

Thoughts on Change

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Spring is here at last! This is the season that most of us associate with new life, rebirth, and renewal. And so, for most of us, it's a time of great joy and optimism. But as I tune in to those around me, I'm aware that not everyone feels that way. The reasons are quite varied, of course, but they seem to have one thing in common. As the seasons change, they seem to remind us, in so many tangible ways that, although we knew it was coming, we are somehow not quite ready. The world is moving forward, but we are not; and we might even be falling behind!

I know this feeling well! Yes, during earlier seasons in my life I have experienced it too, in various ways:

Seasons when I had not yet lost the weight I needed to wear the new spring fashions;
Seasons when I had nothing blooming in my garden because I hadn't planted anything;
Seasons that I wasted hibernating, dreaming about changing my life, but doing nothing about it.

Today though, I am living my dream, or at least well on my way to it. And so when I hear the grumbling tones around me, of frustration, of regret, and of shame, I'm quite sympathetic. But I'm also eager to help. Whatever your dreams, don't let another season go by without moving in the direction of your goals. Life is too short! Allow me to share with you three things I have learned about change. These three things will make all the difference:

1. **Know what you want!** Although this sounds too easy, this is often the most difficult step for people. Why? Because they simply have never thought about it! People really do spend more time planning their vacation than they do planning their lives. The rest of the time, they run on auto-pilot, either busily plugged in to their electronic devices, or otherwise "zoned out" by their "drug" of choice: drugs, alcohol, television, internet, etc. They are unconscious, unaware of the passage of time. So get rid of the distractions, including any distracting voices you might have heard in the past. According to an American Proverb, "If you don't have a plan for yourself, you'll be a part of someone else's." Find a quiet place and go inside. The answers are there!

2. “The reason most people fail instead of succeed is that they trade what they want *most* for what they want *at the moment*.”

I don't know who said this originally, but this truth has long been a source of inspiration for me. When you know what you want, you've got to be able to maintain that focus.

- *In the short-term*, you would much rather munch on potato chips than a salad; but the salad is the better choice if you want to wear that bikini *in the long-term*.
- *In the short-term*, you would much rather watch TV than take that night course; but it's that course that will get the job you want *in the long-term*.
- *In the short-term*, you would rather collect unemployment insurance than work at a job that doesn't thrill you; but it's the proven skills, experience, and successful job record that are going to convince future employers to take a chance on you *in the long term*.

- **Change doesn't happen in one fell swoop.** It was this understanding, based on the work of William Bridges, that saved my sanity during one of the most chaotic changes in my life – migration to Australia. According to Bridges, “change” is an *external* event – loss of a job, death of a loved one, retirement, for example. “Transition,” on the other hand, is the *internal* process we must undertake, in order to come to terms with that change. That process has 3 stages: (1) An Ending; (2) The Neutral Zone; and (3) A New Beginning. It may sound rather benign but Bridges likens it to the long journey of Moses from “The Exodus”, through the “wandering in the desert”, and finally coming to “The Promised Land”. You don't get to “The Promised Land” without going through stages one and two, and believe me, it can sometimes be a long journey. But it's worth it!

Well, I'm no longer wandering in the desert. And now I enjoy helping others find their way. That's why **C-Change** exists!

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