

IF CHANGE IS
all there is,
... CHOICE IS
all you've got!

*A collection of
personal vignettes
about change and
choice*

ELIZABETH POWER

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If Change Is All There Is,
Choice Is All You've Got

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Introduction

When I was growing up, we used to sit around on Granny's porch and talk sometimes we just stood around. One of my favorite photos is of Granny on her porch with her arms crossed, folded up in her apron to keep warm, looking off in the distance. I think there's someone else on the porch with her, but I'm not sure. Doesn't even matter now, because Granny's posture and attitude are what I remember.

We grew up with porch talk. We'd linger there and watch whatever passed by in the back yard in the way of adults or kids in the summer and make talk about what was going on. If there was too big a crowd for Granny's back porch, we'd head for the yard. Didn't matter, it was still porch talk.

Then we'd make talk about whatever we saw going on either on the road (which we could see from that side of the yard) or on the farm next to Granny's and Grampy's place. At night, there would be fires in the outdoor fireplace and the gentle growling of the men's voices.

Sometimes we'd have family reunions at other relatives' places, and we'd all sit on their porch. Some had those great big wrap-around porches and, Lordy, a whole mess of people could talk porch talk there! Size of porch coupled with history of house was a definite indicator of social standing.

I used to believe it was just a rural edge-of-Appalachia Southern phenomenon, but as I talk to folks about it, I find it's spread. I've learned that folks "Not from Here" do it as far away as Michigan and Minnesota. Folks in many places get together and talk about life and its living using their own native dialect and dialogue.

The universal nature of porch talk lies not in the colloquial nature of the phrases and structure or in its community origins. It lies in the nature of parables and metaphor, those ways of communicating the process of living that are less than head on collisions with the truth. It is almost inevitably funny somewhere and most often its humor is not at the expense of someone else.

Porch talk may be slightly catty, gossipy, personal, or even a little tacky; seldom is it blaming or guilt-ridden.

Porch talk talks about all of us somewhere: we've all been so lazy we haven't done enough work to risk breaking the Sabbath sometime, and we've all been nervous as long-tailed cats in rooms full of rocking chairs at some point.

Its beauty is in its ability to relate powerful, perhaps poignant points about living and life. Like living and life, some of its language is awkward, perhaps not quite the epitome of social elegance, and sometimes obscure. Might even need to be read and pondered on for a while.

As a child growing up on porches and in yards, I had no idea of the power of those phrases and stories. As an adult, a person in the business world, finding out how funny they sound to others who grew up in different ways, I see their power. Varying in degree of dialect, depth, and humor, they all relate to getting through life filled with change using the one tool we'll always have: choice.

So, join me. Just pull up a chair, or even symbolically throw your feet up on your desk, and enjoy some porch talk. Sit for a spell, and invite a friend in. Laugh a little, watch night fall, day break, and the shadows shift as the sun courses across the sky. Listen to the sounds of the day where you are, and realize that wherever we are is a porch; whatever we do is where we live our life; and however we live in the changes we face is our story and our legacy to the world that follows us.

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Exploding Bat Dung

Heard something weird lately. Heard tell that you ought to stay out of caves when there's a thunderstorm. Seems like spelunkers---those crazy people (to my mind) who like to climb around in dark tight places, caves and all---say that when thunderstorms come up, lightning seeks out piles of bat guano (you can spell it however).

ZAPP!! And they explode. Now if you happen to have sought shelter from the storm in a cave, thinking it to be safe, you are in for a real surprise about the time a pile of bat dung gets blown up in your face. Best as I can figure, it's about like having a chicken fly sideways and let loose on you.

Boy, have I wanted to go hide in a cave when the storms are raging outside in my life. Always thought it would be safe, and dark. Of course, it's a cave I made up in my mind. The right height, not too dark, no wet slimy places, no piles of bones or scritch things in the dark scurrying around. And no bats. No bat dung.

Caves aren't like that. If you seek shelter in them, they come as they are. Dark. Cool. Left behinds. Maybe bats. Scritch things.

And you know what else happens after the lightning hits? Those bats get all stirred up and fly around. And they can get right scary, too, flapping and making all that noise.

Ain't no safer in than out, folks.

Frying's frying, by detonated bat dung in that nice safe cave or at the risk of lightning out in the storm. Believe I'd rather take the honest risk of the storm

The Hen's Involved But The Hog's Committed

Well, maybe you get beyond the cave. You decide it's a great place to hide if you're in the woods and a storm comes up, and when the storms come up in life you'd just as lief stand in the wind.

Here you are, out in the world. Storms are raging. Relationships change, work changes, you change---usually after going through about forty levels of new and unimagined horror. Isn't it amazing how much people would rather suffer than change?

It's kind of like a country breakfast: the hen's involved, and the hog's committed. Only thing the hen does is lay an egg. Old hog gives up his bacon. He only gets one go at it.

Too many times, we act like we're hogs. Act like asking or requiring change is like asking us to die and give up a haunch to get somewhere.

Truth is, we're a lot more like hens. Every time we go through change, we lay an egg. Each time that old hen sets, she comes up off the nest different. Never the same after each egg. We're different too, each time we go through some kind of change. We sure squawk enough. Everybody in the area usually knows we're different by the time it's done.

Seems like we need to tweak that around: hen's involved but the hog's committed. How about being committed hens, being willing to set and lay, come up different?

Forget being involved hogs---you can't do it. Hog can't go through giving half a side of bacon and live. Pretty much a waste of hog to try.

It's a lot more efficient and productive to go after being a committed hen. You can set and lay a lot more than you can give up a side a of bacon.

Butterflies Don't Like Cocoons

By the same token that you'd best figure out how to get out of the way of exploding bat dung if lightning strikes it while you're in that nice safe cave during a thunderstorm, you'd also do well to remember that butterflies don't like being inside cocoons.

Imagine the shock of being a caterpillar and finding yourself driven to start spinning your own closet! If caterpillars have any sense of self at all, I think it would be quite a shock. Who could relish the thought of being wrapped up, unable to move and not knowing what's next? When or whether you might emerge? Hard position to be in, unless you're some kind of perpetual optimist or pre-informed---and caterpillars have pretty slim chances to be either.

And then, to feel the strange changes that occur as you become a butterfly---yet without knowing what is happening---the body changes, the beginning urge to gnaw through the shell, desperately working to break out with a sense of urgency beyond belief. Sounds like puberty all over again.

Thrashing and beating, straining for what...? Not knowing where you are headed, what the reason for the change is, only knowing you are compelled to do this thing, to break out of this self-styled closet.

My friend's little boy recently found a cocoon in the process of hatching. He thought the butterfly was in trouble, so he decided to give Mother Nature a hand. He gently tore away the carefully spun encasing, let the butterfly emerge with its folded and rumped wings, set it on his finger, and then blew on its wings.

The butterfly hadn't exerted a dab of effort breaking out of its cocoon. It couldn't fly. In fact, it died. What my friend's son didn't realize was that the butterfly had to struggle in order to strengthen its wings and to force bodily fluids through its veins to finish developing to fullness.

