

## CHANGE? WHY SOME DO AND SOME DON'T

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This is a topic that has always fascinated me. I present it to this meeting for the expressed purpose of exploring the subject with you. I value your input, and I hope that my thoughts on this matter will stimulate your interest, hypotheses, and action. It is surprising to me that so few books deal with change specifically, yet there are more self-help books on the market than any other kind of book today. Self-help to do what? To change. It seems that everyone assumes that we know what it means to change, and most of us have said, probably within the last week or maybe even today, "I have to change such and such about myself."

What constitutes change? When can we say we have changed? Is it when we act a different way or feel differently or both? Is it really possible to change? How can we facilitate change? Can we? Can anyone change everyone else? Can we change ourselves? Do we just evolve? Is change the same as growth? Is change another word for difference? People of all ages are afraid of change; what are they afraid of? Do you change when you become committed or involved with something? Are you changed when your priorities are different? Is adding a technique, such as Touch for Health, to your knowledge a change? If you stop some habit, such as smoking or drinking, a change? When you learn something new, does that change you? Is it necessary to put into practice what you know for one to be considered changed?

As a counselor, my entire profession is geared toward the field of change. I often ask my clients, after they have completed the process, what assisted your growth? What

allowed you to go from where you were to where you are now? What helped you to go from misery to joy? They have provided me with many answers, yet still I find myself searching within the field of psychology and in other areas of possibility for the meaning of change.

In theoretical and practical psychology, there are many beliefs about change. Behavior modificationists believe that positive reinforcements will enable change. Gestalt therapists believe that change comes from awareness. Rational emotive therapists believe that change comes from changing your belief systems. Psychoanalysts believe that change comes from insight and working through. Rogerians believe that change comes from genuine regard and validation. Educationalists believe that change comes from knowing. Winifred Winnecott, an expert in the field of human development, said that the only cure for adolescence is time to get through it. The same could be said for the changes we go through. Could they all be right? Is this word, change, a hit and miss process? Is there something we can do to know more about it so that change can be facilitated with the people we work with effectively?

One thing that we know is that change can be stressful, even changes that are considered good changes. The human condition seems to prefer what we are comfortable with. We know what to expect, and that provides us with an illusion of security. I had a client I was treating for depression who told me that after the depression was lifted and gone, that she missed being depressed. She knew what that was like, and although it may have cost her her life, she was secure about how it felt.

Rollo May, in his book Freedom and Destiny (1981) defines freedom as the possibility of changing and the ability to change the nature of your being.

Stewart Emery, in his book Actualizations: You Don't Have to Rehearse to be Yourself (1978) uses the word transformation in the way I would like to define change for this exploration. He says, "If you took an apple and turned it into an orange, that would be a change. But, if you took an apple and turned it into an apple that tasted like an orange, that would be a transformation, because it would have the form of an apple and the essence of an orange. Transformation means housing a different essence in the same form. To a person who has undergone a transformation, the world is exactly the same as it was before. When you are transformed, the immediate circumstances of your existence are the same. What is altered is the way you feel about it. What is altered is your relationship to the things in your life, not the things in your life." (p. 45)

This transformation is what I mean by change.

One of my clients described her life to be like a great peanut field with weeds, pests, rocks, boulders, and, if tended properly, will reap a harvest of peanuts. Therapy, or Touch for Health, or whatever, does not change the number of weeds, the number of pests, or the size of the rocks, it simply gives you the tools to clear the fields of the weeds and rocks, and the materials to kill the pests. You have to believe that the hoe that you are buying will dig out the weeds, and that the work you are doing will yield your own special harvest of peanuts or life accomplishments.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that fear is ignorance.

It is our ignorance and our fear of change that we must deal with, confront, and break through to new heights of growth and transformation.

William Glassar, author of Reality Therapy, said that if you want to change, you have to behave as if you have already changed. Act the part, soon you will be the part. Or, in the vernacular, fake it 'til you make it.

There is actually a huge controversy within the field of social psychology. One faction believes that a person's initial attitude is irrelevant and there is no discomfort produced by a behavior. People are not seen as changing their attitude, but as inferring what their attitudes must be by observing their own behavior. This is called self-perception theory. The opposing view, that of the cognitive dissonance theory, says that the inconsistency between behavior and the person's initial attitude is assumed to motivate them to change that attitude. Another theorist believes that behavior is best predicted by the intention to perform that behavior, rather than about the attitude one holds about that behavior.

Choose your attitude. Act the part. Rule our lives from within. These are the conclusions we draw from these theories.

An afraid or unconscious person looks for security, a wise person looks for the opportunity to change and transform. I see two kinds of change motivated by two types of desires. The first kind of change is the crisis mode, in which someone comes to us in pain and misery, and wants it to go away, i.e., to go from the trauma to the normal and to take away the fear. This may mean that a person will go back

to the way that they functioned before without the crisis, or it may mean that in order to take away the fear, they must change their habits so that they may live, as in the case of a person who has experienced a heart attack.

The second type of desire is to alter a way of living in order to get more out of life. The first type of desire discussed is a negative motivation, the other is a positive motivation. Both enable change. One is not better than the other. They are both ways of needing to risk a new type of being -- one to live, the other to live better.

Unless we recognize that these two types of motivation are quite different, then we cannot be the effective healers we can be. "More than anything else -- and every day of our lives -- a calm, firm belief in ourselves opens doors to what we can be -- if we can manage to keep out of our own way. The trouble seems to be that we get overly serious and start thinking of all the rules, or the problems, or the possibilities of disaster. And before we know it, we've hooked the ball into the lake..." said Red Motley in Parade Magazine.

From my perspective, I offer you my conclusions to my own original questions:

1. Yes, you can change and transform.
2. Yes, you can facilitate change and transformation in others.
3. Yes, altering one's perceptions or altering one's habits is change.
4. Change is seeing the world in a new or different context; being open to the possibility that life is, that being a human being is.

OK. How?

1. How to change and transform yourself:  
Know who you are NOW  
Accept who you are NOW  
Appreciate all the reasons why you are  
who you are NOW  
Believe in the way you want to be NOW

Set goals in terms of having them NOW  
Act upon and achieve these goals NOW

2. How to facilitate change in others:  
Have no need for them to change  
Love them unconditionally as they are  
Promote and suggest to them the changes  
you see possible in them

Werner Erhard has said that in being the possibility for being and transformation, that being and transformation shows up and is present in your life just out of creating that you are the possibility of it taking place. Living your life out of the possibility of what could be, rather than the excuses and justifications we make for ourselves and our lives, is what makes a difference in the world.

What people often need is the time, the energy, the space, and the opportunity to make the changes, transformations, and possibilities they need to make and create for themselves. What we as therapists, healers, and instructors can do is be aware of and empower the awareness of clients of this; suggest, promote, and sell them on the need for change, transformation, and possibility; provide the climate for change, transformation, and possibility to occur while maintaining unconditional love for them; and provide the services as counselor and therapist to assist them in accomplishing the changes, transformations, and possibilities they seek to create and accomplish.

Change, transformation, and possibility happens with awareness, acceptance, and appreciation. Those who change, transform, and live in the possibility that life is are aware, accepting, and appreciating, those who don't, won't allow the awareness, the acceptance, nor the appreciation to be present. To change, grow, transform, and be open to the possibility that life is, this is the challenge of our lives.