

**Waves of Change**  
**How to Survive and *Thrive* When You're Feeling Overwhelmed**

By: Chérie Carter-Scott, Ph.D.  
#1 New York Times Bestselling author of  
***If Life is a Game, These are the Rules:***  
***Ten Rules for Being Human***

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chérie Carter-Scott, Ph.D. founded MMS Institute, LLC in 1974, a recognized leader in the field of Human Development and known as the “Mother of Coaching.” Dr. Chérie has been successfully coaching change & human transitions since 1974. Dr. Carter-Scott is an international best selling author, entrepreneur, consultant, lecturer, teacher/trainer, talk-show host, and seminar leader. Dr. Cherie has been a management consultant and executive coach throughout the last 30 years. She earned her Ph. D. in Human and Organizational Development from The Fielding Institute. Dr. Cherie wrote her dissertation on the relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Her dissertation provided groundbreaking research for this essential linkage.

As a New York Times #1 best selling author, *If Life is a Game, These are the Rules: The Ten Rules for Being Human* has been published in 40 countries with many millions of books sold. Dr. Carter-Scott has multiple other published titles: *If Life is a Game These are the Stories*, *If Love is a Game*, *If Success is a Game*, *Negaholics: How To Overcome Negativity and Turn Your Life Around*, *The Corporate Negaholic: How to Successfully Deal with Negative Employees, Managers, and Corporations*, *The New Species: The Evolution of the Human Being* and *Inner View: A Woman's Daily Journal*. Dr. Carter-Scott is a master facilitator working directly with executive, training, and various departments on vision, goals, and aligning employees on their strategies for the success of the organization.

Dr. Chérie has appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show, The Today Show, The O'Reilly Factor, CNN, Montel, Leeza, Politically Incorrect, The Other Half, Jenny Jones, Sally Jesse Raphael and over 400 radio, TV, print media, and internet exposures worldwide.

Dr. Chérie is the “Mother of Coaching” who has been training coaches in the MMS Coaching method since 1975. She has worked successfully on 5 continents, in 33 countries. Along with her many other talents, Dr. Chérie is an instrument-rated private pilot and PADI scuba diver.

### **Dr. Chérie Carter-Scott, “The Mother of Coaching!”**

- **The Original coach & coach trainer since 1974**
- **NY Times and Amazon #1 Bestselling author**
- **Frequent guest on Oprah**
- **Media Personality**
- **Global CEO since 1974 Consulting, Training, and Coaching Globally**
- **Behavioral Scientist**
- **Ph.D. In Organizational Development**
- **Master Certified Coach by the ICF (International Coach Federation)**



- **LEAP** executive producer & featured on-camera coach 2018 (Amazon)
- **Curriculum Designer of soft skill Content**
- **Writer, composer & lyricist of *The Workshop, A Dress Rehearsal for Life!* Musical**
- **Author of 20 book titles (drcherie.com)**
- **Licensor of Intellectual Property globally**
- **Pioneer in every field she touches**
- **Fortune 500 clients globally**
- **Professor at Antioch and Webster Universities**
- **Expat experience living in Asia and Europe**
- **Instrument-rated private pilot license**
- **PADI certified scuba diver**
- **Developed and filmed her own content for 130 Virtual Training modules (LSVT.com)**
- **Is a long-term business partner, mother, grandmother, and wife**

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## **2020 Words from the author**

I, Chérie Carter-Scott originally wrote *Waves of Change* in 2011 when I experienced a medical crisis. It is now 2020 and we are experiencing unprecedented change with Covid-19 global pandemic. It would be remiss of me to ignore the impact of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) in a book that deals specifically with change, unwanted, unchosen, ubiquitous, and extrinsic change. This global pandemic touches every human on the planet, without exception. It doesn't discriminate against gender, race, religion, or nationality, it unites us all in our fragile humanity. It stretches us, challenges us, and makes us question our behaviors, our addictions, and our reality. It is about much more than staying healthy and safe, it is actually a "defining moment" in our lives asking us who we are, what we stand for, and how we want to show up.

I dedicate this book to those living, struggling, suffering, supporting, and dying during this crisis.

## **Preface**

Change happens; there is no doubt about that. The question is not if things will change, but rather what you will do when the change happens. It is about how you face each situation, how you deal with the transition from what was to what is; it is about how easily you process letting go of your expectations and attachments; it's about how you manage your attitude, your behavior, your relationships, your resources, and your overall life in the midst of what could be perceived as either a crisis or an opportunity!. In Dr. Cherie Carter-Scott's New York Times #1 Bestselling book *If Life is a Game, These are the Rules*, she presents *Ten Rules for Being Human*. Rule #2 states that "You will be presented with lessons." When presented with lessons, you will have choices, options, and opportunities. At times these life alterations are easy to embrace, while other times, they can jolt your reality leaving you feeling confused, uncertain, and even fearful.

*Waves of Change: **How to Survive and Thrive When You're Feeling Overwhelmed*** navigates you through the various levels of change and provides you with real life lessons which equip you with the skills necessary to cope with and manage all levels of change in your life.

While reading this book, you will read examples of change that you, may have already conquered, are in the middle of, or that you may encounter in the future. You will be presented with an entirely new perspective on the changes you are encountering. Whether you are managing the stress of a Level 7 Rip Tide, battling the catastrophic loss of a Level 10 Tsunami, or simply learning to handle the frustrations which accompany a Level 2 Ripple, if you embrace the principles in *Waves of Change* you will discover how resilient and capable you truly are.

I am confident *Waves of Change* will equip you with the skills necessary to embrace the transitions, evolutions, and transformations in your life. Enjoy the book, be mindful of the lessons, and learn to stand up on your surfboard and ride the waves of change to the stable life that you will be thrilled to manage.

**Warren Bennis**

**Bestselling author and leadership Expert**

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of those people who have contributed to me learning how to effectively deal with change. It has never been easy, but it has taught me to have a positive attitude, to be resourceful, and to locate the pony hiding underneath the pile of manure.

Since you are reading this book you are undoubtedly encountering change, are possibly overwhelmed, or feeling like you don't know what to do about your circumstances. Let me be your guide through the changes that may affect the rest of your life.

I have survived fire, floods, abandonment, a sociopathic husband, divorce, disinheritance, financial ruin, medical negligence, a political coup d'état, death of parents at an early age, change in direction, focus, popularity, and home base; I've been invited to redefine, reinvent, and reboot myself multiple times through my life, therefore I am the perfect guide to assist you in navigating the *Waves of Change*. I have provided a list for you on the next page in case you think I am overexaggerating. If I can survive and thrive throughout all of these challenges then so can you! I have had my fair share of waves of change and I am here to confirm "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," and that strength is what is required in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. You must formulate a mindset, an attitude of readiness, and develop the willingness to deal with whatever surfaces as part of your seaworthy "Bootcamp" in life.

No one ever said it was going to be easy, so forget about that notion. Instead, consider an attitude of “I can handle this!” Imagine yourself as your favorite super hero, ready, willing, and able to tackle any challenge and emerge victorious! Whether you are Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Wonder Woman, Zena, the Warrior Princess, and Elektra you can inspire yourself to be your most effective and powerful self to surf the *Waves of Change!*



## Introduction

The changes I have successfully overcome that have vetted me to write *Waves of Change* are:

1. I was a disappointment when I was born since I was the third girl, and not a boy!
2. I grew up in an alcoholic and abusive home and I survived and made training coaches my life's work.
3. My home burned down when I was 13 and I lost everything material (a lesson in values).
4. My mother died when I was 20 (time to grow up).
5. My father remarried when I was 21, sold all of our family possessions, moved to Florida, and married a woman 36 years younger than he.
6. My father disinherited all three daughters when he died (turned victimhood into victory).
7. When I was 21, there was no "Home" to return to. I was on my own (figure out the game of life...now!)
8. My husband left my 18-month-old-baby-daughter and me, took all of our money, leaving us penniless (resilience lesson).
9. We were on the verge of bankruptcy three different times (resourceful lessons).
10. My body was unable to move for ten days in a hospital (enforced reflective moments to visit my life's purpose).
11. A partner in a home decided to sue us for \$1 Million (learn to turn lemons into lemonade).

12. We rescued a \$300,000.00 home situation with mold, wood rot, and termites that consumed all the resources that we had.
13. I overcame a mother-in-law and family who was against me marrying my husband, and that was nothing short of a miracle!
14. I had a medical emergency, where a hospital left a guide wire in my leg for 21 days after surgery, causing DVT and the threat of heart attack or stroke if I flew overseas.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Types of Waves**

“We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing.”

**R. D. Laing**

**What is constantly changing yet always remains the same?**

Answer: The ocean!

There is not one nanosecond when the ocean stops moving. The movement of the currents, tides, and waves is never exactly the same. The ocean is unlike any other body of water, and the changes in the sea do not follow a pattern, nor are they predictable. A beautiful day at the beach with low tide, no current, and hardly any waves, is similar to having no unwanted, unwelcome, or unanticipated changes happen in your life. You approach a parking space that is close to your destination and the space opens up just as you approach it. This is what is called a positive intended change, or synchronicity. You go to a meeting and you are offered an additional lucrative project that you hadn't imagined. This is called an out-of-the-blue blessing, or being in flow. You come home late from a very hectic day to find that your children have taken the initiative to create dinner for the entire family. This is called a small miracle, and great parenting! None of these changes are problems because they all involve good news, pleasant surprises, and positive outcomes. Positive changes are not an issue until they become overwhelming. Too much of a good thing can turn into a brand new

problem. For example, when a friend sends you a beautiful bouquet of flowers that is indeed a lovely experience. When twenty flower deliveries arrive on the same day, it presents a brand new problem. If you don't have twenty vases readily available, your sinks become overloaded with bunches of bouquets with nowhere to place them. On the business front, if you launch a marketing campaign that suddenly became a huge success, you could easily become overwhelmed with hundreds of thousands of Email requests that you never anticipated and your small business cannot handle. The result could reflect negatively on your company image and a lack of responsiveness rather than bringing you desired the new customers you intended.

The changes we are addressing in this book are unplanned, unanticipated, and unpredictable, and as a result are unwanted, unwelcome, and difficult to cope with. For most people, those undesirable changes create stress, distress, and feelings of being out of control. Imagine yourself in a sea in which the current has rapidly changed and you find that you are unable to navigate your way to safety. This is the type of change that many people find themselves in the middle of and are seriously trying to assess whether they should find a life preserver, learn to surf, enhance their survival skills, or get out of the water all together.

The sea is synonymous with change. A wave seems to emerge from literally nowhere. Out of a seemingly calm sea, a ripple appears, gathers strength and mass until it curls, crests, rolls or pounds its way to shore. In many ways the changes you experience are like those waves, at times gentle, at times fierce, but

most often coming out of nowhere, without warning, catching you off guard, unprepared and feeling unable to cope. Change can also appear to emerge from nowhere. A seemingly stable and predictable life will encounter a ripple of information that gathers more and more data until it becomes evident that life has changed significantly. With each curl, crest and roll the reality that life is not as it was becomes abundantly clear.

### **The Perception of Change**

Change is not new, but rather a “constant” woven in the fabric of the human condition. There have been periods in history when conventional wisdom perceived change as having reached a saturation point. One of those moments was in 1899 when Charles H. Duell, the commissioner to the US Patent office was quoted as saying, “Everything that can be invented already has been!” Perhaps life appeared to be stable, static, or lacking innovation, but as we know today, nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Another time when there was an attachment to the sustainment of the status quo was in the 1950’s. The prevailing paradigm at that time was: school, work, marriage, children, retirement, and death. The expectation was that you would stay with the same spouse, in the same profession, and you would remain in the same house for your entire life. You would practice the same religion as your parents, remain a member of the same political party as your family, and follow the same traffic patterns, dress code, and eating habits that your family line dictated.

There was never the expectation of lifelong learning mainly driven today by constantly evolving technology. There was never the anticipation that the average person would have three to seven career changes and seven to ten job changes in their lifetime. In 2011, the average working person will change jobs every four years. Since this is a significant change from the last century where people chose, committed, and stayed with their original choices until either retirement or death, we must rethink our beliefs, our attachments and our relationship to change. Today's worker needs to be constantly updating and educating him or herself to stay competitive in the marketplace, and to be a desirable commodity. In previous centuries, learning different languages as a job requirement wasn't necessary because globalization had not yet become a reality. Welcome to the future!