Perhaps we've discovered that caves aren't so safe after all, and we decide to just cocoon up. Those self-made closets put us at equal risk.

They're appropriate, healthy, and can also prevent us from what we need to go through to come out butterflies. We may want to remove ourselves from the world or from our cocoon too quickly---we may prevent ourselves or be prevented from the thrashing and struggling that we need to come out butterflies. Likewise, some people also use the cocoon to keep on thrashing and struggling instead of going on with the business of becoming butterflies.

Many times in the depths of personal or professional change, that old cocoon is real appealing. It may be the cocoon of "Them Versus Us" or "They're Out To Get Me." It may be the cocoon of "We've Always Done It That Way."

Caterpillars become butterflies only by making cocoons and then at the right time thrashing and struggling for the right length of time as they come out, and then by beating their wings in the air before taking off.

Not spinning the cocoon, trying to come out early or late, or well-intentioned wrong kinds of help kills them. They have to do it on their own.

It's the process that makes them beautiful.

When a business is opened, sold, or closed, it requires the people in it to shed their old cocoons. So does divorce, being widowed, getting married. Most major changes do---they call out a sort of transparency necessary to make the transition. It would be easier to stay just the same, keep on being the old caterpillar.

It's easier. Shedding the cocoon, risking doing something different is scary. I understand that; it's just plain difficult. Feels like taking a psychotic break instead of a lunch break. Kind of like coming with a full load of bricks mentally and choosing to get "one brick short of a full load" for a while.

It might be easier to be hit by exploding bat dung or die in the cocoon---yes, indeed--than go through the bewilderment and thrashing required to become a butterfly.

I Never Met A Career I Didn't Like

Used to be Americans thought they were supposed to have only one career per life. Recent studies indicate that the average American person in the work place changes careers three times. Don't ask me which studies; go check with a career change counselor---or call the census people. I just know that the times I pick up news magazines or business publications, it's no longer the one-career/one-life routine, and three seems to be the new magic number.

It's an interesting statement about today's way of living. Try it---if you don't like it--change it. That's a simple statement, and there's also more to it than that.

Think about the changes you went through deciding what you wanted to be as a child. Somewhere around adolescence, I decided to be a writer---e. e. cummings or Rod McKuen style since it was, after all, their era. So I went away to study writing. Decided promptly that was for the birds; you had to be crazy to spend all that time at a keyboard (little did I know!).

I changed majors at least a half-dozen times, and by the time I returned to writing I had gone through physical therapy and social work at school. Actually did social work . . . and shoe repair. Ended up consulting in change management, and then picked up writing in addition. Might change again.

For a while, I looked at all the changes as instability and indecisiveness. Finally I recontexted it. I considered it another way: Each time I added more to my knowledge base, learned more, put more into my brain that helps me do what I do now. I'm a whole lot more of who I can become because I've done a lot of different types of work.

What do we hope for for our businesses? Isn't becoming all that it can, fulfilling more of its potential what we hope for every business? You can bet it's what I want for my business. I want it to do as well as it can and go as far as it can.

For what reason would I want less than that for myself? Or others? And, as well, if I realize that there's an area I'm not well suited for, then I should do something different.

Long and short of it is, I never met a career I didn't like, because I knew there was always another one. Folks who say, "I was looking for a job when I found this one," know what they are talking about. They realize that if they'll set their hands to whatever is before them while they are figuring out what to do next, they'll go a long way. It's good to keep going while you're looking around.

Our country is changing. You no longer have to settle into one career at 29 and stay there until you're 65. It's much more often two or three careers in a lifetime now. And that means when changes occur in your personal or work life, you can bypass the shame, guilt and stigma that comes with changing careers---just plunge right on in and have a good time with it.

Did Anybody Grow Up Near A "Crick"?

Long time ago I discovered a lot of folks just dig in their heels and sit down like an old stubborn mule when they hear thunder coming up the valley.

A mule won't move if he doesn't want to. Go against his wants, and he just puts it in park. Period. About the only way you can get one to go then is pry up his tail and put a burr under it--if you're big enough to do it. Only takes about once of getting your head clobbered by a mule kick to learn just how independent and merely tolerant of people mules are. Mule trainers aren't called muleskinners for nothing!

Mules work hard. They work steady. And they despise change.

Lot of folks just sit still when they hear thunder coming up the valley, too. They might be on the porch sitting in their rockers, hear that rumbling rolling up the valley and just keep on sitting.

Anybody acting on their good sense knows it means a storm is coming.

If you combine the stubbornness of a mule with our tendency to just stay put when we hear thunder rumbling, you've got trouble.

We got trouble.

Remember when you were a kid? You probably had a "crick," drainage ditch, or some other body of water nearby--and in the middle of winter, your mama said to you "Don't you dare get in that water, if you do, so help me, I'll wear you out. You'll absolutely catch your death of a cold if you do. I'll wear you out if you so much as set one toe in it! You hear me?"

There are lots of other similar threats you probably heard, threats about things you must or absolutely had to or better do. I remember hearing someone say "Don't look at me in that tone of voice" and knowing exactly what they meant. Those imperatives with the threats behind them carried some weight.

Trouble is, those lines just made us act like the old mule. We went into rebellion so fast it made our parents' heads swim. Internally, we just sat down. Period. You think about it: didn't you get in the creek, read under the covers, wait until the last minute or cross the invisible line? Couldn't you just feel it coming, like you know there's going to be a storm when you hear the thunder in the valley while you're sitting on the porch?

Ironically, that's the same way we talk to ourselves when we want to make a change and when we're going through change. Listen to yourself: "I've just got to get that weight off" or "I absolutely have to make my numbers this month or I'll lose my job." About all it does is guarantee you'll sit down in the traces and get wet in the storm.

There are some people who are habituated to negative motivation, it's true. Behind the concept is the reality: whatever made you rebel as a kid makes you rebel as an adult. Makes other people rebel, too.

Want to see a bunch of mule-like people sitting down out of stubbornness? Get paralyzed with fear (we do that a whole lot more often!)? Freeze at the sound of thunder in the valley? Maybe even get so stove up that a burr under their tail won't even move them?

Just do them the way you got done that made you rear up and rebel.

That's the trouble we've got!

You Can Stand It 'Til You Die!

Ever heard anybody say "I just can't stand it, I can't take any more---I'll die if anything else happens"? I've heard lots of people say that in the middle of corporate transitions, takeovers, and divestitures---not to mention people in the middle of painful personal situations.

Think about the guy being run over by a steam roller. He's screaming "I can't stand it! I can't stand it! Oh my God, I can't stand it!" You can stand it until you die. He will. I will. You will.

Nobody ever died from pain. People sure handle it differently; nobody ever died from it. Pain is part of change and growth (remember the butterfly?) just like awkwardness, irritation, embarrassment, fear and anxiety are. Often we feel really stupid, wonder maybe even what's the point?

Sometimes it's hard to imagine surviving the grief of the death of a parent or spouse, a change in health, or in company management or policy. How can we stand it?

