

Hanging on for dear life

"We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning; for what in the morning was true will in evening become a lie." Carl Jung

Life continually evolves life at work, life at home, life at play, and life in relationship.

We've all heard the expression change is the one constant in life and the truth is every day were experiencing change in some way, shape or form. For many, change is unsettling leading to feelings of insecurity, imbalance and instability.

The truth of the (change) matter is pain and suffering come not from the experience of change, but from trying to hold on to the past, to familiar ways of thinking, be-ing and do-ing. Perhaps you've recently reacted to or resisted calls for change in your work, in your life at home, in your relationships or even in familiar habits and patterns you're accustomed to in your play and recreation.

Underneath our reactivity to change is some type of fear — fear of the unknown, fear of new ways of having to do things or think about things, fear about having to learn something new, fear of letting go, etc.

The question and the inherent growth and developmental opportunity with change is to explore: "What am I afraid of?" This exploration is an opportunity as it allows us to really, really understand what's beneath our fear an opportunity to see what we can learn about our fear, what happens if we observe and watch ourselves in our fear (without judging ourselves as being bad or wrong because we have fear) and learn how to be with our fear. Rather than talking a detour and moving around it, suppressing it or trying to control it, we can invite ourselves to directly come into contact with our fear and see what it wants to teach us.

In our world of duality, fear and love are on opposite ends of a continuum. The greater our ability to be with our fear, allow it, understand it and learn from it, the greater our ability to experience life from the love side of the continuum. When we experience the love side of the continuum, change is not so threatening, we feel less resistance to change, we are better able to go with the flow of change, we experience less need to control, and surprisingly we find we are more trusting when change happens. Yes, even change at work.

The first step toward being OK with change is acceptance — acceptance not of the change, but acceptance of yourself, your fears around the change, that its OK to feel what you're feeling. The next step is to go inside and explore what's underneath your fears. Really explore and not try to think your fear away (an art form in Western culture). Then, once you accept yourself in the face of change, become more clear about the cause of your fear, your reactivity and resistance, you become more able to open the door to allow change. Exploring your fear from this place will lead you to right knowing, right understanding and right action.

The beauty of the fear and its attendant feelings of tension, is that without tension no growth is possible. A seed cannot and will not grow without tension. Some seeds need cold, some need warmth. When seeds begin to grow, they meet the resistance of their shell. Then, they need to push through the soil — some even need to push through concrete or macadam — then against gravity and the wind. The deal is that none of these resistance elements inhibits the seed from growing but, rather, enhance its growth into a mature and strong plant. This is why fear is an opportunity for growth. Yes, even at work.

So, at work, and at home, at play and in relationship, we can only grow, personally and professionally, through change we cannot change and grow while defending and holding on to the status quo, holding on

to dear life. Change is not a threat to growth but an integral part of it.

Interestingly enough, many folks resist change because they want to remain comfortable. The reality is the comfort they seek is wrapped in fear, in a quiet or not-so-quiet state of vigilance or subtle agitation masquerading as comfort (afraid that something or someone will change). In this place, one cannot experience true and real comfort that brings true and real inner harmony, inner peace. What these folks really want is harmony; what they really experience is inertia and numbness.

Harmony comes only when one is at peace with ones life and ones environment at work, at home and at play. Harmony comes only when one is open to change and adaptation not resistant to it.

So, hanging on for dear life, does not result in a dear life. It results in tension, stress, anxiety, resistance and resentment anything but a dear life.

Understanding our resistance to change and exploring the fear that's underneath our resistance is the pathway to harmony and inner peace the essential and positive pathway to personal and professional growth, development, harmony and balance.

We will experience conflict in those areas of our life where we need to explore change and are resisting.

Finally, remember life is change. Life is choices. Whether you embrace change or come to it kicking and screaming is your choice. We cannot grow and thrive without change, conflict and tension. Avoiding change, denying change, resisting change keeps us feeling like a victim, always wanting to blame someone or something for the way we feel.

When we consciously choose to explore our resistance and fear and meet the challenge of change, we learn more about ourselves and become stronger, more courageous, more autonomous, more willful, and more engaged in living life the real and true dear life.

Change is an opportunity for us to become more conscious moving through the world with our eyes wide open instead of wide shut. Change allows us to grow our minds, stretching out beyond our mental limits and emotional boundaries. Change allows us to move through life — life at work, at home, at play and in relationship with a greater degree of trust, freedom and harmony.

Here is one way to deal with fear:

Acknowledge and really feel your fear without judging and criticizing yourself.

Ask your fear what its there to tell you. Be alert for inner messages that will bring you greater understanding of your situation. Listen with your heart, not your logical-ego mind.

Be fully present. Are you okay in this moment? Relax into your present well-being. Breathe deeply and continuously into you belly.

Ask your higher knowing: What can I do to improve my situation? What do I need to know and understand?

Taking action on what you learn helps get your energy moving.

So, our \$10 food for thought questions are:

- What is your greatest fear? Why do you fear that?
- What aspects of yourself do you reject?
- Where are you experiencing tension or conflict in your life? Where are you struggling in your life or facing major challenges? (career, home, play, relationship, finances, health, emotions, etc.?)
- Do you face change with ATTENTION or TENSION?
- How can you use tension and conflict to grow stronger, and become more authentic, as *you*?

- What is a current change or conflict in your life telling you? What area of potential is it pointing to? What quality about your self is it pointing to?
- Are your current tensions or conflicts the same as last year, the year before and the year before that? If so, why?
- Would you characterize yourself as an embracer of change or a victim of change? Why?
- Do you feel you have the right and the power to decide how anyone or anything can affect you?

(c) 2008, Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D. and SpiritHeart. All rights in all media reserved.

Peter G. Vajda, Ph.D, C.P.C. is a founding partner of SpiritHeart, an Atlanta-based company that supports conscious living through coaching, counseling and facilitating. With a practice based on the dynamic intersection of mind, body, emotion and spirit, Peter's approach focuses on personal, business, relational and spiritual coaching. He is a professional speaker and published author. For more information, www.spiritheart.net, or pvajda(at) spiritheart.net, or phone 770.804.9125