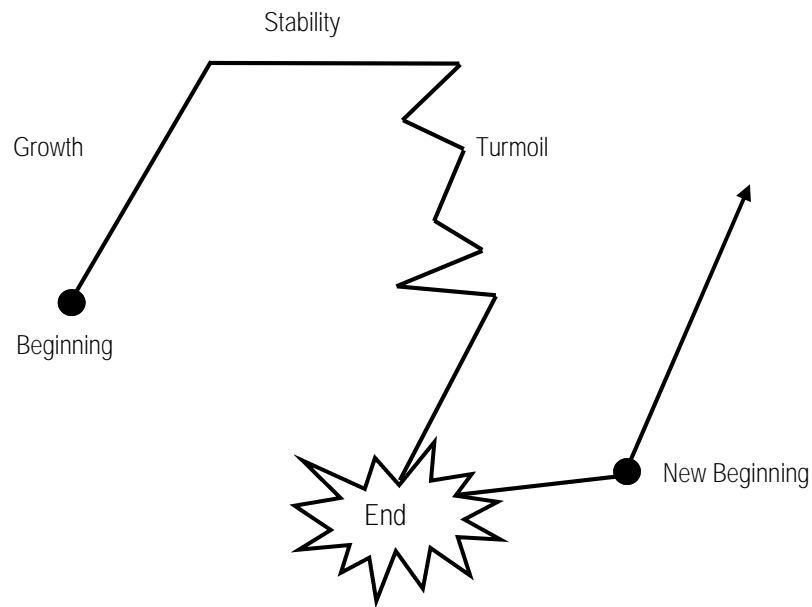


Transitional Change

- Implementation of a “Known” new state.
- Managing the short-term transitional state over a given period of time.

Transformational changes are much more powerful than transitional changes. They literally alter your personal direction in a way that bears no resemblance to your life before the transformation. A new *unknown* state emerges from the chaotic death of the old state of existence. This kind of change is a process that requires you to look at things with new eyes and to integrate into a new way of being. These changes are highly emotional and cut deep into your core. This does not mean that transformational change is a negative experience, although at times it is accompanied by pain. Instead, a transformation is a fluid process rather than a pre-determined one.

Great examples of transformational change are getting married, moving to another country, joining the military, getting a divorce, losing someone close to you, and battling a serious illness.



Transitional Change

- A new and “Unknown” state emerging from a frenzied ending of the old state.
- Impossible to control the time period.

Note:

1. Transitional change may involve developmental change.
2. Transformational change may involve *both* developmental and transitional change.
3. Transformational change can be managed as a series of transitional changes.

These are 5 very important tools for working through transformational change:

1. Flexibility
2. Self-awareness
3. Dealing with emotions
4. Caring for yourself during change
5. Staying positive

If you cannot bend when the winds of change blow hard, they can break you—but if you maintain your flexibility, you can get back up when it is over. Being flexible means that you stay open to different options when you face uncertainties. You maintain flexibility by being aware of yourself and your reactions, dealing with your emotions effectively, taking care of yourself, and sustaining a positive attitude as you go through change.

Elements Effecting Behavioral Response to Change

"If you follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there the whole while, waiting for you, and the life you ought to be living is the one you are living."

Joseph Campbell

You often hear phrases like, “Everybody hates change” or “Change is hard”, but these statements are not really true. People don’t *all* hate *all* changes and not *all* changes are hard! You might hate some changes and not others, or resist one but not another. You may hope for one change and dread another, or you may find some changes hard and others easy. Your reaction to a situation is unique in each particular circumstance. In another time, you may react to a similar situation very differently. You can also react to the same change in a very different way than someone else in the same situation.

So what causes these differences? Your personal response to a change depends on many factors. Some of the most important ones are:

1. Your perception and attitude
2. Impact of the change on your life
3. Your environment
4. Your personal characteristics and core values

Attitude towards Change

"Whosoever desires constant success must change his conduct with the times."

Niccolo Machiavelli

Your attitude towards change is obviously different if you perceive a change as positive or as negative, your choice or forced upon on you, well-timed or badly-timed, temporary or permanent.

The impact of change on your personal life or your work is another factor in how you may deal with change. Your environment and the people around you also make a difference in how well you manage change. It is much easier to experience and benefit from change if you have a support system of family, friends, and community groups.

Another major factor in how well you transition is your personal character and core values.

- Are you generally optimistic or do you tend to worry about the worst possible case?
- Where do you get your strength when things get tough?
- Do you need certainty to feel safe or are you comfortable with some ambiguity?
- Do you tend to feel change disrupts your plans and routines or do you get excited about the new possibilities change can bring?

Many other elements in your life can also influence your reactions to change—especially your health, wealth, stresses, obligations, self-image, and your vision of the future.

Personal Response to Change

Objective:

To examine your response patterns to life changes.

Process:

1. Study the Timeline you created before. Identify the type of each change. Is it developmental, transitional, or transformational?
2. Choose 3 of the Transformational changes in your life. Examine each change by asking yourself these questions...
 - a. Was this a forced change or was it voluntary?
 - b. At the time, did I view it as a positive or negative change?
 - c. How did it impact my life and the lives of my loved ones?
 - d. What was my attitude towards the change?
 - e. How did my attitude impact my approach to working through it?
 - f. What was my support system?
 - g. Did I handle the change well or not?
 - h. Do I view it differently now? If so why?
 - i. What are the patterns I have noticed about my response to change?
(Example: I tend to expect the worst possible outcome and get frightened.)

Reflection – Personal Response to Change

Change 1

Forced or voluntary

Positive or negative

Impact

Your attitude

Impact of attitude

Support system

Handled well or not?

View it now?

Patterns of response to change

Reflection – Personal Response to Change

Change 2
Forced or voluntary
Positive or negative
Impact
Your attitude
Impact of attitude
Support system
Handled well or not?
View it now?
Patterns of response to change

Reflection – Personal Response to Change

Change 3

Forced or voluntary

Positive or negative

Impact

Your attitude

Impact of attitude

Support system

Handled well or not?

View it now?

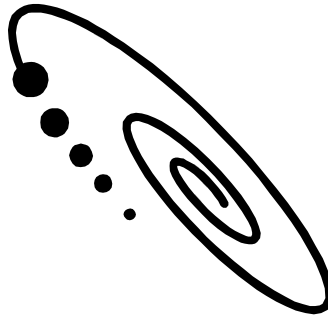
Patterns of response to change

Reflection – Personal Response to Change – Lessons

What I have learned about my response pattern toward change...

Reflection – Personal Response to Change – Strategies

The ways I can use this awareness in dealing with future changes...



CHAPTER 3—STAGES OF THE CHANGE CYCLE

"He who wants to have right without wrong, order without disorder, does not understand the principles of heaven and earth. He does not know how things hang together."

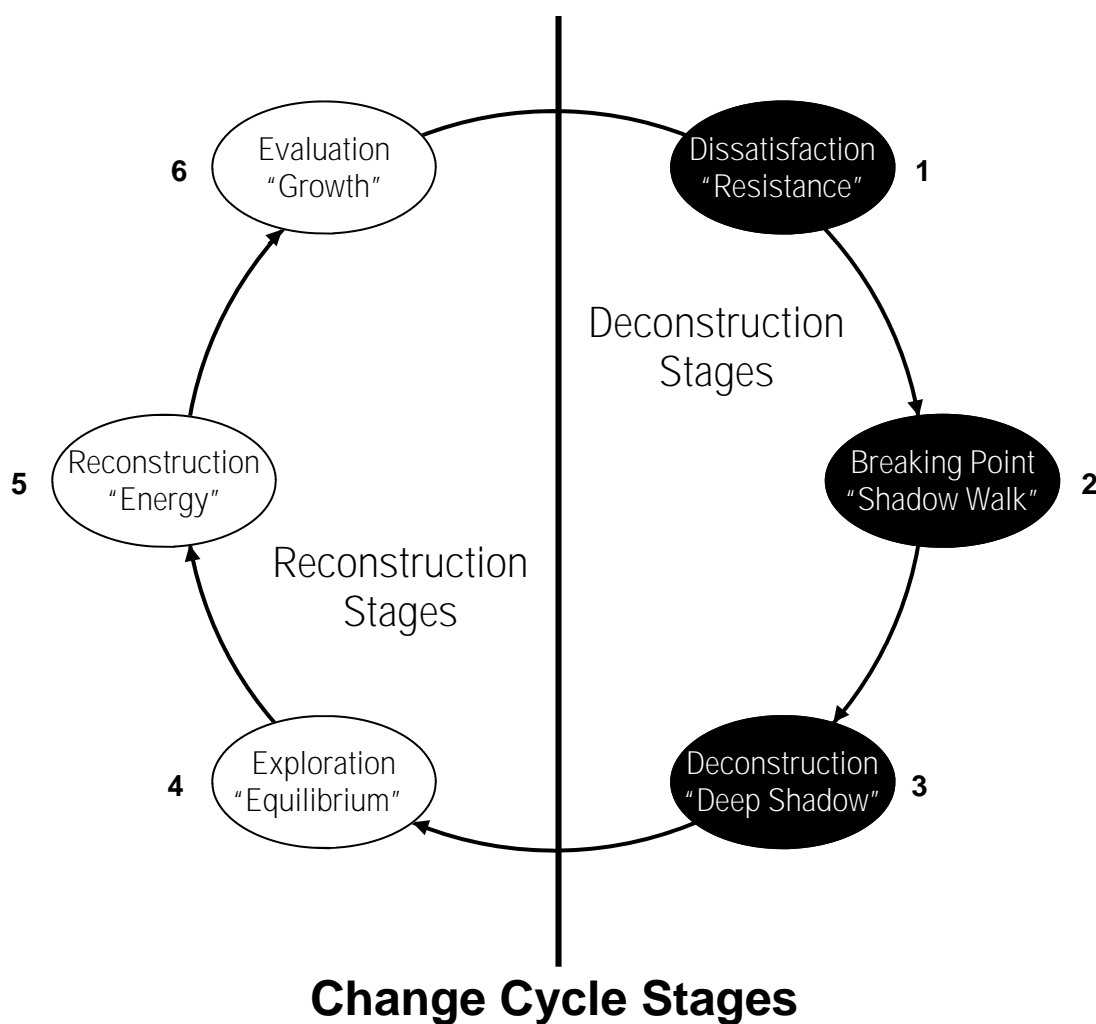
Chuang Tzu

Stages of the Change Cycle

"What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a new beginning. The end is where we start from."

T. S. Eliot

All changes operate in cycles with predictable stages. The first part of the cycle deconstructs the current reality and the second part of the cycle reconstructs the new reality. Below is a model to help you discern the stages of a change cycle and emotional reactions to each stage.



Deconstruction Stages:

- Stage 1: **Dissatisfaction:** Often feel *Resistant* to change.
- Stage 2: **Breaking point:** Begin the experience of *Shadow Walk* as the energy shifts inward.
- Stage 3: **Deconstruction:** Fall in the grip of a *Deep Shadow* experience.

Reconstruction Stages:

- Stage 4: **Exploration:** Start to return to *Equilibrium* as options are explored.
- Stage 5: **Reconstruction:** Propel into action with creativity and renewed *Energy*.
- Stage 6: **Evaluation:** Examine and *Grow* from the change.

In life, you face change in two forms: those you choose and those that are forced on you. Most changes that you initiate start with a sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are. Often this stage is accompanied by resistance as you strive to keep your balance and maintain the status quo. If you pay attention to those early signs, you can be proactive in creating a change you desire. If you choose to ignore your sense of discontentment and resist change, the pressure increases until you reach a breaking point. Then you can no longer maintain your current reality and a crisis develops. Many people tend to wait until they are in crisis before they are willing to make a change. When that happens, you are forced to be reactive.

Deconstruction

"All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another."

Anatole France

Changes that are imposed on you often begin with a crisis. Getting laid off, a grave illness, death of a loved one, and the like are not changes that you choose. Yet they can quickly throw your life into chaos. Many times at this stage you experience a *Shadow Walk*, a sudden grip of intense emotions as your energy is pulled inward to examine your life.

A major change in your life is akin to an earthquake. Many of your beliefs and foundations for your life are shaken and fall apart. In the Deconstruction phase of change, you drop deep into your Shadow. This is a highly emotional, vulnerable, and confusing time when you feel most out of balance. When the tremors are finally over and the dust begins to settle, the sorting out begins. This is the time when you are forced to look inward, examine your feelings, and ask yourself important questions.

Even though most personal growth comes from this Deconstruction stage, many people tend to avoid introspection because it can be very difficult and even painful at times. They busy themselves with daily tasks until they get used to their new situation. If you choose to simply get used to your new situation and not examine the deeper issues, you set yourself up for experiencing more dissatisfaction. Unless you take the time to explore your feelings, needs, wants, and options, you cannot create a satisfactory change where you can be happy with yourself as you emerge on the other side.

Reconstruction

"If you don't create change, change will create you!"

Anonymous

One way or another, the Deconstruction phase ends. When you choose to examine the experience authentically and understand your own needs, confusion gives way to new images of your future. You start to return to Equilibrium and explore your options. Exploration is the first stage in building a new life. This is a hopeful and creative time when many possibilities open up for you. You start to mentally consider your options. In your mind's eye, you see and experience yourself in various situations. Through this process you begin to narrow your options until a clearer picture of your new life appears.

The energy that this new vision of your life creates gives you the momentum necessary to shift into the next stage of change: Reconstruction. During Reconstruction, you take steps to make your vision a reality and actually build a new life. At the end of this phase, you regain your sense of stability and balance.

A crucial stage of change that is often ignored is Evaluation. It is important for you to periodically assess your actions to insure that you are fulfilling your vision—and make adjustments if you are missing the target. This is also a good time to examine your recent life journey and learn from your experience. If you get into the habit of monitoring and observing your own process, you can stay aware of dissatisfactions and play an active role in creating the changes that allow you to grow in the directions you desire.

Reflection – Stages of Change Cycle

Choose one of the changes you examined in the previous chapter. Reflect on the stages you might have experienced...

Dissatisfaction

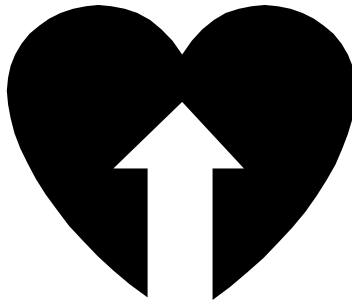
Breaking point

Deconstruction

Exploration

Reconstruction

Evaluation



CHAPTER 4—EMOTIONS AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

*"Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have—
and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up."*

*James Belasco and Ralph Stayer
Flight of the Buffalo (1994)*

Emotions and Resistance to Change

"All in all, punishment hardens and renders people more insensible; it concentrates; it increases the feeling of estrangement; it strengthens the power of resistance."

Friedrich Nietzsche

I met Armen at the architecture college in Tehran, the capital of Iran. He was so different from other young men in school and we soon became friends. We talked about everything and got to know each other well. He treated me as an equal and liked me for the person that I was—unlike my marriage suitors who didn't care to know me. I met their criteria because my family was long established, my father was an army general, and he was wealthy. After all—what more did they need to know about a wife?

Love between Armen and I was forbidden; both by our cultures and our families. He was a Christian Armenian and I came from an Iranian Moslem family. But love doesn't understand those boundaries, so we fell in love anyway. As difficult as it was, we spent as much time as possible together, which caused increasing concerns for my parents.

One day my father came to my room. He said, "I know you are very close to Armen and love him like a brother. But you have to remember that you live in Iran. Your reputation is your most important asset. You cannot let people talk about you."

