

# *Motivation Is Not Enough*

## TAKING SIMPLE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE INNER FREEDOM

In the early years of psychology, a client's resistance to change was often looked upon as solely a *motivational* problem. When a person did not succeed in changing, the counselor felt: "I did my job in pointing out your difficulties. In return, you didn't do yours!" The blame rested upon the one seeking change. The goal was to eliminate the resistances and get the person motivated again.

Now, we recognize that when someone resists change and growth in their personal and professional lives they are not purposely giving family, friends, coworkers and counselors a hard time. Instead, they are unconsciously providing a great deal of critical information on problematic areas of their life given their personality style, history, and current situation. This material then

becomes a real source of new wisdom for psychological growth, professional advancement, and spiritual insight.

Though we still believe motivation is an essential key to making progress, we see that persons seeking change must also gain certain knowledge about themselves and act on it if they wish to advance. Or in a nutshell: *Motivation or positive thinking is good, but it is obviously not enough.*

In other words: If you fall off a horse, you should get right back on. And, if you fall off again, you should get right back on again and again. This is true. But it would make things easier if you also took a few riding lessons!

That's what *Simple Changes* is all about. It is a little introduction on how to learn from, embrace, and ride with, on, around, and through the natural resistances everyone must encounter in their personal, spiritual, and professional lives. No one is ever without some obvious or hidden blocks to growth, change, and *inner freedom*.

At times, experiencing resistances within ourselves can be annoying, puzzling, or frustrating, since most of us really do want to advance and deepen as persons. Yet while we may be upset, there is no need to give up. Now, with just a bit of effort and direction, there is so much we can do to make life more meaningful and worthwhile. Positive change and greater inner freedom need not require a dramatic program. Instead it can occur gradually, *quietly*. Oftentimes we just need a little helpful information and guidance.

## SIMPLE CHANGES

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The fields of contemporary psychology and psychiatry, as well as the classic spiritual wisdom literature presently available offer us a wealth of information on why people have a hard time changing and what to do to enable progress to occur. However, much of this information is not readily accessible. Thus, the real challenge is how to find and explore this helpful material in order to take the simple steps that encourage greater inner freedom.

The psychological information on overcoming resistance in the professional literature for therapists is not generally available to the public. Similarly, the spiritual wisdom on facing blocks in life is often embedded in the classic religious literature of each faith tradition. As such, it is sometimes difficult to read and apply in light of today's challenges. Also, it may not be easy to find even if you are a member of that faith community.

Another difficulty in benefiting from spiritual wisdom is the paucity of interreligious dialogue. Spiritual wisdom of one religious tradition is often inaccessible or outside the experience of those from other faith traditions. For instance, the average Catholic would probably not read Ram Dass, and a devout Buddhist might not think to reflect on the words of Father Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit priest. Yet paradoxically, both could benefit and advance personally, professionally, and even spiritually in their *own* faith if they did. You don't need to see spirituality as a smorgasbord or be a "spiritual tourist" to appreciate how the wisdom of other faiths can be nurturing to your own beliefs and psychology of living.

For over twenty years I have sought to find and employ the most powerful and practical psychological and spiritual methods to overcome resistance to change and facilitate growth among one of the most sophisticated (and sometimes surprisingly inordinately resistant) populations: members of the helping and healing professions. Psychotherapists, ministers, relief workers, nurses and physicians, educators, and spiritual leaders are responsible for the welfare of others. Given this, when they themselves seek help, their responses are often quick, direct, and sound something like this: “I know the approach you have just described is good standard practice. In fact, I suggest it myself to others. But it won’t work with *me*.”

Nevertheless, good, simple, and powerful approaches do work with them and will work with me and you if we apply them in a gradual, careful, and persistent fashion. Our resistances to change are no match for true psychological and spiritual wisdom. If we expend even a little effort we will see that change, while not easy, is simple and the first step is a commitment to wake up to how we are blocking ourselves from so much more in life. As one spiritual guide wryly reminds us:

*To a man who hesitated to embark  
on the spiritual quest for fear of the  
effort and renunciation, the Master said:  
“How much effort and renunciation  
does it take to open one’s eyes and see?”* <sup>4</sup>

## SIMPLE CHANGES

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The same lesson applies to persons in business, education, ministry . . . in fact, to *all* of us in life. But, once again, motivation is not enough. We must know how to face resistances to change. For instance, at times we may even need to go around them rather than take them on directly. A frontal assault will not work.

