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Making Change

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Manifesting our global purpose often requires making change – in ourselves, our relationships, our families, neighborhoods, communities, and society. It's inspirational to see how the movement toward a global shift continues to grow and flourish, even in the face of substantial challenges and alarming societal regressions to less conscious ways of being. The worldwide grassroots movement toward higher human potential is undeniable, from the fresh insights of massive numbers of young people, to the elders who continue to hold the flame of hope steady.

Often however, the ways we attempt to make change are ineffective, which can leave us baffled, frustrated, bitter, or worn out. This is in part because the science of change – which spans the range from cognitive, social, behavioral, and neurosciences – does not always inform the actions at the front lines where activism is taking place. Over the last few months, we've launched a task force of scientists, media experts, designers, and advocates who are working together to create a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes - based on theory and empirical evidence from the science of transformation - that will boost the power of change agents to be more successful in their efforts. Let's look at some of the foundational premises of this effort, and an initial set of powerful concepts/tools that will add some juice to your change making ability.

The Limits of Information in Making Change

A common misunderstanding is that the best way to make change is to provide people with lots of information that supports what you want them to do differently. This "knowledge deficit model," developed by public attitudes researchers in the last part of the 20th century, contends that if a little knowledge does not result in behavior change, then the answer is to provide even *more* data, evidence, and education. The idea is that public skepticism or lack of response to scientific findings about issues, such as climate change or health benefits of smoking cessation for example, is based on a lack of knowledge on the part of the public. Makes sense, right? The solution is then obvious – inform the public - transferring knowledge from experts to non-experts – with the idea that once people fully understand the information their behavior will change. Most campaigns to shift public behavior are comprised primarily of information, education, or awareness-building. The vast majority of our resources go toward the distribution of information, even though information is only a small proportion of what changes people's behavior.

The problem is that information is only one element of what leads to changing beliefs and behaviors, and likely not the most important one. Culture, social norms, economics, upbringing and life experiences, religious and spiritual beliefs, stress levels and biological predispositions, implicit assumptions and biases, and many other factors influence what people believe and how they behave. And, interestingly, self-report data on why a person makes a new behavior choice often is in inaccurate, erring on the side of attributing the change to information, when this is empirically shown to be incorrect. In other words, people think they

change when they receive new information, but they really change in response to a host of other factors.

As a change maker, when you are given an hour to work with an audience, how often do you spend the majority of the hour delivering information to people? It's not strange that you are tempted to do this – in the age of reason, delivery of information has been thought to be the highest form of education. Indeed, most of us likely spent the vast majority of our classroom time throughout our education sitting in rows of desks, listening to teachers lecture, memorizing information from textbooks, and then taking written tests or delivering oral or written reports to show that we at least memorized if not comprehended the information we received. It only stands to reason that we tend to use these methods in our efforts to inform others. With technology, social media, and new styles of oration such as TED talks, we can find more engaging ways to deliver information to people. But to succeed as change makers, we must do so much more.

Motivation

When information fails, the next change making approach many of us take is to try to *motivate* people. Motivation is a combination of 1) the reasons people have for doing something, and 2) the desire or willingness to take action. Think about the ways that you have tried to motivate yourself and other people to make changes in their thinking patterns and behavior – in particular, when you were *not* successful. What hasn't worked? Take a moment to write a list of all of the ways you typically try to motivate yourself or others.

Here are a few that came from participants of a recent workshop we conducted on this topic:

• Reason with them • Argue your case • Cajole • Badger • Nag/Use repetition • Verbal sparring/debate • Offer advice and tools • Live by example • Avoid the topic entirely • Use peer pressure • Create top-down rules and policies • Find ways to show how they are wrong	• Guilt or shame • Use graphic images • Scare them • Reward and punishment • Appeal to their ego • Bargain • Tell them they don't care enough • Roll your eyes, use body language • Pout/sulk • Increase your verbal or physical intensity • Express your frustration	• Yell/raise your voice • Cry • Withhold affection • Seduce them • Enlist others against them/gossip • Ridicule/Make fun of them privately or publicly • Insult them • Call them names/stereotype them • Threaten them • Use physical violence

These are the ways that most of us attempt to increase motivation in ourselves, other people, or societal groups. And many of these can be partially effective. Just as delivering information accounts for a small proportion of lasting change, these approaches to motivation represent another small proportion. The problem is that most of these methods either result in temporary changes, or they are actually counterproductive, resulting in backlash or increased defenses against new suggestions.