Until then I had no reason to lie to my father, so in all honesty I said, "Baba joon, you are right about us loving each other, but this is not a brother-sister thing!" His face and body changed. My father was replaced with his alter ego "The General". He looked me in the eyes and said, "That—changes everything!" He forbade me to go back to college or have any contact with Armen at all. All my tears were not going to make him change his mind. I went to my mother and begged her to convince my father to let me go back to school and promised not to see Armen except in class.

My mother went one step further; she persuaded my father that the best solution was to move the entire family to America. This was the best solution to save me from myself and give me a better future. She told him that letting me go back to school would be temporary while they worked on the emigration arrangements.

My father agreed, but to be on the safe side, he hired a chauffeur to take me back and forth to school and my part-time job. He wanted to make sure that I didn't have any inappropriate contact with Armen. I was delighted. This arrangement could buy me more time with Armen. My goal became to delay the move as much as I could and see Armen

every chance I had. To do that, I had to become creative, so I recruited every sympathizer's help.

Mohammad Agha, our chauffeur, was a young man in love with his young wife who understood my plight. With the help of some money and gifts for his kids, I persuaded him to become my accomplice for the next 1½ years in finding ways to see Armen, even if it was for a few minutes.

Meanwhile, my father was busy securing visas to move the family to the United States. To receive a student visa, I had to get acceptance from an American college. To do that, I was required to pass an English competency test called the TOEFL. By all rights I should have been able to pass that test, since I attended a private school where everything was taught in English in the afternoons. But again and again I scored just short of a passing mark. It was baffling to my parents, but I knew exactly how many questions to get wrong in order to miss the passing grade!

Although my behavior was outside of my society's norms, my desire to stay in Iran with Armen was greater than the fear of my father or losing my reputation. I knew that in the long run, I had no choice but to leave Iran. Meanwhile, I resisted my parents' wishes in every way that I could. I sabotaged my father's efforts to get me a visa and found ways to see and talk to Armen behind their backs. Looking back, I am amazed at how brazen my actions were, but at the time I was reacting purely from my emotions and resisting something that was going to be very painful for me.

It was only years later that I realized that moving to America was my chance at a life of freedom. As painful as it was, and as much as I resisted it at the time, this change was a blessing in disguise. Only a few years later, the Islamic Revolution took away all women's rights and turned the clock back a hundred years. I shudder to think of what my life would have been like had I been successful in remaining in Iran forever.



Emotions and Resistance to Change

"It's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear... It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to."

Marilyn Ferguson

You cannot avoid change but you can choose to grow from it! Change is inevitable and necessary to your survival and growth as a human. Change forces you to look inside and make choices about your life. You have the option of responding automatically through force of habit—or making these choices consciously. To choose consciously, you have to explore your beliefs, emotions, and behaviors with honesty. You have to examine which of them are working for you and which have passed their time of usefulness. This self-awareness leads you to personal growth.

To get your attention, major change is often accompanied by a great deal of emotion. Some you may consider as positive and others negative depending on their impact on you. However, all of your emotions are valid, important, and necessary to the change process, because they provide clues and signals that direct your path through transformation.

Negative emotions about change, such as fear, manifest as Resistance, while positive emotions *energize* you towards Action. The more negatively you view a change, the more you will resist it. But resistance is also good for you. It is nature's way of helping you navigate dangerous situations with caution. You have to understand and value the role of resistance in keeping you safe—without judging or labeling it. You often resist change due to fear of the unknown, which brings up difficult and potentially immobilizing questions and concerns.

- How do I do it? Will I survive?
- Can I get through it successfully?
- Will I get hurt? Will the people I love be hurt?
- Will I get what I want?
- Do I have to give up something valuable?

It is also true that the more you perceive a change as positive, the more excitement and energy you feel towards making the change—even though you might still experience some fear. Positive emotions like *hope* motivate you and lead you to constructive ideas and actions. The key to mobilizing for change is to transform negative emotions into positive ones by addressing your fears and concerns.

8 Reasons for Resisting Change

1. The old and routine is known and comfortable.
2. Not knowing the reason for change.
3. Not knowing what is expected.
4. Not knowing how to change.
5. Perception of imbalance between giving and receiving.
6. Taking change personally.
7. Fear of getting hurt.
8. Needing time to integrate and get comfortable with the change.

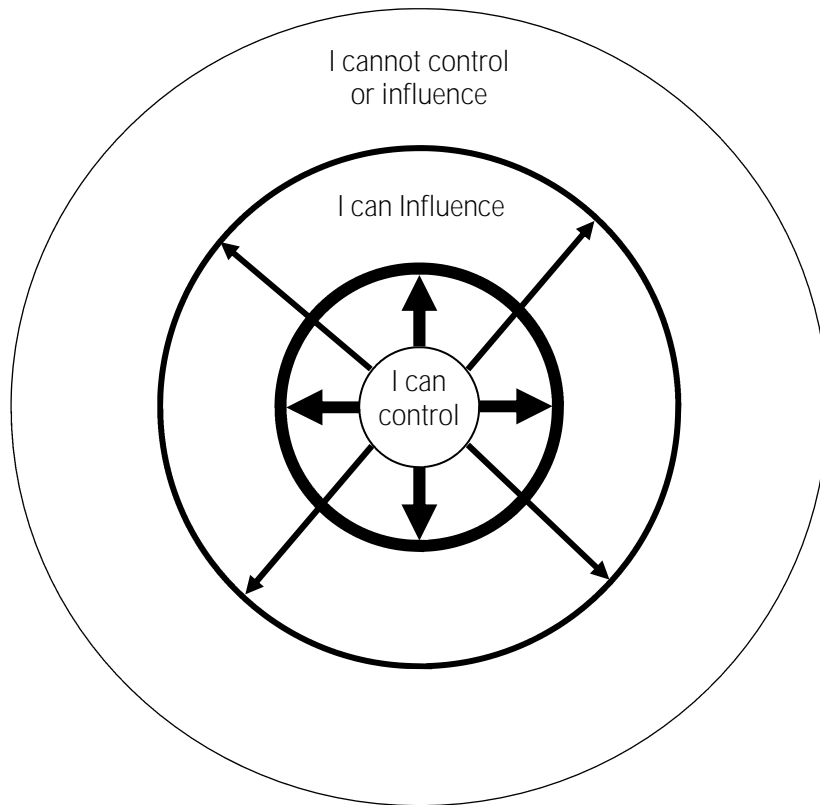
5 Tips for Dealing with Personal Resistance to Change

1. Challenges are a natural side effect of the change process.
2. Controlling your emotions increases your control over the situation.
3. You're either part of the solution or part of the problem.
4. If your life is changing, you need to be changing too.
5. You have the power to choose your own response to change.

7 Steps for Overcoming Personal Resistance to Change

1. Allow yourself to feel your emotions and recognize them as protective, self-preserving signals from your subconscious.
2. Accept your emotional reaction to change and give your feelings expression. Expressing your feelings is healthy, as long as it is not at anyone else's expense. Cry if you are sad, laugh if you are joyous, and scream if you feel frustrated (you may want to consider screaming into a pillow or when you are alone in your car!). Talk to someone you trust, or write or "*journal*" if that is more your style. You need to give yourself the opportunity to release emotional energy before you can get logical and practical about the change.
3. Explore the messages your emotions are bringing to you. Ask, "What are my feelings telling me?" Be nonjudgmental and honest with yourself—especially when you examine your negative emotions.
4. Write down your hopes as well as your fears and concerns in a journal or on a piece of paper. Things are a lot less scary when they are not whirling aimlessly in your head. Sometimes your fears have no base in reality, but you can't see that until you look at them closely.
5. Write down your questions about the change and try to find out the answers to as many of them as you can. Remember—less "unknown" means less "fear"!
6. Study what you have written. Doubtless all the outcomes you consider are possible—but which ones are most probable? Identify and focus on those that are likely to happen and let go of the far-fetched concerns for now.
7. Prepare yourself the best way you can for the likely outcomes. Control and influence what you can in the process and let go of the rest (Spheres of Influence model). There is no point in wasting energy on something you cannot do anything about. Make a transition plan that considers all your options, your support system, and your behavioral response to change.

The Spheres of Influence Model



Adapted from "Sphere of Influence: Doing What You Can Do", by David Hultgran

Control Your Reaction to the Transition

- Decide what you can control or influence.
- Your decision about what you can control affects your sphere of influence. If it is negative, this sphere contracts and if it is positive, this sphere expands outward.
- For example, if you are dealing with changes at work, you have control over your attitude, quality of work, and improving your ability—but you have no control over the competitive strategies of your company.
- You can get into emotional or political trouble trying to control the outer sphere.

Examining Personal Resistance to Change

Objective:

To examine your own patterns of resistance to change.

Process:

1. Choose one major change from your Personal Timeline in which you showed most resistance.
2. Contemplate the event and interview others who observed your behaviors at the time to answer the following questions:

What were my underlying emotions about the change?

Was I aware of them at the time?

If so, was I able to express them?

If not, how did my emotions manifest (anger, depression, denial, ...)?

What were other people's reactions to my resistance?

What was the impact on them?

Looking back, what would I do differently (if anything)?

Reflection – Your Pattern of Resistance to Change

The insights I gained about my reaction to change are...

Reflection – Your Pattern of Resistance to Change

The ways I can use these insights in the future are...



CHAPTER 5—STRESS

"If you ask what is the single most important key to longevity, I would have to say it is avoiding worry, stress and tension. And if you didn't ask me, I'd still have to say it."

George Burns

Stress

"There are very few certainties that touch us all in this mortal experience, but one of the absolutes is that we will experience hardship and stress at some point."

Dr. James C. Dobson

I was working 6 days a week, my son was only a year old, my marriage was falling apart and I was in turmoil. I felt pressure at home and at work. I did not have enough time or energy to play all the roles that I had signed up for. I thought that I was failing at all of them. Every day was a struggle as I pushed myself to be the super-mom, the exciting wife, and the model employee—while I felt like a terrible mom, a resentful wife, and an exhausted employee. I had no time for myself unless I was sick. I actually hoped I would be ill so I would have an excuse to rest.

I suffered from regular headaches, acid reflux, tension, and a stiff neck and shoulders. I felt overwhelmed, irritable and unhappy. My life felt mechanical and joyless. Everything seemed like a burden, ready to crush me.

The more I pushed forward, the worse my symptoms became until I started to have problems with my vision. I first noticed it in my left eye. When I went to my optometrist, he told me that my optic nerve was inflamed and referred me to a specialist. Within two weeks, my vision got so bad that I could no longer see what I was looking at with that eye and I only had peripheral vision in my left eye. In another week, I could no longer distinguish between colors. The specialist could not find any physical reason for my problem. He attributed it to stress.

Going blind was a scary proposition. Would it be reversible or impact my right eye as well? I was very afraid. That was when I realized that *I had lost control of my life*. I was dangerously stressed out. I knew that I could no longer ignore the conditions of my life, and it was time to address the underlying causes of my stress.

Fortunately, my vision problem was cured by taking steroids, but not before it forced me to take notice and make some major changes in my life.



What Is Stress?

Stress is the mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral reactions to any perceived demands or threats. Stress can be anything that stimulates you and increases your level of alertness.

Change and stress go hand in hand; they are both facts of life. The same way that all changes are not negative, all stresses are not negative either. In fact, you need a certain amount of stress in your life to function at your best. Some stress can bring excitement and challenge to your life. The key is to have the right type and amount of stress so you will not feel overwhelmed.

Good Stress – Bad Stress

There are two kinds of stresses:

1. Eustress

This is positive and beneficial stress that can challenge you, but the reason for it is something that you desire. Eustress provides motivation and energy to meet your goals and responsibilities. Examples of eustress are graduating from college, getting married, having a baby, getting a new job, moving to a new town.

2. Distress

This occurs when you are under continuous pressure that leaves you feeling overwhelmed, oppressed, and unable to catch up with all your responsibilities. You feel that the weight of the world is on your shoulders and there is no end in sight. Examples of distress are dealing with a long illness, financial difficulties, a traumatic experience, divorce, and loss.

Why Do You "Stress Out"?

You experience distress for two main reasons...

1. You *perceive* a situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful.
2. You *believe* that you do not have the resources to cope.

Levels of Stress

Acute Stress

The most common form of stress is acute stress. It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting.

Episodic Acute Stress

Some people suffer acute stress frequently, and their lives are so disordered that they are continually experiencing chaos and crisis. They're always in a rush, but always late. If something can go wrong, it does. They take on too much, have too many irons in the fire, and can't organize the slew of self-inflicted demands and pressures clamoring for their attention. They seem perpetually in the clutches of acute stress.

Chronic Stress

While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting, chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people down day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It causes chaos through long-term slow destruction. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career.

Burnout

A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by unrealistically high aspirations and illusory and impossible goals.

6 Myths about Stress

Six myths surround stress. Dispelling them will enable you to understand your problems and then take action against them.

Myth 1: Stress is the same for everybody.

This is completely wrong. Stress is different for each person. What is stressful for one person may or may not be stressful for another; each individual responds to stress in an entirely different way.

Myth 2: Stress is always bad for you.

According to this view, zero stress makes you happy and healthy. Wrong. Stress is to the human condition what tension is to the violin string: too little and the music is dull and raspy; too much and the music is shrill or the string snaps. Stress can be the kiss of death or the spice of life. The issue is how to manage it. Managed stress makes you productive and happy—mismanaged stress hurts and even kills you.

Myth 3: Stress is everywhere, so you can't do anything about it.

Not so. You can plan your life so that stress does not overwhelm you. Effective planning involves setting priorities and working on simple problems first, solving them, and then going on to more complex difficulties. When stress is mismanaged, it's difficult to prioritize. All your problems seem to be equal and stress seems to be everywhere.

Myth 4: The most popular techniques for reducing stress are the best ones.

Again, not so. No universally—effective stress reduction techniques exist. People are all different, their lives are different, their situations are different, and their reactions are different. Only a comprehensive program tailored to the individual works.

Myth 5: No symptoms, no stress.

Absence of symptoms does not mean the absence of stress. In fact, camouflaging symptoms with medication may deprive you of the signals you need for reducing the strain on your physiological and psychological systems.

Myth 6: Only major symptoms of stress require attention.

This myth assumes that the minor symptoms, such as headaches or stomach acid, may be safely ignored. Minor symptoms of stress are the early warnings that your life is getting out of hand and that you need to do a better job of managing stress.

(Levels of Stress & 6 Myths about Stress are Adapted from The Stress Solution by Lyle H. Miller, Ph.D., and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D.)

Are You Stressed?

The following exercise will assist you to identify symptoms that could be stress-related in six areas of human experience: physical, mental, emotional, social, behavioral and spiritual.

Place a check mark in all the boxes that consistently apply to you. If the number of symptoms you identify surprises you, then take immediate action to manage your stress.

