

WINNER'S MINUTES: CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

When was the last time you became aware of the need to change, but you feared the actions required to change and the outcome of the change? You might have believed the old platitudes about change:

- *Change is hard.
- *Change takes time.
- *I've been like this all my life. Why change now?
- *Change means I'll lose who I am.
- *If others don't like me the way I am, it is their problem.
- *I might lose my friends if I change.
- *You can't teach old dogs new tricks.
- *I'm too old to change.

Was your choice to remain stuck rather than face the unknown? Did you ever consider the one constant in life is change? Nothing remains the same except change. Change is inevitable. The clock moves forward. We age. Our bodies alter with time. We move whether we want to move or not. Not only do we change but everything around us is developing. Technology is improving. The phones we use, the cars we drive and the houses we live in are all evolving. Our decision is not whether to stop changing; our decision is how we progress.

Everybody changes, but not everybody progresses.

Do you remember being in high school and liking loud music blaring on the car radio? Now, years later, do you turn down the radio the moment your son or daughter cranks it up? When did you begin to prefer listening to the mellow tunes? Did you notice the change before your son cranked up the latest rap song?

Our taste in music often alters without our intention and indicates: 1) We change without conscious effort; and 2) Change can be natural and easy.

If change is a constant, why fight it? Nothing remains exactly the same! You can choose to paddle with the flow of a river or paddle upstream. If you surrender to the idea of constant change, then you are more likely to go with the flow and expand your mental and emotional abilities.

Challenges in your life—physical, mental or emotional—will come. Life gives us opportunities to progress. Some people see and welcome these opportunities, while others fight them and still others give up in defeat. What choice will you make?

FEAR OF CHANGE

Part of what we fear about change is the havoc we think it creates. Change generates the necessity of broadening our comfort zones, stretching us to learn something new and to work harder. When a new policy was introduced at the university, my peers and I moaned and complained of the time it would take. We recognized a learning curve was required and how we would have to rearrange the next few days to learn new procedures. Surprisingly, after moaning and agonizing about it, most of us found our work streamlined and easier. We had *created our discomfort in the fear of our resistance to change.*

Your fear of change distorts the way you view life and derails your determination to move toward new goals. Moving away from the known is uncomfortable. Part of this discomfort is the belief system that remaining where you are is safe and moving forward could produce unnecessary

pain. Much of your fear of the unknown lies in the belief system that you have little or no control of your future. When you believe you have the power to create, and that creation of your future is your responsibility, your fears no longer prevent you from tackling new challenges.

Change can be graceful and gradual, and you don't need a lifetime to break through self-defeating patterns which keep you stagnant. Change occurs naturally when you shift from judgment to curiosity, from blame to responsibility, and from fear to faith. The acts of accepting and probing for change assists you in developing the emotional wisdom needed to bypass your fears.

GETTING PAST THE COMFORT ZONE

While you cannot learn all there is to know in a lifetime, at some point you may arrive at a place where you decide you are comfortable without learning anything new. You might have worked in the same job for 22 years, been with your partner for 30 years, or attended the same church for 15 years and settled into the idea that you've attained a level of expertise in those areas. Perhaps so.

But have you reached "emotional expertise?"

Age does not create wisdom. As you age, you accumulate facts and information which do not necessarily transform into wisdom. Wisdom is the intangible quality you gain from experiences as you evaluate and reflect on how those experiences have affected your life. To gain wisdom, you move beyond your "understanding" of your knowledge. You stay open to receive the answers to the *whys* and *hows*, approach questions in a new way, and learn from both your successes and failures.

Many of us are still toddlers when it comes to our emotional wisdom. I've seen prosperous middle-aged men throw temper tantrums at staff meetings, cursing and stomping out of the room when they failed to get their way. I've gone down the same emotional rabbit hole, regressing to three year old tears when criticized in front of peers.

You may be a professor at a university or own a company, but your position does not indicate you have reached emotional wisdom. You've gained wisdom in your chosen profession or you would have lost your job. But how many times has emotional wisdom been forced upon you? Emotional wisdom is a choice. You can choose to bump along with the same awareness you had when you were five, ten or twenty or you can choose to wake up, stop blaming your circumstances or someone else, and take responsibility for creating your desired life.

Emotions can remain at your two-year old irrational self even though your body matures through age and your mind develops through experience. Just because your physical body grows older and changes does not mean your emotional body keeps pace. Emotions remain stuck in the irrational and illogical until you determine to move forward and to train your emotions to go with you.

THE GRANNY SALLY LESSON

My grandmother used to throw her anger at us. She would hurl dishes, yell, use the silent treatment, or any other manipulative behavior she knew to get her way. She had honed these tools since childhood when these behaviors worked with her mother who was too exhausted to deal with her fits and simply gave in to her demands. As my grandmother grew up, she found these same tactics worked with her own family. To avoid confrontation, we waited on her hand and foot. She saw no reason to change her behaviors.

My grandmother created havoc wherever she went, and in response, family members began to avoid her. No one wanted to experience the turmoil she brought with her. As a result, she felt alone and betrayed in her last years. Had she been made more aware that her behaviors were injuring relationships with her loved ones and therefore herself, she might have been more willing to change.

When you tire of the harm stemming from your emotional conditioning—the subconscious beliefs thwarting your happiness, joy, peace, relationships and success—then you have arrived at a place where change does not appear so daunting. Instead change appears necessary. This is the point where you wake up and begin questioning your inner self.

NEW QUESTIONS GET NEW RESULTS

My grandmother had a choice to seethe in anger and self-pity or to become more introspective about the reasons why people stopped coming to visit her. She chose to remain static. Had she chosen progress instead, she could have enjoyed the company of family and friends in her life.

We all choose. We can choose to blame others and stay stuck, or we can to decide to progress and make desired changes in our lives.

Do you want to progress or remain static?

Had my grandmother chosen to progress, her choice would have come from the awareness that she needed new solutions. Instead of asking, “What’s wrong with my family?” or “How can they leave me all alone?,” she could have asked herself the following questions.

1. Why doesn’t my family want to visit me?
2. What have I done to alienate them?
3. If I were to come visit me, would I enjoy the visit? Why or why not?
4. Who is to blame for my behavior? Who is responsible for changing my behavior?

To have family members around her again to celebrate birthdays and holidays, she would have had to recognize she couldn’t change us. **BUT**, she could have *changed herself*. This single awareness could have brought love into her life. Because she chose instead to focus on how unloving or unkind her family was, rather than looking at herself, her lonely life did not change.

The **key** here is *to accept that while you cannot change another person, by changing yourself others seems to change.*

Imagine if Granny Sally had picked up the phone and said to me, “I am so sorry I’ve treated you badly. I can’t promise I’ll be 100% better, but I will try my best. I’m calling because I miss you, and I want to see you again.”

What granddaughter could turn down that request?

The right questions are a powerful catalyst for change. What self-limiting beliefs do you hold? Maybe you’ve worried, “What if I let everybody down?” Instead ask, “How does it feel when I help my team (family, friends, partner) win?”

Maybe you’ve asked, “What if I make a mistake?” Try asking, “What would I enjoy learning and who could help me get started?”

Positive questions can unlock the door to new possibilities. Positive questions break through your comfort zone and help you change by choice rather than by chance.

Maybe now is time for you to wake up to change and to reach the success that has eluded you. Change does not have to be difficult, and you do not need another lifetime to break through self-defeating patterns. Change is natural when you shift from judgment to curiosity. You develop emotional wisdom by trying a new approach to life, reflecting on the result, and celebrating when your efforts succeed.