



Perspectives on Change

by GAIL CARROLL

It is the season of change! Fall is so beautiful with all the changing colors and the crisper air as we move closer to winter. Many messages about changes can be gleaned from the beauty of nature, those that are expected and those that are unexpected. Some of us embrace change and just ride its waves, while others question or rebel against it. I have worked through a lot of changes in my own life and career. I remember a time of co-leading organizational change in my career when a colleague of mine began a meeting with the question, “Where are you with change?” She then proceeded to explain that change is coming, changes that we may not have very much control over and that we have a choice – we can get on board, get left behind or get run over. I can remember thinking at the time, “Well I am not going to get run over!” So where are you on the change continuum? It is okay to be wherever it is you are. Sometimes where we fit depends a lot on where we are in our life, our personality, how flexible we are, the type of change we are facing and our perception of that change(s).

Several years ago I attended a lecture by Dr. Leo Buscaglia at the University of Hawaii. Dr. Buscaglia is a dynamic presenter and author. I attended this lecture at a time of great change in my own life – a change I did not choose but, sometimes, especially in our work environments, change is chosen for us as part of an organization’s bigger plan. Sometimes it makes sense and sometimes it does not. Sometimes change is for the better and sometimes organizations make changes just for the sake of change – it may make things better or worse. That is the kind of dynamic we often face when change arrives. I take every lesson though where I can find it. I knew of Dr. Buscaglia through his book *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*. I had often used this book in my grief work with people of all ages (grief – huge change!) His lecture on love and relationships did not disappoint me either. The lecture left me with much to contemplate. I was still stuck on the change continuum and got thinking about Dr. Buscaglia’s book and the story of Freddie in *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*. It really is about change! If you’ve never read this book I highly recommend that you do. The story is about a huge

tree and Daniel, the senior, more seasoned leaf who helps a young leaf named Freddie understand his first experience with the changing of the seasons. Freddie is curious and afraid. He asks Daniel what it is like and if it will hurt. Daniel begins the story of what I would really refer to as the “Cycle of Life” but could also be seen as the cycle of change. Daniel explains to Freddie that this is all a part of the great plan and life. We all have a purpose and we will all encounter many changes when serving our purpose and things will continue to change season after season. That is life! Our lives are that way too. From the time we are born, all we face is change. Change comes in many forms – our growth and development from birth to death is living proof of that. Think of all the changes in your life that you’ve found to be happy and wonderful. What made them that way? Did they just happen or did some of these changes initially show themselves to you through challenge, adversity or fear? Our life experiences also shape our perspectives on things. Having a history of difficult challenges in your life can paint your perception when change is presented and how you respond. If your experiences have been happy ones, you come to expect positive things with change. Whatever your past experience has painted for you, it is up to you to take a close look at yourself and decide how you will face and deal with change in the present and future. There is still time to re-write expectations and perspectives. Here is a list of contemplative questions to get you thinking about where you are right now and what you might consider doing for yourself wherever you are on the change continuum.

- What has my past experience been with change? Positive or negative?
- What is happening in my life currently in the change department, both personally and professionally?
- Do I welcome these changes?
- Am I resisting these changes?
- How much control do I have over these changes?
- If I have some or total control, what am I doing that is good and helping to propel me forward in this change?

- If I have little to no control, what am I doing to help myself through this change process?
- Have I given myself the “self-talk” of listing what I do and do not have control over, then examining where I am with all of this and making wise choices for myself in this change process?
- If I become stuck in the change process, what am I prepared to do to help myself forward?
- Do I behave passively and just take it all while grumbling and complaining and allowing bitterness to set in, or do I become active for answers and a way through this time?
- What actions am I taking on my own behalf?
- Will counselling sessions help me work my way through this change? (*Don't forget that Judy and I are here for you in EAP to assist with the answer to this question, and others.*)
- Am I doing enough to care for myself? (i.e. massage, exercise, healthy diet, adequate sleep and having fun)
- Do I have a person(s) to talk to?
- Am I socializing and having fun or am I so focused on what is happening and what I am going to do that I am missing out on other aspects of my life?

Spend some time contemplating the answers to these questions. Then make some decisions about what you want to do to improve your life at this time, if that's the right direction for you. If you are handling things well, then many congratulations for having learned the “way through change!”

If teaching is your purpose, having a way to cope with and survive change has to be a part of your professional growth and development plan. The one thing we have seen in education in recent years is a constant change. Remember to be good and kind to yourself. Take good care of you so that you can serve your purpose being the best you can be!

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References

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