Possible <i>Physical</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Fatigued or worn out		Restlessness
	Frequent headaches or migraines		Fitful sleep
	Tension in back of neck or head		Difficult to fall asleep, if awakened
	Tight shoulders		Need sleeping pills or tranquilizers
	Backache		Grinding teeth
	Muscle tension		Nail biting
	Digestive problems		Frequently catch colds or flu
	Recurrent stomach aches		Twitching in face or limbs
	High blood pressure		Sweaty palms
	Shallow breathing		Cold feet and hands
	Pounding or racing heart		Ringing in the ears
	Chest pains		Constipation or diarrhea
	Dizziness, lightheadedness, or faintness		Accident-prone

Possible <i>Mental</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Negative mental attitudes		Unable to make decisions
	Easily confused		Do not enjoy any hobbies
	Difficult to concentrate		Mind is often in a flurry
	Trouble thinking clearly		Pessimistic
	Forgetfulness		Have no mental relaxation
	Lack of creativity		Negative or critical view of self

Possible <i>Emotional</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Feeling anxious & nervous		Loss of humor
	Feel unhappy or depressed		Worry a great deal
	Feel unloved		Overly excitable
	Feel lonely		Irritable and angry
	Feel powerless		Short-tempered
	Feel frustrated		Cry easily
	Feel bored		Easily discouraged
	Experience little joy		Often find fault with self
	Bothered by insignificant events		Frequent nightmares

Possible <i>Social</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Isolating from others		Unhappy with family relationships
	Critical of others		Feel uncomfortable being with others
	Feel resentful of others		Have poor relations with work associates
	Lash out at others		Reduced contact with friends
	Lack of intimacy with others		Experience lowered sex drive

Possible <i>Behavioral</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Excess smoking		Short-tempered
	Overuse of alcohol		Inability to finish tasks
	Eating too little or too much		Procrastination
	Sleeping too much or too little		Expecting too much from others

Possible <i>Spiritual</i> Symptoms of Stress			
	Suffer from inner emptiness		Feel like a victim
	Hold no spiritual beliefs		Feel cynical
	The future looks hopeless		Feel indifferent
	Life is meaningless		Unable to forgive
	Few positive things in life		Look for "magic" solutions to problems
	Doubt your ability to thrive		Constantly need to prove yourself

Managing Stress

"In times of great stress or adversity, it's always best to keep busy, to plow your anger and your energy into something positive."

Lee Iacocca

You can manage your stress more easily, if you learn and be aware of the warning signs that indicate you are over-stressed. Remember—you cannot measure your stress by other people. You might respond to the same stimuli differently than others. Each person has a unique threshold for stress and is affected differently by various types of stress. Your perception of an event and the meaning you give it directly impacts the level of stress you experience.

Learning to successfully manage stress begins with your willingness to examine yourself. People and situations contribute to your stress, but that is beyond your control. It is not helpful to blame stress on other people or situations that you cannot control. It is more beneficial to take personal responsibility for your stress and to look for things that you can change or influence. You can get more from learning to manage stress than from trying to reduce stress. The better developed your coping mechanism for stress becomes, the happier and more satisfying your life can be.

To manage stress you need to pay attention to your own thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and how you view events. You can consider stressful events as barriers to your wellness or as opportunities to practice your coping mechanisms. The first step to managing stress is to recognize the situations that are stressful for you. Once you know the causes of stress in your life, you can employ techniques to manage them with success.

Commitment to Yourself

Knowing that stress is unavoidable, the best way to deal with it is to get ready before you are in a stressful situation. Often when you are stressed, you do not have the extra energy and time to create a stress management process tailored to your personality. If your health is a priority for you, pre-emptive measures are much more effective than dealing with stress while you are fighting burn out.

You can employ stress-reducing habits, which you can assimilate into your daily life to enhance its quality. The key is the commitment to yourself and to your health and making the time to explore these techniques and discover the ones that can fit into your life. Remember that if you do not take care of yourself, you will eventually succumb to stress. So, take the time to integrate practices that reduce the impact of stress in your life.

Stress Busters

There are many techniques that can help you manage stress. You must decide what will work best for you, since no one technique is best for everybody. Stress management techniques are simply tools to help you learn to work more effectively with stress and give you new skills to deal with difficult situations. No one technique will make all stress go away. Use your own judgment to decide which techniques to use. Try different things before deciding what is right for you. Once you have found approaches that work, make a commitment to practice them.

Attitude and Perception

"If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment."

Marcus Aurelius

The only reality for you is your perception. How you frame an issue in your mind has everything to do with how you will respond to it. Since you are the product of your attitudes, you can discover their impact on your life by examining both your positive and negative attitudes. Positive attitude gives you the mind-set to achieve your goals even in the face of adversity; while negative attitude hampers your ability to deal effectively with your life. Transforming negative attitude takes time and focus, but you can do it if you put your mind to it. First, become aware of the specific attitudes you want to change and then stay conscious of them surfacing in your day. Do not give up or be hard on yourself if you don't get it right at first. Concentrate on your progress, and eventually you will transform the attitudes that do not serve you well.

Your Support Network

"Without friends, no one would want to live, even if he had all other goods."

Aristotle

Articulating your feelings can relieve tension and bring you focus. You can feel supported by others, and this can help you work through your problems. Refer to Chapter 9: Your Support Network for a more in-depth look at building your support system.

Know Your Limits

"We must learn our limits. We are all something, but none of us are everything...."

Blaise Pascal

Do you find yourself saying "yes" when you really want to say "no"? One of the ways you can pile on stress is not knowing your limits or not honoring them. Learn to say no when you really cannot add more to your load. It is not unkind to say no if you don't have the resources to give the task what it deserves.

Put Yourself on the Agenda

"Declare today 'sacred time'—off-limits to everyone, unless invited by you. Take care of your personal wants and needs. Say no, graciously but firmly, to others' demands."

Oprah Winfrey

You can give to others more genuinely if you are not pre-occupied with your own needs. If you are among those who will take care of everyone else and put your own needs last, you are not alone. The problem is that if you do not put yourself on the agenda, you will become resentful, which will add to your stress. Taking time for yourself to relax and rejuvenate is just as important as giving time to other activities. Schedule some time for yourself every day to recharge for all the other things you are responsible for.

Care for Yourself

"Effective health care depends on self-care; this fact is currently heralded as if it were a discovery . . ."

Ivan Illich

Your body is your vehicle to live in this world. How well you care for it is how well it functions for you. Get into the habit of caring for your body. Eat properly, drink plenty of fluids, rest, get enough sleep, and keep your body active.

Play & Leisure Time

"Be glad of life because it gives you the chance to love, to work, to play, and to look up at the stars...."

Henry Van Dyke

Too many people view play and leisure time as non-productive and feel that they have to earn that time by working hard. In reality, play and leisure time are just as important if you want to have a balanced life. Make sure that you give yourself the time to relax with a favorite hobby or an enjoyable activity. You will be much more able to deal with the stressful parts of your life if you give yourself a break once in a while.

Humor & Laughter

"Through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it."

Bill Cosby

"It has been long known that the ability to laugh is helpful to those coping with major illness and the stress of life's problems. But researchers are now saying laughter can do a lot more—it can basically bring balance to all the components of the immune system, which helps you fight off diseases.

Laughter reduces levels of certain stress hormones. In doing so, laughter provides a safety valve that shuts off the flow of stress hormones and the fight-or-flight compounds that swing into action in your body when you experience stress, anger, or hostility.

What may surprise you even more is the fact that researchers estimate that laughing 100 times is equal to 10 minutes on the rowing machine or 15 minutes on an exercise bike. Laughing can be a total body workout!"
(Source: www.howstuffworks.com)

Exercise

"Those who think they have no time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness."

Edward Stanley

Exercise, especially aerobic exercise, is one of the best ways to manage your stress. A nice brisk walk while you are listening to your favorite music can do more to reduce your stress than you would imagine. Aerobic exercise actually helps your body use up excess stress-induced hormones. Some research recommends exercise as a way of lifting your spirits and decreasing depression.

Spiritual Practices

"The goal of spiritual practice is full recovery, and the only thing you need to recover from is a fractured sense of self."

Marianne Williamson

Your spiritual journey is a personal one. Your spiritual beliefs are your connection to your higher power. Spiritual practice can give you comfort and peace when you are facing hardships. Putting your spirituality into daily practice allows you to reset yourself daily. It helps you prepare for the day. It can be an effective way to reduce your stress.

Relaxation

"Relaxation means releasing all concern and tension and letting the natural order of life flow through one's being"

Donald Curtis

Relaxation techniques are skills that you need to develop and practice regularly so you can use them effectively during stressful times. When you are stressed your breathing becomes fast and shallow. Deep breathing exercises help you take slower and fuller breaths carrying more oxygen to your system. There are hundreds of breathing techniques you can use to relax or energize your mind.

Breathing Technique 1

This is a yoga technique used in most beginning yoga classes to energize and balance both hemispheres of your brain.

- Place your right thumb on your right nostril.
- Using your thumb, press the right nostril closed.
- Slowly and gently inhale through your left nostril while counting six seconds.
- Using your ring finger, gently press your left nostril closed and exhale for six seconds through your right nostril.
- Stop for six seconds.
- Using your ring finger, continue to press your left nostril and inhale for six seconds through your right nostril.
- Pinch both nostrils closed and stop for six seconds.
- Repeat five times.

Breathing Technique 2

- Slowly inhale and visualize your breath in the color white.
- Hold the breath for a count of four.
- Slowly exhale as you let the tension leave your body.
- Continue for 30 minutes.

Breathing Technique 3

- Sit or lie down comfortably.
- Take a slow deep breath and imagine pulling all the tension in your feet and legs into your lungs—then push them out with a gentle exhalation.
- Take another slow and deep breath, this time visualizing the tension in your hands and arms expelling with your exhalation.
- Repeat the slow, deep breathing and release the tension in your back, neck, shoulder, head, face, chest, and stomach.
- Devote full breath for any particular part of your body that is especially tense.

There are also many audio tapes and CDs that can take you on guided visualization and relaxation.

Meditation & Yoga

"Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away other thoughts; distraction of the mind is a sign of its weakness; by constant meditation it gains strength."

Sri Ramana Maharishi

Meditation is a great way to relax and calm your mind. It is a very effective technique to manage your stress. It settles your mind helps you feel less anxious. It also helps you cope with stress.

Yoga is another popular stress-management tool that combines benefits of both exercise and meditation. Yoga helps your mind slow down and your body relax.

Basic Meditation Position

Find a comfortable chair. Sit with feet flat on the ground and back/spine straight. Make sure your knees, when you are seated, are level with the seat of the chair and that your hands are resting on your lap.

Basic Meditation

Mouni Sadhu is attributed with the following meditation:

- Follow the second hand of a watch for 2 minutes.
- Increase the meditation each day 2 to 3 minutes until you can follow the second hand for a total of 30 minutes without distraction.

Other Stress-Reducing Options

Listening to or playing music can be a great source of emotional enjoyment and a very positive therapeutic experience.

Progressive muscle relaxation, massage, acupuncture, aromatherapy, and biofeedback can also be effective in reducing your stress.

Action Plan to Manage Stress

Reflection – Causes of My Stress

The issues that cause me stress are...

Reflection – Stress Management Action Plan

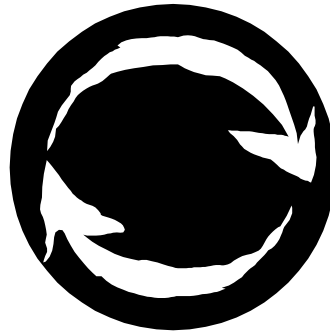
Actions I can take to contain, control, or eliminate problems that cause me stress...

Reflection – Stress Management Action Plan

Actions I can take to improve my health and environment that can help me deal with stress better...

Reflection – Stress Management Action Plan

Stress management techniques that I will incorporate into my life...



CHAPTER 6—CHANGEBACK PRESSURES

"That's the risk you take if you change: that people you've been involved with won't like the new you. But other people who do will come along."

Lisa Alther

Changeback Pressures

"All is connected ... no one thing can change by itself."

Paul Hawken
"Natural Capitalism", Yoga Journal, October 1994

After the revolution in Iran, my husband's family followed us to the United States to escape the Iran-Iraq war. Many young boys were drafted and killed in the war. Boys over the age of 13 were not allowed to leave Iran because they were the next generation to fight. My husband had two nephews who were just young enough to be allowed out of the country. He wanted to save them so we signed papers to accept financial responsibility for the family. They lived with us for several years until they were able to live on their own. They arrived when our son was only a few months old. My husband had just left his job to start a new business that he would eventually turn over to his family. I worked full-time and supported everyone. I was caving in from the pressure of motherhood, the extended family living in my home, and the financial responsibility for everyone. I didn't know how to handle it. I felt trapped in my life.

Any one of these changes would have been enough to upset anyone's life, but this combination was over-turning the proverbial applecart of my life. My husband and I were having a hard time balancing everything, and our stress was beyond measure. We were in constant conflict with each other and the rest of the family. My little boy was surrounded with this jarring energy. I had to do something about this situation, especially for my sanity.

My job offered an Employee Assistance Program, and one of my friends recommended that I check it out. That was my first exposure to mental health therapy and the concept of self-awareness. For the first time I was actually examining my underlying assumptions about myself, marriage, relationships, family, duty, and motherhood. I began to read many self-help books and as my awareness grew, so did my desperate need to change my life.

I started to question our cultural and family assumptions. I challenged the ways we did things. I spoke my mind more often. My family didn't know how to react. My husband became angry and tried to talk some sense into me. My in-laws were shocked because I was not behaving like a dutiful Iranian woman and just live with the situation. They did not say anything to me directly, but pressured my husband to correct my behavior. He felt the pressure and his reaction was to stay at work and away from home as long as he could.

He became more and more frustrated. He did not like my therapist and all the changes that were resulting from my new self-awareness. I remember one day we were arguing when he screamed, “When are you going to stop reading these books? When are you going to come back to your senses? When are you going to stop changing?” I looked at him and emphatically replied, “When I die!”



“No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow.”

Alice Walker

Change has a ripple effect. When you make changes in your life, you affect others, especially those people intertwined in your life. Those who are affected most are those closest to you whom you love best. They are used to behaviors that they recognize and are comfortable with. They want to keep things the way they are. When you choose to shift your position, you no longer occupy the same space in the relationship. So to keep the equilibrium, they can either shift with you or try to pull you back. *Changeback pressure* is their resistance to your actions. This is normal behavior and you should not be surprised if the change you are making is challenged or questioned.

Depending on how others perceive your changes and how their perception affects them, they may resist accepting the change and might pressure you to change back. If the change you are introducing is a transformational change, you can expect them to go through their own change cycle. Everything that you learned about change now applies to them as they work through their own issues.

For you, changeback pressure is yet another element of change to deal with. You have to think about how you affect those you care about. You need to balance being true to yourself and caring for your loved ones. This is a balancing act that can influence the outcome greatly. Transformational change can test your relationships to the limit. But your bonds can actually strengthen—if you remember to communicate your thoughts and feelings, ask for support, and give your support to the loved ones affected by your change. If you want them to shift with you, you have to give them room to move, too.

8 Ways to Support Others through Change

1. Be aware of your own behavior and attitude—these elements impact how others react to you.
2. Be tolerant of others' emotional responses even if these are different from yours.
3. Choose your battles carefully. Let go of little things.
4. Allow flexibility when you can. The answers are found when you are not stuck in one place.
5. Keep your sense of humor and add more humor to your life to lower the tension.
6. Practice and promote good stress relief techniques.
7. Practice and promote authentic and non-blaming communication techniques.
8. Invite affected others to join you as you *invent* the future instead of redesigning the past.

12 Ineffective Strategies to Deal with Resistance

1. Discounting others' resistance to change.
2. Pressuring them to conform to your needs.
3. Persuasion techniques to get their acceptance of your change without taking their needs into consideration.
4. "Power plays" to control and bend the outcome to your will.
5. Passive/aggressive techniques to manipulate the situation to your advantage.
6. Emotional blackmail to make affected others feel guilty for resisting.
7. Playing "head games" to keep them off track.
8. Threatening affected others with harm.
9. Ignoring the impact of the change on them.
10. Distancing yourself to pressure others to agree with you.
11. Dishonoring their desires and needs.
12. Punishing others for resisting the change.

7 Steps for Dealing with Resistance Effectively

1. Create a safe space for others to express their concerns, fears, and needs.
2. Listen and encourage them to express their emotions and apprehensions.
3. Listen to everything and check for clarity before replying—do not cut others off in the middle of their communication.
4. Ask for specifics when you hear others speak in generalities. You can address specific concerns, but not general ones. Sometimes in raising specific objections, they realize that a particular concern is baseless.
5. Ask for input in finding an alternative path. The more others feel involved in finding a solution, the more likely it is they will not resist.
6. Seek agreement once a solution is found. Make sure that everyone is clear about the agreement.
7. Follow-up to ensure the desired outcome.

