

Friends, Family, and Colleagues,

I am beginning a new chapter in both my personal and professional life, and I am energized! So, I figured it was time for me to send one of my semiannual inspiration messages. For those of you knew to the distribution list, welcome!

I admit this one is a little longer than most of my messages, but I promise it's heartwarming and thought-provoking – please do read it all the way through.

This time, I would like to talk about the challenge of change. The word itself even makes some people nervous! I have noticed that change usually occurs one of two ways in our lives – we make change happen, or change happens to us. In this note, I want to share two stories, one about each type of change.

However, before I share the stories, I thought I'd provide an adaptation of **the top 5 reasons why people don't change, as well as a counterargument for each, from Edge Learning Institute's Increasing Human Effectiveness** training seminar – I used to facilitate this program at Delaware Investments. You can learn more about Edge at www.edgelearning.com.

1. **I'm okay the way I am.** (Counterargument: You don't need to be sick to get better.)
2. **I fear the unknown.** (Counterargument: The unknown, though we do not know it, could in fact be better than our current situation!)
3. **I fear failure.** (Counterargument: Begin to give yourself learning mistakes – as Randy Pausch used to say, "Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted.")
4. **I'd better look before I leap.** (Counterargument: You can look before you leap, but he or she who hesitates is lost!)
5. **I don't know how to change.** (Counterargument: Sure you do – we are all changing every day – we are always evolving!)

Okay, now for the promised storytelling! **The first story of change is my own – of making change happen.**

I have decided to leave my global learning and development role within Mercer (www.mercer.com), and my life in Philadelphia, to live in South Korea for two months. My partner Jon teaches English as a Second Language there. I miss him dearly and was feeling unfulfilled in my professional life; so, I opted for a bold change. I am referring to this journey as my "sabbatical" – I am going to think about what I want next professionally, prepare syllabi for college courses I am teaching in the spring semester, write a book about my life as a gay man, and travel throughout South Korea with Jon on weekends.

In the past, change has scared me, and I often felt confined as a result, stuck in a box of practical choices. However, this time I am finding it rejuvenating and mind-expanding! As soon I decided to make this change, I found myself journaling intensely about the experience and how I will grow from it, immersing myself in Korean guide books, and learning Korean. I have already taught myself a slew of words and phrases for everyday life, travel, meals, and more! I am taken aback by how natural and free-flowing the change process has been for me this time.

Here are some questions to consider before we move onto the next story.

- What can you learn from this story of change?

- How do you define happiness?
- Do you want more or less of what you have now, personally and professionally?

The second story is of a friend of mine – of a change that happened to her recently and that has altered her life completely.

My friend Becky's husband was recently diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amyotrophic_lateral_sclerosis). When I first read her email update, I gasped. Becky is a selfless woman who is extremely committed to her work, friends, and family. My first thought was, "How can something like this happen to someone so wonderful?" Here I am making a positive change in my life, and change has decked my friend Becky and her family in the stomach. I was angry and sad.

However, Becky showed me that there is another way, a better way to cope with this kind of change. Here is part of one of the emails she sent me:

"While I was feeling rather sorry for myself about this whole situation and spent way too much time thinking about what our future holds, we went to a support group meeting and there was a young couple...I'd say very early thirties..they just adopted a little boy and he (the father) found out he had ALS. And even though he was diagnosed after Tommy (Becky's husband), he's already in a wheelchair and not able to talk and it's progressing rather rapidly. I just thought how blessed I have been to have found my true love and best friend. I have known him since I've been 20 years old and we have been together almost 30 years...how can I be sad about that when I see this young couple just starting their life together?"

That's a powerful response to change you can't control, isn't it? It definitely gave me pause. There is some good news as well – she and Tommy are traveling to places they have always wanted to go, from the Grand Canyon to Disneyworld with the grandchildren. And despite all of the sadness in her life right now, she made it a point to enthusiastically support my decision to be with Jon for 2 months, and I quote, "If there is ever any advice I can ever give anyone, relationships are precious and when you are fortunate to find someone precious...spend all the time you can with them and enjoy each other because we never know where this journey is going to take us."

You know what I think is one of the best things about this story, and Becky? Her last name is Grace, and her story is one of grace. Becky, my thoughts are with you and Tommy, and thank you so much for allowing me to share your story with others, so that they might learn something from it. You are really an inspiration to me and countless others.

Here are some questions to consider before we wrap up.

- When you make a change, or change happens to you, how do you respond?
- What can you let go of?
- What's one thing you can change now? How can you do that?

I must admit this message is a tough one to conclude; so, I will share another quote provided by Increasing Human Effectiveness, "**All meaningful, lasting change starts from the inside and works its way out.**"

As always, I am with you on the journey and wish you grace like Becky's. Please keep me linked to your story, and let me know how I can support you. I wish you, your friends, and your family a wonderful fall season and a happy new year.

South Korea here I come!

Regards,

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