Zen monks, for example, found that children who endured the horrors of war often manifested the classic signs of trauma: distrust, an exaggerated startle reaction, fear of betrayal, a loss of personal security, and an inability to experience joy. And if the monks tried to handle these problems directly with the children they would fail. So instead they decided to plant healing seeds in their unconscious next to the hurts, hoping they would grow, take root in the inner life, and in turn indirectly heal the hurts. To do this they smiled at the children, played with them, taught and ate warm meals with them. Slowly, in return, the traumatic glassy look in the eyes of the children faded and their faces and souls came to life again in joy.

### **Simple Steps to Encourage Greater *Inner Freedom***

Like the Zen monks just described, *Simple Changes* will plant similar seeds of new freedom, growth, and change. Like “little sound bites” on television, each chapter will only take a few minutes to read before you start your busy day. My suggestion is that you take another few minutes to reflect on the words you have read sometime during the day. Finally, spend a minute or so on the

theme of the chapter just before going to bed to further seed the idea in your heart.

After reviewing the brief chapters provided, I think you will be pleased. Some of the resistances to necessary change are being “melted” by your own thoughts and commitment to living a deeper, richer life. Absorbing sound psychological and spiritual wisdom will enable this to happen in a gentle, step-by-step fashion. Dramatic resolutions or fad “self-improvement” diets don’t work. In the end they just discourage us from believing real change is both possible and enjoyable. On the other hand, a quiet, developmental approach to behavioral and attitudinal change “loosens our psyche up” and “softens our soul” so we can be more open. That can be very powerful.

Following the “seeds of change” there is a second section on commonly asked questions about resolving psychological resistances to growth and change. A third section offering questions often asked of spiritual guides on how to be open is followed by an epilogue. Finally, there are two appendices: an at-home thirty-day retreat encouraging openness to change and a brief descriptive bibliography. The appendices have been included to round out the information on how to logically understand and carefully overcome resistances to change.

To emphasize once again: With what we now know about resistance from psychology and about increasing our awareness from spirituality, there are many basic steps we can take to get more out of our personal and professional lives. Given the preciousness and

## SIMPLE CHANGES

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fleeting nature of life, isn't it worth the effort to expend some energy in this direction each day?

May the words that follow help you to relax, be more flexible, and grow, as you journey toward finding greater meaning and freedom in life. Let this book help you enjoy life *while* you are changing—don't wait until you reach your goals. Personal growth need not be a chore, but rather a continually surprising journey to explore and love.

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*Face reality and effortless  
change will take place.*

~ Zen saying

*The one who would be consistent  
in happiness must frequently change.*

~ Confucius



# ***I***

*Quietly Planting Inner Seeds of Freedom,  
Growth, and Change*

# 1. *Making Space Within*

BY QUESTIONING FURTHER

One of the most precious graces of life is freedom, *inner* freedom. To change, move, *really* grow, we need “space” within ourselves. Habits, worries, emotions, defensiveness, stubbornness, and fear all take up room. Maybe that’s why Zen Roshis suggests that to find joy and peace, we don’t need to *add* something to our lives. Instead, we need to *drop* something so we can see clearly and live more freely. From a Christian vantage point, this is called “purity of heart.” Psychologists are less poetic. They simply suggest: Get rid of “expensive defenses” that take up all your energy. Their suggestion: Uncover and eliminate old, useless habits and unfounded, erroneous, negative beliefs, and the result will be new freedom.

However, while the goal (namely, having space, emptiness, or freedom within) sounds good, it is not easy. Why? Because the first

step goes completely against the grain of our “common sense” and presently limited self-awareness. To be free, we must first realize that in many ways, we are not!

There are all types of hidden addictions, ingrained habits, and unexamined beliefs that are guiding us automatically through life. One of the best ways to find out what they are is to continually monitor our emotions and ask the right type of questions that eventually lead to information that frees us.

