



WHAT DOES CHANGE MEAN FOR YOU?

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I believe that most of us would like to be the best version of ourselves that we can be. I also believe that each and everyone of us has a huge amount of untapped potential. So, how can we become our 'best selves' and unlock all that potential?

To begin with, we need to understand change. One aspect of change can be personal growth. Thinking of change in this way can elicit fear in some, yet excitement in others. So how do we embrace change and use it as a tool to benefit and empower ourselves?

Change will mean different things to different people as we are, after all, each unique. In Gestalt therapy the mechanism for change is the paradoxical theory of change (Arnold Beisser, 1970). This is an interesting concept to consider when we talk about personal potential,

individual growth and development. Beisser believed that for change to occur, you must first fully embrace who you are now in the present and that only after you truly discover who you are now, that change can begin to take place. So how can we begin to discover and understand who we truly are now? One needs to be willing to be honest and open with oneself to begin to increase one's self-awareness. Self-awareness is the ability to truly understand yourself through awareness of your thoughts, emotions and actions. How many of you bother to 'stop and pause' on a regular basis to reflect on how you handled a difficult situation? What did you feel? Where in your body did you feel it? What were your thoughts and how did those thoughts affect your subsequent behaviour? On further reflection, did your feelings, thoughts and actions serve you well? Self-awareness allows us to see ourselves as an individual who is unique and as such will react to situations differently to others but it can also help us to recognise our emotional triggers and gives us choice in controlling how we respond. Self-awareness connects us with our intuition and gives us the choice to embrace it.

To consider events in your life in this way, is the beginning of a greater understanding of yourself. With this deeper awareness you can then build greater self-confidence and self-esteem, which allows you to choose whether you might wish to change in some way. Change, as discussed earlier, is most likely to happen once you fully embrace who you are now.

Why so many of us fear change is a fascinating topic to explore. Fear often holds us back and stops us from discovering our untapped potential. Fear is an intrinsic human emotion which helps to assure

our survival but some people develop inappropriate fears which can arise from overwhelming experiences, high levels of worry, anxiety or uncertainty in life. This is when fear can hinder our development and abilities. Fear often comes from our perception of ourselves and so is interlinked with our self-awareness. Fear can affect everything we do and experience. Fear is about self-trust and our ability to believe in ourselves and what we are capable of. Most of us experience 'inner talk' that goes on in our minds every day. Some of these thoughts are about ourselves and our abilities. Sometimes these thoughts can be negative and are not all that helpful to us. So, during the process of raising our self-awareness it is useful to attempt to overcome these negative internal thoughts by replacing them with new, positive ones. We must remember that how we perceive ourselves can be very different and sometimes not as positive as how other people see us. Talk to friends and ask for their feedback about you as a person, ask them what qualities they like most in you. Write down some positive affirmations about yourself and place them where you can see them throughout the day. Every time you see one of the affirmations, say it out loud. This helps to embed these positive thoughts in your brain and can be very empowering. Once you begin to understand yourself more fully, you can begin to live out who you really are and start to use all that incredible, untapped potential and free yourself from fear. In addition, you then become more capable of embracing change, if you desire.

So, if we need to become more aware of who we are, how can we begin to do that? As each of us is unique, we all need to find our own favourite ways forward in this. Writing a daily journal and keeping a record of your thoughts and feelings and what these mean to you can

be helpful. Learning to meditate or practicing mindfulness can help to calm down the mind and allow us to be present in the moment and able to recognise sensations in our bodies. Writing down your priorities in life, your values and beliefs, your desired goals and then considering whether these are congruent with your current situation or whether some of these conflict with where you are now, can also be a useful tool in raising awareness. Make sure to consider yourself holistically when evaluating your life. Think about all the different aspects of your life such as family, friends, relationships, health, work, money, recreation, spiritual needs and ambitions. You should consider all the different parts of your life if you want to discover what is important to you. This can be quite revealing and gives clarity around what matters most to us. Evaluate your strengths and consider areas where you might want to make improvements. Remember to document your progress in your journal, so you can see your development. Be aware that it is normal to have setbacks but these do not need to stop you with your continuing efforts. Consider what obstacles you might come up against on your journey and plan how you will overcome these.

Once your awareness of yourself grows, you will find your confidence increasing and this will enable you to take on new challenges in many different areas of your life. This can be very fulfilling. So, as you can see, change can be a truly wonderful experience if you allow it to be. It is important to understand that building self-awareness is a life long journey and is never “finished”. What an exciting prospect, that we are continually discovering ourselves and making choices.

I hope that this article may have triggered you to think about your life in more detail and especially about who you really are. If that is the case, then I wish you every success on your journey of self-discovery.

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