### **Are You Noticing?**

The world has changed. It has changed dramatically in one hundred years and profoundly in the last fifty. As we live in this constantly changing world we adapt to the changing environment and start to take shocking new changes for granted. We hardly realize how dramatically things are changing because we are busy living our lives, and not noticing the pace and scope of change. Living in the sea of change is like a frog in a pot of cool water. If you gently place a frog into boiling water, he will jump out. However, if you gently place the frog into a pot of cool water and gradually increase the heat of the water, the frog will be unaware of the increasing heat because he is slowly adapting to the subtly changing temperature. With his adaptation skills he doesn't notice the heat until it is too late and then he is already cooked! We are like that frog in the sea of change.

Turning up the heat is equivalent to the accelerated pace of change, immunization to the ubiquitous unrestricted reach of change, and anesthetizing our emotional reactions to the latest wave of unbelievable changes.

In the 1950's people expected the world to remain stable and predictable. They expected to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers and mothers. They believed that the industrialized era was the final stage in human evolution. They couldn't imagine an information society with the World Wide Web connecting people globally in the present second simultaneously with voice, data, and image, real time. What once seemed inconceivable, when evidenced to the contrary, eventually became embraced as normal.

Denial turned into resistance that then morphed into acceptance. You can observe this process with a variety of examples. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people drank tap water. It was inconceivable to imagine buying bottled water, however, today we accept bottled water as the norm. In 1911 the average lifespan was 47 years, and in 2011 the average lifespan is 77 years. Our ancestors could not have imagined that a human being could live an additional thirty years in the span of just 100 years of research, innovative technologies, and medical breakthroughs.

### **The New Face of Change**

Change has a new face in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. What has emerged in this century is change at a magnitude, pace, and synchronistic seismic changes that can render you overwhelmed, speechless, and feeling utterly powerless. Rather than feeling buffeted about or overwhelmed by change, it is time to look

“change” directly in the face and come to terms with it, especially the great “unknown” factor. The novel Covid-19 virus has turned our world upside down with no clear expectation of when the danger will be over, if we come out of lockdown, will we risk re-infecting those we will come in contact with, and will the world ever resemble our lives from the past? It has been speculated that we will never go back to life as it was, and we will need to create a “New Normal!” This is a radically new face of change!

There is a way to managing change, and it is extremely effective. Even though you cannot anticipate change, you can formulate a personal template to face it, manage it, and have it work for you so that you can ride the wave rather than be engulfed by it.

There are degrees of change just like there are different types of waves in the ocean. The following is a list of life changes, their correlated waves, and their anticipated impact on your life. As you read through the list, make notes on the life changes you have experienced that match each wave level of change. This will help you as you develop your personal “Lifeboat Drills” that will enable you to be more effective when encountering change in its myriad of forms.

## **Ten Waves of Change**

**Wave Level 1 Glassy Surface Changes** are the ones that you initiate and therefore have anticipated. These “intrinsic” changes, created by you, might be difficult to ultimately achieve, however, they are your design and are ultimately within your control. They might be changes in your personal appearance, in your



job responsibilities, your living situation, securing an additional degree, changing your eating habits, or taking on a mortgage. All of these changes are your **choice** and that fact creates a fundamental difference in perception, reaction, and deployment. We could compare these subtle changes to a glassy surface on the ocean. Choice is a game changer and plucks you out of the sea and places you into your own vessel steering it in the direction of your personal compass.

Even when changes are your choice you can easily become swept away with the amount of details that you hadn't originally anticipated when making your original choice. For instance, you may want to have a baby. It may be difficult for you to conceive, and so the first challenge is conception. Wanting a baby and becoming a parent are very different experiences. When you become a parent there are more changes, challenges, and choices than you could have ever envisioned prior to that moment. Being a new parent can be overwhelming even though you chose it and you are delighted with the result. The same is true with starting your own business. The dream or thought is vastly different from actually launching your own enterprise.

Rhonda wanted to have a child. She and her husband Bill tried everything possible for years and it seemed hopeless. They were each tested, they went through IVF, and complied with the dictates of the hospital, but year after year, no pregnancy. Finally, one doctor became committed to their cause and said, "Follow everything I tell you to do; it will be rigorous, but if you follow all of my directives, exactly, there is a high probability that you will become pregnant.

Rhonda and Bill were dutifully committed and their dream ultimately came true, Rhonda became pregnant with a little girl!

**Wave Level 2 Ripples** are small daily changes that happen without your permission like temperature fluctuations, cancelled appointments, inability to complete projects, disruption in sleep patterns, increased demands at work, bills that you don't recognize, and purchased products that fail to deliver on their promise; all of these come under the heading of unexpected events, or irritations. Usually they are sequenced and staggered so that you don't encounter them all simultaneously. They are minor irritants that will not ruin your day unless there is an inundation of them. Ripples do not have mass, velocity, or power so they disturb the glassy surface, but cannot harm you, however, they can easily turn into white caps when you are least expecting them.

Stephen could be labeled a control freak. He liked his area clean, tidy, and everything in its proper place. He had the expectation that life should flow easily and without much disruption. When the water heater broke, he was irritated that he didn't have any hot water for his shower, and then when the repairman came he was told the cost or replacement. Then when he picked up his dry cleaning the spots were still on his shirt. Then his timing belt on his car broke in the middle of driving on route to his parent's house. He bought a software package and couldn't get the codes to work. He tried everything and couldn't get the product to work, and then on top of it all, he lost the receipt. Stephen was irritated at all of the incidents, but he never took a moment to reflect on the incidents to see if there was another way to handle them. It is in the reflective

moments that you see what changes can be made in ripple conditions that will prepare you for the Tsunamis ahead.

**Wave Level 3 Rolling and Spilling Waves** or changes can be irritating, troublesome, and unsettling but they will not cause you any real harm. For example, you have expensive car trouble, a sick child at home with a fever and no back up plan for childcare, your pet has a tumor and requires surgery, a traffic jam renders you stuck in the middle of nowhere, or you get food poisoning from an upscale restaurant. We could consider these changes equivalent to “Rolling and Spilling Waves” because these waves are gentle, safe, and break at the shoreline. “Spilling Waves” occur when the crest (or top) of the wave tumbles down the face (or front) of the wave. They may alter your patterns of behavior but they are not significantly disruptive. With these small “Spilling Waves,” you can allow them to upset you or take them in stride, and ride them, but they happen regardless. If you manage your reactions and deployment to the “Spilling waves” you will find that there is nothing serious to worry about. If you catch them at the right time, at the right angle, and you are in relatively good condition, you can surf them easily, enjoy the ride, and even improve your situation for the long-term. They are harmless changes that can be easily navigated if you don’t become overwhelmed by the process. If you expect life to be without any waves, “Rolling and Spilling Waves” can really upset your day.

Elena was always out of breath and constantly in a hurry. Life was timed to the second. When she was on the commuter train returning from work and it broke down, it caused a meltdown. Elena was frantic until a kind stranger offered her a calming tone and steps to address each item on her mind. He

helped her call, text, and Email everyone with whom she had made commitments. Within 15 minutes, Elena had a new model of how to handle the unexpected. Rather than holding this incident as a fluke occurrence, she decided that it happened for a reason. Elena vowed to change her life rhythm to be more in flow, breathing more, and much less stressed. She determined to stop overloading her schedule, to stop saying “Yes” to all requests, and to declare that she could only calmly manage 5 projects at any time. The commuter train incident was a gift that changed Elena’s life because she was willing to pay attention to the “Wake-up Call.”

**Wave Level 4 Shore Dump Waves** or changes are unanticipated, “extrinsic,” come from outside of you, and can tend to upset your equilibrium, however, they are not life threatening, and do not cause you immediate damage, pain, or suffering. These are changes like having a power outage, a transit strike, a flood, political unrest, a volcanic eruption causing flights to be cancelled and airports to close. These changes are similar to “Shore Dump Waves” that shape up steeply before breaking powerfully in the shallow water next to the shore. These events appear to “dump” on you information about short-term circumstances that are happening somewhere in the world, (near or far) that are totally out of your control. You don’t want to consider surfing these waves.

Jim was living in Bangkok during the flooding of Thailand. Every day he read in the paper or saw the shocking images of people living underwater throughout Thailand. He lived with the fear of anticipating when the floods would come and considered what he would do when they arrived. He received an Email about volunteers who took food, clothing and medical supplies to

people whose lives were in shambles. He thought, “I can’t go to work in these conditions, I am in good health and I may as well help others in need. When Jim shifted his attention from his own needs to others in need, his perspective shifted. He found new energy, new ideas, and a passion to help others. He discovered a side of him that had been lying dormant and appeared with purpose.

**Wave Level 5****Plunging Waves** or changes are also unanticipated but the impact is stronger and is closer to you. For example, a car hits your vehicle, people are injured, but no one dies, damages to both vehicles, and many unplanned inconveniences. Your home is robbed, your car stolen, illness strikes you, your family, or your pets, an older or younger relative must move in with you and this changes the family dynamics, impacting your finances, and the ripple effect is experienced throughout your entire life. There are increased irritations and upsets with your partner, spouse, or family members. These can be compared to “Plunging Waves.” Plunging waves break with tremendous force and can easily throw a swimmer tumbling to the bottom of the ocean floor. They usually occur at low tide, when the sand banks are shallow and there is less water for the waves to break onto. This wave type is dangerous and is a common cause of spinal injuries.

Georgine was driving her three children to their after school activities when a car broadsided them, totaling her vehicle. The children were crying, the driver of the other vehicle was hurling accusations, and Georgine’s head was hurt from hitting the steering wheel. It was like a nightmare with people behaving like their most primitive selves was a moment that she will never

forget. When she returned to her husband, Craig, he responded with empathy and compassion. He handled the details of the accident with ease, cared for the children and his wife and reduced the level of trauma significantly. Georgine noticed that she had been taking Craig for granted, and this “accident” created a renewal in their commitment. She remembered why she had married him and expressed her deepest appreciation for his willingness to put his family first!

**Wave Level 6 “Surging Waves”** exacerbate stress levels so that irritability is compounded with your reaction to the changes. Examples of “Surging Waves” are: a significant reduction in your financial situation, an increase in friction with those close to you, disconnection with your mate, family or work associates, sexual challenges, insomnia, and conflict with your in-laws. Surging waves may never actually break as they approach the water’s edge, since the water beneath them is very deep. These waves do not lose speed or gain height; however, they can knock swimmers off their feet and rapidly carry them back into the deep water. For this reason they can be very dangerous, especially in rocky areas.

Lorna discovered that her husband was having an affair. She confronted him, they went through counseling, and they decided to separate. She went to see her priest and had many long conversations with him. After many soul searching hours, she decided to accept his invitation to start again. She wrestled with ending the marriage or finding the courage to forgive. It wasn’t an easy process, but finally she found the inner peace to forgive him for his transgressions. Rather than simply blaming her husband for his actions, Lorna asked herself what she

could have done differently to nurture their relationship and keep it magical and fun. Dealing with the change of an unfaithful spouse can be devastating, but making the choice about what to do next can be even more daunting. Taking each change that life deals you an opportunity to be a better person than you ever imagined is always an option to be considered.

**Wave Level 7 Rip Tides or Currents** involve more serious losses that rip you apart including: divorce, loss of job, loss of income, loss of savings, home foreclosure, loss of business, loss of functionality, including the onset of Alzheimer's. This level of change can be compared to rip currents because the events seem to take control of your circumstances and take on a life of their own. Rip currents can be extremely dangerous, dragging swimmers away from the beach. A rip does not pull a swimmer under water but rather carries the swimmer away from the shore in a narrow channel of water. Death by drowning comes following exhaustion while fighting the river or ocean current. A swimmer caught in a rip current should not attempt to swim back to shore directly against the rip. This action risks exhaustion and drowning.