Reflection – Change Back Pressure

The Change back pressures I am experiencing are from...

Others expect me to...

Reflection – Change Back pressure

Others' fears and concerns are...

The actions I will take to address others' concerns are...



CHAPTER 7—EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

"No matter what message you intended, what is reflected back to you is the message that was received."

John S. Nagy

Effective Communications

"Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy, and mutual valuing."

Rollo May

Another important tool in dealing with resistance is effective communication. Each person has a belief and judgment system that allows her or him to make decisions and navigate through life. Each individual's belief and judgment system is the result of unique life experiences. Since no two lives are the same, no two systems of coping with change can be the same. Each person also has a unique lens of perception and language to interact with the world. Therefore, different people might react differently to the same change and express it differently. When they face new changes, they may need time to absorb these and to decide if the changes are positive for them.

Disagreement and conflict are a normal part of change. You need to make sure that the communication around the disagreements is handled in a respectful manner. You need to focus on the issue and not let the disagreement become a personal attack.

Since you experience things differently than others, you cannot assume that what is true for you is necessarily true for others. You can misunderstand other people's intentions and meanings if you make that assumption. When a misunderstanding occurs, very often, people believe themselves to be in the right, while maintaining the other party to be wrong. Effective communication is the best way to resolve conflicting viewpoints and ease hurt feelings. When you chose to address conflict rationally and graciously, you open the doors to awareness and appreciation of others' reality.

If disagreements are handled constructively, your relationships will grow. But prolonged and unresolved conflicts only drain your energy and destroy your relationships. Effective communication is the most important tool you have to strengthen your relationships as you experience major changes. If you include your loved ones in your change processes and consider their needs and feelings, you help decrease their resistance and increase their acceptance and support. Giving and receiving feedback effectively is one of the essential communication skills that can strengthen your relationships.

Effective Feedback

Feedback is defined as information that flows between people about their interactions. Effective feedback is sharing information with others in such a way that truly helps them understand their shortcomings and facilitates their personal growth. Effective feedback also allows people to understand the effect of their actions on you. Feedback does not assume that the giver is right and the receiver is wrong; it is an invitation to interact.

There are two types of feedback: **Supportive** and **Constructive**. You exchange supportive feedback to encourage *behaviors that enhance* the relationship. Constructive feedback allows you to help each other become aware of unhealthy behaviors and modify them. When you give constructive feedback, you tell the other person about a behavior that affected you negatively and you suggest improvements. This will build, enhance and sustain the relationship. Constructive feedback is not the same thing as criticism. **Criticism** is finding fault with someone's behavior and blaming that person, which is destructive to the relationship.

To nurture your relationships you need to focus on positive behaviors and opportunities to give supportive feedback. You communicate what you appreciate and what works for you. I believe that most people want to please their loved ones. When you express appreciation, they feel acknowledged and want to please you, as well. Genuine and frequent *supportive* feedback can help a relationship grow faster than receiving only *constructive* feedback. It is easier to stay open to constructive feedback when the positive is also noticed and communicated.

Therefore, *effective* feedback is information that:

1. Is understood by the receiver and does not cause them to become defensive. (Don't blame.)
2. Keeps the relationship intact, open, and healthy—though not devoid of conflict or pain.
3. Validates the feedback process in the future.

Feedback Model

1. Describe the situation.
2. Describe the specific behavior.
3. Describe the impact on you.
4. If applicable, offer an alternative behavior more suitable to you.

Framework for Giving Feedback

“When (*describe the situation*), and (*describe the behavior*), it made me feel, (*describe your feelings*.) It would have been more helpful for me if you (*give an alternative*).”

Examples

- Yesterday when you gave me the thank you card, *I felt* appreciated.
- When I was running late this morning, and you took the kids to school, *I felt* so supported.
- When you called yesterday and told me that you had all the answers to my problems and I should just listen to you, *I felt* like a child. I would listen more to your ideas if you first asked me if I was interested.
- When you didn’t show up for our meeting yesterday, *I felt* that my time was not valued. I would have been fine if you had called and cancelled.
- When I talk to you and you read the paper, *I feel* that what I have to say is not important to you.

A Guide to Giving Feedback Effectively

"Self-expression must pass into communication for its fulfillment."

Pearl S. Buck

8 Keys to *Giving Feedback*

1. Give feedback when you are not overly-emotional, because effective feedback requires a cool head.
2. Be aware of your intent. Check for hidden intentions. Ask yourself, "Do I really want to help the relationship—or do I want to get back at them?"
3. Deal with specific, modifiable behaviors. That is all the receiver can actually do something about—if she or he so chooses.
4. Do not use blaming language. Blaming will only result in raising the other person's defenses. The other person stops listening as soon as she or he feels defensive.
5. Keep it positive whenever possible. Remember—constructive does not mean unkind.
6. Discuss the impact of the behavior on you because that is the reason for giving the feedback.
7. Don't overload (discuss too many concerns at once) or judge the other person. Remember—sometimes intentions are not the same as the effect.
8. Check for understanding. Ask if the person feels he or she understands your concerns.

Guide to Receiving Feedback Effectively

"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention...."

Rachel Naomi Remen

8 Keys to *Receiving* Feedback

1. Listen to what is being said. Solicit feedback on specific things.
2. Know the difference between feedback and attack. Stay receptive to genuine feedback.
3. Avoid defending or arguing your position while you are listening to the other person.
4. Paraphrase and clarify.
5. Ask questions only to clarify your understanding of what is being said.
6. Remember that feedback is useful information about the impact on the other person and may be different from your intentions.
7. Take the feedback as information—not demands. Accept what you like, and leave the rest—but listen for possible truths and ignore the fallacies.
8. Convey appreciation for the feedback. Appreciation paves the way for future feedback.

Win-Win Approach to Conflict Resolution

Transformational change often creates conflict or requires you to make decisions that impact other people in your life. A win-win approach to conflict resolution and decision making allows you to take other people's needs into consideration and finding a solution that can work for everyone involved.

This approach works if:

1. The various people's needs are not mutually exclusive.
2. There is a desire on everyone's part to find a win-win solution.
3. Everyone involved trusts each other to be truthful about their needs.

This method can be used for critical and non-critical issues if it is important to gain the acceptance and support of everyone involved. Win-win process can help you to make collaborative decisions that take everyone's needs into consideration. Another use of this chart is as a decision making tool for an individual having to choose the best option out of several possibilities.

Examples of critical problems or decisions might be:

- A husband and wife both work in the same company and fear they will be downsized. Should one or both quit their job and start a business?
- A new mother has to decide if she should be a stay home mom or go back to work.
- A business man's health is being greatly affected by the stress of running the business and he has to decide if he should sell the company.
- A couple cannot have children and wonder if they should adopt.

Examples of non-critical issues or decisions might be:

- A family purchasing a new house.
- A high school senior choosing a college.
- A couple deciding if they should allow their 25 year old son to move back home with them.

A 12 Step Win-Win Approach to Resolving Conflicts

1. Everyone involved agrees that a win-win solution to a conflict is *possible*. With no belief that such a resolution can be achieved, there will be no energy for moving forward.
2. Everyone agrees that they want to resolve their conflict in this manner. Finding a win-win solution requires time, patience, and energy. Only when the relationship is important to everyone involved are they willing to resolve the conflict using a win-win approach. Talk about the reasons why you are willing to invest your time and energy into this resolution.
3. Discuss the interests of each person in the outcome.
4. Each person determines her true *needs*. Needs are essential elements that are not negotiable, and a win-win solution must meet all of them.
5. Each person determines her *wants*. Wants are negotiable elements and a solution will meet as many of them as possible.
6. Each person determines her *deal-breakers* (what she absolutely will not or cannot do). The solution cannot have a deal-breaker.
7. Each person determines where she can be flexible and what she is willing to contribute to the solution.
8. Using the Win-Win Chart, all the needs, wants, and deal-breakers for everyone are combined and recorded in the appropriate columns. This becomes the criteria for selecting a solution.
9. Everyone combines their creative energy to brainstorm possible solutions.
10. Each solution is then evaluated against the criteria (needs, wants, and deal-breakers).
11. Select the solution that meets all the needs and as many of the wants as possible without having a deal-breaker.
12. Everyone agrees on any action that is necessary and plans those actions.

Win-Win Chart – Part 1	
Problem or issue:	
Persons:	Interests/Concerns:
Needs	Wants
Deal-Breakers	Flexibilities

Win-Win Chart – Part 2

Solutions or options to be considered:

Win-win solution/option:

Necessary actions:

Reflection – Communication Patterns

My communication patterns are...

Reflection – Communication Action Plan

Actions I will take to improve my communication skills...



CHAPTER 8—THE “SHADOW WALKS”

“Just as conscious contents can vanish into the unconscious, other contents can also arise from it. Besides a majority of mere recollections, really new thoughts and creative ideas can appear which have never been conscious before. They grow up from the dark depths like a lotus.”

*“Approaching the Unconscious”, in **Man and His Symbols** (1964), by Carl Jung.*

The “Shadow Walks”

“A human being would certainly not grow to be seventy or eighty years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species. The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning.

The significance of the morning undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind, and the care of our children. This is the obvious purpose of nature. But when this purpose has been attained—and more than attained—shall the earning of money, the extension of conquests, and the expansion of life go steadily on beyond the bounds of all reason and sense?

Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning, or the natural aim, must pay for it with damage to his soul, just as surely as a growing youth who tries to carry over his childish egoism into adult life must pay for this mistake with social failure.”

*“The Stages of Life” (1930), in CW 8: **The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche**, by Carl Jung*

Naomi Quenk, in her book, *Beside Ourselves – Our Hidden Personality in Everyday Life* writes:

“We all have times when we are ‘out of character,’ feel outside and beside ourselves, and act in unexpected ways. And we’ve all observed such aberrations in others. Sometimes we are intrigued or even amused by these atypical behaviors; more often, however, we are puzzled, distressed, put off, and embarrassed by them.”

Quenk’s book is based on Carl Jung’s theory of psychological personality types. Jung’s theories not only address the consistency and predictability of personalities, but also the inconsistencies. Jung’s concept includes a hidden part of personality—*The Shadow*—where the fears, as well as untapped talents and potentials, are hidden. This information is accessible through experiencing your shadow.

“Our consciousness does not create itself—it wells up from unknown depths. In childhood it awakens gradually, and all through life it wakes each morning out of the depths of sleep from an unconscious condition.”

*“The Psychology of Eastern Meditation” (1943),
in CW 11: **Psychology and Religion: West and East**, by Carl Jung.*

"There are as many nights as days, and the one is just as long as the other in the year's course. Even a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word 'happy' would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness."

Carl Jung

This following is a personal story from my journals about one of my Shadow experiences.

"I am flooded with emotions and feel like I am drowning in them. I feel like I have been punched in my gut. I am bending in pain. I feel exposed, misunderstood, threatened, and off-center. I feel like a fool for being so trusting, so idealistic, and so gullible. God, the world would be such a nicer place if it were left to my imagination. In my world, all people are good and want to connect and remember their light and want to grow. Everybody is safe and there is nothing to fear.

I feel like an alien. I don't belong to reality. It is hard to believe the darkness in the world. It pains me to see the world of reality. I feel angry. I feel betrayed. I feel misused. I feel judged without a chance to defend myself. I feel hurt.

I am going through a strange period in my life. I recognize it as another period of growth, which by its nature is often painful. This growth is coming from questioning some old beliefs and being surprised that they are not serving me any longer. The kind of period that is making me declare a new resolve to live by.

In the last couple of weeks, I have been in the grip of my shadow and feeling introverted. My energy for external activities has been very low. I have been in search of answers in a new learning opportunity posed as a dilemma. I have been defining my boundaries in the new challenge. I have been watching myself evolve with a new understanding of myself in response to the life dramas surrounding me."

The background to these journal entries is that a huge contract that was to keep me very busy for a year was cancelled prematurely because of the client's financial difficulties. That created some issues between us regarding the contract and my compensation. I approached it with the desire to collaborate with the client to find a win-win solution. The client's reaction was to humiliate, accuse, and threaten me with legal action. The thought of legal action would not have even crossed my mind before this exchange. I was hurt, angry, and felt like a child in need of protection. I had no idea about my rights or theirs. I decided that it would be stupid if I didn't at least find out. I called a business lawyer for legal advice and learned that my rights were being violated, and the client was taking the upper hand by putting me in the defensive position. I decided to turn over the negotiations to the lawyer.

This was not an easy decision for me to make. I had to first understand myself in this situation and examine my motives before meeting with the attorney. I had to first figure out the spiritual significance of this event in my life and choose my position in dealing with the situation. I had to decide who I wanted to be and what qualities I wanted to exhibit. I had to believe that I was doing the right thing for the right reason to be able to move forward. That was the only way for me to do something that was hard to do.

I had to answer the questions, “Am I doing something wrong if I am in a conflict with others? Am I not living a Spirit-filled life if I am not living in harmony? Am I a bad person if I see a lawyer?” I had to ask how being a loving person fits in with being in conflict. I had to know what the hidden gift was in this pain and confusion.

I talked to my friends about my situation, listened to my inner voice, and watched for clues in inspirational books and in the things I heard or saw or felt each day. I went on a personal journey, asking with all my heart and soul for the answers. In the outside world, I functioned at minimum involvement while most of my energy was engaged in new discoveries in the depths of my inner world.

I reminded myself that confusion is the first step to clarity and I had to experience each stage. So I felt a range of emotions. I became the little girl who was told she was a bad girl for being contrary. I felt attacked, hurt, afraid, angry, blindsided, confused, indignant, victimized, and humiliated. I hated these feelings and everything they brought up for me. But at the same time, I also felt compassion and understanding for my client’s fears.

“Today was an important day of discovery,” I wrote. I finally understood how being a loving person fits in with this conflict; this was not about loving others...it was about loving myself. I was in a situation where I was forced to protect myself rather than allowing others to take advantage of my willingness to please. I pushed out of my comfort zone and stood up on my own behalf. I understood that by letting my attorney deal with this, I was taking care of myself and my needs. I was also taking care of myself by saying, it is not ok for you to take advantage of me and I am not a bad person for saying that! I love myself enough to give myself a voice to say “NO.”

I told my attorney the values that I embraced and how I wanted to behave in this situation, and that I was going to let him do his job. I knew he could do a much better job than me at staying objective and unattached. I trusted him as a spiritually-aware man, and I knew that he could separate legal issues from the moral ones. I did not need to do this negotiation myself when I could have someone represent me. I was also not willing to put myself in an abusive and emotional situation. I had to trust myself that I was on the right track with this decision and do what I must, even if it was not easy to do.



The Shadow – An Expression of Unconscious Knowledge

"The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers."

M. Scott Peck

Ego—your conscious energy—is the way you present yourself to the world. Ego displays your socially and morally acceptable mask, and it includes those things that you acknowledge about yourself.

Shadow—your less conscious energy—embodies everything that you would rather not acknowledge about yourself such as weaknesses, undesirable traits of character, and fears. The unconscious also contains your repressed memories, experiences, ideas, hidden talents and dormant potential. Access to this unconscious information happens through the process of shifting your energy from Ego to Shadow. Shadow experiences aid your personality development. The strangeness of these experiences can force you to examine the essence of personality to obtain a new awareness. This is the psyche's attempt toward self-actualization.

In most of your day-to-day life, you operate from your Ego. But certain triggers can surface the energy of your shadow. The shadow can appear either as a projection on others or in your dreams.