Of course you can survive it. And you'll stand it until you die. The question is, using what coping mechanisms?

A certain amount of American toughness in how we stand events that are painful went out when we began to be a self-focused and fairly narcissistic society. When "I" and "me" began to be bywords and critical concepts in our society, we lost our sense of "us" and "we." And with it went a certain resilience, a certain cohesiveness that made it possible for us to mourn our losses as a nation and as significant groups. Like work groups.

I am not necessarily an advocate of grief groups at work, now mind you.

I am an advocate of reality based thinking. No one ever promised any of us jobs until death do us part. No one ever guaranteed us we'd have it made regardless of how competent (or incompetent?) we were. There are no guarantees in life.

Instead of bemoaning the loss of perceived guarantees to life, liberty, and happiness the way we want it, striving to find meaning in our experiences of change is a far more powerful idea.

Instead of becoming martyrs, masochists or madmen why not become people of strength who can face the unknown with courage and grace, and go on?

Whatever happened to grit, pluck, and persistence?

So what if it didn't go the way you wanted it to. So what if you hurt. So what if you lost a job you really liked.

You can stand it 'til you die, and the sooner you realize it, hurt, and go on, the sooner you get on with the richness of life that waits for you.

Self-Discipline Is A Dirty Word

You bet it is. Every time I've tried to use self-discipline as I originally learned it, I've really bolluxed things up. Bad. It just gives me a hard way to go.

Think about it: Every area where you use self-discipline. Dieting. Saving money. Rearing kids. Working with other people.

Now, we all know some people who have a lot of inner strength who deal with these areas differently. They don't go around self-flagellating and beating themselves to a pulp every time they try something. They set up success instead of failure, and do it by dint of will and belief in the outcome.

As for me, and lots of other people, it's a whole different process.

Most of us get taught self-discipline the same way. Along about the time we begin to learn language and walk, we toddle into the kitchen and reach for a red hot stove eye. We say, "Tove, Mommy?" and hear the reply, "Yes, baby, that's a stove, No---don't touch it. You might get burned." That reply soon becomes a litany, repeated over and over again as we work into learning personal safety, and about the parts of our world.

One day, though, we toddle into the kitchen, reach for the hot burner, and ask again, "Tove, Mommy?" and this time get a very different response. "If I've told you once, I've told you fifteen thousand times, stay away from the stove!" It carries the unusual emphasis of a hand on the rear as well, more often than not, and is the ultimate expression of how we are taught self-discipline at an early age.

Most of us slink off crying and feeling ashamed of ourselves at that point, and darn sure we won't ask again.

School is not without its perils, too, in the area of self-discipline. Since children spend the majority of their day there, more than their waking hours at home, it becomes the place where most social behavior is modeled.

The education system helped you to learn about socially acceptable behavior in groups, how to handle yourself in a learning environment, how to delay gratification by completing required work before you played, how to be obedient. All of that required self-discipline.

How did it help you learn self-discipline? Well, start with restriction. Did you ever get kept back from an activity? Or restricted to a study hall? If not, maybe it was monitoring that got you trained---you know, dealing with Teach who had eyes in the back of her head and could see everything you were doing. No?? How about restraint? You might have had to stand in a corner, sit in the closet, put your nose in a circle, go to time out. If all else failed, you were punished. "I will not throw spitwads" 1000 times pretty well took your spitwad title away, didn't it? Remember trying to use three pencils at once? I can guarantee that anyone dieting or trying to achieve a desired goal who uses self-discipline probably uses one or more of the above techniques to motivate themselves.

No one likes feeling deprived of something they want, even if it's to get something else they want. Most of us use negative, punitive premises at some time in the process of self-discipline. The way we learn self-discipline, we beat ourselves to a bloody pulp trying to get to something that we really want. It doesn't make much sense if you think about it. Using a "No" process to get to a "Yes" goal is pretty skewed thinking.

Did you know that the root word for disciple and discipline are the same? The Latin "discipulus," meaning to follow, is their root.

Every process of discipleship has four common steps. Whether you look at a spiritual or secular figure, from Jesus Christ to Hitler, the steps are the same. The four conscious steps are:

1. Encountering the teacher to whom one becomes a disciple.
2. Choosing consciously to follow that teacher.
3. Changing progressively over time to more and more closely follow the teacher's teachings.
4. Being taught through acceptance.

A classic example in the spiritual is Peter, the itinerant fisherman who chose to follow Jesus. Hopefully, he knew how he got there the morning after he said "Yes" and began to follow Jesus. He didn't become the spiritual leader he ended up overnight---he struggled with his identity, with the problem of being associated with "them" after Jesus' trial. Further, in the garden of Gethsemane where the soldiers came to arrest Him, he drew a sword and cut off Malchus' ear. Hardly in keeping, I'd say, with his teaching. Did Jesus kick him out of the group? Restrict him? Restrain him? Tell him he'd better watch out from here on out? Punish him? Hardly. He reminded Peter of who He was and of the necessity of the events they were experiencing. After he'd put Malchus' ear back where it came from.

The same is true for Hitler. The people who chose, even as opposed to choosing death, to follow Hitler and become Nazis learned the precepts and behavior of Nazism over time. Had Hitler simply had every person killed who fell short of the program, he never would have had people in command and the organization he had. Couldn't have happened.

And whether it's a sports hero, business mentor, political leader, or any other "model" figure, the process is the same when someone chooses to become a disciple to that person.

Same difference when a child learns to walk. They get taught through acceptance--- they stumble, get helped up, encouraged, take a few halting steps, smiling and looking for approval, and on getting it, go a few more. Then they reach for more. And they stumble over logs, steps, and obstacles, maybe sit down and cry. And then they get up and go on. They sure don't sit around unhappy for too long, usually no more than it takes to get over a bumped behind.

It takes just a smidgen more than no common sense at all to figure out that conscious choice, progressive change, and teaching yourself through acceptance instead of judgment makes getting to your goal easier.

Then self-discipline becomes self-discipling---instead of a dirty word, it becomes gradually turning about and redirecting your energy in the direction of your real choice.

I believe there are some rare individuals stricken with the grace to do this, and to them self-discipline has never been a dirty word. For the rest of us out there dealing with budgets, diets, divorces, changes in corporate culture and other severe swerves from our old reality, trying to use self-discipline to adapt has been abysmal.

Make it easier. Clean up your understanding of what is behind self-discipline. Use the process of discipling as a model for "letting you teach yourself" (or "letting yourself learn") how to achieve a goal or adapt to change.

Persevere, remembering that it is always more sensible to use a "Yes" process to pursue a "Yes" goal.

Invisible Dogs On Leashes

I used to think those invisible dogs on leashes were the tackiest tourist gizmos I'd ever seen. Changed my mind, though, when I realized I was on the end of an invisible leash.

Got to watching and realized a whole slew of us are. Was the tail wagging the dog or the dog wagging the tail? Was the walker maneuvering the leash or vice versa? Look around. Especially just after a cutback has been announced where you work, or when someone is going through divorce or recovering from a death. Just the ordinary stresses and strains of life will do.