The truth is that making people feel bad doesn't make them change their minds. In fact, it can cause people to go into hiding, avoid the topic altogether, or redouble their defenses against future attacks to their current belief system. Making ourselves feel bad doesn't change our own behavior either, though our minds like to think it will. When you step back to consider

it for a moment, it's not difficult to believe that barraging yourself or others with information, cajoling, nagging, bargaining, threatening, insulting, or carrot-and-stick approaches do not actually work to encourage long-term changes in how people think and behave. If only accurate information and a desire to change were enough, there would be few people with addictions or behavior-related health problems. But what is the alternative? If information and motivation are not at the root of making change, what is?

Worldview Transformation

If information is about 10% of behavior change, and motivation is another 10%, what is the remaining 80%? Our premise is that it is *worldview transformation*. Long-lasting changes in thinking patterns and behavior spring from foundational shifts in the way people view themselves, the world, and the relationship between themselves and the people, places and things in their environment. These shifts happen through a natural process that we as change makers can help to facilitate.

A series of studies at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (Vieten, Amorok, & Schlitz, 2006; Schlitz, Vieten, & Amorok 2008) has examined how people make significant shifts in worldview that result in long-lasting changes in their thinking patterns and ways of being. For over a decade, we've investigated how people make fundamental shifts in the way they view themselves and their relationships to others and the world. By analyzing written stories of people's individual transformations, focus groups with transformational teachers from a variety of the world's wisdom traditions, in-depth interviews with over sixty masters and teachers who have taught thousands of students, surveys with thousands of people who have made major

changes in their lives, and prospective studies following people over time who are engaged in transformative work, we've created a model of transformation that continues to evolve (see http://noetic.org/research/transformation_model). Put simply, our research indicates that there are four interrelated things you can do to foster change: 1) creating opportunities for people to have *direct, personal, and profound* experiences of seeing things in a new light; 2) providing *scientific evidence* to support and expand the insights from those experiences; 3) giving people *practices, training and tools* as scaffolding to support the new way of being in their everyday lives; and 4) connecting people with *relationships and communities* that support the new way of being. Direct experience, scientific evidence, tools and applications, and community are four key elements to making change.

What we've learned from this work and from the work of other researchers engaged in this field is that **profound transformation in people's worldviews is possible under the right conditions, and that this is the foundation of true and lasting changes in thinking patterns and behaviors**. In other words, changes in behavior spring from underlying changes in how people view themselves, the attitudes and perspectives they take toward other people and the world around them, and the ways they think in general about reality. This is how religions, spiritual traditions, modern transformative programs, and psychotherapeutic approaches work, each with their own strengths and limitations. The major limit of these programs is that they often require adherence to a particular belief system, set of teachings, or teacher/diety/guru. Our goal has been to develop a cross-traditional model of transformation that can be applied in a variety of contexts, spiritual or secular, to make change.

In short, people make changes in their behavior when they think differently about who they are and the way things are. For example, behavioral changes can arise from changes in how people view time (for example, being able to comprehend the impact of their actions into their own future or future generations), or how they view their connections with others (e.g. being moved by the plight of or impact of their actions on people who are far away, or those who are perceived as different – not the same as me or not a member of my "tribe"). Lasting changes in thinking patterns and behaviors come from seeing oneself and the world in a new way. So, the task of a change maker is not to deliver new thinking patterns or behaviors directly to people, it's to help people see themselves and the world from a new perspective, and allow new thinking patterns and behaviors to arise from those changes.

Another model of behavioral transformation that relies on essential internal shifts springs from a number of studies on how people create and maintain new behaviors, such as behavioral responses to climate change in among neighborhoods and policy makers. Estrada and colleagues (2017) developed a model called the Tripartite Integration Model of Social Influence (TIMSI). The model indicates that the elements necessary for inspiring new behaviors include: the sense that they can do it (efficacy), the sense that the behaviors are consistent with their salient sense of self (identity), and the sense that the new behaviors are consistent with their personal values and the values of those groups that matter to them (values). Self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003), or the belief that you actually can do something, has been shown to consistently predict long-term behavioral outcomes and changes in individual functioning across a wide array of domains. Knowing that people like you are also engaged in in the new behavior you are working to adopt is also extremely powerful, but highly de-emphasized in our