The Concept of Projection

- Unconscious contents of your psyche are charged with energy that must be released for you to function comfortably with minimal stress.
- The most powerful and universal way to release this energy is through Projection.
- Projection is attributing an unacknowledged part of you to others. This part can have negative or positive attributes.
- Projection is a normal psychological process that allows you to relate to other people through recognizing your similarities.
- When you project, you exaggerate the degree of certain qualities existing in someone else.
- Projection often accounts for your initial attraction or rejection of others.

In the Grip of the Shadow

When you experience the stages of Breaking Point and Deconstruction in a transformational change, you find yourself in the *Grip* of a Shadow Walk. It feels as if part of you has left your body and another less familiar part of yourself has taken over. You feel out of balance, vulnerable, and highly emotional. No matter how knowledgeable and experienced you may be in this area, that surreal feeling may take over your life and remain beyond your control.

A Silver Lining

"We emerge into the light not by denying our pain, but by walking out through it."

Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.

Experiencing a Shadow Walk is never comfortable or easy, but it is always necessary. You walk into your shadow to slow down and pay attention to those things that are not in the light. Your journey to shadow takes you to your unconscious reality, the basement of your soul where you keep unrecognized potential alongside the disowned part of yourself. You walk into your shadow to see more of yourself and bring out what you need to use in the light.

5 Gifts of a Shadow Walk

1. Significant learning you could not get any other way.
2. Possible gain of new awareness necessary for an innovative solution to a problem.
3. Gaining clarity and focus about the direction of your future.
4. Increased consciousness resulting from development and integration of all parts of you.
5. Reduced need for projections—leading to more authentic relationships with others.

Triggers for the Eruption of Your Shadow

The general precondition for eruption of your shadow is *lowering of your general level of consciousness*. This permits a *transfer of energy* from Ego functions to relatively unconscious Shadow functions. Several circumstances encourage this transfer of energy. The most common ones are:

Common Triggers:

- Fatigue
- Illness
- Stress
- Important life transitions
- Significant developmental changes
- Loss & grief

Other Possible Triggers:

- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Trauma

However, it is important to note that these conditions do not always lead to a Shadow Walk. Much of the time people engage in positive and adaptive behavior in response to fatigue and stress.

7 Strategies to Care for Yourself during a Shadow Walk

1. It is easy to neglect your body's needs, which is the last thing you want to do in a period of high stress. Pay attention to your body, take deep cleansing breaths, eat well and drink plenty of water, exercise, go for a walk and stretch.
2. Every emotion is a message and serves a purpose so let yourself feel them. Focus on the energy of emotions. Discover their messages. Do not become involved with practical matters and decision-making when you are feeling emotional.
3. Runaway thoughts, worries, and fears can zap much of your energy. Take the time to write down your emotions. When the energy subsides you can make better decisions. Buy an attractive blank book or journal or use your computer and write your thoughts (but be sure to print the pages). When you see your emotions turn as words on a piece of paper they become much more manageable and a lot less scary. Sometimes the big scary monster on the wall is just a shadow puppet of your own hands.
4. Know and use your support system and ask for help. Support is always there and you don't have to do it alone. Your challenges are yours to deal with, but you are never without help. My greatest comfort comes from my spiritual beliefs, my family and friends, inspirational books, my coach, and sometimes even therapy.
5. Nothing is absolutely negative. Looking for positive aspects of this change keeps you from drowning in negatives. Remember the "Serenity Prayer" and let go of what you cannot control. ("God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change... Courage to change the things I can... And, the Wisdom to know the difference.")
6. Stay true to yourself because you have to live with the person that emerges from the change. One measure of successful change is to feel good about yourself at the end of the journey.
7. Remember that change works in cycles and cycles end. You may not be able to control the change, but you have control over your own attitude and perceptions about the change. Keep things in perspective and keep your sense of humor.

Reflection – Shadow Walk

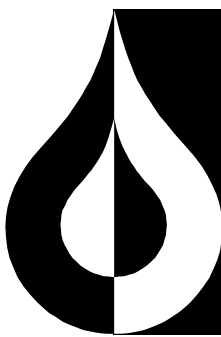
My last Shadow Walk experience and my feelings as I remember them were...

Reflection – Shadow Walk

My last Shadow Walk experience and my feelings as I remember them were (continued)...

Reflection – Shadow Walk

The ways I will care for myself in future Shadow Walks are...



CHAPTER 9—CHANGE, LOSS, AND GRIEF

"... joy and sorrow are inseparable. . . together they come and when one sits alone with you . . . remember that the other is asleep upon your bed."

Kahlil Gibran

Change, Loss, and Grief

After Great Pain

*After great pain, a formal feeling comes
The nerves sit ceremonious, like tombs
The stiff heart questions was it he, that bore,
And yesterday, or centuries before?
The feet, mechanical, go round
Of ground, or air, or ought
A wooden way
Regardless grown,
A quartz contentment, like a stone
This is the hour of lead
Remembered, if outlived,
As freezing persons recollect the snow
First Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go.*

Emily Dickinson

Sometimes you experience transformational change in form of the total loss. This can be loss of a loved one, a dream, a marriage, a job, or a way of life to name a few. With great loss comes great pain and your psyche reacts in protective ways to lessen the blow to you. When the change you experience is a great loss, you will proceed through a grieving process.

Stages of Grief

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

Kahlil Gibran

Swiss-born psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross first described this process as a pattern of coping strategies for patients who know their diagnosis is terminal. However, this process is true for anything you perceive as a great loss.

Dr. Kubler-Ross has named five stages of grief:

1. Denial and isolation
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

Denial and Isolation

This is the stage of shock just as an event happens. Your natural tendency is to deny the loss has occurred. You may feel disoriented and retreat from your usual social life. Fear, confusion, and a general numbness characterize this stage, which may last a few moments, or for a much longer period, depending on the magnitude of the loss. This lack of feeling is nature's way of enabling you to carry on with the necessary things you have to do.

Anger

As you pass the stage of denial, you may begin to feel angry. The anger could be aimed at the person whom you perceive as causing you hurt—even if he or she is dead. You may just feel angry at the world or even yourself, for allowing the event to happen, even if there was nothing you could have done to stop it. Other emotions such as anxiety, irritation, frustration, a sense of betrayal, and shame can also be present at this stage.

Bargaining

At this stage you may make bargains with God, saying, "If you make things right, I will do this or that." You may even try to bargain with yourself or others. This phase is filled with thoughts of "yes, but" or "if only," which is an attempt to find a way out of accepting what has happened. This is the time that you are still holding on to a false hope—your last hold before you finally let go.

Depression

Once you give up the fight, you might feel an overwhelming sense of sadness and helplessness or just "numb out". At this stage you will feel low energy as your energy shifts inward. It is possible for unexpressed anger to remain under the surface. If you

become clinically depressed, you will need help from a professional to move out of this stage.

Acceptance

At this stage, anger, sadness, and mourning subside as you begin to accept the reality of your loss. By this time, you are able to face the event with peace and resignation that allows for the acknowledgment of what has happened. Acceptance releases the energy held in grief for you to build a new reality.

How quickly you might go through the loss and grief cycle depends on the intensity and the meaning of the change for you. It is also easier to accept something that is over and done with such as the death of a loved one, than something that is unfinished, such as going through the process of a painful divorce.

Grieving and its associated stresses can pass by more quickly if you take good care of yourself and your needs. The chapter on **Your Support Network** focuses on various ways that you can elicit support and take better care of yourself.

Sometimes you can get stuck in one of the first four stages or zigzag through all of them, not able to let go. At least part of your energy is held hostage by the event, and you cannot fully move forward. You may revert back to an earlier stage, if you have not fully worked through it. But until you move to acceptance, your life can be painful and unsettled.

Getting Stuck

"The real questions are the ones that obtrude upon your consciousness whether you like it or not, the ones that make your mind start vibrating like a jackhammer, the ones that you 'come to terms with' only to discover that they are still there.

The real questions refuse to be placated. They barge into your life at the times when it seems most important for them to stay away. They are the questions asked most frequently and answered most inadequately, the ones that reveal their true natures slowly, reluctantly, most often against your will."

Ingrid Bengis

My clients, the top executives of an organization, and I came to an agreement on the scope of the new organizational development initiative. This was a new company, but I had worked with the individuals for many years in other capacities. I left the planning

meeting, pumped with ideas on how to help them build a healthy organization from the start. Together we would build a company so strong at its core that it could grow no matter what changed around it. We scheduled the next three steps on the plan, and I was charged with preparing a proposal for a contract.

This was by far the largest organizational development project I had ever done. I was thrilled with the promise of bringing all the knowledge I had gathered in the 15 years of working in this field into a comprehensive plan. This was a complex plan that took into consideration the developmental needs of everyone and ways to insure their success. Part of the plan provided for strengthening the organizational structure, while making it flexible enough to handle the uncertainty in the market and continuous changes in that industry. Implementing this project required great commitment and a large amount of time, money, and resources in the first year. I asked for a budget, but being a new company, they had not budgeted anything for this work, and would have to come up with the money as they went along.

In the following weeks, I worked many long hours to create a blueprint that would help the company leaders make this vision a reality. I felt so excited and motivated that I put all my hopes into this one project. In my mind I saw how it would unfold and all the things that I would do to make it successful. I woke up in the middle of the night with ideas and had to write them down before I could sleep again. I saw myself as a partner in doing something noble. I began to live in a possible future reality as if it had already happened.

Since this was a big contract, I checked with several of my colleagues to verify that I had invoiced properly. I offered an estimate based on the market value of the services, which, due to the complexity and skill requirements of the project, was a substantial sum of money. I told my clients that I was sensitive to their financial needs because I believed in the project and was committed to its success.

I received an e-mail reply saying that they were interested in the project, but the price was more than they could afford. They would discuss the fees and the scope of the work internally and let me know. This was a reasonable reaction and I did not feel concerned—especially since a contract was attached to the e-mail for my review. The contract would be signed as soon as we agreed on the price. I replied that I would gladly work out something mutually beneficial and would wait to hear back from them. I expected to get a call at most in a couple of weeks. But, I didn't hear anything for weeks. Meanwhile, my calls and e-mails regarding other matters also did not receive any response.

Every day I wondered when the next e-mail or phone call would arrive, letting me know one way or the other what was going on. But there was only silence. A year-long project hung in the balance. I had pushed everything else off my plate to focus on this “sure bet”. I was ready to focus my attention completely as soon as we came to a financial agreement.

When a month passed by, I started to imagine all kinds of scenarios. I still awaited news from my clients, but now the momentum was gone. They had put me on hold and I could not do anything about it. I was too invested to easily let it go. This was that once-in-a-lifetime chance to prove my professional worth. So I emotionally hung on to the hope that my clients would eventually see the importance of the initiative and the value of their investment. I had to believe that they would call soon and we would come to an agreement.

I felt more stressed with each passing day. Soon the stress built up so much that I fell into the grip of the Shadow. For a week, I wallowed in overwhelming emotions. There was no energy left to struggle as I was forced to look inside—to stay with my emotions and listen to what they were telling me.

That week my coaching session was focused on this issue. With the help of my coach, I realized that I had put all my eggs in one basket and now I felt vulnerable and at the mercy of this company. I understood that I had tied my own self worth to this project. I was emotionally attached to something that was not materializing. On the one hand, I knew that I had to let go and start on a new path, but on the other hand I wondered if there was a logical explanation for this lack of communication. I was afraid of losing something that was precious to me without even knowing the reason! I felt confused and angry. Why can't they just let me know something?

When the time for the first scheduled event approached, I asked for an update and simply received an e-mail saying that they would like to reschedule the event for the following month, and they would contact me soon. I assumed that the project was cancelled, but talking to a friend within the organization, I found out that it was still on the table. They were meeting in a few weeks to discuss the scope of the plan. I would hear something from them within a week after that meeting. Once again, I had hope and once again I had to wait. The weeks leading to the meeting were easier because I did not expect any communication. I channeled my energy into processing my Shadow Walk and learning its lessons. I began writing and working on other projects. As I waited, I started to look at other options and what I could do next if this project folded. But, inside I still felt hopeful. Surely, they would want to do some version of the plan, even if a smaller one.

The meeting came and went. On that day I could hardly think about anything else other than what they were discussing. The choices were simple; either they 1) were still interested, 2) wanted to do fewer things or 3) didn't want to work with me at all. Any of these alternatives was a reasonable management decision that I could support if only they told me. But I heard nothing—not that week, not the following week, and not even the third week!

As each week went by, I got less and less hopeful that the project would fly. With the passage of time, I found myself in emotional turmoil again. My feelings were so convoluted that I didn't know how to deal with them. The first symptom of stress was a familiar stomach ache that always signals me to pay attention to my inner voice. Then I began to feel my energy shifting inward as my emotions intensified. I started to use the techniques that usually ease my work through a Shadow, but this time nothing seemed to work for long. Everything reminded me of the project, and I kept wondering what had happened to it?

The nights were the worst because my defenses were down. It was hard to fall asleep with my mind racing in a loop of painful thoughts. Even my sleep was not restful. I often woke up in the middle of the night from what I call "mind attacks". Runaway thoughts took control of my brain and made me toss and turn. I prayed for my mind to stop whirling. I became stuck and did not know how to get unstuck!

All my energy was consumed with the need to know something. I was dealing with an **unfinished business**. I was stuck in an emotional limbo. I could not move on because it seemed impossible for me to accept a loss I didn't know had happened yet.



The Power of Unfinished Business

"Following your feelings will lead you to their source. Only through emotions can you encounter the force field of your own soul."

Gary Zukav, **The Seat of the Soul**

With my coach's guidance, I explored and listed in my journal the feelings that tormented me. I wrote that I felt pain, anxiety, fear, hurt, betrayal, disappointment, loss, and anger. I said that I did not want to leave part of my soul in this project, that I had unfinished business with my clients, that I needed to have closure. I wanted to know whether or not it was my fault!!!

Just seeing everything written down felt good. This was my first step to clarity. In our next session we talked about the significance of each emotion and the meaning of each. I understood that my pain came from feeling stuck and the anxiety was caused by anticipation and waiting. I felt scared of the financial implications as I waited for this work that had the potential for great financial security. I was hurt because I felt disrespected by my clients' lack of communication and insensitivity to me as a small business owner and, even more importantly, as a friend. The sense of betrayal resulted from my perception

that they did not value me, and I felt disappointed because my current reality was not the same as the future I had imagined a few months before. My anger erupted to protect myself and cause change.

All the signs seemed to say that this door had closed. But even with that acceptance, I could not fully move on. I still had *unfinished business* with the project—I needed to know what had happened. Part of my emotional energy was invested in an answer. Something of great value had disappeared without a trace. I needed to know if the cause was an internal company issue or if I had done something that derailed the project. I needed to hear the story of what happened to the project, in order to achieve closure with it.

I came to realize that I would have to do something to release the energy that had been captured by this project. My first step was to write a letter to my clients that I would not send. I spent hours on the letter, writing how things looked like from my perspective, how I felt hurt, and what I needed from them. I poured out everything that was blocking my energy into these words. That was not a pretty letter, but it felt good to write it. It felt like purging toxins from my body.

The letter helped relieve the pressure, but I had to go beyond my immediate feelings and explore the deeper issues that were now surfacing. I had to face that I was afraid of making mistakes, because then I would feel like a failure. I was reminded once again that forgiveness starts with the self and I had to remove the load that I was placing on my own shoulders by expecting perfection.

I finally comprehended that my self worth was not dependent on this project. I realized there were many other things that I could offer the world. Now I could finally let go. With my ego no longer invested in the project, my energy was released to recreate a new future where this project was only one possibility. No matter how it turned out, this project could no longer define me. My unfinished business was now finished and I could move on.