Rob was a director in a large telecommunications company. He had worked there for 17 years, experienced a lot of success, and numerous commendations. His boss was promoted and Rob anticipated being offered a promotion as well, into his boss's vacancy. To his surprise, the company brought in a VP from a competitor company who treated Rob with disrespect. With a declining economy, a new demanding and diminishing boss, Rob wondered what he should do. The next thing that happened was that Rob was called in to explain his expense report. His new boss had built a case against his charges on his

report and fired him. Rob was so shocked that he hardly knew what to say or where to turn. He had been a dutiful employee for so long only to be rewarded with this series of actions. He experienced loss, sadness, embarrassment, anger, humiliation, and self-pity. For months he was unable to do anything. Then one day he awakened to the thought, "Life is not over, this is just a setback. I am not dead, nor am I defeated!" He started to meet with a variety of companies to regain his self-respect, his dignity, and his self-worth. Finally, after many months of introspection and interviews, he started his own company and he has never been happier. He is doing work that he loves, and he gets to use his values to manage his staff and customers in creating win-win situations where everyone feels valued.

**Wave Level 8 Hurricanes** involve permanently life-altering events.

Events like, terminal illness, burglary coupled with vandalism of a house or office and identity theft, financial ruin, fire, flood, earthquake, tornado, or tsunami that may cause you to lose everything.

Marion's home was burglarized while she was away on a business trip. Upon returning, she discovered her house in ruins. Mattresses turned over, couch cushions pulled from the sofa, clothes were pulled from closets and dressers and strewn throughout the bedrooms. Her safe was missing, containing her emergency savings, credit cards, jewelry, and many irreplaceable items. Many of her family heirlooms were missing, some unique pieces with heartfelt sentimental value, which caused further heartache. Questions taunted her, "Why



would the thief want the old watch?" "Why me?" "What if I were home when this happened? Would I have been hurt or even killed?"

After coping with the initial shock, Marion leapt into action, first calling the police to file a report and possibly collect evidence to catch the perpetrator. She then contacted her bank and informed them of the incident. She asked them to be on high alert for any suspicious transactions that might impact her accounts. Next, Marion contacted the insurance company to file a report of all apparent stolen items in hopes of trying to recover some cost for the lost items. Days later Marion received a call from her credit card company; the card had been used and now totaled over \$7,000 in fraudulent charges. This thief not only stole some of her most prized possessions, now she was using her identity! She contacted law enforcement once more to inform them of this new victimization but they did very little other than take another report. The changes, coupled with the lack of responsiveness created a fury in Marion that was committed to creating results. Rather than in wallowing in "Poor us" she asked her assistant if she could take the credit card charges on the card, seek out the merchants, and see if there was surveillance footage available to track down the thieves. There was one merchant who was willing to participate and the outcome was exposing the largest fraud rings in the state of Nevada. Marion's assistant saved the day, and helped law enforcement significantly, and Marion received satisfaction that the thieves were punished.

This wave level can cause permanent damage if it is not addressed quickly and in a very proactive, positive, loving, and intentional manner. If you are facing level 8 waves, here are some steps that you can take.

- 1) Take inventory of the items you treasure, phone albums, family heirlooms, collectibles, jewelry. Take photographs of these items to keep them in a safe place in the event that something happens to them.
- 2) Know who you need to contact when a level 8 wave happens. For Marion, it was important she contact the police first to secure the scene, then the banks to secure her funds, and finally the insurance company. If a level 8 wave occurs which involves the loss of a family member, you may need to contact other family members, friends, and a funeral home to make the appropriate arrangements. It's important to know who you must contact and who you can contact for support.
- 3) Make a list of items that you cannot live without if you have time to collect certain treasures before you must abandon the premises: photo albums, jewelry, birth certificates, etc. When you are in an emergency, you have no time to think. You must have conducted your preparations in advance because you need to act quickly since there is no time to ponder what you have to retrieve before it is too late.
- 4) Keep cash on hand
- 5) Be sure to have an external back up drive for all important computer data

- 6) Have emergency credit cards that have a substantial available balance

**Wave Level 9 Rogue or Freak Waves** come totally out of the blue, with no warning, and no related incidents. This could be like going into the hospital for a simple procedure, then having complications which result in a medical crisis. It could also look like a hostile takeover in the corporate world. You are informed that all the funds have been drained from your account with no explanation. This is why we compare level 9 to a “Rogue or Freak Wave.” The exact causes of Rogue waves is unknown but it is believed they may propagate from storms, high surface winds, subtle shifts in the ocean seabed, gravitational and magnetic variations in the Earth's crust, and possibly an alignment of the planets and the moon that produce intensified gravitational effects. These waves can arise suddenly, can be more than 100 feet high, and can damage or destroy ships at sea.

Hurricane Katrina is an example of a “Rogue or Freak Wave.” Hurricane Katrina, the most costly disaster in US history made landfall near New Orleans on August 29, 2005, when 1836 people were counted dead; but still today we do not know just how many people lost their lives as a result of that tragic event.

There are two principal reasons why the death toll remains unclear. One is that a large number of people remain missing. The second is that the number of deceased depends on exactly who is counted as being a victim of the hurricane. We must count all who drowned or were crushed in building collapses, but do we also count those who had a prior medical condition such as heart disease or respiratory problems that were fatally aggravated by the trauma

of the hurricane? Do we count those who committed suicide in the days after? Without details of who died or what caused their death we cannot begin to answer questions such as these concerning the variable risks people face in natural disasters. Was it a natural disaster? Could it have been avoided? Will governments use events like this to learn lessons to help protect people from similar events in the future? Will it be an awakening to insisting on right action to ensure that we do all we can to reinforce the infrastructure. Hopefully their deaths will not have been in vain.

**Wave Level 10Tsunami** involves world events that are so powerful that they impact everyone globally in some way or another. We would compare these waves to a Tsunami. A Tsunami comes from a shifting or rubbing in the tectonic plates at the bottom on the ocean floor which results in the displacement of water. Tsunamis generate waves that gradually increase in height and power resulting in gigantic waves of 100 feet (30 meters) in height that emerge, seemingly from nowhere, causing massive destruction in their path as in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.

The following events are Level 10 Tsunami waves. September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City was a Level 10. The AIDS epidemic that in 2008 was responsible for the deaths of 25 million people was another Level 10. The economic meltdown of the worldwide financial institutions in 2008-2012 was another Level 10 event. The massive British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 that impacted the environment, economics, and

devastated natural resources was also a Level 10. The looming energy crisis that threatens to exhaust all of our Earthly resources, fact or fear-based fiction?

World events can be so mystifying that you feel dwarfed, helpless, hopeless, and unable to make a difference in the midst of such massive changes. The changes we are dealing with span the scope of technology, health, economics, politics, media, and the environment.

Even though the world is rapidly changing, you must look at your relationship to those changes, determine how they make you feel, and establish what you want to do as a result. Part of your self-reflection throughout this journey will be to formulate your personal template to manage change. When many people attended grade school they rehearsed “Fire Drills” in case the school caught on fire. A fire drill or in this metaphor, a “Lifeboat Drill,” is a procedure that is rehearsed over and over again until it becomes so automatic that you never have to think about what to do, you just do it! You will emerge from your interaction with this book with your own personal “Lifeboat Drills” to manage the different levels of change that you may encounter. As Heroditus said in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, “The only constant is change.” Since change is the constant, when you have your “Lifeboat Drill” templates to manage change, you know that when the waves of change loom in front of you, you will know exactly what to do to take charge of the situation whenever possible, and manage it...or surf the wave.

How do you see yourself? Do you picture yourself as a swimmer, a surfer, a small vessel, or an observer standing on the beach? Imagine yourself in this sea of change and determine how you want to be.

Waves are unforgiving. They follow the dictates of the larger body of water, the orchestration of the winds, the phases of the moon, and other climate changes that mandate their configuration. Like waves, change is also unforgiving. Change doesn't care about your circumstances. It is unconcerned about your health, wealth, or happiness. The waves of change emerge, build, crest, and break whether you approve or not. They don't ask your permission. They don't consider your feelings. They just keep coming, wave after wave, with no time out. You have choices: you can drown, get out of the water, or learn to ride the waves of change.

In the upcoming chapters we will examine the different waves or levels of change, how they can impact your life, and propose what you can do in your own life to cope, to manage, and ultimately to thrive and prosper using the change process as a catalyst for your own growth.

## Chapter 2

### The Process of Change

“Learn to get in touch with silence within yourself, and know that everything in this life has purpose. There are no mistakes, no coincidences, all events are blessings given to us to learn from.”

**Elizabeth Kubler-Ross**

As a perfectly formed wave grows, arches, and then crests it reveals a calm, serene balanced integrity. Then suddenly it curls and crashes relinquishing it's precision and elegance into total confusion and chaos. It also happens that a balanced and harmonious life is informed of sudden change that plunges the person's life into mayhem and uncertainty. Life can become reorganized and stable again, however there must be a master plan that manages the process of change that includes: information, emotions, communication, strategy, and action steps to successfully make the shift from being out of control to taking back control of your life.

Dealing with “Extrinsic Change” is very similar to the stages of loss and grief outlined by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 groundbreaking book, *On Death and Dying*. Dr. Ross was the first person to examine the varying stages that a person encounters when they have been told that they have a terminal illness. What I have discovered in my work with Change Management is that the phases of change parallel those “Grief stages” outlined by Dr. Kubler-Ross. Those phases are:

- **Denial** – is when you refuse to acknowledge the existence of something.

Familiar words from people in denial sound like this: "I feel fine. There's no problem." "They are exaggerating; it's no big deal." "There must be a mistake." "Don't worry about it." "This is temporary. He'll get over it." Denial is a temporary defense mechanism that denies reality, helps you cope, buys time and distances you from the information. The unconscious perception with denial is that if I don't allow the reality into my consciousness then it isn't real. Denial closes off awareness to the reality being presented. When the person realizes that he or she is in denial about the reality of a situation, denial cannot continue once awareness has entered. As soon as sufficient awareness illuminates the circumstance, denial automatically dissipates replaced by anger. The disconnection associated with "Denial" when finally illuminated gives rise to the fury of anger even rage. As denial dwindles there is a heightened awareness that certain individuals will be left behind with the change process that is happening.

- **Anger**– is the condition of becoming upset, distressed, or distraught by something that is going on. Familiar phrases associated with anger are: "Why me? This isn't fair!" "How did this happen to me?" "What did I do to deserve this?" "*Who is to blame?*" "Who turned my world upside down?" "Who did this to me?" The person looks to find the culprit, assign blame, or to get revenge. They want to express that they won't accept what they have been told is the new "way things are now." Depending upon the person's degree of comfort with the expression of emotions, expressing anger will either be suppressed, controlled, uncontrolled, or fully expressed rage. The release of anger is an important part of the process. Anger is an emotion of



self-respect and self-preservation. Anger is the motor-emotion that jumpstarts the engine of energy and action. Without anger the person risks sliding into apathy.

- **Bargaining**– is an attempt to negotiate a better situation exchanging something that you have for something more desirable. The bargaining phrases are: "Just let me have another opportunity!" "I'll do whatever you want to have things the way they were" "I will be the very best wife (husband), employee, friend, person, if only..." Bargaining assumes the possibility that the situation is somehow reversible. The negotiation can be proposed with a boss, a spouse, a landlord, a friend, a doctor, or a higher power in exchange for a reversal of circumstances. Bargaining rarely works because usually at this point there is no room left to negotiate. When the person finally gets that trying to bargain is pointless, that is when they slide down the slippery slope into depression.

- **Depression** – is the state of incredibly deep melancholy and sadness almost to the point of despair. When you reach "Depression" you have given up all hope, and eliminated all of your options and you feel powerless over your circumstances. Phrases associated with depression are: "Nothing matters so why bother?" "What's the point?" "No matter what I do it doesn't matter." Depression is the feeling of hopelessness, helplessness, and apathy. When a person has reached the stage of depression, it means they have given up the fight. They no longer want to argue, bicker, justify, defend, or build a case for their condition. They have expressed their anger, explored their options, quit trying to bargain, and succumbed to extreme despondency. Depression, however, is not the end of the line. It is, just like

the other conditions, a temporary phase that also passes with time. When depression is fully experienced then the light of “Acceptance” can guide the way.