society that focuses on individualism, and routinely underestimates the impact of the social world. A simple example of this is a city that was attempting to encourage its residents to recycle. One set of advertising told people about the problem of plastic, and encouraged them to recycle their plastic bottles. The other set of advertising invited residents to join the 75% of their neighbors who were already recycling. As you can imagine, the second set of ads were more effective in creating the change. Finally, when behaviors are in strong alignment with our internalized values (both conscious and not conscious), we are less likely to resist engaging in them. So again, to function as a more effective change agent, the majority of your work can focus on cultivating people's 1) identity as someone who acts in the new ways of being, 2) sense of efficacy that they can actually do what is being requested, and 3) identifying with the *values* of the community of people who are behaving in the new way.

Now, we are using findings like this and research from our colleagues around the world to create models and training programs for change makers who want to enhance their effectiveness. Whether people are working as counselors, therapists, or coaches who support other people in making change, or societal change agents like politicians, activists, or leaders of NGOs, the same principles apply. While a comprehensive treatment of these concepts and tools is beyond the scope of this chapter, and is currently being developed into a book and training program, let's take a look at just a few principles that you can implement today to enhance your effectiveness as a change maker. Some of these are common sense reminders that tend to elude us when we become very passionate or emotional creating change in something or someone. Others are unexpected, and even paradoxical. Our task force will be elucidating these in a book and a training program for change makers in the coming year. Meanwhile, we hope

that using some of these in your change making work today will enhance your effectiveness right away.

Creating an Ecosystem of Change

So, lasting changes in people's thinking patterns and ways of being and behaving most often spring from a shift in worldview or perspective. Those shifts in worldview and perspective occur within an entire *ecosystem of change*. Behaviors and the worldviews that give rise to them are developed over time in the context of a complex network of relationships between biology, cognitions, emotions, desires, beliefs, life experiences, assumptions, biases, and perspectives that are both explicit (you know about them) and implicit (outside of your conscious awareness). And that is all just *inside* of each person! Behaviors and worldviews are also strongly environmentally and socially mediated, meaning that they are dependent on what is happening in someone's environment (including such things as region, socio-economic status, and access to food, shelter, housing) and who they come into contact with (friends, family, loved ones, acquaintances, communities, neighborhoods, spiritual communities, workplaces, and other societal structures), both over the lifespan and in each moment. No wonder our approaches to change making must go far beyond simply providing information and stoking a desire to change!

Successful approaches to making change must be comprehensive - addressing multiple levels of people's lives both internally and externally. To affect the complex network of inner and outer systems that determine behavior requires a multipronged approach. You can translate this into practice as a change maker. Even in the course of a one-hour presentation

you can include messages, images, and experiential activities designed less to tell people what they should do and why, and more about helping them link the hoped-for behavioral shift to their pre-existing worldviews, efficacy, identity and values. Or, you can engage in activities that work to shift these to be more in alignment with the hoped for behavioral shift. Begin to see each person or group you are addressing as an ecosystem rather than an individual. Rather than asking "how much information can I deliver in this one hour?," ask yourself which aspects of this person or organization's ecosystem of change can be enrolled? As change makers, we direct our energy toward creating as many of the ideal conditions as we can for the natural process of change to occur.

You've got to create an ecosystem of change. Creating conditions for the natural process of growth and change to occur is sort of like planting a garden – providing the right soil composition, nutrients, water, sunlight, and stakes in the ground, and monitoring each over time to determine which are most conducive to our plants to grow. If you want to make change, you can't address a single issue directly. Here are some ways to create an ecosystem of change:

Nothing Substitutes for Direct Experience

A comprehensive strategy to change your own behavior, or to change the behavior of others, must be deeply experiential. Having a direct experience is the most powerful way to shift someone's perspective. An old adage goes, you can tell someone about what it is like to eat an orange all day long, or you can simply give them an orange to eat. When teaching people about pollution in the oceans, see if you can get them into a boat to witness it for themselves. If

you are attempting to increase health through improved nutrition, a visit to a farm to harvest vegetables, a cooking class to prepare them, and a shared meal is much more powerful than a list of nutritional do's and don'ts.

When you can't get people out of their chairs, at times guided visualization can be a good substitute for in-person experiences. Also, the emerging technologies of virtual and augmented reality can effectively "trick" the mind into having a very compelling direct experience. For example, a virtual reality application that introduced students to their elderly selves (by taking their pictures, age-advancing them digitally, and then placing the person face-to-face with their future self in an immersive virtual reality environment), increased their willingness to save for retirement (Hershfield et al., 2014). In effect, this experience shifted their perspective on time, making later monetary rewards more salient in the present.