How many people do you know or encounter who would say to you, "I just can't help it, I just feel how I feel and there's not a thing I can do about it" or "I just can't seem to change my feelings"?

If you've ever been in a manufacturing environment, you know the typical arrangement is to have line workers who perform the same repetitive motions on a schedule set by a supervisor who does what the boss says. The boss may not spend too much time in the factory, so the supervisor really runs the place. In fact, sometimes the boss never sets foot in the place.

What happens when the boss decides to come in and make the plant work a different way? First of all, the supervisor is very likely to feel threatened about past performance, looking good, and staying on. Of course, so do the line workers, who are on the receiving end of the direction set by the supervisor.

The supervisor's usual reaction is to do whatever it takes to secure his or her position. Whatever it takes to create the appearance of being vital to the operation--- whatever it takes to look good.

Imagine that you are like a factory and your emotional life is that supervisor. Unless you exercise your will in an appropriate way, your emotions often act like that supervisor--- they are un-disciplined, do whatever is necessary to create the gratification they need, and oh, what havoc they wreak if you decide to begin to discipline them!

You end up on their leash. It's invisible, all right, until that old thing rears up and jerks you around a time or two.

And if you decide to get a hold of yourself, watch out. Just like the supervisor is threatened by surprise visits or change in the operation, so your emotions are threatened by your conscious choices to exercise your will differently.

Your emotions require change, just like your body requires food and your mind requires mental activity. They get accustomed to a certain amount of change, and will do whatever it takes to get it. Period. If you have a high need, you may have a more chaotic life, or a more extreme life. Maybe not, maybe so.

Change at the emotional level usually focuses on cause and effect instead of results. Effects are the intermediate reactions to causes, while the result is the last in the series of effects.

Receiving a hug is the cause that creates the effect of feeling good of which contentment is (hopefully) the result. Results are long-lasting. They are those states emotionally which most of us would prefer if we knew how to attain and hold them.

When you think about it, you actually have the power to choose what you feel about 95% of the time. How often do you exercise that power? What would happen if you exercised it more often and in those times chose to focus on results

instead of effects?

You'd put your emotions on the end of the leash instead of letting them have you on the end of it.

That's very different from suggesting you deny what you feel or mask it with a positive quality. It's suggesting that you begin to realize that you do have the ability to choose, and the more you use it, the more you find your life moving in the directions most people say they want to see their life going.

Duckpoots & Whirlwinds

Back in the country where I grew up we often talked about making mountains out of molehills, but a little further back in the country from where I grew up people talked about events being as important as a duck poot in a whirlwind.

When you think about it, the resistance we generate in the face of change is equally unimportant.

How much difference will it make in 100 years to us personally if we change the way we do some particular part of our job or some particular part of our life? Not a whole lot as individuals, perhaps a great deal collectively.

We stir up dust, shake feathers and look like a parrot that just hit a ceiling fan, because of the idea of doing something different. That's where our resistance to change shows up so clearly: Even the idea of doing something different ruffles our feathers.

No matter what you're doing, remember that your own resistance to change is ultimately about as important as a duck poot in a whirlwind.

Now I know if I tell you or if you tell someone else that their resistance to change is about as important as a duck poot in a whirlwind, they resist even harder.

The tendency to react to every change as if it is overly important---something we can't possibly do because we have always done things another way---is partly based in our belief that we are unrecognized.

Human beings have four basic universal needs. They are recognition, acceptance, affection, and love.

Most of the time when we make a mountain out of a molehill sized change, or when we run headlong into our resistance about a proposed change, we're running into old unmet needs.

People who suffered during changes and whose suffering was not acknowledged, whose ideas and inputs were not heeded will resist change. They are in fact, in their resistance, acknowledging their desire for change; they are just doing it backwards.

If you've known all along it could be done more effectively and efficiently and no one ever listened, your resistance is expressing a negative need for recognition and acceptance.

Out-crazy the crazies at that moment. Give recognition, air and ear space. Just be there and listen, because many times your recognition that their needs have been valid dramatically reduces resistance to change. It doesn't mean that their needs got met in the past, or even that they may get met now.

Why? Most of us feel shame at some level about the areas of our work or personal life where change needs to occur for us to be more effective.

Unless you accept the proposition that people really function better in mediocrity, then the desire for competence and excellence is paramount in the hierarchy of satisfaction.

As a result, if the circumstances, systems, or approaches to operations with which we are dealing prevent the exercise of competence or excellence, shame develops.

Shame's old dark roots are found in the perception that our needs are somehow not important. If you think about the shame that children feel and ultimately express, it is because their needs have been perceived by an adult in the

child's environment, as unimportant from the child's perspective. The child who wants to go out and play, that is to have satisfaction in his own work life, to develop

mentally, who goes to Dad or Mom and says "Can you play with me?" and Dad or Mom says "Ah, later honey, we will play at 4:00, I've got to be here right now." But when 4:00 comes and they aren't there, the child feels shame. That shame is created by the perception that their needs were unimportant in the adult's eyes.

I get real bored with transactional analysis in the workplace. It's still there, though, because we deal with people as parent/adult/child. We can react to one person from any of the three perspectives. Each of us has a predominant role in our relationships; sometimes our role depends on the person with whom we're interacting.

A high level of parent/child interactions usually hides an unrecognized sense of shame in the corporate structure. When shame becomes pervasive, events take on monumental proportions that ordinarily would be as insignificant as duck poots in a whirlwinds.

Not looking at how shame can distort perceptions lets events be kept in proportion with ease. Remember, an event is based in a fact, and that facts have associated feelings. Feelings need recognition, acknowledgement and attention without becoming the facts.

The way facts are talked about can help keep them balanced and can help feelings from becoming facts. Let's say you hear someone talk about something and they sound like an old outboard radish---"but-but-but" every other word.

What does that tell you? "But" negates everything said before it. "He is a good employee but . . ." or, "We have a good system but . . ." or, "It's a good car but it needs a new engine."

The only thing "but" does is say that everything you just said before wasn't true. If you substitute "and" where you have been using "but," you acknowledge that the current state needs improvement and that it still has good, valuable and effective components.

The "buts" are a cue that the speaker doesn't feel totally comfortable with what comes after "but." There may be feelings that they're unaware of or that most likely are shame-based behind the scene. You may never know.

Big things can happen---much bigger than duckpoots in whirlwinds. If you keep them in balance by remembering to identify the fact, recognize and respond to the feeling, handle the fact, and hang your thoughts together with "and," you'll keep the "but" out of the air.

Insignificant stuff will stay that way; significant stuff will be manageable.

Ben Franklin And Failure

Ben Franklin: He was a man with a great big mind. In helping frame our early governmental procedures he put common sense adages and logical structures to work in business and government.

That's a lot more than we do most of the time. Most of us don't think---that is, actually engage brain and apply outcome. We do it much less in our lifetime than Franklin did in a year: we have lots of supports that do it for us in our more complex world.

