

Change versus Alteration

Although the words bear similar meanings, “change” and “alteration” are not synonymous. Change is driven from within and governed by the right intentions. Alteration is based on external factors—what others will think, what will impress someone, what will enable you to “keep up” or maybe even just what will appease someone so s/he’ll leave you alone. The trouble with all of these examples is that they are most likely to cause greater insecurity, which in turn breeds low self-esteem. When you’re feeling low, you’re not as likely to feel invigorated and ready to take on your weaknesses, and a downward cycle results. You’ve got to forget about any influences that lead you to look to others for approval. If you don’t, your happiness and success will always hang on the whims of others, and this reliance will only lead to a very frail emotional existence. You’ll never get ahead because you’ll always be fretting over and worrying about keeping everyone else happy. You must concentrate on making yourself happy instead.

On the surface, many people are open to change, but privately, or even subconsciously, they resist change at every turn. When you don’t make the changes you know are necessary, you feel weak and depressed. Contrarily, when you successfully make changes, you feel positive and in control. Now here is a key thing to understand: It is not the *change* that makes us uneasy or gives us anxiety; it is how we *perceive* and handle that change. Let’s now outline the three key ways in which people make changes in their lives. One of these ways is more powerful than the others in terms of conscious, lasting change: Drastic circumstances require drastic measures. You could have a heart attack, lose your job or experience some other sort of personal tragedy. Where you might not have felt compelled to change your situation before, however, such events force you to change. The second way people make change in their lives is slowly but surely. Gradual changes like this are more likely to evolve through personal relationships and other such long-term molding influences. The third change-inducing factor is internal change. Both positive and negative factors can compel you, but it is under this unique method where you have willfully hit the pause button and made a conscious transformational decision.

To get change to stick, you must make sure three things occur. First, you must have a firm commitment to change. You have to have reached the point where, in your mind, there is no other option. Second, you must be willing to pay the price for change's rewards, persisting even when you feel weak. Third, you have to know where the change is taking you. How is this life transformation going to affect your life? What will the end results be? One thing that can really alleviate the fear of the unknown is doing your homework so you know exactly what to expect. Carefully plan your steps toward success—even when you've never been there before. Remember, there is much more security traveling new terrain with a map!

When those closest to you seem to be the most discouraging, remember that they have only seen you the way you have always been. They have no experience with the person you're going to become. Fair or not, it is only human nature that we are judged and that we also judge others based on past experience rather than projections of their future potential. Some people may take these sentiments as unsupportive and extremely crushing to their confidence in proceeding. If you fall into this category, do not cast your pearls before swine! This doesn't mean you shouldn't still pursue loving relationships with those around you, but you don't have to constantly be laying everything out on the line for them to scrutinize, either. Why make yourself vulnerable to those you know are not going to cheer you on? In this case, it is simply a matter of being careful and wise about who you open up to. On the other hand, some people may find the naysayer to be a serious motivator. Whatever works for you, go for it. Just make sure you keep the positive energy flowing.

Finally, we have all heard the saying that a habit is made in twenty-one days. If such a short-term benchmark motivates you, go for it, but don't believe for a minute that twenty-one days will make you home free. Certainly, if you can persist in doing something for twenty-one straight days, you are on the road to success. These short-term successes are important because they enable you to start seeing and tasting what ultimate success might be like. But also remember that even after two or three months of steady commitment, we can still topple from our new routines. Such an experience would be more closely aligned

with alteration than true change. The key is to continually reinforce your new habits and to hold yourself accountable to your new discipline. That way, you won't revert back to the old habits of your comfort zone.

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