

NAVIGATING CHANGE IN AN EVER-CHANGING WORLD

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I thought we'd start with a question. Just go ahead and raise your hand -- or if you're watching on YouTube later, you can put it in the comments. So, how many of you has someone who delivers ice to your home to keep your food cold? Anyone? No hands. Okay. One hand? Do you see someone has ice delivered to your house to keep your food cold? Yes! Okay ... Well, wow! That like ... Never mind then, everybody!

But for most of us, we no longer have what's called the Iceman, who delivers a block of ice to your ice box. Do you still have an ice box, too? Yes? Wow; that's cool! We all need to go talk to her afterwards. That old-fangled technology!

But most of us in the room don't get ice delivered anymore by the iceman, right? And yet, at the time, that was some incredible technology. It was a great change, because the iceman coming ... And in the 1890s, there were 1,500 ice trucks in New York City, alone, meaning 1,500 icemen delivering ice! And it ushered in the ability for us to store our food longer and safer, and to diversify our diets. Because then we could get food from the outside world -- outside of our own little area, because they could ship it nice and they could keep it nice in our homes longer. So it was a great change to have the iceman come and deliver a big block of ice for you.

But then, there was a change, and some new technology came along called the refrigerator. Right! But you know, there was probably that one person who was like, *"I don't like this new technology, the refrigerator. I'm really missing Tony the Iceman."* Right? You know there was one person who was against this new technology. Because change is hard. Change is hard!

And yet, there's change all the time. How many people like change? Another raise in hands. How many people like change? [Congregants titter] It's a very Unity crowd, so it's probably about 40%, which is more than the average. There was a University of London study that showed that around 75% to 80% of people disliked change. 75 75 to 80 % of people dislike change.

And there's a few reasons why. That's because we don't know ... With change, we usually don't know what that means for our future. We don't know how it's going to affect us. Change also usually brings a lot of choices; usually means that some action needs to be taken, and it can overwhelm us. And then, of course, there's also the fact that our brains are hardwired for routines. Our brains like to know what's going to come next. It likes patterns. So, when change comes, it disrupts that pattern. It disrupts the knowing what's coming next, and we're not comfortable with that.

And yet, we know that change is constant. We just need to look at nature for that. Even here in the desert, I've been so pleasantly surprised, really, to see how much nature changes, even here in the desert with the cactus and the wild -- well, the wild everything. [Congregants laugh] Here in the wild west. [Congregants laugh]

So how do we navigate change? I've got three steps for you.

The first: be open to and accept change. Two: embrace change, meaning spiritually surrender to it. And three: celebrate change. And within celebrate change: Where are you putting your focus? Where are you putting your focus?

So let's dive into number one: **BEING OPEN TO AND ACCEPTING CHANGE**. Sometimes some of us may get stuck in the ... well, "the good old days." Have you ever heard yourself or maybe someone else talk about, *"Well, the good old days. It was better back then. It was better when we did this."* It can also

sometimes sound like, “*Our family always does it this way*” or, “*I always do it this way,*” meaning, “*This is the best way and I’m not changing.*” Right?

I’ve often sometimes heard, “*When I was younger, we didn’t have these video games. We just sat and talked to each other back then. Things were better back then.*” And, of course, the one we can all say, like, “*Remember 2019? Wow; those were the good old days!*” [Congregants laugh] Those pre-pandemic times; good old days. Yeah.

And yet, when we’re looking backwards, we’re taking our attention away from the good that’s happening now. And it’s hard, because the news is constant! And now we have it on our phones, and it’s all the time! And so, when we’re constantly being told all the bad things that are happening, it’s easy to believe that terrible things are happening right now.

And yet, believe it or not, there is good change that is happening in the world. There is good change happening in the world! But where are you putting your focus? Are you going to put it on the news? Or is your focus going to be on the good? And I say “Good” with a capital G. Are you looking for God? Are you looking for the good? Where is your focus?

When we put our focus on what used to be -- or what our life used to be like -- we’re missing the present; in the present moment. And so, when we hear ourselves say this, what we can do is we can pause; we can breathe; we can take in our surroundings. And we can be grateful for now. Or I can be open to doing new things now.

So, one of your little homework -- soul work -- for the week: when you catch yourself, pausing and saying, “*I’m going to be grateful for now.*” Because change is happening all the time.

