



embracing change

CHANGE IS NATURAL AND THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE. WHEN WE RESIST
CHANGE, WE SUFFER. THE TREE THAT SWAYS WITH STRONG WINDS,
SURVIVES, WHILE A RIGID TREE FALLS

by **Uma Garimella**

While we like the adage, “Every day is a new day – a new beginning,” deep inside, most people would not want to be thrown into uncertainty, where we have to figure out our response to continual change.

I start my day with Louis Hay’s morning meditation, saying to myself – this is a new beginning, a new day. A couple of months ago, when my daughter put her foot down to stop long commutes to work, and wanted to move closer to our workplaces, I had a chance to actually test myself out.

As an advocate of ‘affirmations’, I decided to affirm the following: “I am moving to become more environment friendly and to use my time more effectively and productively.” I have read Dr Wayne Dyer’s *Erroneous Zones* and have been trying new routes, new dishes off the menu and new restaurants, and generally consider myself flowing easily with change. However, I was hoping that the solution, which my new affirmation brings, would be something less drastic than moving out of a big house where we had lived for the last 11 years!

Despite my trepidation, I continued affirming to myself that my life was getting better because of the change. And yes, it came to pass. Can you believe it, now I walk to work most days! I have very good help at home and things have settled down much faster than I had anticipated. It really is true that sometimes when we let go of the comfort zone, something better turns up.

Unexpected and expected changes

The change we brought into our life was certainly planned and we had mentally prepared ourselves. Nevertheless, what happens when we get a bolt from the blue? My sister Vani, always a protected housewife, was thrown into a new situation when she lost her husband suddenly a few years ago. She had to learn to live alone initially, and then she had to learn to live with her daughters for longer periods. Drastic as the change was, she has carried it off so well!

Even when change is expected, you do not really know how you will take it until you go through it. Says Prasad, who recently married off his second daughter, “The feeling of emptiness is something you cannot even imagine, though you knew this was coming. Unless you experience it, it is hard to describe and then you need time to get over it.”

Do we have a choice?

Sometimes change is made voluntarily, sometimes it is forced – as in the case of Vasu Pendyala. His first job was at Satyam and he has been there for the last 13 years. The recent happenings have not only shaken the

corporate world but shaken the lives of the employees as well. “The initial reaction was that of panic and fear, and then I turned to God for help,” says Vasu. “It has also made me think of how we should maintain integrity in all our actions – whether it is putting a false claim for reimbursement or telling a harmless lie. I have also decided to live a more simple life.” He adds, “We must trust the Divine to bring only good from any change.”

Change is natural

Change is disturbing because we always want certainty in life. Lalitha, a meditation guru from Hyderabad, says, “If you knew the story and screenplay of a movie, would you go and watch it? But that’s exactly how we want to live our life.” So why do human beings want adventure in the movies and books or on *Discovery* or *NatGeo* but not in their life?

“When I really start feeling – life is so dull, I should have some change – my maid suddenly takes off for a week without notice or my mixie goes for repair!” claims a housewife. “So I am wary of saying this.” Who wants this kind of change? Surely, no one. However, in such situations one learns the value of the maid or the mixie (as the case may be) and tries to value them more when available.

In the last 20 years or so there have been so many changes in society, relationships, technology, lifestyles, and every aspect of life we can think of. The only way we can remain happy in such times is by accepting change rather than resisting it. Those who have suc-



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ceeded in life or business are those who have adapted to change.

“I was a bit apprehensive of changing my job from a foundry environment to a hi-tech software company which had a different work culture, technical jargon, and younger generation of employees,” says Mary Fernandes who recently moved to InfoSpectrum, Nagpur Centre. “However, I decided to go with the flow and confront this change. My attitude, and above all my implicit trust in God, have helped me in honing my skills, enhancing my knowledge and confidence in myself leading to value addition to my job and self-satisfaction.”

Says the owner of a kirana shop, Ding Dong, in Sainikpuri, Secunderabad, “I had my own set of customers even when supermarkets opened in the neighbourhood. However, I had to change to keep them coming to me. I had to rearrange the shelves so customers could walk around and pick up stuff. I even gave in to a bar-code reader and computerised billing. I still do the manual checking of number of items like in my old kirana shop days! I know I will do well because I have adapted to change but kept my personal contact with customers. Many other kirana shops have closed down.”

It takes courage to adapt. It is like getting into a flowing river. You hesitate – afraid to step into the cold water, worried that it might take you away from the secure shore. Then a few minutes into the water and you start liking it. A couple of years back when I went for rafting in Kali river I felt the same.

Fear of change is not just a malady of old age, as we would like to believe. People of any age could be quite rigid in their ways. Even infants react negatively when they go to a new place or meet new people. Some babies seem to enjoy the change, though.

So is adaptability something you are born with? Though some are ‘naturals’, anyone could acquire this quality any time in life. Haven’t we learnt new ways of thinking after we started on ‘the path’? Yes, some don’t even notice it but adjusting to change is their way of life.

Teen wisdom

“Teenage is a time when things around you change – your perspective, your priorities, your goals, your preferences – more than anything, you change – from an age where you can stomp out of the door if you disagree, to proceeding into the age where responsibility starts coming to you naturally,” feels Rishabh Ginotra, a third year student at BITS-Pilani Goa Campus. “Expectations increase. I’m talking about the change from being present at a gathering to actually being responsible for taking care of the people around you. The change inside me came only after I disappointed my parents a few times by not acting responsibly.”

Raman, a classmate of Rishabh, says, “To me, definition of change is, letting go of something. You have to let go of something to say that you have welcomed a change, be it old sandals, old furniture, old friends, old intentions, or old memories.”

That rings a bell with a grown-up too. “If you don’t have anything to cling to, then change is nothing but whatever is happening to you. It is no longer a change. Which also means you are living in the moment,” echoes Akila Jaikumar, a computer professional based in Hyderabad.

Ways of dealing with change

The tree which is able to sway with strong winds, tends to survive, while a tree that is rigid falls. So is the case with us. Keep affirming that you are flexible and change is easy

and smooth. Lessons of life need not always be learnt the hard way. I like Louise Hay's affirmation: "It's easy for me to change and I enjoy the change." Moreover, the tree is able to sway because it is firmly rooted. Meditate on your swadhishtana chakra whose element is water and which is associated with fluidity and adaptability. Complement it with the mooladhara, which gives you a sense of purpose and direction. Every quality that a chakra represents can be developed either as a strength or as a weakness. Determination and stubbornness are two opposite ends of the spectrum of being rooted while aimless straying and adaptability are two extremes of flexibility. Make sure you are flexible but you move about with a sense of purpose.

Several years ago, Swami Sukhabodhanandaji said in his workshop, "We become

rigid when we have a filter of 'should' for all events of our life. When the event satisfies our 'should' we are happy, and when it doesn't we are unhappy. Consciously replace 'should' with 'may be.'" The joints in our body represent the changes in the directions of life and our ease of these movements and when we are inflexible, we get joint pains. Sometimes breathing problems also indicate resistance to change. Be alert to these bodily changes – our body is speaking to us, So when you get these symptoms, look within yourself and create affirmations that take you through the changes smoothly. Trust the process of life, which is a natural series of changes!



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*We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article.
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