Direct experiences should engage as many of the senses as possible, be provided in an environment of safety and consent (both ethically, and so that people are willing to be vulnerable and let down their defenses a bit), and ideally, be repeated. Direct experiences that are too threatening or dangerous can backfire, stunning people into denial or dismissal of the event as an anomaly, or increasing their defenses.

Even something as simple as asking an audience to share with a partner or a trio can bring a level of direct experience to a conversation that is quite powerful, and also includes the social dimension. Whatever is feasible, be sure to make each set of strategies you create for the change you are working toward include several elements of direct experience.

Making a Case

We made a strong case at the beginning of this chapter for the limits of information to make change, but while trustworthy information is not sufficient to make change, it *is* necessary. There are some things you should know about providing data, evidence, or information to people that might help you be more effective.

First, each of us is hardwired with certain cognitive biases that are functional for cognitive efficiency (for example, screening out irrelevant information, being able to quickly process new information through categorizing it into buckets, and focusing most of our energy on the most salient parts of our environment such as those that are most important from an evolutionary perspective, including danger, reproduction, or food/shelter). Problematically however, these same functions can make it very difficult to process information that runs contrary to what we believe or implicitly assume is the case. As adult development expert Cook-Greuter (2000) put it, "The ego represents the striving of human beings to understand themselves and the world they live in by fitting new experiences into their current meaning system. Overall, the ego labors mightily to create and maintain coherence and vigorously defends against dissonant stimuli."

As a change maker, you must work to break through these biases or bring them into the light of day. If you ignore these biases, you can share your information until the cows come home and it will have no impact other than to fortify the defenses of the listener. The strength of the mind to resist a shift in worldview is tremendous, because it is cognitively-costly – meaning that everything has to be recategorized. For those of you who remember typing papers, or filing in actual paper filing cabinets, adding a new sentence or a new file meant

everything had to be shifted around. Not only does the new belief need to be instantiated, the existing beliefs all have to be compared to the new one to make sure no major discrepancies are formed. No wonder it's hard to make changes in behavior!

The process of shifting or shedding light on implicit biases and assumptions is most often a long one, requiring repeated intervention and practices. But as a change-maker, knowing that your information may be met with denial, skepticism, or threat-alert may help you change the way you deliver the message. A few things you can do follow:

- Keep it brief, simple, and to the point, and use metaphors, storytelling, symbols or simple representational images, or other non-verbal tools as much as possible. For example, you can tell people who are shifting their nutrition patterns to eat three cups of vegetables, ½ cup of carbs, and ½ cup of protein at every meal, or you can show them (or better, give them) a plate that has space for ½ vegetables, ¼ carbs, and ¼ protein. Adding a story, which again is processed by a different part of the brain than pure facts, also can be a powerful way to have information "stick" while circumventing the higher brain's sifting process.
- Make the *immediate* benefits of the change you are proposing clear, as opposed to only the long term benefits. Long-term consequences, while comprehensible by the higher cortex, are so abstract as to be meaningless to the middle-brain motivational system. If the change you are proposing is long-term, such as "if you quit smoking now, you will add ten years to your life," or "if you pay more for solar power now, the planet will benefit in the future by slowing global warming," you might consider in addition to

these lofty goals focusing even more intently on what it will result in right now. In the climate change world, we call attention not only to the immediate intended benefits but also the immediate "collateral benefits" that are often numerous and under-acknowledged, such as biking to work not only helping the environment, but one's health, energy level, and happiness today. You can frame the conversation with the bigger, longer-term picture, but focus more attention on immediate benefits of the desired behavior – for the head, the heart, the body, the spirit, and current relationships and quality of life: for example, "If you quit smoking now, you will have fewer wrinkles within four weeks," giving them pictures or video to reinforce that immediate benefit, or "by going solar now, you join a vibrant community of people who are smart, savvy, and advanced," giving them ways to know they are a member of that community (even something as simple as a membership card or decal for their car window works) and ways to interact with that community (as simple as being allowed to join a private Facebook page or invitation-only conference).