Again, when we look at nature, we see the plants bloom until completion. And then they slumber. And then they grow anew. You’ve got these beautiful yellow trees out here. I don’t know what they’re called, but they’re beautiful! They blanket your front yards. I know those of you with the yards that are blanketed probably don’t appreciate it, but for those of us walking by, they’re gorgeous! And then they’re gone. And then a new bloom comes; a new season comes.

We can’t resist change because change is essential to life.

How many people now -- I’m almost afraid to ask this question! How many people live in the same home you lived in when you were a child? Oh, there’s one! Okay; two. But for most of us, we’re not living in the same home we did when we were a child.

Okay; how about this one? How many of you are wearing the same clothes you did in kindergarten? [Congregants laugh] Not a hand this time! Oh, the kindergartner. Okay. [Congregants laugh] I think that’s cheating, but ...

Change is essential to life. And when we’re resisting change, we’re acting from a place of control. We’re acting from a place of trying to force things instead of allowing them to emerge. Just like in nature.

See, the Law of Nonresistance is letting go of control and doing things from a more spiritually grounded place: a place of peace. A place of peace for what is: for how life is presenting itself now. And we can allow what wants to take expression to emerge and grow. That’s the Law of Nonresistance: noticing and allowing what wants to be -- what wants to come up; what is new; what’s growing new -- to be there.

There’s a great story in the Bible. Because when we’re resisting change, it means that we’re really -- what we’re doing is -- we’re holding on to the past. And we’re not wanting to move forward. So there’s a great story in the Bible of Lot and his wife. God is going to ... I mean, I guess he was upset; having a bad day; “hangry” ... I don’t know ... But he’s going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And angels

come to Lot and say, *"Take your family and flee, and don't look back."* Two directions, everybody: 1) Flee; 2) Don't look back. But what happens? Lot and his family are fleeing, and his wife looks back and immediately turns into a pillar of salt. Meaning: when we look back, we get stuck where we are. When we look back, and keep focusing on what's back here, it stops us from moving forward in our lives.

That's what resistance to change is: it's being stuck in the past. So, accepting "what is" -- accepting the present moment; accepting that life is change. Life is change, and we can learn new things and we can do new things.

So, last winter, I was faced with a major life decision. And it was a big change. It was the opportunity to pick up my life in California, where I'd lived most of my life; sell my house of more than 18 years; and move here for a job in Phoenix, Arizona. You may know the one. [Congregants laugh]

It was scary! But then I also had come to realize that my husband, Juan, and I had entered into a new phase of life. We were "empty nesters" now. And that change was okay. And, in fact, change would mean that there would be new experiences; and new people; and a new city; and new memories to be made in this new phase of life.

So, accepting and being open to change -- because change will happen. And how we respond to it creates how we experience it. How we respond to it creates how we experience it.

So number two: **EMBRACING CHANGE**. Because if we all agree that we can't stop change ... Has anyone learned how to ... Now I'm afraid to ask questions, everybody! [Congregants laugh] Has anyone learned to how to stop change? No! I think that's the first one without a hand. Okay ... No; we cannot stop change.

And we can agree that change can be good! Especially if we want change in our life; especially if we're looking to change an area in our life. But that means taking action. Change means changing. Oh, the irony! [Congregants laugh]

Change is the catalyst for change. The action of change needs action to be taken by you. You are the vessel through which change occurs. Did you hear that? You're the vessel through which change occurs.

So I could say, *"Well, I'd really like that job in Phoenix, but I want to stay in California."* That wasn't going to happen! I needed to move. I needed to take that step. I needed to make the change happen so that I could experience and change to a new job and city and new friends.

Or, okay; real life. It's good when you admit things that you want to change in front of, like, 400 people, right? So, I really need to drink more water. I needed to drink more water before I got here to Arizona, but now I really need to! Everyone's telling me I need to drink more water. But now, am I doing anything to make that change? No. I don't have water on my desk. I'm not carrying around a big thermos like the college kids do. I'm not doing anything! And so what happens? The inaction doesn't make the change happen.

So, we can say we want change, but it's the action -- it's the embracing it, leaning into moving forward -- that makes the change happen. Action is a critical step of change.