- **Acceptance** - is the state of embracing the new present reality with a good attitude. When you shift from depression to acceptance you acknowledge and come to terms with the truth of the situation. Acceptance is about fully releasing the expectations from the past, embracing the present, and inviting the future to lead the way. Phrases associated with Acceptance are: "It's going to be okay," "I can handle this," "I can only do the best I can, and then turn the rest over." "There is probably something for me to learn from all of this." Acceptance means that you have come to terms with the change you are facing, be it small, life altering, or terminal. With Acceptance comes peace of mind and spirit.

I have always seen a direct parallel between the process of managing change and dealing with grief. After all, we humans don't like losing anything. We don't like being out of control. We also don't like the unpredictable unknown. When you experience a change process that was uninvited you are losing what you knew; you are clearly not in control, and you are faced with a big unknown: the future. You can never be totally certain of the future, however, you usually assume that unless informed to the contrary, you will wake up in the morning, in the place where you went to sleep. You will have the same family members around you. You will go to the same job, see the same people, and have the same compensation that you have had. When information about a change upsets part or all of that scenario there is a degree of grief that you experience and with that

grief come the five stages Dr. Kubler-Ross outlined based on years of observing terminally ill patients and their families face death. She didn't invent those stages, she observed her patients over time, and formulated her model based on her observations of consistent behaviors.

When dealing with change you need to monitor your reactions to what is happening in the moment because change happens in phases. As each part of you digests, processes, and integrates the information, there is the next wave of change that washes over you. Those phases are: psychological, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and engagement.

### **The Phases of Change**

The first phase is when the information regarding the change is delivered. That information is absorbed and processed **psychologically**. You discover that something has changed in some way on some level and your reaction is to immediately consider certain questions: The questions that you ask yourself internally are:

- What does this mean?
- How will this impact my life?
- What will be changed?
- What must I do?
- Who should I tell?

When you reflect on these questions you formulate a relationship to the change process. You shift from “denial” to reality and start to examine what this change really means to your life. Questioning and self-reflection are very important to the process of managing change.

The second phase involves your reactions to the information. For most people there is an **emotional** component that surfaces either consciously or unconsciously. The questions that you ponder are:

- How do I feel about the information I have received?
- How will this impact my ability to live as I have in the past?
- How do I feel about that?
- How does this information affect who I am?
- How do I feel about that?
- How does this information influence what I am able to do?
- How do I feel about that?
- Does this information affect how I am perceived?

When you take time to reflect on what is happening and how it affects you, you assess what is happening inside you in relationship to what is happening externally. This is important because your awareness of the impact of change helps you sort out the various phases and to understand your reactions.

The third phase involves questioning the validity of the information you have received. The **intellectual** part of you starts to look for refuge in

inaccuracies or credibility issues to disprove the information you have received.

Questions your mind will naturally consider are:

- Do I believe what I hear?
- Can I trust the source of the information?
- Do I need to conduct my own research?
- Who can I reach out to for support?

The fourth phase for many people involves a **spiritual** component. This involves reaching out to a higher source or energy, depending on personal beliefs and religion, and requesting guidance and direction, relief of pain and suffering, and peace of mind knowing that you are not alone in this process. The thought process is:

- This cannot be happening to me.
- Why is this happening to me?
- What have I done to deserve this?
- Is God punishing me?
- Am I supposed to learn something from this? If so, what is the lesson?

The fifth phase is **engagement**. This is when you move into action. The problem solver in you asks the questions:

- What can I do?
- What must I do?
- What should I **NOT** do?

- What should I ask others to do on my behalf?
- What steps must be taken?
- Who should be the ones taking those steps?

Clara had one long-term varicose vein left over from the birth of her son. It wasn't really painful, but it looked awful and it irritated her. One day she thought she might consult with a doctor and find out if something could be done. The doctor's response was affirmative: simple, easy, inexpensive, and only ten days recovery time to make this irritation go away forever. Clara was delighted and scheduled the surgery. The procedure was simple and ten days after, when she was supposed to resume her normal life, Clara experienced an excruciating pain in the leg that had the surgery. She was doubled over with pain. Every time she bent her leg the electric shock waves that she felt terrified her. She called her doctor who explained it as nerves in her leg that had been severed during the procedure. She went to see a relief doctor when her surgeon was out of the country who gave her a shot for pain and four new pain medications. She dutifully took the pills, but intuitively Clara knew something was wrong. She called her doctor and scheduled an appointment immediately upon his return.

When Clara saw her doctor, she showed him the blood clot that had developed on the outside of her leg. The doctor agreed to remove it and with some Novocain he proceeded to remove the clot. To his amazement he found a guide wire that had been inserted during surgery twenty days earlier to guide the laser in the vein ablation. The doctor, the nurses, and Clara were all shocked

to see this 1.5-meterlong tube being extracted from Clara's leg. Clara was delighted to discover the culprit of all her pain and suffering, little did she know that this moment was to change her life. Immediately a team of doctors, safety specialists, crisis managers descended upon her and asked if she would agree to an ultra sound and an X-ray. She complied. The next day she was asked to return to the hospital and told that she had "Deep Vein Thrombosis" (DVT) and she had to stay in bed, cancel all of her activities, and start giving herself blood-thinner shots twice a day in her stomach until further notice. Clara couldn't believe what was happening to her. The hospital then started insinuating that because of her age and her rigorous travel schedule she most likely already had the thrombosis before the surgery; they inferred that the guide wire left in her leg for twenty days was not the cause of her DVT, but perhaps the blessing that illuminated her hidden issue. They then asked her to meet with an oncologist who said, "If you have cancer, it will throw off a blood clot. You don't mind if you have a pap smear and a mammogram to determine if you have cancer?" Clara complied as the good patient she was only to discover an abnormal mammogram. Next step: breast biopsy. In addition to the biopsy, an Electroencephalogram (EKG), an extensive lung exam, a heart exam, CAT Scan (CT) with a colorful liquid coursing through her veins. The good news: Clara did not have cancer, nor did she have a pulmonary embolism; she didn't have a heart condition, or a lung condition. What she had was DVT caused by the guide wire that was left in her leg for 20 days. Clara experienced dramatic change in a very short period of time. The chronology of facts looks fairly simple on paper, but imagine being Clara. Her expectation was for her life to be back to normal after ten days, when her life, in fact, suddenly was suspended and put on "Hold" indefinitely.

The information delivery came at Clara at several key points.

- You have nerve damage from the surgery
- You have a blood clot
- You have a guide wire that was left in your leg during surgery
- You have Deep Vein Thrombosis
- You need to be on blood thinners indefinitely
- You cannot travel or do anything until further notice
- You may have had this for a long period
- You may have cancer
- You may have a pulmonary embolism
- You need a biopsy

Each time she received new information she had to process it:

psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and then take action steps with engagement. In addition, she was transiting her own reactions to the information. Initially, she is in “Denial” and her thoughts are: “There must be a mistake or a misdiagnosis. I feel fine! There’s no problem. They are exaggerating about my condition. This can’t be true! I feel great!”

Clara’s psychological questions at this point...

- What does this mean to me?
- How will this impact my life?
- What will have to change?
- What must I do?
- Who should I tell?



After she deals with the first wave of change, she dives into the next wave, “Anger.” Her thoughts are, “Why me? This isn’t fair! How did this happen to me? What did I do to deserve this? Who is to blame? Who turned my world upside down?”

Clara’s emotional questions at this point...

- How do I feel about the information I have received?
- How will this impact my ability to live as I have in the past?
- How do I feel about that?
- How does this information affect who I am?
- How do I feel about that?
- How does this information influence what I am able to do?
- How do I feel about that?
- Does this information affect how I am perceived?

After she deals with the second wave of change, Clara dives into the next wave, “Bargaining.” Her thoughts are, “Just let me have my life back! I’ll do whatever it takes to get my life back the way it was. I will be the very best patient there is, if only I can be healthy again.”

Clara’s intellectual questions at this point...

- Do I believe what I hear?
- Can I trust the source of the information?
- Do I need to conduct my own research?
- Who can I reach out to for support?

After she deals with the third wave of change, Clara dives into the next wave, “Depression.” Her thoughts are, “Nothing matters so why bother trying? What's the point? No matter what I do, there is the next wave of information that hits me and knocks me down. I am not in control of my life.”

Clara’s spiritual questions at this point...

- Why is this happening to me?
- What have I done to deserve this?
- Is God punishing me?
- Am I supposed to learn something from this?
- If so, what is the lesson?

After she deals with the fourth wave of change, Clara dives into the next wave, “Acceptance.” Her thoughts are, “It's going to be okay, I have lots of support. I can deal with this. I can only do my best, and let God do the rest. I can pray and stop worrying.” “There is something for me to learn from all of this, and that will be revealed to me at some point.”

Clara’s engagement questions at this point...

- What can I do?
- What must I do?
- What should I **NOT** do?
- What should I ask others to do on my behalf?
- What steps must be taken?
- Who should be the ones taking those steps?

As you track with Clara through her medical crisis change process, ask yourself if you have ever experienced something like this. Your change process might not be related to the field of medicine, it can be anything related to unexpected change. Was your process similar? Were the steps in your process parallel? What did you learn from it? What would you make sure to put in your “backpack” to include in your “Lifeboat Drill? As stated in *If Life is a Game, These are the Rules*, chapter four, if you learn something from everything that happens to you, then the lessons haven’t been wasted. If you don’t learn something, then you are destined to repeat the same lessons, over and over again until you finally get them.

Reflect for a few moments on those “Change Lessons” that you have been given. Have you learned from them? Have they contributed to your life? Have they helped you grow through overcoming adversity? Write down your discoveries because this is what the change is here to teach you.

## Chapter 3

### Stress is a Wake-up call

“Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens.”

**Kahlil Gibran**

This wave of change that you are experiencing right now might actually be a powerful “Awakening” to you from you in the helicopter of your life. Imagine that there is a part of you that exists outside of day-to-day activities. Consider that a “knowing” part of you is wise and can see the past, the present, and even have a glimpse in to the future because it resides in a helicopter high above daily activities. The perspective of this wise part of you is different because it can witness the continuity of the passage of time. Imagine that when you become incredibly stressed, it is the higher or helicopter-self waking up your everyday-self to the fact that it is time to make a an intentional change. Contemplate the thought that the helicopter-self does whatever it must do to awaken the everyday-self to what must happen for your overall well-being. If you don’t heed the whispers, then the helicopter-self will start to nudge you. If you ignore the nudges, then the helicopter-self will do whatever it needs to do to get your attention. If you turn a blind eye to the wake-up call, it will become so persistent, growing louder and louder until it, like the wave of change, knocks you down, so you must pay attention. You get to choose, notice the clues and make the change voluntarily, or the wave will make the change for you without your permission or consent.

## **Dealing with Stress**

The waves of change can cause stress. If you know nothing about stress, it can wreak havoc with your health, create a myriad of symptoms, and seriously affect your well-being. Since each person is unique, the degree of stress that each of us can manage varies from person to person. Where one person thrives on stress, another buckles under at the very thought of it. Therefore, the process of managing stress becomes an individual concern.

Most of us were never educated about stress... what causes it, how to recognize it, and what to do to alleviate it. Stress was never part of our school curriculum in elementary school, in gymnasium, or at university. Stress was never deemed important enough to include as part of the syllabus of coping with daily living, however, we live in an extremely demanding world that can be very stressful, especially when multiple high priority requests simultaneously require your attention. When you feel overwhelmed and unable to cope, you know that stress has taken control of your life. Here are the questions to answer on a separate piece of paper:

- What moments are stressful for you?
- When and where do you experience stress?
- Do you experience stress around certain people?
- What are the signs or symptoms that you notice?
- Are the times and places consistent?
- Do you notice stress before it becomes an issue?
- How do you monitor stress when it becomes a concern?
- How do you manage stress when it has spiraled out of control?

- What are the negative effects of stress in your life?
- Do you do things to reduce the stress or tolerate it?