Brains are meant to be more than the guts of a hat rack. They're more sophisticated than computers, faster by far, and better logical structures. They're interactive with the rest of us; I've never seen a hand wave without the stimulus generated by a brain.

Franklin did a good job at thinking and using the product of his thoughts. We'd do better if we followed his habits; at least if we followed his advice.

Fools make folly when they cast reason aside. Reason coupled with imagination creates new ways; reason burdened by dull brains digs ruts deeper.

One of the most useful concepts Franklin developed is a way of evaluating the risks and benefits of reasoning. Anyone in sales and marketing can probably tell you about the Ben Franklin sales closing technique. Line up the reasons for and against the choice and you see pretty quickly the best way to go.

What happens is that you choose more carefully, looking at the consequences clearly instead of acting on impulse.

When you're going through change, it's even harder to consider the potential outcomes. It's too easy to find yourself in the NO category of life. The first reaction to

major change---especially if it hits you in the wallet or in your self image---is almost always NO, I'm not gonna. The second underlying current is a stronger fear of failure instead of hope for success.

Use old Ben Franklin's technique to consider the process of change. You can set up a fairly easy model for looking at the reasons that we are far more attached to failure than to success. Right here's the root the big hog goes for.

If you look at our social expectations, what happens when you have a car wreck? It is, "Oh honey, did you get hurt? Is everything going to be OK? How bad was your car hit?" Or perhaps at a death, the amount of sympathy that is extended. Generally in situations of failure where we all have bad feelings or when most of us have feelings of discomfort, we tend to wallow in a lot of sympathy, comfort, pity and attention. Those are the positive benefits of failure. In work, we see the individual in failure has less required of him or her. Direct relationship.

Now, you might say, "What are the negative benefits of failure?" Obviously, you don't add bricks to a fellow's load if he can't carry a hod---or keep dumping responsibility on someone who demonstrates they can't handle what they've got.

The negative benefits of failure are fairly obvious if you think about how you felt if you have ever been fired. It's a little like being leveled by a steam roller. Money drops, self-respect and self-esteem sink about as low as slug slime. Immunity to viruses and bugs of all sorts decreases. Negative benefits of failure? You bet.

Take a look at the negative benefits of success. You might find it odd to consider the loss of sympathy, pity, comfort and attention as negative benefits of success, but I can reassure you when you begin to move towards the pinnacle of your career that your friends drop off---folks really don't like you too much when you're successful. In fact, you get to be about as popular as pox with your old friends who are still doing what they did.

And if success isn't what you attain, if it's health instead, it's just the same. Ask anyone who has reduced their weight significantly about the number of fat friends who still wanted to be their friend after they got lighter in weight. Face it, few people like you when you succeed at something they'd like to do.

Then if something bad happens it's, "Ah, that's too bad, ain't it a shame, just go get you another one since you've got so much." It's a lonely climb to the top and it's lonely when you get there. It's not necessarily because folks have elbowed somebody off the plateau; it's just plain envy. One of the negative benefits of success is loss of sympathy, pity, comfort and attention.

Conversely, the positive benefits of success are the flip side of the negative benefits of failure. You can see increased self esteem, increased self respect, increased responsibility, increased levels of financial success---the things that go down as negative benefits of failure are the very things that stack up as the positive benefits of success!

How much more familiar are we as human beings with the positive benefits of failure, sympathy, pity, comfort and attention, than with the positive benefits of success---increased self- esteem, increased responsibility, increased self respect, and increased financial rewards?

If you look at the number of twelve-step programs, it's pretty clear we're much more familiar with, addicted to and involved with trying to leave the negative benefits of failure behind.

We don't know a whole lot about living with the positive benefits of success. That's part and parcel of learning to choose---even when it feels awkward. If the payoff for making changes that cause discomfort is isolation and alienation, then what is our mode, what is your motive, what is our drive? What pushes us to go on and go for success?

That's a deep personal choice. You choose for yourself your "driver"---whatever motivates you. For some it's money, things or people. For others, the pleasure of serving or their spiritual values.

Regardless of what drives you, and whether what you're driven to is---sales, marketing, quality improvement, problem solving, or personal transformation, you can't win when you're addicted to the negative benefits of failure.

Take old Ben's way and adopt it. Begin to think about the consequences you get for each set of actions you take.

Look at how the tail is going to wag the dog. And if you don't like it, don't get the dog. Harness up to a new one.

If you use your brain for more than the guts of a hat rack, you can hitch up to the kind of dog whose wag matches the animal you want to see on the front end.

Information Gluts And Future Shock

Have you thought how much more information you get each day as opposed to ten years ago?

Dramatic increases in information generated and promulgated are directly responsible for the increased perception and fact of change.

When oral history was the only form of communication, change occurred much more slowly. It took a long time for conversation in what is now California to get to what is now North Carolina. No optic fibers, telephones, telegraphs, mail carriers---just the months it took to cross the country. No computer modems. No instant transactions. How much more time would it take to change without those tools and without their speedy processing of information?

It's easy to see what's happened if you just do a simple graph of time from 1600 to 1985 and plotting along that line the increase in inventions designed to process information. The curve climbs straight up beginning in the mid-1900s and nearly about falls over on itself.

Consider the increasing speed with which these inventions process information. The primary reason people say change is happening so much faster is, quite simply, the faster you can process information, the faster changes occur.

Business projections that used to take at least a full day to figure now take a matter of minutes using powerful computer programs. We can predict reactions to different market strategies or different occurrences much more rapidly now, requiring us to prepare intervention strategies more quickly.

Some of the ways public events have been handled generate vast amounts of information---all of which are almost accurate, none of which are completely accurate. Each distorts the picture in a different way and creates world-wide ripples at different levels.

Our minds continue to process information at the same rate that they always have, while machines process information more and more quickly. As a result, we lag behind in our ability to create and impact change in our world.

The answer is not necessarily to slow down technology, the answer is to learn how to cope with change more effectively. Once we begin to implement proactive long-term thinking along with an appropriate amount of reactive short-term thinking, we begin to be able to balance this tremendous juggling act a little bit more readily.

If you can't slow down the future, and you can't speed up your mind a lot, you can learn to dance a little better. Dancing a little better means looking at your reactions to change in your life, evaluating how those reactions affect you, looking at additional ways you can think about change, and adding some of them to your life.

That's the skill and art of practicing conscious choicemaking. It makes coping with change much easier.

It Takes The Snake Longer To Eat The Hog Than To Kill It

How long does it take a tornado to strike? Or for somebody to bid on your business and throw it into a tizzy? How long to say or hear the words, "I want out?"

Not a whole lot. Whole lot less time than it does to clean up, calm people down, and work out the details.

Snake'll sit and watch and watch. Then it'll strike. Say it strikes a hog---not likely, but could happen. Snakes are as scared of hogs as people are of change. Hogs, it's said, are immune to snake venom. So it's not likely a snake will get a hog, but it still might happen.

Just like it would take a snake a long time to stuff a hog down its doublehinged jaws, it takes a long time to adjust to change.