- On the flip side, it can be powerful to help people pay attention to what is not working, or what is causing dissatisfaction about a particular topic, *right now*. Helping people identify and amplify the discomfort they are experiencing in present time about an issue is more powerful than pointing out how it will have negative future consequences.

There are many other approaches to making your information delivery more engaging, powerful, and participatory. Rather than imagining yourself as an expert who is delivering information to people who need it, consider yourself a tour guide, introducing people to their own journey of discovery. Rather than being a missionary, spreading the gospel of a particular

topic, imagine yourself walking beside your target audience, pointing out things in the surroundings that are interesting. Trust that one thing revealed to someone through their own efforts is worth a thousand that you might convey to them.

Training, Tools and Practices

Instilling new behaviors into people's lives takes almost constant vigilance at first – it's extremely rare that someone has a profound insight and then changes their behavior for good. It's important to realize that even if you facilitate a direct experience that results in the Aha! Moment you were looking for, AND you provide compelling scientific evidence or information to back it up, AND you've got the person on board with you, they will need accessible, feasible ways to integrate the new behavior into their life. The implications of what needs to be done next may be very obvious to you, but not so to the person who is ready to make the change. It's incredibly cruicial to co-create a simple strategy for making change that people can actually do, rather than telling them what they should do.

How can you blow gently on the flame of nascent motivation for change, without extinguishing it? By giving people feasible, achievable, free or inexpensive, community-supported activities that they can immediately integrate into their everyday life. A bit of wisdom from the coaching world is that when working on putting new behavior patterns in place, set initial goals that are 100% achievable. This can be something like, "I will exercise for 3 minutes per day." It sounds silly, and so small as to be worthless, but in fact it provides people with many of the elements that must be in place for behavioral change to occur – such as direct experience, self-efficacy, immediate reward, and when the success is shared with others, social

reinforcement. Then these small changes can be gradually built into larger ones. It's important that the person you are working with come up with the strategies themselves, with only a little help from you.

Ideally, new behaviors are presented in someone's "zone of proximal development," a term coined by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1987) to refer to what someone can learn to do with just a little help. That little bit of help is what Vygotsky termed "scaffolding": a temporary framework that is put up for support and access to meaning in the early stages of learning a new skill, and taken away once the person secures the ability for themselves. Kind of like training wheels, your job as a change maker is to identify the next achievable next step for yourself, or assist the person/people you are working with to do the same, and then make sure there is enough scaffolding for them to feel safe to take that next step.

Also, remember that adding a behavior to one's life is often much easier than subtracting a behavior. Your change-making might benefit from mobilizing the "approach" rather than "avoidance" aspects of behavioral motivation. Highlight, emphasize, and demonstrate what people are moving toward, instead of what they are moving away from. The nobility of deprivation or asceticism is motivating for a very small minority of people. Yes, most people are motivated by relief from discomfort or suffering, but you can place the emphasis on moving *toward* relief (rather than what they need to give up to attain that relief). Secondarily, people are motivated by moving toward joy, thriving, belonging, and quality of life for themselves and their loved ones. When working to change the behavior patterns of yourself

and others, focus on what will people be adding to their lives, rather than what they must subtract.

Meeting People Where They Are

It seems cliché, but more often than not, as change makers we neglect this very important principle. Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) identified "stages of change" from pre-contemplation, to contemplation, preparation, action, and finally maintenance of new behaviors. For example, in the precontemplation phase, people are unaware of their behavior or the problem, and resistant to change. In this phase, the task is to increase awareness (remember, not through information alone). In the preparation stage, it's helpful to create a collaborative and achievable plan for change with them. Helping someone in the precontemplation stage create a plan is nearly useless, though that's what we do all the time (think, giving nutritional plans to people who are nowhere near ready to make a change).

The key is to identify where people are in their process, and meet them there. Instead of trying to skip stages, like trying to move someone from pre-contemplation to action, you can purposely focus on moving them just to the subsequent stage. Notably, they include as a sixth stage relapse, because the norm in every behavior change is relapse. This stage is not so much about trying to avoid relapse, as embracing the opportunity to learn from backsliding. For change makers, know that there are stages to change, and that the process is not entirely linear. Acknowledge, recognize and even celebrate the twists and turns that can occur.