Learn to recognize your own body signals, physical and behavioral responses that provide you with warning signals and wake up notices. These are the gauges on your "dashboard" that give your information about your "motor." When these warning signals indicate that something is not right, or is not functioning at optimum performance, you need to heed the warnings rather than taking Ibuprofen for pain or having another cup of coffee for energy. Below are some typical body warning signals.

Highlight the ones that you experience on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Which are the ones that only show up under pressure? Perhaps you have other symptoms that are not listed here, if you do, write them down.

Pain in the neck	Pain	Losing temper/Irritability
Headache	Becoming hyper	Shortness of breath
Tight shoulders	Eating disorders	Nausea/Stomachache
Shallow breathing	Lower back pain	Perspiring
Dry mouth	Fatigue	Catching your breath
Sleeplessness	Shaky knees	Excessive smoking
Constipation	Neck pain	Binge drinking and/or eating
Grinding teeth	Clenched jaw	Being overly Judgmental
Racing thoughts	Inability to focus	Nail biting or cheek biting

## **Stress Symptoms**

In case you hadn't noticed, or you thought stress symptoms were "normal," the following clues indicate that you are out of balance, and not addressing the stress that you are experiencing. Take note of the ones that are present in your life.

- Inability to concentrate
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Feeling unable to cope
- Low self-esteem
- High blood pressure
- Nervous tics or muscle spasms
- Indigestion
- Breathlessness
- Increased dependence on alcohol
- Irritation with little things
- Nail biting
- Avoidance of social situations
- Withdrawal at work
- Headaches
- Loss of sleep
- Loss of appetite, Increase in appetite
- Memory loss
- Reduced sexual drive
- Loss of hair

- Weakened immune system

Serious results of stress can cause obesity, irritability, and give you ulcers. Specifically with men, it can cause a decrease in testosterone production, and with women, it can cause irregularities with menstrual cycle. With both genders, it can cause episodes of depression.

Stress is often related to Control. When you feel overwhelmed, you feel trapped and unable to consider or imagine options. When this happens, you feel completely alone and unable to reach out for support. Therefore, it is best to notice the stress signals before they overtake your capable self and render you unable to manage your circumstances. When you become aware of your stress “alarms” you will be required to make a change. If you don’t initiate the change voluntarily, the waves of change will engage and take over.

### **Stress Checkpoints**

There are four options from which to choose when dealing with the reality of stress. The good news is that these are your four options, and the bad news is that there are only four options. You can...

1. Change or eliminate the stressful **item** in your life. (If you feel you cannot eliminate the stressful option, then you must consider option #2).
2. Change your **attitude** regarding the stressful item. (If you cannot change your attitude regarding the stressful option, then you must consider option #3).



3. Change your **response** to the stressful item. (If you cannot change your response regarding the stressful option, then you are left with only option #4.

4. Manage the stress that comes with your **reaction** to the stressful item.

This is about practicing stress-reducing techniques to help you cope with those elements in your life that you cannot change.

### **1. Change the Stressful Item**

Take one question at a time and answer these questions on a separate piece of paper.

- Do you know what is causing your stress?
- If you know what causes it, write it down.
- Can you reduce the frequency of the stress?
- Can you shorten the length of exposure?
- Can you avoid the situation altogether?
- If the stress is caused by a person, can you avoid him/her?
- Can you eliminate the cause of the stress?

If the answer is, “No” to eliminating the stressful item, then proceed to “Option #2.”

## **Trent's Stress**

Trent's six-year old daughter, Lila screamed constantly. This created a lot of stress for the entire family. Everyone complained about her upsetting the environment and ruining the harmony of family life. He was at a loss about what to do. He didn't want to stifle Lila's self-expression, however, he knew some action had to be taken. The levels of stress kept growing until one day he called me and said, "I am at the end of my rope and don't know what to do." We had a coaching session in which he started to laugh as a streak of insight flashed across his mind, he said, "If I were working at the airport, I would have those huge headphones that cancel out noise. That's it! I must get a set!" He created a large hook by the front door to hang his yellow noise-cancelling headset used at the airport by ground traffic directors that he located on the Internet. The headset created such a reaction in the family that a meeting was called. Lila asked, "Daddy, why do you have such big ears?" His response was, "So that you can scream as much as you want and I won't get a headache." Other family members requested their own headsets. He said he would order a set for everyone except Lila immediately. The headphone exercise lasted for three days. When there was no reaction to her screaming Lila stopped screaming. The other children never had any need to receive their headphones, and the order was cancelled. The problem went away and the yellow headphones have their place at the front door. Whenever the noise of four children becomes overwhelming to Trent, he only needs to go to the front door and put the yellow headphones on his head, and he is again in a state of tranquility.

## 2. Change Your Attitude

If you cannot eliminate the item that is the source of your stress, the second option is for you to change your **attitude** regarding the source of the stress. For instance, if the source of the stress is your mother, and you cannot eliminate her and you cannot change her, then perhaps an attitude adjustment on your part is in order.

- Can you find some humor in the situation?
- Can you open your heart and feel compassion for her?
- Can you make your exposure limited and focused on positive aspects that enable you to reduce or eliminate the stress? For example, can you keep the conversation focused on topics that are not stressful?
- Can you take charge of the situation and redirect activities that are more fun and nurturing for both of you?

### Victoria's commute

Victoria commuted to work and it drained her of energy to sit in traffic every day. She reviewed her alternatives and it looked hopeless. She couldn't move her home for a variety of reasons. She loved her job so leaving wasn't an option either. She felt trapped in the unending traffic day after day. She had to find a change in herself that she was willing to adopt and commit to. After much soul searching she said, "I must change my attitude about the commute." When I asked her what was necessary for that to happen, she replied, "I have to make the time in the car exciting and compelling, so I am not frustrated and depressed. I probed for her options and she sparked, "I could listen to all the E-books that I

have never found time to read!" Her face brightened and she felt relieved. It was a solution that adjusted her attitude and made her rise to the surface of her life. She saw a solution that was not apparent to her previously and she "owned" the wave that turned her commute back into a ripple.

### **3. Change Your Response**

If you cannot change the item or your attitude regarding the source of your stress, the third option is for you to change your response to the source of the stress. For instance, if your ex-partner makes you want to scream, then perhaps you want to consider singing instead of screaming. Releasing the energy that is kept in check regarding the stressful item is very important to taking back the power.

- Can you take back the power over your reactions?
- What will it take for you to release the emotional charge?
- Are you able to "aikido" the energy into creativity?
- Could you have a conversation with yourself about the power this situation has over you and what you want to do to alter your response?

### **Arguing For Your Limitations**

If you find yourself answering, "Yeah-but, I cannot eliminate the stressful item; nor can I change my attitude about him/her; I also cannot change my response because so many years have ingrained my reactions." Then you may be arguing for your limitations. Every time you hear yourself saying, "I can't because..." you are telling the universe that this is your plight in life, and that you

have no choice but to suffer. You are affirming the fact that you have no choice and no power. You are declaring that you are stuck with the situation that is causing you stress and there is no way out of it. If this is the case, then you have only one choice left and that is to manage the stress the best way that you can.

### **Nicole's Mother**

Nicole had an extremely negative mother. Every time she saw her she complained about her life. She dragged on and on about how awful things were and how no one loved her. Her refrain was exhausting and Nicole dreaded contact with her. Every time she had to see her Nicole felt like she sucked the life out of her and it took her days to get back on track with her life.

In a conversation with Nicole, we addressed what she could do about her mother. She couldn't get rid of her, nor could she refuse to ever see her again. She was unable to change her attitude about her mother, but she brightened when I mentioned changing her response. "You mean changing the way I react to her?" she said curiously. "Yes," I replied, "You get to choose and you also have the power to change your response to her stimulus. How would you like it to be?" I asked. She thought and reflected and then her eyes started to sparkle, "I want to open my heart to her and know that she will never change, and it isn't my fault. I want to let her be and stop trying to change her." I probed, "Really? Do you believe that you can do this?" "It's worth a try, but I think I have reached the stage when I am ready to finally let go and let her make her own choices." I queried to clarity, "Are you sure?" Yes," she said with certainty, "It's time for me to let her be her and let myself live my own life. I am an adult and so is she. I will

limit my time with her to 1 hour per visit and say good-bye with love and support. That will work for me!" Nicole chose to change her reaction to her mother that day and things were never the same after that.

#### **4. Manage the Stress**

Your last option is managing the stress. If you cannot change your stressful situation, and you cannot change your attitude or your reaction to the situation, then the last possibility is to actively practice stress reduction exercises on a daily basis. Choose the ones you are willing to implement and start today to manage and reduce your stress. There are a variety of ways to reduce stress, but notice if you start hearing that familiar, "Yeah-but I tried that and it didn't work; I don't have time for that! It sounds good, but I would never actually do that." If you hear sentences like that in your head it means that you are still arguing for your limitations. Remember that this level of stress is a "Wake-up Call" from the helicopter-you to the everyday-you. If you are not paying attention, the helicopter-you might have to do something drastic to get your attention.

When my daughter was four years old, I was playing with her at the beach. She looked at me and said, "Let's run Mommy!" Without thinking, I burst into a run down the beach forgetting to stretch and warm up. The next day I was literally paralyzed. My body had seized up and I couldn't move. I spent the next ten days in the hospital looking at the ceiling asking myself, "What am I supposed to learn from this?" The lesson was crystal clear, slow down, take care, reduce the stress level, and stop pressuring yourself to get everything done right now! I

learned that if I didn't heed the subtle messages of the helicopter-me, it would need to literally knock me down to get my attention. After I discovered what I was trying to teach myself, I made some changes and regained full functionality of my body.

The suggestions and techniques below will not sound familiar to you. You arrived at this situation because you have certain behavior patterns that are producing the situation. If you want things to be different, you must change something in the scenario, otherwise you will have the same result. As Jim Rohn says, "If you keep doing what you've done, you're going to keep getting what you've got. The message is that you must make a change to your daily life for your helicopter-you to approve of your new lifestyle. The list has a wide range of opposites on it, from screaming to meditation, from bioenergetics to deep breathing. The purpose of the list is to provide you with options and choices across a broad spectrum so that you can find something on the list to commit to on a daily basis. If you refuse to commit to anything, you will most likely use food, cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs as your panacea reducing your stress for the immediate moment. Depending on what is most socially acceptable, you will calm yourself, comfort yourself, mollify your feelings, and cope with the situation at hand by temporarily anesthetizing the stressful reaction.

### **Stress Reduction Techniques**

Before you make all your choices, find time in your agenda and schedule it into time slots so that you have allocated time to manage your stress. Here is the list of potential items from which you can choose to manage your stress:

- Walking in nature
- Yoga
- Recycling center Energy release
- Physical Exercise / Energy Release
- Deep focused breathing
- Meditation
- Progressive relaxation: tensing and releasing one body part at a time
- Massage
- Sauna or whirlpool bath
- Listening to calming music or sounds in nature
- Racket sports
- Screaming into a pillow
- Crying with complete permission to “get it all out”
- Getting angry in a safe environment and letting it out
- Run or do aerobic exercise

### **More Strategies for Stress Management**

- Associate with people whom you enjoy and who support you.
- Don't let one thing (unclear) dominate you.
- Open yourself to new experiences. Try new things, new foods, and new places.
- When worries start to build up, talk to someone whom you trust.
- Lifestyle Assessment



- Take active steps to start enjoying your life.
- If you are not doing work that you love, then take steps to move in that direction, including taking classes, training, and writing down what you want ideally to do. Then inform everyone you know about your wishes and take daily steps in the direction of your dreams.
- If you are not surrounded by loving people seek out positive and supportive people who will empower you to move beyond your own concerns, worries, or fears.
- If your life isn't in balance then determine what it would take to get it in balance. Start to implement those changes one-by-one.
- Ask yourself what is lacking in your life. When you find the answer, initiate actions to include that which is lacking.
- Ask yourself what you yearn for? If there is nothing, congratulate yourself. If there is something, then find ways to incorporate it.
- If you could make one change in your life, what would it be?