So, when we hear ourselves saying things like, *"Oh, I could never do that"* ... Because I got a lot of people -- when I said, *"I'm up and moving and going to a different state"* -- I had a lot of people who said, *"I could never do that."* Or, *"Ooh, I don't like change."* But you can do that. You can do hard things. You can do new things. We can do hard things. We can do new things. Spiritually surrendering to what is. Have faith, as the Bible says, that all things are working together for good.

The Bible also says God's will for you is good, meaning Love's will for you is good. Infinite Presence's will for you is good. The Universe's will for you is good! You are being supported by a loving and wise Universe. All things -- all things! -- are working together for your good.

So, ask yourself: What is one action I can take to help me implement the change I'm wanting in my life? Or: What's the one action step I can take to help me implement the change I want that I'm resisting? It's both action, though.

So, think for yourself right now. What's one thing I can do? If it's physically -- maybe there's a physical health change you want: drinking more water. What's the one action step you can take to get there? Mentally: maybe you're spiraling in the same negative thought or idea. What's the new thought that you can start to take action on? Emotionally: maybe there's a new way to take care of yourself; some self-care routine that you can implement. Or spiritually: maybe a new prayer or a new meditation routine or practice.

But it's about taking a step and making the action happen. And then, once we've accepted change -- we've embraced change, we've taken action towards change 00 then it's time, number three: to **CELEBRATE CHANGE.**

And I want to acknowledge that sometimes change is thrust upon us. Sometimes there's change that we wish didn't happen. The death of a loved one or a pet or a sudden job loss. And it's okay to grieve the past; and we can still celebrate "what is." We can still embrace and celebrate the legacy; the memories; the learned moments and experiences. Both emotions can be true at the same time. I can miss my family and friends in California, while absolutely loving and embracing my new life here in Arizona. Both can be true!

So, we can celebrate change! The fact is: we have always lived in a changing world. So, when people say, "*It was better back then,*" what were people back then saying? "*It was better back then.*" Right? It's always changing. It's not the same it was now and six years ago; four years ago; 20 years ago, five years ago; even last year. It's changing. And without change, we would all be hunters and gathers without life-saving medication and medical advances; without the many ways that we can now connect with others all over the world.

I have a couple of friends who have -- who just happen to have sons that live on the opposite end of the earth -- and they were able to get to know their grandchildren through FaceTime. FaceTime, video conferencing, video calls made it possible for them to get to really connect with their grandchildren. And, even for my own self, FaceTime has helped me when I call my kids in California; or my parents in Palm Springs; my five-year-old nephew in New Orleans. I actually have a friend I met through Facebook, and we video talk with each other through an app called WhatsApp. Facebook and WhatsApp weren't around 15 or 20 years ago. So, without those, this friendship wouldn't happen.

So yay, change! Yay, change! And without change ... Well, without change, I wouldn't be standing in front of you right now. Because I did choose change. And I'm so grateful for the opportunities that it's brought me. I've been able to really get to know many of you in this community. I've been gifted by learning from -- and the kindness of -- Rev. Richard Maraj. By the beautiful, prayerful presence of Rev. Sandy.

Because I chose change, I've been able to get to know the wisdom and humor of my buddy, Rev. Jimmie. The joy and creativity expressed by Sue Thompson and by Steve. The heart of Julia and the Bookstore. Yvette and her kindness. The organization of Michaelene. The teamwork and talent by Bo, our maintenance guy here.

Again, none of this would have been possible -- I would not have experienced all of the welcoming and support -- if I had not chosen change. If I'd stayed comfortable in my home in Simi Valley, California, I

would be in California right now, and not here. I needed to be open to and accept that change was wanting to and waiting and emerging to happen! And then, I embraced change and I'm celebrating the change that this new adventure has brought into my life.

And I want to thank all of you for being a part of one of the biggest changes in my life. Can you give yourselves a round of applause for me? [Congregants applaud] From you.

So, my invitation for you is to: be open to change; accept change; embrace and take the steps toward change; and then absolutely celebrate change. And in celebrating change, those new connections and memories, talents, skills that you'll be making.

And when you go to get some ice out of your freezer later today, maybe celebrate that change, as well. You've got your soul work for the week. Blessings, everyone! Thank you. [Congregants applaud]

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