The process of Motivational Interviewing (MI), by behavioral scientists Miller and Rollnick (2012) also holds evidence-based wisdom for change makers. In MI, counselors are

reminded to follow the acronym RULE: Resist telling them what to do, Understand their motivation, Listen with empathy, and Empower them to take action, setting achievable goals and identifying techniques to overcome barriers. Truly understanding the motivation of another person, rather than imposing your idea of why they *should* be motivated, is one key to cultivating the conditions for change. For example, I worked with a population of pregnant women using a mindfulness-based intervention to help them change health and nutrition behaviors. We discussed with them why they might want to make such changes – including fewer childbirth complications, better health of the baby, better mother-infant bonding. We found that for some of the women, their main goal was to get their size eight jeans back on as quickly after childbirth as possible, to stay attractive. This was their motivator, and going with that despite my wish that their motivations be more noble (and feminist!), was more effective than trying to get them to focus on outcomes that were less compelling and more abstract to them, or seemed out of their control.

Research by Kegan and Lahey (2001) shows that when people are unable to change to more functional ways of being, or have difficult achieving their goals, it is typically because they have competing commitments of which they are not aware. These non-conscious competing commitments often represent deep, survival level perceived needs that simply overwhelm the establishment of new behaviors. For example, let's say you are working with a CEO who is moving toward establishing green practices throughout her company, and you've worked for a year in an iterative fashion to co-create a set of steps that work for everyone. There will be a slight immediate reduction in profit margin, which will be recouped over five years in energy savings and the optics of the company will be substantially improved, leading to a projected

increase in profit. At your six-month follow-up with the company, you learn that the CEO later drastically reduced the scope of the plan, so much so that it is effectively hobbled, having no impact on intended outcomes, and no real change of which to speak.

What happened? What you don't know is that the CEO received feedback from one (just one!) shareholder saying that people wondered if she was going soft, and whether this emotional tree-hugging tendency might impair her ability to be a strong leader. This triggered in her a concern that she herself was keeping barely suppressed – that if she moved too far from the conservative tough business-sense roots she learned during her upbringing and training, she would lose her job, be the subject of public ridicule, and eventually become completely meaningless as a person. This might sound dramatic, but when these competing commitments are uncovered, they are typically quite dramatic. Not a surprise in this case that she was easily swayed toward rejecting the new behavior. What can you do?

Rather than ignoring that people have extremely strong competing commitments, bring them into the light and take a look at them together. Put them all on the table. Respect them, and make room for them. Have compassion for them. And find a way to help people serve those commitments *and* move toward what they really want to do. In this case, you might connect this CEO with other conservative strong business leaders who are going green. You might work with her to test whether it was true, in fact, that if she made these new moves she would lose respect, testing it out by making small moves toward the new behavior and seeing what happened. You might give her extra resilience training, so that she knows she will be

thrown into these survival level conflicts when criticized, and have skills for navigating those moments.

Radical Inclusion

The law of conservation of energy in physics states that the total amount of energy remains constant in an isolated system, and that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but can be changed from one form to another. Similarly, when working to make change, you cannot create or destroy aspects of essential nature of a person. Patterns of thinking, emotional archeology, implicit biases, and historical perspectives can be de-emphasized and disempowered, to stretch the garden metaphor – composted, through creating an ecosystem of change, but rarely can they be eradicated. Like R. Buckminster Fuller said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that **makes** the existing model **obsolete."** The best way to de-emphasize an old way of thinking is not to chip away at it with the goal of eventual elimination, but to add new ways of viewing the world that make those story lines less relevant.

We call this radical inclusion. Every part of each person is acknowledged, embraced, and allowed a seat at the table, even the parts we really, really disagree with or don't prefer. The racist parts. The sexist parts. We include the parts that care more about a cheeseburger or cheap television today than about the impact these things have on the environment for future generations. The parts that want more money, that want people imprisoned or killed who might be dangerous. The parts of all of us that have been selected over millennia of evolution

to focus on our own immediate survival and that of those in our own tribe, even at the expense of others.

Remember, accepting and allowing in this context are not the same as approving or condoning. This is about meeting things as they actually are, instead of how we think they should be. Instead of focusing on eliminating what we don't prefer, we focus on including and transmuting it. Integral philosopher Ken Wilber (2007) points out that when we move into higher levels of consciousness, we don't leave the previous stages behind, but instead we *transcend and include* them. It makes sense, but in practice it's non-intuitive, and takes a bit of work.