### **Summary of Stress Techniques**

1. Energy release and/or physical exercise
2. Progressive relaxation
3. Countdown 10 to 1
4. Slow diaphragmatic breathing
5. Relaxation tapes
6. Quiet time/time out
7. Take a walk, run, exercise, or do yoga
8. Visual reminders that you have a choice

9. Shoulder rub or massage
10. Lifestyle assessment

### **Stress Review**

- Become aware of your stressors, and your emotional and physical “Alarm signal” reactions.
- Recognize what you can change, and start the process.
- Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stressors.
- Consider alternatives to your automatic physical reactions to stress.
- Build up your physical reserves through exercise.
- Enhance your emotional reserves (through friendships and healthy, positive relationships with colleagues and family.

Being creatures of habit we usually gravitate to what we know, to what is familiar, to what is within our control. Stress can become habit-forming. Once you wake-up and recognize your stress you can do something about it. Remember, without awareness, nothing productive can happen. Once you are aware, you can make choices and changes that enable you to deal more effectively with the waves of change.

## Chapter 4

### Overcoming Overwhelm

“The great thing is, if one can, to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions in one's "own" or "real" life. The truth is, of course, that what one regards as interruptions are precisely one's life. ”

**C.S. Lewis**

In a task-saturated world, the word “Overwhelm” has become so commonplace that its usage has shifted from a verb to a noun. Overwhelm is assumed to be the new “Normal” state of things. Overwhelm is different from fear in its personification. Overwhelm is frozen in time without the capacity to make a decision or to take any action at all. You can imagine Overwhelm boxing you in between waves that, when making contact, immediately flash freeze turning to a solid block of ice. When you are surrounded with ice you are numb, unable to feel, unable to know what you want, unable to choose or see your way clear to the appropriate next action step. Overwhelm looks like the people of Pompeii fleeing from the waves of the volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79AD, frozen in time. When Overwhelm strikes, it brings with it an avalanche of additional demands and tasks that merely exacerbate the situation.

One of the culprits that have intensified the task-saturation is the onset of technology, which added to the complex lives we used to live means the new reality can result in you constantly communicating with someone, either by texting, emailing, talking on a mobile phone, going online... connecting somehow...someway continuously. Many people experience relentless daily

overwhelm ranging from “I don’t know what to do first,” to “There is way too much for me to deal with,” to “I can’t get it done...and I don’t even know where to begin!” Pressure to live up to expectations, to succeed, achieve goals, produce results, and make a contribution build up inside until one day they are locked in the throes of overwhelm, numb to its debilitating effects on the body and the quality of life. First, let’s define some terms.

### **What is Overwhelm?**

The state of Overwhelm means that you feel helpless because you are buried beneath everything you have to do; you feel crushed and; overpowered. When you are in the state of “overwhelm,” you are inundated with concurrent demands so much so that you cannot determine what to do first since everything appears to be the same level of priority: urgent!

### **Some of the Prongs of Overwhelm**

It can be overwhelming to your emotional, physical, and mental well-being when you consider all that is going on in your life and in the world in general. In addition to the stress of daily life - family, jobs, health concerns, transportation, and finances, we also witness world events up close on TV like starvation, genocide, atrocities, massive fraud, epidemics of disease, conflict, incessant wars, and natural disasters that can occupy your consciousness, clutter your thoughts, fraying your nerves, and making you feel disconnected, emotional, and absentminded. Information overload from a variety of sources: the media, your job, email messages, phone messages, voice mail, and bills, can burden you. It may even appear as if there is a leadership and moral crisis in the

world and you, as one person in a small country have difficulty trusting those in charge to do the right thing. You must filter through tremendous amounts of information much of which is unpleasant. You experience overwhelm because you have no filter or cautionary system. Without a filtering system, the onslaught of information bombards you from all directions, simultaneously.

In addition, you may also feel overly responsible: since it appears that it is up to you to take care of everyone including aging parents, ailing siblings, unemployed young adults, and dependent children; all who rely on you to ensure their well-being... because either no one else will or can take care of these needy individuals.

Ambition may lead to burnout, and performance anxiety stems from the fear that not doing more may cost you your job when cutbacks are mandated. Chronic overwhelm is one of the major causes of anxiety disorders. Overwhelm takes a toll on your nervous, immune, and hormonal systems, and when left unattended will produce cycles of anxiety, fatigue, and temporary despair. People on this kind of overload are more susceptible to disease as well as aging faster.

## **Technology**

Once upon a time, someone suggested that technology was supposed to make life easier, and give us more free time. In a perfect world, technology actually can do that. The pace of the world has literally accelerated before our eyes. Consider the impact of this acceleration.

For example, when radio was invented it took 38 years to reach 50 million users. When TV was invented it took 13 years to reach 50 million users. The Internet took four years, the iPod took three years, and Facebook took only nine months to reach 100 million users. iPod application downloads reached one billion in only nine months. What does all this mean? It means that change is speeding up and it is not arithmetic, geometric, or exponential, it is viral.

Viral change is when a small set of behaviors initiated by a small number of people and communicated to their networks create massive tipping points, translating into new behaviors. Viral change is about creating a deliberate epidemic of thought and behavior. The challenge is dealing with an imperfect world and the side effects that accompany technology, such as: viruses, worms, spam, forgotten passwords, identity theft, frustrated customers, and unfriendly return policies. The challenge includes dealing with expectations that are repeatedly and consistently unfulfilled. You may have heard, "On TV it said, 'Plug and play. I plugged it in, so why doesn't it play?'" When a promise is made it sets an expectation in place. When an expectation has been established it generates hope in the person who anticipates something positive tangibly improving their circumstances. When a promise doesn't deliver it creates disappointment, dissatisfaction, and even disillusionment.

The good news is that we are now wireless... the bad news is that you can easily work around the clock. The good news is that we can communicate ubiquitously 24/7, and the bad news is that we often don't know when to stop...how to relax...how to stop doing and simply "Be." Forty-eight percent of the population is so stressed that it requires sleeping aids to wind down and

sleep. With higher expectations, compressed time, and less resources the pressure becomes even more increased. There are no longer extended periods of time in which to sort, process data, reflect on interactions, and determine the best course of action.

Even a simple choice like buying new computer software can create stress. Thoughts like, “Do I have enough time to learn how to use it? Do I have enough experience to understand the directions? Do I have time enough to convert my old data? Do I have enough memory? Do I know anyone who can help me with this? Will they have time for me? Will our schedules coincide? Will I waste my money buying it and having it sit on the shelf?” A simple decision, when postponed can resurface frequently with the same mental conversation looping in circles.

With the world speeding up, the volume of change accelerates as well. Not only do we have more change than ever before, the speed of change is occurring at what seems like the speed of light. There are times when even taking a deep breath feels like a luxury. Today a client said, “I know I should prioritize, but everything seems like a top priority. There is so much to be done, no one to delegate to, and I feel alone and completely overwhelmed.” This is not an isolated incident, but more and more it becomes the norm for the average person.

Stephanie skyped me and said, “I need to talk.” I agreed to clear some time and we skyped between our two continents. The overwhelm sounded like this. “I don’t know what to do first. I don’t know what is going on with Maria. She won’t

talk to me and I don't know what I did wrong. She is supposed to have a key role in two upcoming projects and if she won't talk to me, I don't know how can we work together? Then there are the computer issues. Everything is in breakdown. At this moment there is not one electronic device that I can rely on for accuracy, functionality, and reliability. I need all of my computers and my mobile phone to become functional and interfaced immediately. I don't have the office staff here because they are either sick, in school, or attending a funeral. I have to complete the documentation for two clients who are waiting for notes from me and I cannot get them done because of the computer issues. I am afraid that if I enter the data, the computer will lose it, and I cannot print it out because we are out of ink! I have one employee who is expected within the hour. I cannot work with her because the new computer guy is arriving. I've never met with him, and I can't meet with him today because I have a client meeting at the same time that he will be here. Nothing could be rescheduled, and no one could come at different times. I have to get this training completed before I leave next Friday to go on holiday with a new man whom I am considering having a relationship; maybe I should cancel his trip? I have to take back all the projects from the employee, Mary, who just quit because she is changing her career direction. I heard last night that two people have issues with my leadership and that really hurt my feelings. I must interview people to be on the new team project for the Fall. What makes me the most upset is that my mobile phone lost all of the contacts and I feel like I cannot trust my phone anymore. On top of all that I haven't been to the gym in a week, I have to go out and buy food for the house, I have to pay bills, and taxes are due. The Internet is down in one of the offices, the old computer guy installed a system that isn't compatible with our new software



and it seems to have a virus! The Emails arrive with the text from one person and are “From” a totally unrelated person. I can’t synch up my new mobile phone with my computer! Everything has to be done now and there is only one me! I just can’t get it all done; I am out of vitamin supplements, and it’s the hottest day of the year!”

I could hear the sound of overwhelm in Stephanie’s voice. She is dealing with Level 5 Plunging Waves. They keep coming at her in the form of computer issues, syncing her phone, breakdown with her address book, employees not showing up for work, flair ups with people close to her, and convergent cascading concerns, from food, to getting to the gym, to double-bookings, and time constraints in a compressed and demanding situation.

The mind doesn’t organize various tasks but rather holds them all in a container with no filing. My job was to invite the spaghetti of her mind to download and capture it as it flowed. I immediately separated her download into categories: technology, personnel, office, and miscellaneous. When her random thoughts became sorted and organized Stephanie could see that there weren’t 25 items, but rather four groups of specific concerns. At that point she could see the possibility of delegating each category to a competent person to resolve specific issues. She began to see the light at the end of the tunnel and that light illuminated the situation. This is a situation in which having a coach helped clarify, categorize, and unfreeze the overwhelm. After our conversation, Stephanie was launched in motion because she became senior to the tasks that

had previously paralyzed her. Part of Stephanie's challenge was that she has high standards and is a perfectionist. When things didn't go as planned she becomes upset, frustrated, and extremely irritated because of her high expectations, because she feels out of control, and because her self-esteem is linked to her ability to produce results. She saw all of the issues as her personal reflection highlighting her ineffectiveness as a leader and consequently, she blamed herself. On top of all the breakdowns in her office, she was also having a "Negattack!"

One simple answer is for Stephanie to adjust her expectations. That is good advice, but before she adjusts anything, she must notice that her happiness quotient is at risk. Stephanie must discover that she is not as joyful as she once was. Then rather than blaming her mood on random tasks and adverse circumstances, she could look a little deeper at the factors lurking behind the irritations, frustrations, and expectations.

If you find yourself in overwhelming circumstances, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have a high need for control?
2. Do you long for a time when everything will be working?
3. Do you let little things upset you?
4. Do you attach your joy factor to your level of accomplishment?
5. Do you wish problems could be resolved easily and quickly?
6. Do you let the "To Do's" weigh you down?

## 7. Do you let the tasks and projects rob you of your joy?

If you answered, "Yes" to three or more of the above questions, you could be setting yourself up for a series of bad days. There is a way out of this dilemma, but it requires some due diligence. If you are ready to take the steps to move out of overwhelm, then read on, because hope is on the way.

1. If you notice that your joy factor is suffering, ask yourself, "When was I last in a good mood?" Think back to the last time you felt joyful. Track forward and notice what happened in the meantime to cause you to lose your good mood.

2. Ask yourself what or who robbed you of your joy? Take a minute and jot down all the joy robbers without judging their validity.

3. Joy robbers are things that steal your happiness. They zap you of your natural mirthfulness. When you become aware of what or who steals your lightheartedness, then you can start to address those items rather than just be left feeling sad, lonely, or sluggish. If you keep a journal, you can notice more easily when this happens. Consider taking each instance where you were feeling great and then suddenly everything changed to a kind of "Flat" feeling and noting what happened. Then ask yourself, "What can I do about this?" What could I do differently next time? Determine some action steps; then take note of them. This reflection and action should lighten your mood considerably. The shift from being the recipient of a joy-robbing moment, to understanding what happened,

and then to focus on a solution moves you toward hope. Hope is much brighter in the energy wheel of color than being zapped of energy.

