

## Can't Handle Any New Growth Experiences ©

Writing this article in early October 2008 might be a wee bit appropriate considering the changes going on around the world. Where I live in Canada we are days away from Federal Elections. Our neighbour, the United States is only weeks away from their National Election. Add to this a serious change in the economic situation and ... well, change seems like a fitting subject.

Change is inevitable. We may not move the knick knacks or switch to a Mac computer but change is still ever present and always inviting us to come along for the ride. Some change is absolutely wonderful. What if we never changed to indoor plumbing, MRIs and even energy conservation? Change creates new relationships, new opportunities, new bodies and new minds. Change is indeed the path to possibilities.

When I ask people why they don't change the answers are fairly consistent and the one that tops the list is ... Fear (which sometimes comes out as dread and anxiety). It is followed quickly by not wanting to be uncomfortable and plain laziness.

Fear covers a lot of territory including fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of criticism, fear of success, fear of losing someone, fear of taking responsibility, fear of jeopardizing a position, fear of not being able to "go back", fear of making a mistake, fear of creating discomfort or anxiety and many more. What I know about change is that it always, *emphasize always*, impacts our personal growth. One way or another we are changed by change. We move closer to our authentic selves or we step back into the status quo or repeat patterns of self-abuse. Even when we think we are "staying the same" there is something internal that shifts when we make a decision to change or not.

The strange coincidence is that we are always changing as is everything around us. We can move and flow with change or we can resist and try to avoid it. What will entice us to make changes varies with the gravity and foreseeable consequences of change. Committing to exercise half an hour a day might feel monumental to one person while for someone else it takes leaving a partner to generate that much animation. Truthfully, whether it sounds crazy or not, while most of us might think there is no comparison in the "weight" of these examples, I assure you we cannot assume what is a bigger challenge for someone else.

Just like George, my neighbour's little dog. George doesn't like change. His previous "walker" let him stop at a neighbour's house and enjoy a sausage treat adding a minimum of twenty minutes to each walk. I have less time so I'm just here to walk him to the end of the road and back allowing for periodic sniffs and deposits. He would prefer to stop halfway and indulge in homemade delicacies. That's not the plan but every day he strains desperately on the leash hoping to somehow maintain the routine he has become accustomed to. George digs his four feet into the ground and plants himself like a stake. I pull him along because I am determined. For several yards there is a pattern on the gravel where he has held himself – board stiff – trying not to change. Eventually he gives in and the walk is over much sooner than if he continued his rebellion. If George could only see that his unwillingness to go with the momentum of the walk is causing him such discomfort he might act otherwise. But George is just like many of us; we simply don't want the inconvenience or uneasiness or in this case, the loss of something important. If not for me, George wouldn't even have this walk today but since he's a dog, he doesn't understand the big picture. Like most of us, he wants what he wants when he wants it and change doesn't feel good.

What I believe is that people don't change unless and until there is something compelling them to do so. George holds onto his stubborn intention in spite of what is obvious – we are not going to stop. If he knew there was a sausage treat waiting at the end of the road he would bolt ahead of me for sure. It might be easy to train George to engage in the full walk by rewarding him differently but when it comes to changing human behaviour it takes a lot more than a little sausage.

So how do we know when we are indeed choosing something that has real resonance for us? Well, there's the first clue – resonance. If it makes your skin tingle, your hair stand on end, your stomach start churning or any kind of physical reaction then you are onto something. You might feel your heart race a bit or you might stop breathing. It's not so much that these symptoms are present at the precise time that you step through the proverbial doorway but for sure they have been there at some point along the way. It might be when the idea popped into your head or when you made the final plans. Either way, it's a full body reaction to a change in your personal experience.

So what if you just did things even when you were afraid? Truthfully we do it all the time. We line up for roller coasters that will make us scream our heads off. We merge into speeding traffic that doesn't make room for us. We hike mountains, pet wild animals and some of us brave souls stand up in front of a room full of people and talk out loud!

What I am more certain of then ever before is that Fear is no excuse. Fear is just fear and as Susan Jeffers has been so frequently quoted saying "Feel the fear and do it anyway." I say, "Do it anyway". Feel the fear if you want to, recognize it for what it is, ignore it, avoid it, deny it and just do the darn thing. Using fear as an excuse is like saying you can't eat pie without ice cream. It's not true; it's just your way of holding yourself back, keeping yourself immobilized instead of stretching into the field of possibility.

And ... what if in the field, there were fabulous opportunities that you had never imagined. And what if some of those opportunities released years of pain and sadness? What if some of those opportunities opened your heart, opened doors and led you straight into the most fulfilling life possible. What if?

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