It's just plain irrelevant how long it takes for the change to happen. So, you have a computer modem that ties you in and lets you know a day ahead of time that your business is being sold. So, you're a professional tornado spotter and know it's going to hit your place. So, it takes someone else six months to tell you, "I want out."

It still takes longer to adjust to change than it does to create it.

The sudden sale or takeover of a business, announced relocation, marriage, divorce or death may be as unexpected as a hog suffering from snake spit.

Handling them---going through the feelings, choosing how to respond, acting on the choices, integrating new patterns and practicing until they're new habits---takes about as long as it does a snake to swallow a hog whole.

Iron On Iron

Many of us who have been through a lot of change find the experience is like iron chiseling on iron. In becoming who we are, many of the choices we make, their consequences and the experiences we confront are very, very difficult. Oftentimes we're like the new kid who didn't know the winter game of "Crack the Whip" and got on the tail the first time out. We get slung around pretty bad.

Now, everybody has challenging experiences of their own. Common to all is no matter who you are or what the name of your experience is, iron on iron is a tough process. Doesn't matter what it is, "tough" is relative to each of our lives as individuals. Can't compare yours to mine and say mine was harder. Might not of been, to me.

How come I'm so pigheaded? Is it that I get blinders on and just start digging a rut? Only problem there is the shallow difference and the short dimensions between a rut and a grave.

Is it just plain self-centeredness and buried shame? You know I couldn't possibly need to change---why, I'm practically perfect in every way!

How about the fact that doing something different downright threatens the stuffings out of me, and I'd a whole lot rather deny I might need to change than face it? To the point that I have to get beaten over the head to do it?

When I think about iron on iron, I think about how come it is so hard to make change, what is it that keeps us from being willing to make changes from which we would benefit.

I think we all have flashes of seeing something about ourselves or something about the future that might be coming towards us or some trend that we would really like to be proactive about, you know, the fifth time the same thing happens and you think maybe you should be doing something different.

The way I figure it, needing a telephone pole instead of a toothpick is something related to the experience of being born.

If you think about what it is like to be a baby before you're born, it's a pretty good deal. You've got "three hots and a cot"---three meals a day, a place to sleep, no cares or worries except those transmitted through the umbilical cord.

Life is pretty secure and safe. Everything is a big YES. All your needs are met; there's no risk, certainly not such as you might perceive (so far as we know about unborn infants).

But then, no matter when it happens, the big squeeze comes, you get drained, you get pushed out of the birth canal, and unless you have the very fortunate benefit of being born in a warm southern ocean, you emerge into a cold room.

Sooner or later somebody cuts the cord. It is the first experience of separation, of finding yourself separate from your mother, and from then on folks, there is a whole lot of separation. "NO," the keyword of individuation---you, separated from your desire---becomes the most powerful word in your world.

Sometimes iron on iron is the process of seeing ourselves constantly separated from our desires until we change directions. Sometimes iron on iron is the process that we go through when we change directions and begin to get adjusted to a new one.

One of the hardest iron on iron experiences I have ever had was the process of deciding that I really wasn't handicapped. I'd been born with a congenital defect that caused

both knees to dislocate. Much of my childhood was spent on the ground as a result, and I grew into my middle school years, in casts, having surgery, trying to get my knees corrected.

I got very comfortable with the concept of being handicapped. I learned there were some real benefits from it, people felt sorry for me, I got a lot of pity and sympathy, and I certainly got a lot of attention from those big red stripes on my legs.

Of course, the trade off was that I couldn't do things that other kids could do. I grew more and more bitter about it. I kept seeing myself as "separate from"---no I can't do that, no I can't run, no I can't swim, no I can't do this, no I can't do that, I'm different, I'm separate.

I became a hard, bitter and self-pitying individual. I don't know what trigger got tripped, or what switch got turned on, but there came a point in time when I decided I really didn't want to see myself as handicapped and in fact, I was about as able as anyone else even though I was different.

If the process of iron on iron meant doing things as outrageous sometimes as hiking on crutches, driving straight-shift Volkswagens with casts on both legs, and ultimately, the challenge of carrying a glass jug down a trail that dropped 300 feet in a quarter-mile, just to see if I could do it, then, by golly, I did it!

It was a process of me being iron, being strong willed (very strong willed) chiseling on iron. I lived in my separateness, not in my ability and what I could do and was, but in what I thought I couldn't do and wasn't.

The chiseling on my character took place in a very difficult and challenging way. There was a lot of re-evaluation of who I was, of what it meant to be me, what I wanted to do, and what I actually could and couldn't do.

A few years after I made that conscious choice I saw someone that I had not seen since childhood, and their first question, to give you a clue where my identity lay, was, "How are your knees?" No more, now.

For people who go after it tooth and toenail, the process of spiritual transformation is also often an iron on iron experience. In the Christian tradition being constantly transformed "from glory to glory" is the process of having the pressure of God impact the willfulness of man.

Many times in business we see a similar process of persons molding into corporate culture, chiseling away at their self identities. At the same time we are chiseling away to learn to fit, we face the pressure of being chiseled on, as well as retaining some of our self as well. Unhappy is the person who becomes their work.

It's easier to let the outside hammer away at us. It's hard to lift and lie down under the hammer at the same time. It's hard to say, "Hammer on! If iron on iron it must be, so be it!" not knowing what the Creator will remake in the created!

Again, though, you can stand it until you die. And the strongest character is that born of iron chiseling away at iron, forging strength with which to face change, strength bound with flexibility and proactivity.

Life's Laws Of Physics

Sometimes I think it should be life's slaws of physics. There is a fundamental law of physics that applies to us in life in a lot of different areas, especially as we deal with change.

It is: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. You might call it the pendulum effect.

Because we are so accustomed to NO driving our lives, we find any time we start looking at YES, we tend to go hog wild. You can see this in divorce. Many folks recently divorced (the marriage was the NO) go off the Richter Scale in terms of social life and dating and acting like adolescents (the perceived YES when they were in the NO).

Sometimes the calmest people go wild with grief. Sometimes a person who acquires sudden wealth spends out of control.

When you see yourself bouncing off the walls, that's when you're dealing with "life's slaws" or life's laws of physics.

In fact, you can take a look at how you divide the world into opposites and much more clearly see life's laws of physics and how they apply to change.

Consider the things we devalue. I mean, nobody likes being fat, ugly, old, poor or sick. We value very highly in the positive being healthy, well, rich, young, attractive.

Yet, most of us are---or would like to be---in the balance. We're pretty much right where we happen to be because of timing, choices we have made or the genetics we have been dealt. It's the only place we can be.

We can gradually move some of those opposites into more balance---for instance, if I'm ugly, I can always have cosmetic surgery or I can use make-up or I can wear a paper bag or I can change the way I think about myself.

There are some pieces in life with which we are stuck. They relate to how we deal with life's laws of physics.

What are you going to do? Are you going to bounce off the walls, or are you going to settle down in the middle and learn how to live out of choice as much as you possibly can?