4. If you can't do anything about the item, and you can't think of anyone who can help you, consider releasing the item and letting it go. Your choices are: 1) do it yourself, 2) delegate it to someone who can do it better than you can, 3) release it as a task altogether, 4) be a martyr and suffer. The suffering is the bind between pressuring yourself to get it done, yet not choosing items 1, 2, or 3. It is like being stuck in the limbo of pressure, on the one hand, and indecision on the other hand.

5. Take each day as a moment in time. Whether your definition of a day is 4, 6, 8, or 10 hours, remember that it is a finite amount of time. Each day has a beginning, middle, and an end, and you can only get so much done in a day. Make sure that you start each day with a "To Do" list to focus you. Check your list three times to make sure that you are on track with your tasks. At the end of the day notice what you accomplished and take note of the success or the lessons to apply to the next day. For instance, if you noticed that interruptions are your nemesis, set yourself up to have some time away from people who could distract or disturb you. If you look at each day as an opportunity to improve your effectiveness, then you will grow through the self-reflection, analysis of time and tasks, and the implementation of correction. If you don't, you might be guilty of insanity...doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results!

6. Invite yourself to set reasonable and attainable goals that you can, in fact, accomplish. Make sure your list is realistic given the appointments and commitments that you have in your calendar.
7. Focus your energy on causing those goals you have set for yourself. The world is full of distractions. If you are a procrastinator, you don't need much help since you will create your own. The challenge is to focus your attention and your energy on that which you said you wanted. Learn to say, "I am sorry but I am on a deadline. I really need to focus right now. Could we talk later?" This is a polite way to manage a boundary and is essential if you are to get anything done.
8. Each evening acknowledge all progress towards your goals, even if today you have not achieved the ultimate realization of your tasks. Acknowledgment of progress sends a message to your subconscious, "Progress counts!" Then realistically set new "To Do's" for the next day to feed your enthusiasm and continue the progress or to finally accomplish the task. Managing yourself is what builds self-esteem and self-trust. If you can take charge of your ability to accomplish your tasks then you will feel more capable and competent.
9. Ask for support, assistance, and guidance, from all possible sources in your life. As my father used to say, "You can't refuse unless you've been asked." People can always turn your request down, but they can't say, "No," unless you have asked for something. Many people have a conversation in their head playing both roles, and then reject their wish never inviting the other person to participate in the

conversation. They never give them the option to choose. Always ask for help, you will be surprised how often people will lend a hand.

10. Validate all progress, movement, and effort expended. Then, let go! What you can't get done will not really matter so much in the long run. No tasks left undone are worth berating yourself over. Your relationship with yourself is more important than any "To Do." Let go of the need to be perfect, and let yourself be the person that you are!

All of this overwhelm is associated with confronting the waves of change. The big challenge in coping and managing change is to literally seize the moment. When you're frozen in time you can't even consider seizing the moment, because the moment has literally seized you! When I say, "Seize the moment" I mean get hold of yourself, snap out of disbelief, and start to address what the change means to you and what you want to do about it. Seizing the moment means that you get a grip on yourself, your circumstances, and the various options that are available. It means that you take hold, get your footing, and move into an offensive posture rather than the defensive one you have been thrust into. It means that you take time for your thoughts, your feelings, and you plan for the future. When you "seize the moment" you shift your energy from disbelief, denial, anger, bargaining, and depression to acceptance, acknowledgment, choice, strategy and action.

You need to ask what impact this change will have on your life. It means allowing the impact of the change to bring up feelings related to the change. It

means mapping out scenarios with various action plans. For example, try on different scenarios, “If this happens, then what does that mean to my family and me?” Taking action means that you are no longer at the effect of the situation, because you have shifted your energy into being at cause. This process can be undertaken by an individual, a team, an organization, a city, and even a country. Taking charge is imperative if change is to be managed rather than merely reacted to.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself**

Managing change requires that you ask yourself these questions:

1. What is the situation I find myself in?
2. What information can I gather about it?
3. Who can I ask to find out more information?
4. What is the purpose of this process?
5. What are the potential risks?
6. What are the potential benefits?
7. What are my options?
8. Who are my allies?
9. Who are my opponents?
10. Will changing my attitude have any effect on my situation?
12. What is a realistic time frame for this situation?
13. What are the potential consequences?
14. What is my ideal desired outcome considering the circumstances?
15. What is the best sequence of actions for me to take?

After you write out the answers to those questions, you will feel more grounded, focused, and capable of initiating action.

In addition, here are some coping mechanisms to consider when you “Seize the moment” for yourself.

1. Seek information and guidance
2. Share concerns with others and seek their support
3. Redefine the crisis into an opportunity
4. Accept the situation as yours to deal with whether you like it or not!
5. Review alternatives and consequences and determine the best course of action that causes the least upset and trauma and causes the best possible outcome.
7. Express, release and vent your feelings to reduce stress
8. Get outside of yourself and focus on helping someone that is less fortunate (this removes “self-pity”) and re-directs your energy to helping someone that may not be able to help themselves.
9. Technology may assist the speed of the transition, but it is ultimately up to you to drive the process rather than letting it drive you.  
Technology can serve you if you don’t become a slave to it.

Remember, the process is similar whether you are fired, or your community was devastated by a tornado; managing change means that you become focused, assess the situation, and take charge. It requires leadership, decisiveness, and clarity of thought. When you understand the process of



managing change, you can better manage yourself in the midst of extrinsic change.

The future rapidly becomes the past once you have managed the transition at hand. It is up to you to rise above your circumstances and take charge of yourself, the situation, and what must be done.

## Chapter 5

### Indecision, Negativity, and Resistance

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”

**Victor Frankl**

The waves of change may be lapping over you at this very moment in time, and the manner in which you respond to them will dictate your overall condition for the upcoming future. Change is a catalyst for negativity. If you have successfully dealt with the negativity within you, then when the waves of change appear they won't throw you to the bottom of the ocean floor. This is not to say that you should try to be super positive about the unanticipated change, if making light of it isn't your truth. There is a fine line between complaining and sharing the truth of your experience. Just like there is a fine line between being overly positive in circumstances that appear horrendous. What you want to strive for is a way to share your experience, being honest, without being excessively negative or positive. It is always preferable to look for some potential positive outcome in all situations rather than feeling perpetually victimized by the waves of change.

How you previously defined yourself has probably started to shift. The waves of change came at you, changed you in a variety of ways, however, the process happened so quickly that you are hardly aware of how you are different from the “old” you. You may not even be sure that you know who you are now

after all the changes have occurred. You may find yourself disconnected, observing, or enmeshed in your own secret world of negativity regarding what has happened to you. Becoming aware of your thoughts is critical to focusing them in the direction that causes functionality, productivity, and a positive outcome.

### **Murphy's Law**

"If anything can go wrong, it will!" has been attributed to a man named Capt. Edward A. Murphy, an engineer working on Air Force Project MX981, designed to see how much sudden deceleration a person can stand in a crash.

One day, after finding that a transducer was wired wrong, he cursed the technician responsible and said, "If there is any way to do it wrong, he'll find it!" In addition, there are many derivatives of the original law. They are:

- "If anything can go wrong, it will!"
- "Left to themselves, things tend to go from bad to worse!"
- "If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something!"
- "Nothing is as easy as it looks."
- "Everything takes longer than you think!"

When the waves of change knock you down over and over again, do you become discouraged and lean toward giving up? Do you let those waves turn your good mood into a negative one that feels picked on by life? If you do, you

might be suffering from Negaholism...a preoccupation or even an addiction to the negative aspect of circumstances. Negaholism is the separation between your essential self and your ego (your perception of your worth). The condition engages when you feel stressed or overwhelmed and something happens that triggers a hostile conversation **with yourself** whereby the ego starts attacking the self. In a situation with your spouse when you realize that you forgot to mail the taxes as you had agreed to do, you probably feel guilt, regret, remorse, and disappointment.

Expatriates who gave up a successful career to migrate to Dubai were at risk of Negattacks when the UAE economy crashed they discovered it all came crushing down upon them. If you were one of those Dubai expats, you might be tempted to beat yourself up for selling everything at home, having no fall-back plan, or for being in this situation at this time in life. If you did have a Negattack over these life changing circumstances, then the triple imprint would be in full force.

The feelings consequently lead to a Negattack. The Negattack evokes feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and the inability to perform or deliver what is requested at the time. The Negattack compounds the situation. Not only have you not done something that you promised, you did not live up to your expectations, which let others down and makes you feel guilty. The self-flagellation, exacerbates the situation and, in effect, rubs your nose in it, and makes you feel even worse. The overwhelming feeling focuses on the “disaster” that you have caused through your forgetfulness. You now engage in a

downward corkscrew globalizing the situation with conclusions like, “I never do anything right.” This adds insult to injury, and your self-esteem starts to plummet. This creates a separation within you; your essential self does something while your ego observes in disbelief.

With all these feelings comes the desire to find some relief in order to function. The inclination is to mask, suppress, or replace the feelings of insufficiency with a temporary fix or “feel good” moment (using a cigarette, a cup of coffee, something sweet, TV, shopping, a drink, a drug, chocolate, and so on) substituting a substance, an experience, or a process for the mental torment. The temporary “fix” is selected to distract from the pain of overwhelm, worthlessness, and inadequacy and to provide temporary relief. This short-term gratification eventually wears off, and the feelings of anxiety, apprehension, and fear regarding the situation eventually return. The cycle repeats itself over and over again until it becomes “normal” to you to mask the feeling with a substance, an experience, or a process. With repetition and reinforcement this cycle becomes habitual and eventually can turn into an addiction.

### **Where Does Negativity Come From?**

The roots of Negativity come from childhood. It originates from interactions with parents, caretakers, teachers, athletic coaches, and bullies who diminish, discount, and disqualify the individual’s ability and worth. When the repeated reinforcement of the negative message, “You’re not good enough, not smart enough, not attractive enough, not fast enough, not cool enough...etc” not

enough of something that is required to succeed in life locks into a person's psyche, he or she becomes a Negaholic.

### **Why Is Negativity So Addictive?**

Negattacks occur to intelligent, talented and capable people for very specific reasons. When a person has a Negattack, they engage in self-flagellation for not living up to their own expectations or standards of behavior. The critical question is, "How does being self-deprecating become addictive?" The answer lies in the phenomena of the triple imprint. Negaholism locks itself in place through what I have labeled, the triple imprint, three different and yet simultaneous impressions that lock a behavior in place, without a person ever noticing it.

A single exposure to negativity will not create a habit; two exposures to negativity will not formulate a pattern; three simultaneous negative imprints, however, repeatedly will lock in the addictive behavior pattern. The triple imprint involves: psychological, emotional, and physiological aspects that converge simultaneously.

Beating yourself up or Negaholism, drives a wedge between you and your essential self, like a virus that lies dormant and can spread. The more exposed you are to the virus, the more likely you will become infected. Negaholism is self-deprecating, self-defeating, and self-sabotaging. All of that self-negation spills onto whoever is within close proximity. "Perfectionistic" bosses create

demoralizing environments for their employees. "Constant Critics" make their partners feel worthless, unlovable, and fearful. "Never-good-enough" parents perpetuate sibling rivalry and low self-esteem in their children. Infected people unknowingly become carriers of the negativity. It is difficult to withstand the onslaught of an external "Negattack" unless you are an incredibly positive person who has developed immunity to the negativity of others, at work or at home.

Negaholism doesn't discriminate between work and home. It can and will cause the individual to obsess about everything that is wrong, has missed the mark, or can cause concern, worry, or fear. For instance, if a person notices a lump on her body, a Negaholic will immediately imagine the worst that "will" happen. In under an hour the person can be planning their funeral before they have even called the doctor to have an examination. Since most Negaholics are unaware that they have this condition, they are unconsciously afflicted and are unable to stop, except by engaging in distracting and diverting behaviors that are self-sabotaging...excessive eating, drinking alcohol, consumption of large amounts of sugar, chocolate, drugs, or charging possessions that they don't need and can't afford. All addictions are the result of the pursuit of or the avoidance of a feeling! Addictions come out of a concept or image of one's self that they are insufficient.