Self-awareness and sensitivity to what we “fill our psyches with” seems so elusive. I think Thoreau was right when he said, “It is as hard to see oneself as it is to look backward without turning ‘round.’” Much of my work is with a “professionally sensitive” population. These “healers” and helpers generally consider themselves in tune with themselves and their environment because of their work and professional roles. Yet those who are truly sensitive are the ones who seek to learn new lessons and “unlearn” old habits each day.

To be aware like that we must have a questioning air that is fueled by an appreciation of our emotions. In other words, we need to be able and willing to be sensitive to what our emotions can teach us. When we are angry, sad, thrilled, anxious, fearful, or depressed, we are tempted to think the emotion is being caused by some external event in our lives. That is only partly true. The interpretation we attach to the event plays the major role in eliciting a given emotion.

## SIMPLE CHANGES

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For example, we might have a friend who asks for recommendations for books to read or movies to view. Then he calls to criticize the choices. (“The plot is not well-developed.” “The ending is not believable.” “The humor was lagging.”)

Our first reaction might be: “Well, why do you ask me for suggestions if you are always going to play the critic?” At work when someone asks for ideas and then repeatedly rejects them, we may ask a similar question: “Why did you ask if you are only going to reject them (and try to make me feel inferior in the process)?”

You may also ask yourself: “Why is he so critical? Doesn’t he know I am going to get tired of it and stop offering suggestions?” The answer to this is quite simple: No, he probably doesn’t see himself as being critical. Also, in this style of behavior, he may unconsciously feel he will impress you with his own knowledge even though it is off-putting. The reason behind it may be that it is more important for him to feel superior than to have your friendship, for if he valued it, he would be more gentle and sensitive. Fear, which underlies insecurity and neediness, often causes such behavior.

Still, now that we have gone on this “psychoanalytic safari” and analyzed why he behaves in this irritating fashion, what have we got that will make more space in our life? Nothing, really. We may decide either not to suggest anything in the future or just expect he will rarely be happy with our recommendations. But even though we may have made our life a little more pleasant by the decision, we still haven’t opened up any more space in our inner life

to change or grow. We haven't yet asked the right type of question. We haven't questioned far enough.

We always ask questions about the other person(s) or event(s) that are precipitating emotions in our lives. This is a natural response. In the case just cited, it is normal to ask: What is the matter with him? Why does he behave in such a critical fashion? Doesn't he realize he just pushes potential friends away by being so dissatisfied with suggestions (gifts) offered to him?

However, after these outer-directed questions are asked and our emotions of anger or annoyance dissipate a bit, then it is time to ask really useful questions: Why did *I* allow myself to be so upset over someone else's behavior? Given my reactions, what can I learn about my own insecurities and agendas that will make me more self-aware, less defensive . . . more *free*? Such a change in the focus and extent of our questioning helps us retrieve the power to alter our future reactions.

Knowing the answers to such questions clears our inner space. If we don't ask these questions or if we stop in the questioning process too soon, we only uncover information that is useful for the other persons but not for ourselves. And the sad part is that it probably won't be useful to them, either. Since their behavior is unconsciously motivated, or is tied to an unexamined belief about themselves and their world, they would naturally deny our interpretation even if we offered it to them on a silver platter. Besides, when we are annoyed by another's behavior, we are probably the last person able to help them. In such cases, our

motivations to help would be less than pure, and our response would more than likely be aimed at paying them back or showing them how they injured us rather than for their benefit.

Yet in irritating and other unpleasant situations, we can help ourselves by tilling the psychological and spiritual soil, and planting new self-knowledge that will lead to opportunities for necessary growth and change. Wouldn't that be a better option than just moodily focusing on the silly behavior of others and our own hurt feelings? Wouldn't it be better to reclaim the power we are wasting in interpersonal situations so as to alter our reaction style both interiorly and interpersonally? How we question ourselves—especially when annoyed, hurt, or experiencing a negative emotion—is an important key to self-understanding, changing destructive patterns of reactions, and making space within for new learning opportunities.



### *Seed of Change #1*

*After reflecting on why someone with whom you interact behaves the way he (she) does, ask why you are reacting the way you are. In this way, you can gain further insight into your own defenses, needs, insecurities, and blind areas. Change needs the room occupied by these defenses. Make space within yourself by psychologically and spiritually “cleaning out” your inner life.*