Interestingly, within days of this new awareness, I received an e-mail from my clients, telling me that due to some unexpected problems, they had not yet had the opportunity to make the final decision. The project was not dead after all! By this time, I was in a very different emotional place and I could quietly accept any outcome.



9 Facts about Unfinished Business

1. Occurs when experiences are not completed for some reason.
2. Often due to avoidance or conflict.
3. Contains memories and associations that still have "voltage."
Finished Business does not maintain "voltage."
4. Stays in the memory with two to three times the force of Finished Business.
5. Drains energy.
6. Becomes a rigid, fixed pattern that keeps demanding to be re-experienced.
7. The hope that if we re-experience it, it will come out differently, and we will get what we want.
8. Relationships will give us an opportunity to re-create the experience (feelings).
9. The more Unfinished Business we can release, the more we are available for new experiences.

4 Common Reactions to Unfinished Business

1. You avoid the person involved.
2. You do not want anyone else to have a good relationship with that person either.
3. You make unkind remarks about her/him.
4. You do not support her/his ideas, feelings, etc.

This page is adapted by permission from works of Eileen Broer – For deeper understanding of the Power of Unfinished Business visit <http://humandimension.org/audiotapes.html>

Numbing Out

"My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk."

John Keats

It is possible that you may experience a change so extreme and painful that to protect you from the intense pain, your mind and body become numb for a while. I share a personal story with you about one occasion when I felt numb for months as a result of a change that was too unbearable to deal with otherwise.

As I said in the Introduction, I came to the United States against my will when my whole family moved here. This move was to keep me from marrying the man I had fallen in love with in college. I cried for weeks before we left Iran. But something changed in me when I saw him for the last time and said my final goodbye. My tears dried up. It felt as though a switch was turned off and my intense feelings were replaced with ice. I was unaware of my expressions, but later on my brother told me what he saw. He said that on the day of our departure at the airport, I was unusually calm and emotionless. My face seemed blank and I gazed un-seeing into the distance. I was oblivious of family members who had come to the airport to bid us farewell. My reaction seemed more appropriate for a weekend trip to a nearby destination than leaving my country for the unforeseeable future.

I don't remember much of that day. The shock of the change proved more than I could handle, and I froze up inside. My systems had shut down and my body and mind were functioning on autopilot. I had very little interest in what was happening around me. I had no energy to engage in all my family's activities in setting up our new home. I just wanted to be left alone. I had "numbed out". I stayed in that daze for the next several weeks as I began my new life in America. I began to thaw when I started collage six weeks later. The demands of fitting into my new environment gradually drew my attention away from the internal pain and refocused my energy outwards.



Numbing out is a phase of change that you only recognize after you have gone through it. Think of it as a safety fuse that blows when electrical current becomes excessive. You numb out when you cannot handle the emotional load.

Numbing out can happen in two ways:

1. Unconscious – This is a protective mechanism to keep you from being overloaded.
2. Conscious attempt to avoid pain – This is done by engaging in addictive behaviors.

There can be many reasons for numbing out such as:

- Reaching a saturation point
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Experiencing undesired change
- Experiencing events that are too painful
- Experiencing a spiritual void

10 Indicators That You Have Numbed Out

1. Depression or sadness
2. Reduced appetite
3. Lost humor
4. Lack of focus and concentration
5. Isolation, detachment, and disinterest
6. Low energy
7. Low motivation
8. Low libido
9. Tunnel vision
10. Cycling thoughts running over and over in your mind

Acting Out

Numbing out is a natural and protective reaction to intense emotions. However, at times it can indicate a need to fill a spiritual void. If you are not aware of this need, it can manifest in acting out in improper ways and escaping into addictions. Some addictions such as drugs, alcohol, and gambling are more obvious than others. You have to pay special attention to subtle addictive activities. You might act out by overdoing otherwise healthy activities such as exercise, sex, sleeping, watching television, and eating.

Downtime to Reset

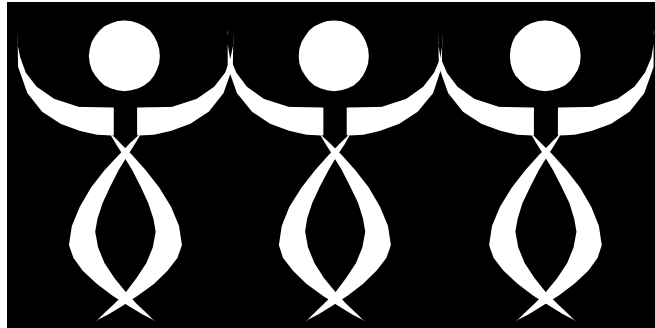
Avoiding grief brings greater grief. Addictive behaviors are ways to avoid the real issues. But avoiding an issue cannot solve it, only addressing it can. It is important to take “downtime”—a time away from your day-to-day activities to sit in quiet and reflect on your underlying emotions and needs. Understanding yourself helps you to “reset” your emotional system. Emotions fuel actions, so when you reset you do not go back to filling the void inappropriately. Also if you find yourself acting out, you can make a conscious effort to deal with what is before you and to address your needs. You can choose to engage in those actions that will fulfill your needs without producing negative consequences. When the void is filled, the buttons are disengaged and the drive to act out is no longer there.

Reflection – Acting Out

The ways I tend to act out when I am in emotional pain are...

Reflection – Dealing with Emotional Pain

Actions I can take to deal more effectively with emotional pain are...



CHAPTER 10—YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together."

Vesta Kelly

Your Support Network

"Here is the basic rule for winning success. Let's mark it in the mind and remember it. The rule is: Success depends on the support of other people. The only hurdle between you and what you want to be is the support of other people."

David Joseph Schwartz

You cannot hide from change or pain—but you never have to go through it alone. In times of great change, when everything seems to be shifting, finding anchors to steady yourself becomes even more important than ever. The time to secure your support system is before you actually need it. Investing your love and time in authentic friendships, searching for your inner strength, and reading books that speak to your heart are among those things that you can do and enjoy while building a strong support system.

Several years ago, my brother died from a sudden heart attack when I was out of town. I felt that my world was turned upside-down. I never had a chance to say goodbye to him because he did not want his body to be preserved. He was cremated by the time I returned. I felt that a giant hole had opened up in my heart and threatened to engulf me.

I felt extremely close to my brother even though he was 11 years older than me. He was one of the cornerstones of my life. He had been the person I went to when I had to solve a problem. I did not believe that I would ever get through the pain of his loss. I could not find comfort in much of anything. I wanted to curl up somewhere and die. I got through thanks to my support system.

I was helped by the amazing circle of friendship I have cultivated throughout the years. My friends were there for me every step of the way. They would not let me feel alone in this time of need. They surrounded me with love, but also gave me space when I needed to be alone. I got daily calls and many invitations to lunch, coffee, and walks in the park. My friends reminded me that I had much to live for.

Another source of comfort for me was my belief system. For many years I had studied the principles of various religions and spiritual concepts until I had developed my own beliefs. But it was not until my brother's death that I had to rely on them to survive. With the loss of my brother, I felt totally helpless and out of control. I had no choice but to surrender and trust that my faith would get me through. Through enduring the pain of my brother's death, my conceptual spiritual beliefs found their way to my heart where they finally became solid and real.

My therapist was yet another incredible resource to rely on. She helped me to understand my grief and find ways to express what I felt. Three weeks after my brother's

death, I took my journal and went to his favorite park to sit in his favorite spot and have a talk with him. Up to that time I had been busy caring for my devastated mother and staying strong for the rest of my hurting family. As I sat on the bench and watched the river flow by me, I thought about him and all the times that the two of us sat on that very spot and talked. This was the place I could feel him near me. I said a prayer and asked God to help me start the healing process.

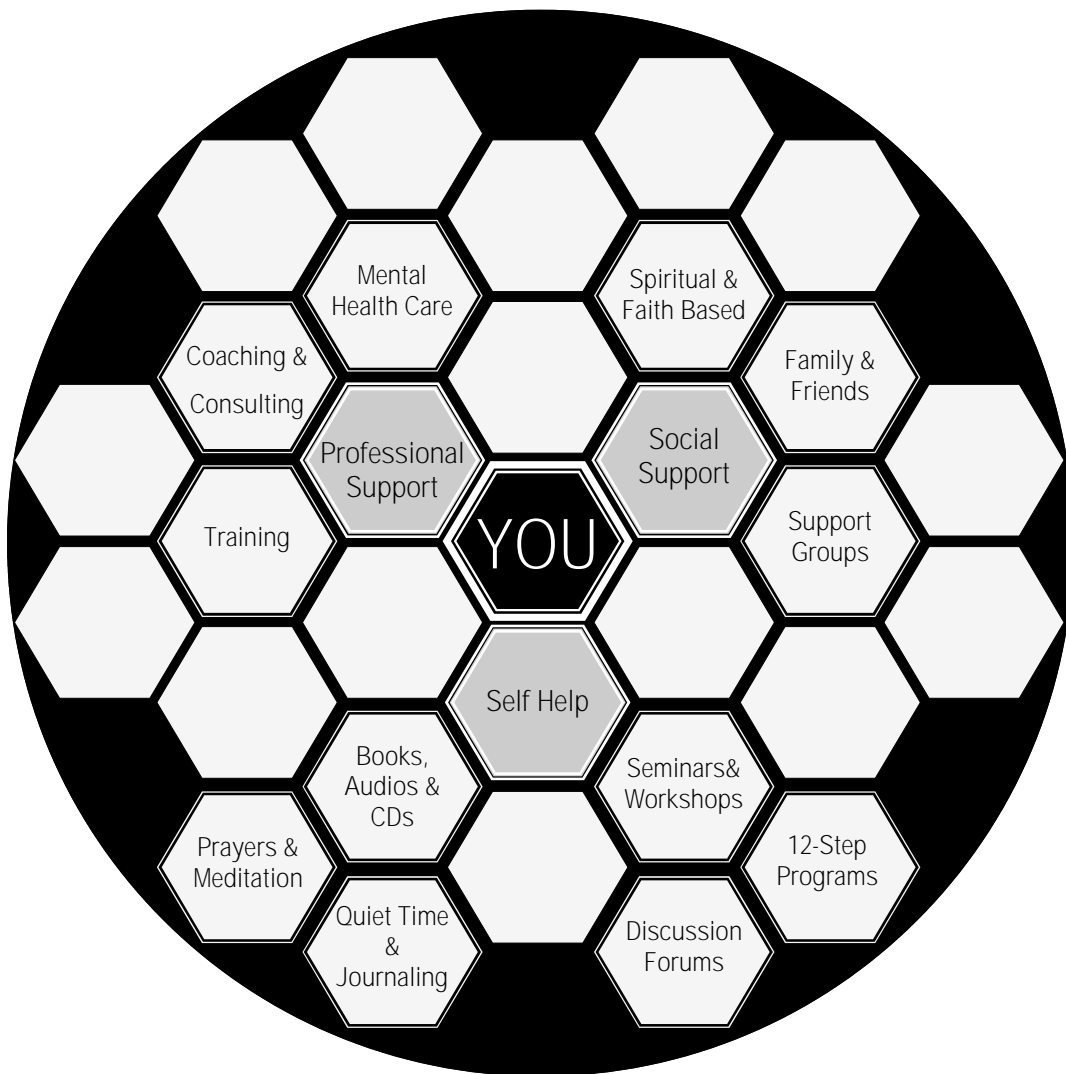
Then I began to write in my journal. I was amazed at how *angry* I was at him for leaving me! My words of anger poured out on the page as my tears washed over them. I wrote for a long time until I moved on from anger to declaring my undying love and gratitude for him. That day I took the time to sit in solitude, hear myself, and tend to my feelings. I allowed myself to feel and express my anger even though I could not logically justify being angry at my dead brother. In reality, feelings just exist without a need to justify them. Once I acknowledged my anger, I could move through it and mourn my loss. When I left the park something had shifted within me as I finally achieved closure.

This was by far the worst experience of my life to that point. It left me emotionally paralyzed for months. It took a long time before my life began to resemble normalcy. I cannot imagine what this experience would have been like without my wonderful network of support. It was through this experience that I truly appreciated the importance of my support and the safety net it provided me.



Types of Support

There are three types of support systems: 1) self-help, 2) social and 3) professional, as shown in the Support Network illustration. Some of them, such as friendships and spiritual awakening, need to be developed and nurtured through the years, but most others are available as you need them.



Support Network Model

Often you can get all the support you need to handle changes through self-help methods and social support, but at times you might feel completely lost and overwhelmed, even with good social support. When nothing you do is making a significant difference and self-help is not enough, you need to consider getting professional help. In doing so, you

first have to recognize the need, and then decide on the type of professional help before choosing the appropriate provider. Examples of professional help: life coaches, business coaches, mentors, therapists, counselors, and clergy.

2 Main Reasons to Go Beyond Self-Help

1. What has happened prevents you from moving on and you need to examine your personal history, the underlying causes, and associated feelings in order to begin the process of healing. The best help—depending on the nature of the stress—is often found in therapy. If there are symptoms that require medication, visit a psychiatrist. Otherwise, you can get help from a psychologist or a licensed clinical social worker.
2. You have worked through issues, and have passed through stages, but need support as you move on to the next steps. That is when using a coach can be most beneficial.

Coaching or Therapy

The following comparisons are to help you understand the differences between therapy and coaching. Each model is suited to specific needs and it is important for you to choose the support that benefits you the most.

<i>Basic Differences Between 2 Successful Help Models</i>	
<i>Therapy Model</i>	<i>Coaching Model</i>
Utilizes a medical model.	Utilizes a performance/growth model.
Discussion of feelings, integration of past hurtful events.	Creation of goals, strategies and action plans.
Works with the unconscious with a primary focus on feelings.	Works with the conscious with a primary focus on actions toward values-based goals.
Focus is on behavioral awareness, healing, and restoration.	Focus is on personal awareness, achievement, and enhancement.
Patient looks backward to understand the past and its impact on the present.	Client looks forward to create a better future.
Untangling of unconscious conflicts allows the patient many more choices.	Works with client to identify, prioritize, implement, and actualize choices made.
Goal is to overcome obstacles and increase personal strength through self-understanding.	Goal is to recognize self-potential and evolve to a higher level of functioning.
Energy is directed towards reducing emotional pain.	Energy is directed towards inspiring to achieve.
Often deducted as a medical expense.	Usually a business / personal expense.
Often a slower process: major psychological underpinnings carefully brought to light for examination.	Rapid growth possible because conflict resolution has been handled.

<i>Approaches of 2 Help Models</i>	
<i>Therapy Model</i>	<i>Coaching Model</i>
Listens to feelings, conflicts, and symptoms of underlying dysfunction and reflects those back to the patient. Will follow the patient on any valid exploration of feelings.	Listens for language, blocks, needs, and values as clues for how to get the client into action. Reflects actions back to client and problem solves.
Directs the patient toward self-responsibility. Teaches how to be less reactive by changing behaviors.	Directs the client toward accountability. Encourages and requests proactive behaviors.
Provides new perspectives.	Provides new approaches.
Deals with self-imposed limits.	Deals with missed opportunities.

<i>Relationships in 2 Help Models</i>	
<i>Therapy Model</i>	<i>Coaching Model</i>
Traditional relationship. Therapist assumes responsibility for patient's healing process.	Collaborative/ equal partnership. Client assumes responsibility for growth and success.
Growth of the therapist not an issue.	Both often experience personal growth simultaneously.
Patient is not allowed to know personal details of the therapist's life.	Coach shares relevant personal information while guiding client toward understanding and growth.
Strong boundaries involving stated legal and ethical limits and guidelines.	Awareness of stated boundaries by both parties. High level of ethics in place.

