

Embracing Change

by Penni Osborn



*To everything there is a season and a time
to every purpose under the heaven...*

Ecclesiastes



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Allow Yourself to be Vulnerable

Putting on your battle dress, to protect yourself, will only prolong the pain. Allowing yourself to be vulnerable means you can *feel* and therefore *process* the change you are experiencing and thus prevent it from negatively dominating your future choices. Being vulnerable means letting yourself 'in', as well as those around you. Being vulnerable means being honest and open to your experience; it's not a weakness. In fact, it's completely the opposite. Accepting our vulnerability is a strength that can lead to incredible transformation. History tells us stories of those who have been vulnerable to immense adversity and yet have been able to not only rebuild what was broken but build more – bigger and better than before. If we can find acceptance for where we are right now – however negative a place it may seem – we open our hearts and minds to possibility, opportunity and ultimately, personal growth.

*Vulnerability sounds like truth
and feels like courage.*

Brené Brown

Avoid Personalising

“It’s all *my* fault. If *I* had done Y then X would not have happened to *me*...” Chances are, no it’s not and yes it would! If there are lessons to be learned, learn them and move on. Personalising experiences is like making yourself the lead role in a play where you have no idea what the story is, who the other characters are, or what their scripts tell them to say and then berating yourself for fluffing your lines! When we take the ‘self’ out of events and allow ourselves to observe, without judgement, we can see more clearly how the event itself is neutral and that we can *choose* the level of impact the event has on us. Self-blame and criticism serve only to make adjustment to change more difficult and emotionally painful. Your ability to make empowered choices remains, regardless of what has happened.

Men are not disturbed by things, but by the view which they take of them.

Epictetus

Reach Out

It takes great strength to ask for help. Trying to cope alone may seem like the best thing to do as you don't want to bring others down, right? Or maybe, someone told you it was weak to ask for help. However, letting people in, and telling them how you feel, gives them the opportunity to show their compassion and offer support. The simple act of voicing your worries or fears can bring significant relief. Others, that may have shared your experience, can offer the foundation you need in order to make small steps forward and those that haven't can simply make you feel less alone and isolated. As humans, we *need* to be connected to others; it provides a sense of belonging, boosts our self-esteem, reinforces our values and makes us feel less lonely. And that works both ways; for those reaching out for help and for those that offer it.

No one has ever become poor by giving.

Anne Frank

Look for Opportunity

It may seem like all is lost but, in fact, much can be gained from change. Maybe you never knew just how resilient you could be. Maybe you've discovered you are more capable than you realised. What space has been created by change? How have you been enlightened? Can that be used positively in some way? Albert Einstein, the great mathematician, once said, "In the midst of difficulty lies opportunity". If difficulties weren't thrown at us every now and then, how else would we grow? How would we learn to problem-solve and to pass that experience on to the next generation? In years past, the difficulty of getting from one place to another was water but we figured out how to build boats and bridges and then we could travel anywhere. What opportunity can change give *you* and what can you build that allows you to travel?

Pain is certain, suffering is optional.

Buddha

Problem Solve

When we are overwhelmed, reason and logic tend to disappear! We focus on the 'what-ifs', ruminate on the difficulty of our situation, personalise it (why me?), and believe what our emotions are telling us (emotional reasoning). But how is this helpful? Consider asking yourself these questions:

1. What's the problem?
2. What do I need right now?
3. How do I get that?
4. How do I utilise it?

For instance, the 'problem' is that you've been made redundant. What you need is reassurance that it wasn't personal. You can get that reassurance by checking the facts; a great reference, knowledge that your employer is cutting costs. You can then utilise those facts to re-energise yourself and move forward, away from adversity and towards opportunity.

*If you define the problem correctly,
you almost have the solution.*

Steve Jobs

Remind Yourself of Your Values

What areas of life are meaningful and enriching for you? Think family, friendships, spirituality, physical health, career, intimacy, creativity. We are not 'one thing' nor does 'one thing' define us. It's self-limiting to put all our emotional energy into just one area. If we live our life according to a broad range of our individual values, chances are we'll be more able to 'roll with the punches' rather than be beaten by them. Try listing everything you value under these suggested headings. Where can things be improved? Would you benefit from spending more time with friends or perhaps a new creative project is long overdue? On a psychological level, working with our values and ensuring they are well balanced helps to shift our thinking from being inflexible to flexible. Flexible thinking allows us to be more adaptive and accepting of change as we can offer ourselves multiple alternative ways of viewing our situation rather than remaining fixed and rigid with only black and white vision.

*First say to yourself what would you be;
then do what you have to do.*

Epictetus

Be Kind to Yourself

This is the most important thing of all! We are all unique beings; rich tapestries of our individual experiences, our nature and our nurture. The process of change is not linear. There will be a time when everything is okay again. Trust that. In the meantime, offer yourself compassion and kindness every day. Accept that where you are at this moment, is simply that, just a moment. Many more moments are yet to come. And while you wait for the wheel to turn, remember that you are living, learning and growing into a fuller, richer, wiser you.

*If we believe tomorrow can be better,
we can bear a hardship today.*

Thich Nhat Hanh



Here we have looked at various ways we can embrace and emotionally grow through change. But what about when change has rocked our world so much that even reading this piece seems overwhelming? And what if it simply doesn't feel possible, right now, to reach out to those close to us?

Despite our best efforts to manage the effects of change, sometimes it can all just feel like too much to cope with. When this is the case, we become vulnerable to depressive illness, insomnia, anxiety and the physical repercussions of mental stress. At this point, professional counsel can make a real difference. An impartial ear and warm, empathic collaboration can help diffuse some of the tension we may be experiencing and create space for clarity and calm, allowing us to observe and proceed effectively.

If you are currently feeling overwhelmed by unexpected events (past or present), or if the change has caused you to feel overwhelmed, depressed or anxious, I'd love to hear from you. Together, we can plan a strategy to help you navigate your way through - and beyond - your current situation, back to homeostasis and a more peaceful existence.

I look forward to working with you!

Penni Osborn



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