



Dealing with Life Transitions

1 October 2013

Hello

Several years ago I worked on a project at a mine. One of the project team members was a man who thought, spoke, and acted, as though life had punched him in the face one too many times. He had worked for this particular company for 15 years and when things turned bad he was retrenched. He was unable to find another job until the same mine asked him to come back again and work for them two years later. After 16 months he was again retrenched. And then, lo and behold, they suddenly had to complete another project and decided he needed to come back and work for them one year after his second layoff. He was not young, he was not healthy, and he was very disillusioned with life. He coped by enjoying his drinking and smoking up a storm which did nothing to help his very high blood pressure.

In my life I have encountered many people who are in similar circumstances. They literally are waiting for life to deal them the next blow. At best, they are people who just manage to cope with life. Sometimes they have to pretend to cope. What is really sad though, is that no matter what has happened to you, life can be good. When we face big changes in our life, whether they be of our own making or of events beyond our control, we have the choice to act as passive victims or not. Yes, we cannot always control what happens to us, and yes, it often is not nice. But, we do have the choice as to what to do about it. And while there are some things we cannot control, there are a lot that we can. Contrary to what we may be feeling during times of difficult personal change, we are not powerless. The fact that we are human beings means we are endowed with a great deal of creative energy and resources to decide what we want our life to be like. We can either let others decide what the life we will live is going to be like, or we can decide to create the life we want, irrespective of what we may have been through.

Realise everything changes. Stop holding on when you need to let go.

The challenge though, is that many of us have no idea what to do when change hits us. No one ever taught us how to deal with it. No one ever explained, or possibly even role-modelled, the way to deal with personal knocks and hardships. So we don't know what to do. We sit there feeling helpless and passive. We sit there hoping something will go right. We sit there feeling like victims. We sit there and complain and moan, and when we are done with that, we complain and moan some more.

In order to move on most people have to go through a number of steps in a personal change cycle. This is not a new concept. The first part of the change cycle draws on the work in bereavement and grieving. And let's face it, the first part of change is usually grieving a loss. The second part of the personal change cycle involves reinventing your future. Sometimes this is the part that people don't get to. They may grieve well, but they don't step forward into creating a new future for themselves. Sometimes people don't even do the grieving part, and they just become stuck in a slump, ever more unhappy and disillusioned with life.

So, what we need to understand, is that while personal change is inevitable, losing out is not. With the knowledge and skills to negotiate change, even the most challenging change can be something that can lead us to reinvent our lives for the better. In fact change can be a blessing at times, because without change, we are not likely to evaluate our life and change the parts that are not really working for us. Change forces us to get real about our lives and whether or not we are truly living our best life.

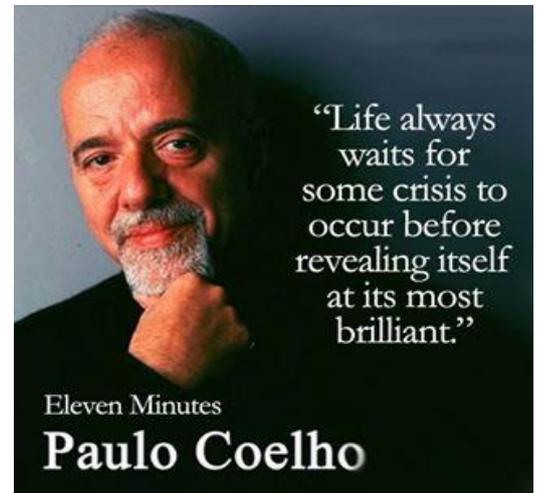
There are many change cycles you can read up on in the literature. The one I developed and use has the following stages, split into two phases (1) disorganisation and (2) re-organisation.

Disorganisation

- Shock/denial
- Fear/anxiety
- Anger/bargaining
- Depression

Re-organisation:

- Acceptance
- Exploration
- Visioning and testing
- Planning and action
- A new commitment



Each of these stages has a purpose. There is nothing wrong with being in a stage. What is a problem is getting stuck in a stage. In upcoming newsletters I will talk more about each of these stages and what to do to move forward onto the next stage and ultimately an even better life for you.

"Promise me you'll always remember-- you're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem and smarter than you think."

-Christopher Robin to Winnie the Pooh

In a workshop on the 26th October on "Managing Life Transitions" we will look at the various stages of the cycle and discuss what actions to take in each stage to move forward onto the next stage and ultimately a better life. Read more....

<http://www.lifecoachingbusiness.co.za/mediaarticles/Transitions.pdf>