<i>How 2 Help Models Work With People</i>	
<i>Therapy Model</i>	<i>Coaching Model</i>
Patient has difficulty functioning and don't know why.	Client is eager to move to a higher level of functioning: (double income, more joy, get the most out of business and life pursuits, etc.) and are unsure how.
Therapist diagnosis the condition.	Client self-assesses and set goals.
Therapist treats the patient dealing with old pain, old issues, or current traumas in their lives.	Client designs the future with the help of the coach based on having a strong personal foundation.
Therapist monitors the progress.	Coach monitors performance.
Patient absorbs information.	Client acts on information.
The scope of work is focused on the presented problem.	The scope of work is expansive and exploratory.
Helps the patient to stabilize and move from dysfunctional to functional.	Helps the client balance and move from functional to extraordinary.
Teaches the patient coping and protective mechanisms. Helps patient resolve old pain and cut through old defenses.	Encourages the client to use his/her strength and to build reserves. Teaches new skills and tools for personal or business growth.

Comparison tables are co-created with Coach John Nagy. For more information you can visit www.coach.net.

Mental Health Care

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, when too many family pressures piled up on me, I looked into my company's Employees' Assistance Program (EAP). My first session with the EAP psychologist was a new and eye-opening experience. I grew up in a country that did not promote mental health, so I was never taught about the importance of mental health care. As a child, the only time I ever heard of a psychiatrist was in reference to a family friend admitted to a mental hospital. In my little girl's mind, I understood that you had to be crazy to need one of those doctors. Now I was learning that *therapy is not for the mentally ill but for those who want to be mentally healthy*.

It felt good to regularly talk to someone knowledgeable about problems and ways to fix them. This was indeed a new idea that I took to very quickly. Therapy helped me open my eyes to new perspectives and viewing things from new angles. In therapy, I learned to look within, to hear myself, and to trust my inner wisdom where I would always find all the answers.

Introduction to the EAP program eventually led me to spend several years in counseling with a fantastic therapist. By this time I was in my late thirties and I was experiencing the so called "midlife crises". My therapist, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) became my anchor as I weathered that storm. I loved working with her and learning more and more about how my mind functioned. The level of self-awareness and growth that I achieved in that period of time was not possible any other way.

With my therapist's help I learned to adjust to all the major changes I was experiencing. I learned techniques to resolve my problems. I worked through the war between my Middle Eastern upbringing and my Western lifestyle that had raged inside me for years. Working with this competent and caring therapist gave me a safe place to explore what was happening inside me and deal with issues that left me fragile and raw. She helped me see my own patterns of action and interaction. My therapist guided me to find my inner strength while I discovered lasting solutions to my issues. Growth requires hard work, but it was also extremely rewarding.

Through this experience, I learned much about myself and about human behaviors. That knowledge still serves me in solving new problems as they arise. Even though it has been several years since my last visit to my therapist, I know that I can always count on her support. I know if I face something bigger than I can handle, I can call and ask for help. That is a very comforting thought.



If you choose to work with a therapist, you should pay a lot of attention to choosing someone who can fit your needs. Also remember that, as in any other profession, the quality of work can vary among therapists. It is better to not have therapy than to have a therapist who is not good. When you work with a therapist, you trust him or her with the care of your mental health, so that person must be trustworthy. Finding a good, qualified professional may take a little bit of digging, but take the time to do it right.

Some Very Wise Words

A large survey by *Consumer Reports* published in 1995 suggested that most people are satisfied with their treatment and that it does help people adjust to changes in their lives. But if your therapist is not making a difference in your life, always keep in mind that you can change the situation. If after three sessions you feel you are not benefiting from the interaction, switch therapists. Your life is too important and therapy is too expensive to waste that kind of time and money.

(Source <http://www.soyouwanna.com/site/syws/therapist/therapist5.html>)

Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers—Demystified

Psychologists have a Ph.D., Psy.D. or Ed.D. with an area of specialty in diagnosing and treating emotional disorders. This individual will have completed four years of college and an additional four years of graduate school. Psychologists typically provide psychotherapy, and administer and interpret psychological tests. A state licensing or regulation board governs psychologists.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors with specialized training in mental health. They are able to prescribe medications and, more often than not, an individual seeing a psychiatrist will be working regularly with another mental health professional. Usually a psychiatrist will conduct an initial psychiatric evaluation and provide follow-up appointments for medication management if that is needed. There are some psychiatrists who provide therapy, but many do not. A psychiatrist is licensed in the state in which, he or she practices and therefore is governed by a state regulatory board.

Licensed Clinical Social Workers hold a graduate degree of MSW and specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional disorders. Generally, they do not provide testing, although some hold additional certifications that qualify them to do so. Their treatment patterns are similar to that of a psychologist. They must be certified or licensed in the state in which they practice and anyone referring to himself or herself as a “social worker” without such certification or license is in violation. A state licensing or regulatory board governs social workers.

3 Basic Expectations You Must Have from Your Therapist

1. Confidentiality is crucial. You need to be completely comfortable while working out your treatment. This could be greatly compromised if you sense that your comments are leaving the office. It goes without saying that your therapist should not discuss your case, or even your status as a client, with anyone else. That's also why you shouldn't choose a therapist who you know socially.
2. Privacy is also important. Make sure the physical setting of your therapist's office is such that you feel your confidentiality is not being violated. Going to a therapist who shares a waiting room with the local newspaper might not be a good idea.
3. No Sexual Advances should be made by your therapist. If this happens in any way at all, you need to stop seeing this person and report him or her to your state licensing board.

Adapted from "When Talk Is Not Cheap: Or How to Find the Right Therapist When You Don't Know Where to Begin" by Mandy Aftel and Robin Tolmach Lakoff

10 Considerations in Selecting a Mental Health Care Provider

1. Different therapists are better suited for different issues. Choose a therapist who has expertise in the area that you need help in.
2. Ask your medical doctor or friends for referrals of therapists they have worked with and have gotten results from.
3. You should speak to the therapist before your first session. Conduct an interview and see if there is a good fit.
4. Check out print media or search the therapists' names on the Internet. Learn about them.
5. Ask the therapist how long he or she thinks your treatment might last. Therapy can be a long process, but it is not meant to be a permanent one. Therapy should teach you coping mechanisms and effective ways of dealing with life.
6. Mandy Aftel and Robin Tolmach Lakoff, authors of *When Talk Is Not Cheap*, recommend asking your therapist if he or she has actually been in therapy and what they got out of it.
7. You have to feel comfortable and safe with the therapist. You will be baring your soul to this person and she or he must be able to create an environment of safety for you.
8. The therapist's approach should be supportive and not shame-based or judgmental. (You may not discover if this is the case until you have had a few sessions – Caution: If this not the case, it is a clue that you need to consider going to someone else and not be used as an excuse for you to bail out of therapy altogether.)
9. Consider your comfort zone and affinities – would it make a difference if you are working with a man or a woman, younger or older? You will share private, vulnerable, and emotional moments with this person.
10. Ask your therapist what to expect from your first session aside from basic scheduling and payment details.

Coaching

One of the greatest gifts I have ever given to myself is to work with a good coach. My coach has been a constant source of inspiration, motivation, encouragement, support—and much humor! With his gentle, firm, and sometimes down-right blunt guidance, I have developed clarity in my purpose and a strategy to translate my vision into reality. He has helped me navigate the rough terrain, held me up when I was down, and cheered me on when I was on a roll. He has kept me accountable to myself, taught me new skills, and reminded me to value myself—without reservation!

Using a personal coach is a rich and rewarding experience if you choose one who is suited to you and your needs. Like any other profession, the quality of coaching varies. My first experience with a coach a few years ago was not as positive as it could have been. He was a friend who was new to coaching. He was a very kind and insightful person. However, he lacked both experience and a tested process, and this created much confusion for me. I felt overwhelmed with his stream of ideas that I could not implement. I had not done my homework. I had no clue about what I wanted to get out of coaching or what I could expect. After a few months the pain surpassed the gain and I stopped working with my first coach.



Should you consider working with any coach, first determine what you want to gain from coaching. Know from the beginning that you are embarking on a relationship that must be authentic to be effective. You must be willing to allow the coach to help you hold yourself accountable to your commitments. You should feel a sense of comfort and trust with this person in order to open up and be truthful. Your coach will ask you what you should already be asking yourself—if you were operating with higher awareness.

10 Considerations for Selecting a Coach

1. The service the coach provides should match your needs.
2. The coach should have the specific expertise you need.
3. The coach's testimonials should reflect what you are trying to personally accomplish.
4. The coach should offer a complimentary session to assess compatibility.
5. The coach's philosophy and belief system should complement yours.
6. Your conversation with the coach should inspire you.
7. The coach's approach and system should work for you.
8. The delivery method should match your needs (face-to-face, calls, etc.).
9. The cost should match your budget.
10. You should expect a specific return on your investment that the coach is able to support you in creating.

Building a Support Network

Process:

1. Brainstorm ways you can build or enhance your support network.
2. Choose 3 items and write specific Actions to accomplish them on the next page.
3. Decide on a date that you will return to this activity and Review your Progress. Record this date on your calendar.
4. Review and record your progress and set a new review date if necessary.
5. Repeat the process with new action items until you feel that you have created your desired support network.

Reflection – Building My Support Network

In order to build my support network I need to....

Reflection – Building My Support Network

Specific actions I will take to build my support network....	Progress Review...
Action 1:	Date:
Action 2:	Date:
Action 3:	Date:

Reflection – Building My Support Network

Specific actions I will take to build my support network....	Progress Review...
Action 1:	Date:
Action 2:	Date:
Action 3:	Date:

Reflection – Building My Support Network

Specific actions I will take to build my support network....	Progress Review...
Action 1:	Date:
Action 2:	Date:
Action 3:	Date:



CHAPTER 11—BECOMING A CHANGE THRIVER

"You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of."

Jim Rohn

Becoming a “Change Thriver”

“There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.”

Dr. Denis Waitley

As a human being, you cannot escape the cycle of change in your life. Change is your opportunity to learn and grow. You have no choice but to experience the Deconstruction stage of the change cycle. But you have choices in the Exploration and Reconstruction phases. You can either ignore what your psyche is trying to tell you and leave your deep issues unresolved—or you can take the time to understand and work through your Shadow Walks, so that bring clarity and purpose to your life. *You have the choice to thrive through change.*

To thrive means to grow and develop, to prosper, and to be successful. Becoming a Change Thriver means that you grow to be **change-ready**—you have learned ways to embrace change rather than run away from it. Being a Change Thriver is not something you are born with. Although certain personality traits can make it more comfortable for some people to deal with change, for most people thriving in change is a developmental process. Since the nature of life is change, you have gone through many changes in your life and have developed certain skills in coping with change. The first step to becoming a Change Thriver is to identify the essential characteristics and the role they play in making change an easier process for you. The next step is to take inventory of your skills and determine the additional skills you need to develop. Then you have the rest of your life to perfect the art of change.

To thrive in change you need to examine 3 main sets of characteristics of Change Thrivers:

1. Internal mind-set and beliefs
2. Self preservation
3. Approach to change

The more you learn and practice these skills, the easier it becomes to thrive in change.

Change Thriver Characteristics

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Charles Darwin

Internal Mind-Set and Beliefs

1. Have a sense of their life purpose
2. Incorporate their spiritual beliefs as a foundation in their daily life
3. Strive to be true to themselves and are motivated to live their own truth
4. Stay attentive to internal messages
5. Trust in the process of their life
6. Can let go of control in things they cannot control
7. Practice an attitude of gratitude and seek the advantages in situations

Self-Preservation

1. Cultivate a solid support network
2. Care for their body, mind, and spirit during the process of change
3. Honor and express their emotions
4. Recognize the value of humor
5. Have strategies to cope with uncertainty
6. Stay open to possibilities
7. Are adaptable

Approach

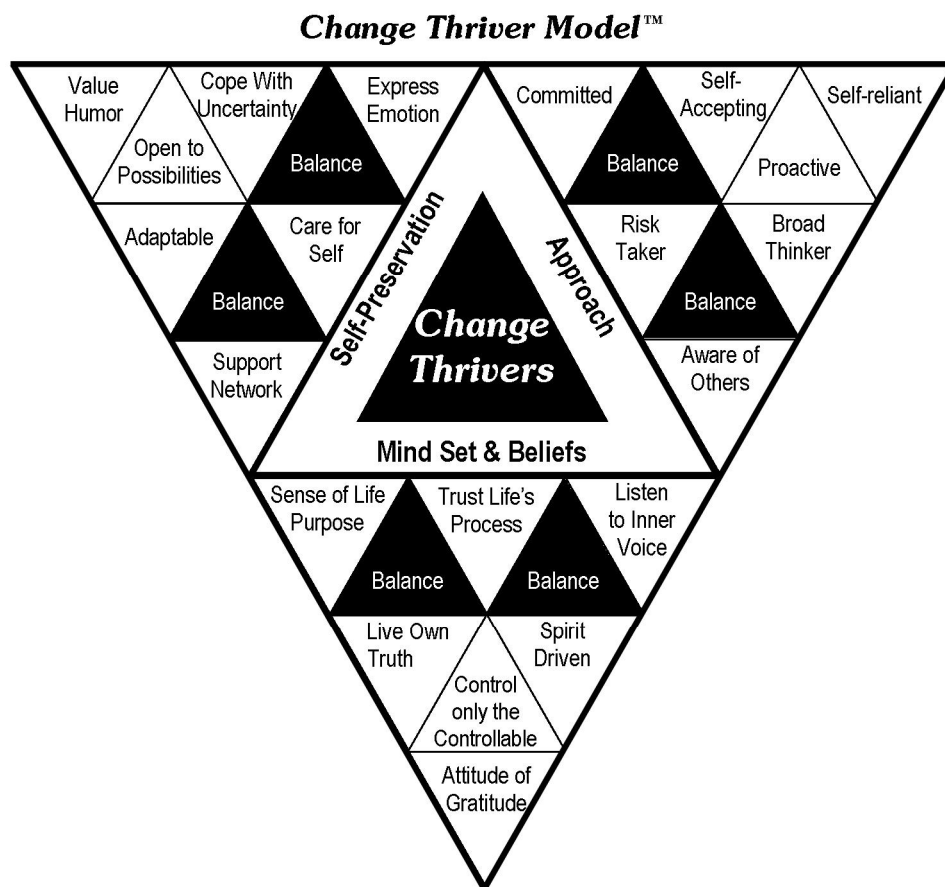
1. Know and are confident in their own abilities
2. Know their own shortcomings without judging themselves
3. Think beyond the obvious
4. Have the courage to be proactive
5. Are willing to take prudent risks
6. Are willing to follow through with plans and commitments
7. Approach change holistically and take into account the impact of change on others

Change Thriver Model

This model is an easy reference to the characteristics of Change Thrivers. Mind set and belief system is the foundation for thriving in change. It gives you access to your internal power to give you strength to weather the storms.

When you know how to preserve yourself, you can cope with the deconstruction stages of transformational change as the world seem to crash all around you. A solid approach allows you to reinvent yourself and create a new future more appropriate to the self you have evolved into.

Becoming a Change Thriver is a dynamic process and not a static one. It requires a continuous effort and a balanced approach to maintain it.



Change Thriver Self-Assessment

"The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings."

Okakura Kakuzo

Becoming a Change Thriver is an ongoing process. Awareness of your own behavioral tendencies is the first step of this process. The next step is developing the characteristics that would aid you in becoming a Thriver in your changing world.

This assessment is a tool to help you evaluate yourself. You can take this assessment with two different intentions.