Choice is, after all, the best option. Aging, taxes, and, to some extent health, are topics you pretty much are stuck with. You will age, pay taxes, and probably get sick sometime. It's a sure thing you'll die. Weight and attractiveness you have more control over.

Attitude and balance---there you have almost complete choice. Think about it: Excessive choices in one direction lead to extremes. Balanced choices let you take charge of your life in spite of events around you. You can choose your attitude about it at every moment, so long as you're willing.

When you bounce off the walls just because you're used to it, you're part of life's slaw: A mish-mash of shredded cabbage flung about the kitchen with a mad dash of carrots and some sort of moistener. I use mayo and vinegar for a good bite. It's still slaw: Not very distinguishable taste, often lukewarm in cafes, and really rotty when it's stale. Consistency and slaw are mutually exclusive, in cooking and in life.

On the other hand, monitoring and choosing about your actions puts you one up on life's laws of physics. If you minimize the swing on some or all of your actions in certain dimensions, you create less backlash.

More room to get what you want to do done.

Better opportunities to move forward instead of staying in perpetual cleanup.

Green And Slimy Lazarites

A friend of mine used to say I'd been through more change than anyone except a post-surgical transsexual opting for sex change reversal.

The number of times any human being bangs on the inside of his or her own tomb, pounding away at the stone, waiting for it to roll away is almost innumerable.

Just as butterflies don't like cocoons, we really don't like being buried alive. We don't like finding ourselves inside the tomb prematurely, and I doubt many of us even like getting to it on time.

If you think about the story of Lazarus, who died, was embalmed, wound, wrapped, buried, rotted, and then, of all things, raised back to life, it becomes a little easier to understand how profound change can be.

Think of the times that you've found yourself in an enigmatic situation in your career or your personal life and have been unable to see an out. By sitting there and looking for windows where once you could see no doors, you are able to see the gravestone rolling away.

Often, as I've said, if the Big Boss can't get my attention with a toothpick, He uses a telephone pole.

A lot of times when it comes to that point of resurrection, the divorcing from the old life and the embarking into the new life, we desire a toothpick and we require a telephone pole.

And so it is when we are making changes.

I would rather have the toothpick to help me remember I need to hear more effectively and I know I really need a telephone pole. I keep thinking things can be like they always have been and I can still end up somewhere different.

Let's say you're working in an environment where your business has just been buried by change and you feel like you are in a grave. Literally, maybe you don't know where your future is headed. Maybe your company has gone down the tubes. Or you're at a dead end because you don't know what to do and the economy is in such a situation you're not sure you can find a job.

Remember the symbolic nature of life. You are literally like Lazarus. You're bound up in the grave cloths of the old, waiting, just waiting for the stone to be rolled away. Well, symbolic death---no matter how easy or how beneficial it is in the long run---is simply no fun.

The feelings you have when you find yourself bound up in the grave cloths are the same feelings you have the first day you sit down at a computer. You feel fear, anxiety, ultimate irritation, annoyance, feeling rather awkward because you don't know what to do.

We are a lot more equipped to be resurrected than we are to go through the dying process. Even though death is more difficult and resurrection is a relief, death precedes resurrection.

Can't have resurrection without death.

Those little brown woolly worms that predict and then hole up for the winter become ice balls when the weather gets cold, and thaw out in the spring to become beautiful moths? I doubt they're too wild about being frozen into a chunk of ice, but it comes with the territory.

So when you find yourself feeling the feeling that comes with change in a business or personal environment, yes, by all means grieve whatever you feel like you're losing. Also be

a green and slimy Lazarite, someone who is already raised from the dead on the inside, looking for life, watching for and letting the door be rolled away so you can get about the business of living in the next level.

We each will probably change careers three or more times. Our businesses will be dramatically changed through international events, cash flow crisis, start-up operations, sales and merger diversities---and the ability to continue to resurrect will be critical in the '90s and the 21st century.

Out Of Fear And Into Longing

Each time I look at situations where change has occurred with a minimum of stops and starts, I find one consistent factor: The folks involved have moved from motivation due to fear to motivation generated by longing.

It sure is easy to see the reason. What happens when you're afraid? Your frame of reference, the factors that cause you to have the picture of the world that you have, gets very narrow.

Usually it focuses on whatever is necessary to insure your own survival.

Competition becomes a hallmark along with other indicators of a traditional environment threatened by change. Cooperation goes out the window.

People who might have once explored become fearful. Folks of high ethical standards become moralistic. The delight in the useful is replaced by a drive to maintain status quo.

Instruction replaces the experimental, the mentoring that comes with cultures passing on their healthy uniqueness.

You can lead an obedient horse to water, and it won't drink unless it's thirsty. Get thirsty. Long for excellence. Develop a passion for living, thinking, making choices. Get committed to choosing.

That will help you move from action driven by fear to action emerging from longing.

Motivation By Provocation

Friend of mine said you shouldn't oughta ever tell certain somebodies they couldn't do something.

She was right. Doesn't matter that she was a wrinkled albino prune, older than God, deeper than a post, and plain old simple (not dumb, just unsophisticated simple).

Remember how it is that most of us rebel when we get told we shouldn't do something? Well, that's motivation by provocation.

Some people can be motivated by provocation into doing some pretty phenomenal things---exceeding previous performance, performing unthinkably hard feats, doing what everyone says is impossible to do. That's how we got to the moon, transplanted hearts, created freeze-dried foods and who knows what else.

When you're the person who's supposed to initiate change, you might want to take a look at who can be motivated by provocation. A person who just up and agrees instead of rebelling is a good candidate for other types of motivation. They need a different variety of carrot in front of their nose.

When you're leading an organization through change, look at all the people. Look at who buckles and who thrives on pressure. Create what needs to be created for each person or group of people according to what motivates each person or group.

The Myth of Security

Don't you believe it, it's a lie, sure as you're reading this. Ain't no such thing as security.

Remember how it was before divestiture in the phone companies? Only had one--- maybe two---Ma-Bell and AT&T? Remember how everybody thought if you worked for the phone company you had a job for life?

Ain't no such thing as security in a job or anywhere else. Everything short of God Almighty, in my experience, will change. Divestiture, court-ordered, changed the phone company forever. Nobody who works for the phone company knows where they're going to be for long, seems like. Customers sure don't know about how to use the system--- alternate services, whether to rent or buy the telephone, service and repair plans. Remember when phone bills were just one page?

Imagine how it would be to work in that!! You might have thought you'd have a job for years and then all of a sudden didn't have any idea at all where you'd be. Or where you might have to go to keep on working, under what conditions. Whew!

Ain't no such thing as security. Who promised it to you anyway? Where is it written that you had a right to a job with the same company, persistently climbing the ladder of success and promotions over the years?

Where is it written that life is even fair? Let alone work or career? Or that it would go your way all the time?

It's not. You can be driving down the road and have some fool run into your car and kill you. You can be working along and have your company get sold out from under

you by the boss in East Egypt---without your even knowing it. You can expect roast beef for dinner and get hot dogs.

