

Discovering Choice in Change



Change. Just the word itself, printed in black and white as it is in this article can create a multitude of reactions—heart racing; sweaty palms, faster breathing—is it fear of change? Or excitement at the prospect of something new? Regardless of whether you welcome it or fight it, change is difficult for everyone. Change is especially difficult and scary when you've experienced the world as not safe or reliable due to trauma. Learning to trust yourself, others, and the world again is quite a task.

Literally, change is when something different occurs than what is currently happening. When you notice change, you become alert as you assess how you need to respond to be safe. Being *gentle and nonjudgmental* with yourself is important as you consider how you respond to change. Most people find the idea of change threatening. Yet, if you think about it, there are as many times or perhaps even more times when change is happening and you do not notice it at all. For example; seconds pass, new cells replace old cells in your body, dormant plants start to sprout, different items are put on shelves at the store, and you have likely changed position for comfort since beginning to read this article.

Wouldn't it be better if we could learn to view all change as part of the flow of life, not just as either good or bad, but as an opportunity? What you believe about change is important because it will influence how you feel when you are confronted with change. How you feel in turn impacts your behaviors. If you don't take time to realize that you can choose what you believe, then you are more likely to feel like a helpless victim.

When I choose to believe change is good and in my favor, I will feel happy and hopeful. However, when I choose to believe change is bad and difficult, I get disgruntled and anxious. Perhaps you can identify? To have more choice in your wellbeing, it is important to challenge your beliefs about change. Perhaps you think challenging your beliefs about change seems trite or unrealistic because you are suffering with a lot of pain. **I want you to genuinely know that I believe your pain is real and that you are not alone.** I also know that at times suffering is increased in a difficult situation because of unhelpful beliefs. Identify a belief you have about a change in your life and then ask yourself Byron Katie's "Four Questions."

1. Is it true?
2. Can you absolutely know that it's true?
3. How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?
4. Who or what would you be without the thought?

Choices, Chances,
Changes.
You must make a
Choice to take a Chance
or your life will never
Change.

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In examining your beliefs, hopefully you found that there is more choice in what you believe. Sometimes because change is coming it is easy to assume the future will be negative. What is actually true is that no one knows the future, but that *in this moment* you have a choice of how you will believe. Will you believe the change will bring you a future that is negative or positive?

We are all looking for more happiness and less suffering. As you increase your awareness of your beliefs and how they impact your feelings and behavior, it is my hope that your length of suffering decreases, you feel empowered in your life, and you move towards more love and serenity in 2020.

By Emily Hand, LPC-MHSP

Treat Yo'self

As the old year rolls out and the new one rushes in, there will be changes, challenges, and tough decisions to make. In order to be at your best and give yourself the ability to make the best choices, keep the positive outlook, and find the good in things, here are just a few things you can do to give yourself the edge.

- Treat yourself with kindness and respect
- Avoid self-criticism
- Make time for your hobbies and favorite projects
- Broaden your horizons by starting a new hobby
- Do a daily crossword puzzle
- Plant a garden

Take care of yourself physically:

- Eat nutritious meals
- Avoid cigarettes—see Charity for help with tobacco cessation
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise, which helps decrease depression and anxiety and improve moods
- Get enough sleep, lack of sleep contributes to a high rate of depression

Surround yourself with good people:

- Make plans with supportive family members and friends
- Seek out activities where you can meet new people
- Attend our support groups

Learn how to deal with stress:

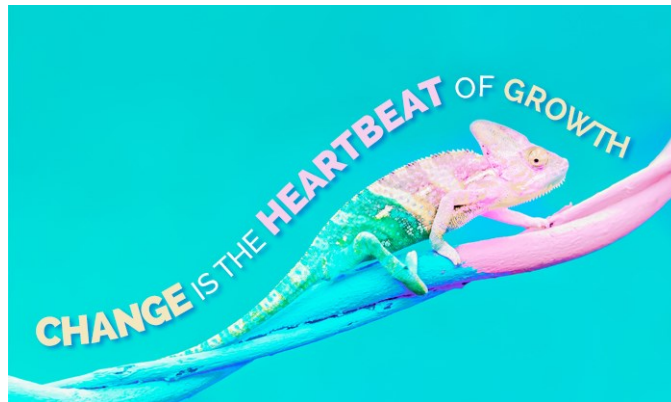
- Do Tai Chi, exercise
- Take a nature walk
- Play with your pet
- Try journal writing
- Remember to smile

Quiet your mind:

- Try meditating
- Attend our Mindfulness Meditation group on Thursday afternoons

Lastly, get help when you need it:

- Seeking help is a sign of strength — not a weakness
- Lead a full, rewarding life



Did You Know That...

◇ The more options you have, the harder it is to choose. So, if you're feeling overwhelmed, eliminate some of the options and

just choose between two or three items at a time.

◇ It's harder to make choices at the end of the day. So, be sure to get up early and work through your options during the daylight hours. You'll make better choices.

◇ More is not always better. If you feel the need to get a second opinion or some help with a tough choice, limit it to just two or three really good friends. The more people who try to help you make a choice, the more likely you are to choose poorly.

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Yesterday I
was clever, so
I wanted to
change the world.
Today I am wise,
so I am changing
myself.

Rumi

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*May your choices reflect your hopes,
not your fears.*

Nelson Mandela