1. With a specific change in mind
2. With changes in your life in general terms

The purpose of this assessment is to help you identify both the traits that you have already developed and the traits that you need and want to develop in order to be a Change Thriver in your future.

Reflection – Change Thriver Assessment

Change Thrivers Characteristics		Never	Rarely	Some-times	Often	Always
M i n d S e t & B e l i e f s	I am clear about my life’s purpose.					
	My spiritual beliefs are the foundation of my daily life.					
	I strive to be true to myself.					
	When I become aware of a personal truth, it is essential for me to live that truth.					
	I pay heed to my internal messages.					
	I trust in my process of life.					
	I can let go of controlling those things that are not in my circle of influence.					
S e l f - P r e s e r v a t i o n	I practice an attitude of gratitude and seek the advantages and opportunities in situations—regardless.					
	I have a solid support system which I always depend on.					
	I take care of my body, mind, and spirit—especially in stressful times.					
	I pay attention to the messages my emotions “gift” to me and express them appropriately.					
	I recognize the value of humor in helping me through change.					
	I have strategies to cope with uncertainty.					
	I tend to stay open to possibilities.					
A p p r o a c h	I am adaptable.					
	I know and feel confident in my abilities.					
	I know and do not judge my shortcomings.					
	I am an innovative thinker.					
	I have the courage to be proactive.					
	I am willing to take prudent risks.					
	I follow through with the plans I make.					
	I take into account the impact of change on others.					

Reflection – Change Thrivers Characteristics

The insights I got from this assessment are...

Reflection – Change Thrivers Characteristics

My strengths are...

Reflection – Change Thrivers Characteristics

The skills I need to develop are...

Building Blocks Inventory

The purpose of this exercise is to have an awareness of the elements you might have already developed in aiding you towards being a Change Thriver.

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory- Spiritual Foundation

The spiritual beliefs that are the foundation of my daily life are...

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory- Support Network

Self-help resources that are available to me...

List of books and resources that can inspire, guide and/or comfort me...

List of activities that help me when I feel down...

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory- Support Network

List of people around me and the ways they support me...

List of support groups that are available to me...

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory- Support Network

List of Professional Support available to me...

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory – Self Care

The ways I take care of my body, mind and spirit are...

Reflection – Building Blocks Inventory –Dealing with Uncertainty

The strategies I have learned to cope with uncertainty are...

Developing Change Thriver Characteristics

Process:

1. Choose 3 of the characteristics you would like to develop and write them in the spaces below.
2. Use the information throughout this resource guide for ideas you can use to develop these characteristics.
3. You might discuss your goals with someone you trust and brainstorm additional ways to develop these characteristics.

1. Change Thriver Characteristics I want to develop ...

2. Change Thriver Characteristics I want to develop ...

3. Change Thriver Characteristics I want to develop ...

Developing an Action Plan

Objective:

To develop necessary skills to become a Change Thriver.

Process:

1. List 3 specific Action items using the ideas from the last exercise that you are committing to in order to build your skills.
2. Decide on a date that you will return to this activity and Review your Progress. Record this date on your calendar.
3. Review and record your progress and set a new review date if necessary.
4. Repeat the process with new action items until you feel that you have reached the desired level of comfort with change and are *change-ready*.

Reflection – Building My Change Thriver Skills

Actions to Develop my Change Thriver skills...	Progress Review...
1.	Date:
2.	Date:
3.	Date:

Reflection – Building My Change Thriver Skills

Actions to Develop my Change Thriver skills...	Progress Review...
1.	Date:
2.	Date:
3.	Date:

Reflection – Building My Change Thriver Skills

Actions to Develop my Change Thriver skills...	Progress Review...
1.	Date:
2.	Date:
3.	Date:

APPENDICES

BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Ayn Rand

Atlas Shrugged

The book gave me a sense of self and a new perspective for a healthy “work & life” community. I learned to value my talents and gifts and being in an environment that also valued my abilities.

Richard Bach

Jonathon Livingston Seagull, Illusions. and One

Richard Bach’s books nurtured my free spirit. They opened my eyes to the idea that I could choose to forge my own path and I could trust the flow of the Universe. This was also my first exposure to the concept of Oneness.

Pat Rodegast & Judith Stanton

Emmanuel’s Book (I through III)

These books gave me a new spiritual model that made sense to me. It answered many questions that were unanswered in my search for God in the various organized religions. It further defined a non-judging God and Universe that was not separate from me or anyone else. It reinforced the belief that we are all One.

Dan Millman

The Way of the Peaceful Warrior, Sacred Journey of the Peaceful Warrior, and No Ordinary Moment

These books gave me practical examples of all that I had come to believe about living my life.

Jane Roberts

Seth Speaks, and The Nature of Personal Reality

These works have very deep and complex concepts about the nature of the Universe. They expanded my awareness to a degree I didn’t believe possible and are well worth the investment of time and attention.

Neale Donald Walsch

Conversations with God (Book 1 through 4)

If I had a conversation with God, I would be asking many of the same questions. The answers and concepts in this book resonated with me and rang true. They helped me “connect the dots” and see a more complete picture of life.

Joseph Girzone

Joshua

I learned about the gifts of living and working with love in my heart.

Marlo Morgan

Mutant Message Down Under

The gift of this book was to take me on a journey to another world where the beliefs of my world were questioned. Through the book, I experienced a harmonious way of life in a manner totally foreign to anything I had ever seen or heard of. It made me long for that society with its simple and yet profound ways, and it made me sad that its wisdom is vanishing with the few tribes that are still living the TRUTH.

James Redfield

Celestine Prophecy

This book gave me new aspects of the concepts I had learned. It was like cutting facets, to bring a diamond into brilliance.

Gary Zukav

The Seat of the Soul

Gary gave me a different lens to look at life... mine in particular! I found the concepts reassuring.

Daniel Quinn

Ishmael, and The Story of B

These books connected me to the rest of the earth. Reading them made me examine my beliefs and assumptions about my place in the world and in nature. They gave me a different model of being...to exist in harmony with the earth. I became conscious of the impact of my actions on the quality of life. The awareness this brought me shifted my paradigms and helped me to make different choices about my life.

Caroline Myss

Anatomy of the Spirit, and Spiritual Madness

I strongly recommend Caroline Myss's work to anyone who wants to transform his or her life. Her words connected me with a deep truth that changed my life in the most daring and positive way. If I were to pick only one book to own, while living on a deserted island, it would be the *Anatomy of the Spirit*. Every few years I read it again.

Iyanla Vanzant

One Day My Soul Just Opened Up

This is a down-to-earth book of great wisdom to guide our daily lives. Each chapter has a gem of a thought... to contemplate, integrate, and to help us tap into our own strengths.

RESOURCES

Books

The Dance of Anger—A Woman's Guide to Changing Patterns of Intimate Relationships, by Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D., Revised edition 1997

Guide to Stress Reduction by L. John Mason Ph.D., Revised edition 2001

Your Heart's Desire—Instructions for Creating the Life You Really Want, by Sonia Choquette, 1997

Negotiating Love—How Women and Men Can Resolve Their Differences, by Riki Robbins Jones Ph.D., 1995

How to Survive the Loss of a Love, by Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D., Melba Colgrove, Ph.D. and Peter McWilliams, 2000

It's Not What Happens to You, It's What You Do about It—Taking Responsibility for Change, by W. Mitchell, 1997

The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Work Book, by Martha Davis, Ph.D., Elizabeth Robins Eshelman, MSW and Mathew McKay, Ph.D., 5th Edition 2004-6

On Death and Dying, by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, 1997

When Talk Is Not Cheap: Or How to Find the Right Therapist When You Don't Know Where to Begin, by Mandy Aftel and Robin Tolmach Lakoff, 1986

Web sites

Business & Life Coaching
<http://www.coach.net/>

Power of Unfinished Business
<http://humandimension.org/audiotapes.html>

How to Master Stress
<http://www.psychwww.com/mtsite/smpage.html>

Overcoming Fear of Change
<http://www.firstsearch.com/RadRpts/Change.htm>

Change: Loss, Opportunity and Resilience
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE7421.html>

PROGRAMS BY AFSANEH NOORI

Keynotes & Workshops

Afsaneh offers her knowledge and experience to:

- **Individuals** needing tools for personal and professional transformation.
- **Professional or Trade Associations** looking for an inspiring keynote speaker, seminar, or workshop facilitation.
- **Corporations or Organizations** striving to build a collaborative team-based culture through effective leadership, team development, customer service and supporting systems.

She presents inspiring, empowering, entertaining and thought provoking programs on 3 topics:

1. Change Thrivers
2. Power Within
3. Change-Ready Organizations

These topics could be presented either as a keynote for an hour session, a 3-hour seminar, or as a full day (6-hour) workshop.

Change Thrivers and Power within are available as weekend workshops. Change-Ready Organizations is available as a 2-day off site planning workshop.

Coaching Program

Afsaneh offers personal coaching on a limited basis. These sessions are structured around the Change Thriver Model. The length and the frequency of coaching are personalized to the need of the client.

For more information visit our website www.ChangeThrivers.com or call toll free (888) 490-9748

CHANGE THRIVERS

“My life was about to change forever – in ways that I could not even imagine. I was in a daze, sitting in an airplane that was getting ready to take off and take me away from Iran and everything I had known as my reality up to that time. This plane would take me to a new world that I only knew from movies!”

That day Afsaneh began her journey to become a Change Thriver. This program is based on the premise of this book which comes from the knowledge she gained on this voyage.

Workshop Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of the session, participants will:

1. Understand the difference between
 - a. “Surviving change” and
 - b. “Thriving in change”.
2. Identify the stages in a cycle of change.
3. Recognize the keys to success and the traits of “Change Thrivers”.
4. Assess their readiness to thrive in change.
5. Learn ways to become “Change Thrivers”.

Workshop Focus/Goals:

1. Increase awareness of “Surviving change” in contrast with “Thriving in change”.
2. Explore the various stages of the change process.
3. Learn “Change Thrivers” mental attitude and approach to change.
4. Explore personal change readiness through a “Self Assessment” tool.
5. Explore ways to close any gaps that are highlighted by the assessment tool.

Methodology:

Combination of Storytelling, discussions and interactive exercises

***For more information visit our website www.ChangeThrivers.com
or call toll free (888) 490-9748***

POWER WITHIN

Power Within is based on a story about Afsaneh's personal journey in search of her true power. She takes you on an imaginary trip to her childhood in Iran, her move to United States and finally achieving the "American Dream" only to realize that in the process she has lost herself... Now it is time for Afsaneh to define her own meaning for power and success.

Workshop Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of the session, participants will:

1. Understand the difference between internal and external power
2. Define their own meaning for Power
3. Examine how their definition for power impacts their lives
4. Explore ways to increase their true power

Workshop Focus/Goals:

1. Explore societal definition and use of power
2. Explore personal definition and use of power
3. Increase awareness of their "True Power"
4. Discover a different mental attitude and approach to gaining power
5. Explore ways to increase their personal power

Methodology:

Combination of Storytelling, discussions and interactive exercises

***For more information visit our website www.ChangeThrivers.com
or call toll free (888) 490-9748***

CHANGE-READY ORGANIZATIONS

This program is created based on Afsaneh's 16 years of experience as a change agent, organizational transformation consultant and trainer working with both manufacturing and service industries.

Lack of proper attention to the human side of organizational change is the biggest cause for organizational failure to manage change effectively. Any one that has been charged with leading organizational change knows that dealing with people's resistance is the most difficult part of the change process. The focus of this program is to highlight the importance of understanding the employees' emotional responses to change and the role of change agents and leaders in channeling that power towards successful change.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of the session, participants will:

1. Understand and communicate the difference between “managing a change” and making an organization “change-ready”.
2. Connect with and respond to the emotional and human side of change.
3. Recognize the intricacies involved in an Organizational Transformation Initiative.
4. Identify the type and magnitude of support an OTI requires from the leadership, internal consultants, change agents, and HR professionals.

Session Focus/Goals:

1. Increase awareness of the difference between “managing a change” and making an organization “change-ready”. Discuss distinctions, similarities and differences.
2. Explore the nature and experience of change and how most humans resist it.
3. Explore and discuss an “Organizational Transformation” model consisting of
 - a. OT Assessments
 - b. Key social aspects of a highly collaborative organizational culture
 - c. Key technical aspects of the organizational culture
 - d. Support systems alignment

Methodology:

Combination of discussions, interactive exercises and audio visual presentation

For more information visit our website www.ChangeThrivers.com or call toll free (888) 490-9748

ABOUT THE COVER ART

Rebirth 2001

A few years ago, I had an opportunity to visit China. Before I left on this long trip, I bought some metallic gel pens and black paper to doodle when I got bored during the flight. I found an unexpected joy in creating colorful, shiny shapes that would pop off the black paper. I found myself taking my pens and paper everywhere and drawing every chance I got. Drawing was so much fun that when I came back to the United States, I bought even more colors and larger paper to work on. I spent hours drawing and finishing a new piece every few days. Through my artwork, I discovered another side of myself—the artist.

Rebirth is a self-portrait depicting my emergence from the finite and mono-chromatic world of linear logic into the colorful and unlimited world of visual art. In time, *Rebirth* has also become my symbol for transformational change—a symbol for breaking through limitations and entering a new world of potentials.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Afsaneh was born in Iran of two daring and devoted parents who named her Fairytale (Afsaneh), contrary to the Moslem tradition of naming children after religious figures. Afsaneh has never followed tradition for tradition's sake and encourages us with her example to be ourselves even if it is not popular.

Afsaneh's developmental work and educational background as an industrial engineer have given her unique skills to help individuals and groups manage change, honor diversity, and grow into high-performing teams. Since 1994, Afsaneh has consulted with many Fortune 500 companies in their efforts to create collaborative environments and to implement change successfully.

One event has had the most significant impact on Afsaneh and her ability to help people manage change and appreciate peoples' individual diversity. At the age of 20, she and her parents moved from Iran to the United States. Her father was a general in the Iran's army. Her uncle, also a general, was executed during Iran's revolution. Afsaneh learned to work through enormous personal sorrow and change while adapting to a new culture. She learned a new language, made new friends and embraced a totally new way of life at a time when her background made her less than easily accepted in the United States. This has, of course, given her an enormous depth of compassion for people and their struggles.

Afsaneh has used her personal changes, challenges, and losses as tools in developing her spiritual values. Her spirit is bright and shines in dark corners when her friends are in need of love and support. In the process of spiritual growth, she came to understand that her life and work were one and the same. She also brings this light into her professional life with joyous results. She believes that her roles as speaker, organizational transformation consultant, coach, author and visual artist are only satisfying when they embody her values.

Overcome Your Resistance and Make Change Work!

- Do you feel you are simply surviving life from day to day?
- Do changes in your life drain your energy?
- Do you expend your energy resisting change rather than embracing it?
- Do you want to learn ways to thrive in the midst of change?

Change Thrivers Resource Guide arms you with effective tools to heighten your awareness and develop your “Change Thriver” skills. Even though some people are naturally more resilient in meeting life’s challenges, everyone has the capacity to learn how to make change work for them.

This practical book offers theories, personal stories, a self-assessment tool, step-by-step techniques, and targeted exercises to help anyone who is motivated to become “change-ready.”

I would rank ***Change Thrivers***, in the top 10 of change management resources! The impact of her personal experiences, insightful exercises, and thoughtful quotes make this a book that involves and empowers you to make change happen for the better. Do yourself a favor and get into this book today.”

- Susan List Mike, M.D.
Psychiatrist and Co-Founder,
Joyful Genius, Where Moms Start Smart!

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Afsaneh Noori is a speaker, coach, and organizational consultant specializing in individual and corporate change. She has combined her personal experiences and career in organizational development to create this unique “how-to” manual for empowering anyone in the throes of personal transformation.

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