Give it up! Realize that security in anything is a myth. Only that which is unchangeable is secure. Whatever it is that you can determine and know 100% as unchangeable is worth deeming secure.

So how do you work with the rest of life? Maybe you decide nothing is secure and you're not going to put your need for security in anything.

How do you cope with change if nothing is secure?

Through choice. It's the only option you will have until you die.

Don't tell me, "I don't have a choice." You do. You always have a choice, certainly about how you feel. You may be unable to alter an event of change in your life, such as job loss, illness, or disaster. You still have the power to choose how you feel.

Fact is, your ability to choose is guaranteed you as long as you're not in a deep coma or altogether dead. That's security.

It's up to you to choose whether you want your ability to choose as a reality, or whether you want to live with the myth of your security as based in your company or relationships with people.

Rolling Uphill

So you've realized you can't stay in a cave, you're going to be afraid when you're going through change, it's ok to change lines of work, to monitor how you use your ability to create rebellion inside yourself, and that in fact you can stand change until you die.

You've gotten on the stick and taken a look at how you beat yourself into failure using self-discipline instead of leading yourself to success. Hopefully, you've started leash training your emotions, taken a look at the real significance of the changes you face (usually about like duck flatulence in a tornado). You've realized that no matter how hard it is, you're willing to risk getting attached to the positive benefits of success in change through choice.

Change is happening so much faster because of the speed with which information can be processed. It's clear that it happens a whole lot faster than we can create and adjust to it.

True too, that personal change is like being hammered flat on an anvil. Bouncing off the walls is little help except to keep you dizzy and still unadjusted.

Yep, you'll resurrect sometime. Maybe if you want to you can move from being motivated by fear to being driven by a longing. Maybe you can get motivated without having to have it come through provocation.

Maybe you realize your security lies in your ability to commit to what is unchangeable and to remember choice is where your power is.

If you do, you're ready to look at the fact that when you make a change, whether you decide it needs to happen, make it happen, or are the one to whom it happens, you'll learn to roll uphill to make it stick.

You know how change goes. Somebody says do it, somebody starts it, the people affected by it grumble along and here in a little while, everybody quits trying.

Changes are not long-lasting because folks roll up to the edge of the top, think they have it made, and then slide back downhill. Persistence in rolling uphill against the old familiar patterns, and persistence for about twice as long as it feels good, is required.

Doubt it? Look at corporate culture change, diet, savings or exercise plans. In implementation they often fall short. Maybe you work in an exceptional place where it's different. Great. Then remember how hard it was to roll uphill long enough to make the change a lasting one, and help others remember by being a model when change is required again in the future.

It's a place where you can exercise choice.

The Rut and the Grave

What's the difference? What happens when you roll up and down in the same place?

What makes ruts? Going in the same place over and over again. Most of us have them; repetitive ways of performing tasks, going places, sayings, thought processes, emotional patterns.

Funny, though. If you do what you've always done, chances are, you'll get what you've always gotten. That's a rut.

And the only difference between the rut and the grave is the depth and where the ends are.

Seasons of Change: Paradigms

Small comfort, this. Some comfort when you remember how cyclical life is. We go from spring to summer, fall and winter---from birth through youth to maturity and old age. Businesses go from startup to development, fruition, and sometime, somehow closure.

So it is with all change. Change occurs when the party who has the authority to initiate it deems change necessary, and when the party undergoing change participates.

There are different types of change. The most usual occur because of developmental progress---such as the development from crawling to walking. They also occur in the growth of a seed to a plant and then to reseeding; in the birth and life cycle of a business or relationship.

Such changes are reasonably predictable at the "macro" level. They cause discomfort, occur at usually predictable points in time and have typically known consequences. They cause temporary upheaval.

When such changes occur in situations involving a number of people, such as in a company or family, predictable consequences become less predictable. Personal, less visible issues increase in number.

Another type of change, one that often emerges in developmental changes that involve a number of people, is more transitional. If your company is at a developmental change point, it may trigger transitional change as employees relocate, change jobs or careers, perhaps divorce.

When you're in transitional change, life is much less certain than in developmental change. Transitional change is less predictable; it often lasts longer, and its focus on form over function can impede the progress required to keep functional matters going. Still, it has

guideposts and markers along the way, and the chaos is knowable. Others have gone where you are going.

Not so in change that is born of and brings transformation.

Transformational change may involve both developmental and transitional change, and it is unlike either. It is the change of chaos, of discovery, of going where no one has ever been before. It's the first trip to outer space, the first heart transplant, the first business of a kind---innovation in expression. Terribly frightening and also exhilarating, it is ungrounded. There are vague, perhaps recognizable markers along the way---since this is a new path, untrodden, there are no sure guideposts.

Individuals may undergo transformational change at the personal level in some circumstances. In the transformational process of spiritual development, each person becomes someone different from the next person aspiring to the same goal.

Business transformation has both the known and unknowable. If you work for a firm pursuing a style of operation previously untried (so far as you know, according to literature and data base searches) then of course there is anxiety. No rules, guidelines, historic antecedents.

How will anyone know if they hit the mark? Perhaps your culture is changing, and your firm is endeavoring to form a new one. That is transformational, and also developmental. Your corporate culture will follow a reasonably predictable developmental process known to those in organization development (or even social work's group process). How it is transformed, however, will be unique to your group and will contain elements of risk localized to choices the change initiators, agents, and targets choose.

The roles we each have in change paradigms vary, as well. The one who decides the change needs to occur and has the power to implement it is clearly the one who initiates it, or the initiator. They may or may not also be the one who acts it out and implements it in

the environment---the agent of the change. Needless to say, if you're on the receiving end of the change, you're the person with the bullseye pinned on you: the target. A sports analogy might be to call the one who calls the shots the coach, the one who delivers them the pitcher, and the one who gets them and is supposed to do something with them, the catcher.

All change processes and players have fairly known roles. If you're in the middle of change, it's hard to keep them clear and respond to each need as it emerges in an appropriate manner. It takes considering the highest powered easiest skills and choosing whether to practice them when it's easy and when it's tough.

Is The Dirt On Your Neck About To Become The Topsoil On Your Garden?

You can be that poor. Guarantee it. You can get so bound up in being unable to change, suffering analysis paralysis, maybe going opposite and getting wild that you can be so poor you can't afford to give away the dirt on your neck.

Come spring, it'll be the topsoil for your garden.

Even if you do well, the sweat you accumulate wrestling with change and choice, learning how to live in the insecurity of the times is sweat you can use one of two ways.

You can keep it on your neck. Let it be just old ruddy dirt---where I grew up, it made your white socks orange. Wear it. Let the sun turn it into darkened wrinkles. Age it. Keep it.

Or, you can slough it off, and use it as the topsoil on your garden. That's some rich sweat. Rich dirt---dirt that's had your life tilled in it. Dirt that has the food from your own growing process.

If you let it become your topsoil, it'll feed that ground and enrich it. Make it grow better. You won't need a cave. You'll be confidently insecure in your cocoon. Have both hams on your hips at market. Be supple steel. Have no gravecloths.

It's worth it. You choose.