Why would we want to include these parts of ourselves and other people as we work toward change? Because they are actually there, and they are not going anywhere. As Carl Jung pointed out, when we suppress "shadow" aspects of ourselves or other people, pushing them out of conscious awareness, they become *more* powerful drivers of behavior, not less. If our focus as change agents is to successfully suppress or control undesirable thoughts, motivations, or behaviors, our approach will surely fail, and may backfire. In contrast, when we nurture and support the growth of what is positive, this shifts the ecosystem without suppression.

Your Presence As a Change Maker

Of everything we have said thus far, it's possible that the single most important thing you can work on to enhance your change making ability is your own state of mind and way of being. The presence you bring to this work is your most valuable tool.

Why? Changing in foundational ways can make people feel vulnerable and scared. Stepping away from what they know can feel unsafe and unfamiliar. By changing, people are often risking loss of comfort, love, social standing, equilibrium, sense of self, sense of control…actually, it's a wonder that anyone changes! Your ability to embody a genuine, authentic sense of caring, respect, and dignity is essential.

As change agents, we must cultivate humility in ourselves – the knowledge that we cannot control the outcome of our efforts. We can only provide as many ideal conditions as we can for the natural process of change to happen. Extending the garden metaphor, making change is about painstakingly cultivating an environment most conducive for a natural process of growth to occur. We don't reach inside the seeds to pull the saplings out, we instead provide the ideal environment for germination to take place. If you have ever tried to make someone (through blunt force or sheer will) to be different, including yourself, you'll know that it is a losing proposition. A guiding assumption here is that given the right conditions, most people grow toward what Maslow called self-actualization (or, a drive that is present in everyone toward the realization of their talents and potentialities). When we work to change people's beliefs and actions by force, we often witness a pendulum effect – where people swing between being on "good behavior" and relapse/regression. Oscillations are to be expected, and are in fact essential to true change, but trying to force change or pushing people too far beyond their current meaning system and capabilities too quickly, almost guarantees a rebound.

In fact, the desire to control other people and situations (which includes employing direct and forceful efforts to change them, even with the best of intentions) paradoxically leads

to *less* effective approaches to making change, and also leads to greater burn out for change makers. Focusing on what we *can* do to provide the ideal conditions under which a new way of being can bloom leaves us knowing in our hearts that we have done what we can, leaves others feeling respected rather than harassed, and leaves a pathway open for future change. Some seeds that are planted germinate for years, with no apparent sign that anything has happened, until they eventually break through the soil. You as a change agent don't always get to know the impact you've had. Two crucial things to cultivate in yourself as a change maker is 1) trust in the process of change itself, and 2) non-attachment to the outcome of your work.

Make sure your *passion* is tempered by *compassion*. People don't change from being insulted, harassed, shamed, lectured, lorded over, or in response to hysteria or outrage. In fact, when people feel this, they are unlikely to be open to change. When threatened, we perceive an unsafe, dangerous environment that is not conducive openness to change. Unwittingly, we create unsafe environments when we overtly or covertly insult people, their families, their regions, or their people.

In a recent article in the Atlantic, Conor Friedersdorf pointed out that "people are never less likely to change, to convert to new ways of thinking or acting, than when it means joining the ranks of their denouncers." He quotes Abraham Lincoln who said, that to dictate to a man's judgment, command his action, or mark him to be despised "and he will retreat within himself, close all the avenues to his head and his heart. And even though your cause be naked truth itself, transformed to the heaviest lance, harder than steel, sharper than steel can be made, and though you throw it with more Herculean force and precision, you shall be no more able to

pierce him, than to penetrate the hard shell of a tortoise with a rye straw." Back to our point about radical inclusion: you can *feel* outraged, righteously indignant, and you can have *thoughts* that people who need to change are selfish and stupid. But if your attempts to make change do not afford the other person or perspective respect, dignity, and compassion -- conveying what is essentially an invitation to try another way of being and see for themselves how it works -- then any change you make is going to be brittle and easily retracted, broken or damaged.

This is why nonviolent resistance is so incredibly effective. If you watch the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr or John F. Kennedy, consider the march in Selma, the actions of Rosa Parks, or Gandhi, or countless others – what you see is an invitation to join into a community of dignity and justice. It's inviting people to move toward something, rather than taking something away from them. It's welcoming, and it offers direct experiences, evidence, actual tools and training, and a community of support. It enhances their sense of efficacy, clarifies their sense of identity, and moves them in ways that align with their deepest values. We hope that this chapter has provided some support for your efforts.

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