

Ask Your Therapist

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Managing Change

Before I talk about managing change, I want to thank everyone for all the kind and positive comments I received from my last column, Pet Bereavement. It seems to have touched the hearts of many readers.

It is said that the only constant in Life is change. So we had better learn how to “go with the flow” or risk being carried out to sea in the undertow! Whether we experience the death of a beloved (person or pet), the diminishment of abilities, the end of a dream, the loss of a love or changes in circumstances to which we feel an attachment, we create our own misery through our willful insistence that things be as we wish, rather than as they are.

Change occurs naturally, organically in nature which we accept and even celebrate but when change comes to our lives uninvited, we squeal and protest, complain and feel victimized by the events of our lives. How many times have I heard “He died too young”, “I had no choice” and “I was an innocent bystander”?

By looking change in the face and taking action where we can and accepting inaction when that is appropriate, we take some control over our lives. Rather than tensing and railing about the changing circumstances of our lives for which we have no control, we can take control over our reactions to change. Have you heard an old folk tale about the man whose wife died, which was bad, but then an invading army came thru, stealing all the women and she had been spared that horror, which was good. And then the horse ran away, which was bad, but the son went after it and found it, which was good. But on the way back home the son fell and broke his leg, which was bad, but when the invading army came back through stealing young men for the army he was passed over, which was good....

You can see my point here. Our attitude creates our reality. If you are always looking for the negative side of life, that is exactly what you will see. And if you are looking for the positive side, that is what you will find.

So how do you manage change? Here are a few ideas.

1. Look on the sunny side of Life. Not the blinders of denial but an internal coach who encourages you to see the glass as half full, not half empty.
2. Learn to manage your stress through exercise, mind control (meditation, prayer, super focusing on something positive), keeping company with other positive people, making a positive contribution to the lives of others, or even anti-anxiety medication for short term use if the pressure is really on you, effecting your ability to sleep, digest, relax, etc.

3. Talk to other people who have made the changes you are making and get tips from them on what worked and what didn't work. Be patient with the process of change.
4. Seek professional help BEFORE you feel like jumping off a bridge.

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to www.krishnabai.com where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-386-5657