Insufficiency is the feeling of being unable to meet the challenges that life presents. It is never pleasant for anyone to feel insufficient. The feeling of insufficiency is rarely addressed for what it is, and is most often avoided, we pursue remedies to fill the void and alleviate the emptiness. We attack the symptom and avoid the root cause. When you become slimed by negativity, you

relinquish your power and become obsessed with the lack of what you need; whatever is external to you becomes more powerful than you are.

When an individual engages in diminishing behavior resulting in a "Negattack," a catalyst emerges. This catalyst is similar to enormous synchronic lines intersecting within the individual that activate the Triple Imprint; triggering feelings from similar earlier experiences. The Triple Imprint is so strong that it overpowers the individual.

### **The Triple Imprint**

The anatomy of the Triple Imprint looks like this; The Triple Imprint involves psychological, emotional, and physiological aspects. The psychological imprint comes from the *attention* you get from yourself and others for the behavior you exhibit. The emotional imprint comes from the *dramatic* situation and the feelings associated with the Negattack. The physiological imprint is the *chemical rush* that is released into your system from the attacking of a substandard behavior.

The psychological reinforcement occurs when people are in an environment in which positive recognition, reinforcement, and rewards are withheld. Without any possibility of positive attention, they gravitate to the only other option for attention, negative attention (since being ignored is not a viable alternative).



The emotional reinforcement comes from the drama. The protagonist and the antagonist create an internal conflict inflicted on the self from the mental berating of not living up to expectations, causing diminishment, disconnection, and tension. The drama is exciting and emotionally charged. The juxtaposition of the uncomfortable feelings caused by the anxiety coupled with the exciting feelings caused by the drama and attention contribute to the perplexity of the situation.

The physiological reinforcement comes from substances called opiate peptides that are released into your system. Opiate peptides are the negative side of positive endorphins. Opiate peptides, a string of amino acids, create a chemical rush in your system that locks in the addictive pattern. Opiate peptides stress your endocrine system, attack your immune system, and make you more susceptible to illness.

When these three systems converge, the addiction becomes fully activated. This is the reason why intelligent, creative, and powerful people become addicted to self-sabotage, diminishment, and why they unconsciously are obsessed with success or are determined to avoid failure.

## **The Opportunity**

This could be an opportunity to reexamine, redesign, and reinvent yourself into the person you've always imagined you could be. This is not to minimize where you have been on your life's journey, which has had its challenges; however, this phase of your personal evolution, if handled with awareness and choice, could be the most enlightened and successful to date. Before we embark on making the lemons in the sea of life into the lemonade that you drink on the deck of a cruise ship gently taking you out to sea, we must examine all unconscious beliefs or assumptions that you may have.

## **Lucy's Story**

Lucy had a beautiful home that she had spent seven years decorating, choosing the perfect items that would magically fit into all the little corners of her adorable cottage. It was charming, quaint, and just perfect for her. Her challenge was that she was out of touch with reality. She had been so focused on doing her dream career that she had neglected her financial obligations. Somehow she thought that everything would magically turn out. Days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, and her creditors were getting restless. The notices kept coming in the mail, but she kept telling herself that something wonderful was going to happen and rescue her situation and everything would be fine, just like in the fairy tales.

Then one day, her best friend turned to her and said, "Lucy, you're in crisis." With those four simple, yet powerful, words, time stood still for what seemed like an eternity. Lucy's life was about to dramatically change, as she

faced the truth of her situation. With her friend's support she started to move out of denial and face facts. It started with her declaring bankruptcy. Then she gradually let go of everything she had acquired throughout the previous seven years. As she sat filling out the bankruptcy papers, Negaholism had taken over and was screaming at her the reality that she was about to lose everything. There were days when she didn't know where the money would come from to even pay for food and gas. She was frightened and the fear caused all of her Negaholic tendencies to rise to the surface. She cried every day for four months, struggling to accept that her greatest fear in life, following in the footsteps of her manic-depressive father who lost everything, had finally come true. She knew that in spite of her circumstances, she had to find a way to feel good about herself.

Fed up with feeling depressed, anxious, and angry for having failed so miserably, Lucy wanted more than anything to feel happy and at peace once again, freed from the internal war zone of self-punishment. She commented, "I need to be grateful... but how can I feel grateful when I've lost everything? A part of me kept insisting that there must be something I should be grateful for. While searching for something I was grateful for, I noticed that my good health was number 1. Then I was grateful for my gifted mentors who deeply care about me, and then for the healthy meals I was eating. I was gaining momentum and the gratitude started to flow. I was grateful for gasoline in my car, for my cat, and for all the support I was receiving from my friends. I realized that my friends loved me regardless of whether I owned anything or nothing. With this insight, I discovered that I am the same person now as I was before I "lost" everything. I

started to reclaim my sense of self-worth and I saw myself from a whole new perspective.”

In an effort to reach out for a life preserver, she tells her story:

“I called my coach for a session to stabilize me financially so that I could start feeling calmer as I started the next six months. For the first time in my life, I found myself doing things I had never done before: babysitting my best friend’s 2 year-old daughter; organizing a garage sale, selling off my jewelry, photographs and a piano that no longer belonged in my life. Shortly thereafter, something quite remarkable happened. Within three days, I received three calls from individuals asking me to return to real estate and represent them.”

As her financial situation stabilized and brightened, Lucy started to ask herself difficult questions: “What is this experience supposed to teach me? What am I being asked to learn from this experience? What is the purpose of this wave of change in my life?”

Then Lucy was invited to live with loving friends who were delighted to have her become part of their family. She learned how to live with others which would never have happened if she had kept her tiny cottage for one; she also became more flexible, patient, and relaxed about life in general.

## Examining Your Beliefs and Assumptions

Depending on who you are and what you believe, when the waves of change are upon you, you might consider examining your beliefs and assumptions regarding:

- 1) Who you are **now**
- 2) What you are capable of doing **now**
- 3) What you want your life to be devoted to **now**

Lucy had to do this in order to choose the change that had washed over her life. She had to reevaluate her values and priorities then make choices that would separate the future from her past.

Things change; people change; you are changing; and the world around you is also changing.

- How do you cope with these changes?
- Do you cling to the way things used to be, “the good old days?”
- Do you reminisce, recollect, and constantly remember and remind others how things used to be?
- Do you focus on the future formulating new visions, goals, and strategies that you long to make your new reality?
- Do you learn from what happened in the past or do you forge ahead repeating the same old patterns expecting different results?

## **Changing the Game**

Changing the “old” game means to challenge accepted norms; it may mean eliminating old concepts, attitudes, or belief systems. You might even consider reexamining, redefining, and reinventing who you are and what you want in this next chapter of life. If you look closely at who you have become as a result of this change that you have successfully navigated, you could discover some answers that might surprise you.

What are your lessons at this time in your life? Have those lessons changed? Are they different from your earlier lessons? Are there lessons that keep repeating over and over again because you didn’t quite get them the first, second, or third time around? Notice your lessons, both the new ones as well as the old ones. Embrace your lessons, learn what they are here to teach you, realize that no matter what your age, there are still lessons to learn in the game of life.

## **Initial steps that people can take**

The first and most important step is to become aware and admit that you have negative tendencies, compulsive and/or addictive behaviors that take over and dictate your reality. Denial never moved anyone closer to functionality. The second step is to decide that you want to change something rather than automatically reverting to the old behavior pattern. For instance, you might say, "I want to stop procrastinating," or "I want to stop comparing myself to everyone," or "I want to stop being a workaholic and have a more balanced life!" The declaration that you want to have your life be different than it currently is

starts the process of looking for alternatives, support, and more healthy ways of functioning.

If you are going to counter balance negative tendencies, you must start noticing what you and others are doing *right*. Your focus needs to be on solutions, good news, the perfection of the situation rather than on how you have been victimized, "woe is me," or "Murphy's Law." The shift needs to be intentional and deliberate because Negaholics will easily recede back to old behaviors. You need to guard against the vortex that drags you down the Negaholic black hole. You need to focus on your blessings, not on your blunders.

If you choose to change the Negahollic tendencies, you will be much more ready to cope with change, rather than having the change act as a catalyst triggering your negative tendencies to the surface and taking over. As you are kinder to yourself you will start to enjoy your own company much more. People will want to be around you because you are fun and happy. You will start feeling hopeful and interested in others. You will notice that you are doing more random acts of kindness to others and good things will start to happen all around you. You'll start feeling better physically and you will want others to be happier as well. As opposed to a negative corkscrew of energy, you become involved in a positive spiral of unlimited possibility. Once you embrace your positive side, you open the door of sunlight, goodness, and miracles. All things are possible when you lead the way to your desired future!

Even though the power of the Triple Imprint is significant, it can be overcome by patiently and diligently following specific steps. Relief from the pattern doesn't happen overnight or by just saying, "No," but by utilizing the tools and techniques. If you have Negaholic tendencies, pay attention because you could reverse a condition that could cause your demise. You could become an Olympic swimmer by learning how to overcome Negaholism. Hundreds of thousands of people have broken the cycle of addiction to negativity through practicing the tools and breaking through to happy, functional, and successful lives that can deal with the waves of change and keep their heads above water.



## Chapter 6

### Fending off the Fear

“Only the unknown frightens men. But once a man has faced the unknown, that terror becomes the known.”

**Antoine de Saint-Exupery**

Are you afraid? No, of course not! You are not afraid. However, even though at this moment you don't feel afraid... concern, worry, fear, anxiety, and panic attacks can wheedle their way into your mind if you let them. Managing change is about dealing with the “unknown;” when conditions are uncertain, unclear, or unpredictable it is fertile territory for fear to take hold. The higher the degree of unknown, the greater the opportunity for fear to creep into your consciousness and claim center stage. Imagine that “Fear” is a character in a play in which you are the leading actor. Picture him in gray, black, or a camouflage costume, shimmering in and out of environments where people are confronted with unwanted change. “Fear” lurks in the shadows waiting for an opportunity to slither into your consciousness. He has full access to you 24 hours a day, whenever he feels you are the most vulnerable and susceptible to his seductive slime. His job description dictates that his time be allocated between three main responsibilities:

First, he collects data on everything that makes you afraid. From snakes to cockroaches, from drowning to being held up at gunpoint, from abandonment to suffocation, from being homeless to being diagnosed with cancer, he extracts,

captures, and catalogues all of your fears to use on you when you least expect it, when you lack the strength to notice what is happening, to stand up to him, or to overpower him.

Second, he whispers your “worst that could happen” fears in your ears while you sleep. He chooses moments of doubt and weakness and carefully selects his most extreme words for greatest impact. He chooses times when there are no distractions so that he can have your full attention. In the early hours before dawn, or in the late night hours, in complete darkness, right before you fall asleep, he sees his opportunity to plant seeds of fear in your mind and he takes it.

Third, he siphons your power by carefully coaxing you into the imagination of your worst terrors, as if they were already upon you. He works most effectively with phobias, traumas, insecurities, addictions, negativity, and overwhelm. He waits for moments when you recoil, avoid, or withdraw from something so that he can catalog it for future reference. Your power drains away the more you lose your clarity, your certainty, your self-confidence, your self-trust, and your belief in your capabilities. The more afraid you are the less you trust yourself. The more afraid you are the more you can be manipulated. The more fear runs your psyche, the less rational, logical and reasonable you become. As you become reduced to the state of a terrified child, the more he grows in strength, capability, and power. As you shrink in self-confidence, “Fear” grows by absorbing your powers. As you become less powerful, he becomes more powerful. When “Fear” has you totally in his grip, he can then choose which

weapon he wants to use on you: anxiety, panic, or sheer terror. Once you become the slave of “Fear” he can cause you to do drastic things because his whispers become louder, stronger, and more dominant. He can take more risks of being discovered because you listen to and obey his every word. When he has power over you he can then design your demise. The more he succeeds the more powerful he becomes; as his power increases so does his enthusiasm, eagerness, and commitment to winning at all costs. Rendering his victims powerless over their circumstances is his victory; any attempted escape from the churning sea of fear is blocked with even bigger threats of even worse fears manifesting. Having declared success with his present victim, he then moves on to the next one to churn their fears to surface so that he can repeat the cycle of manipulation, control, and dominance.

Have you met fear? Has he ever visited you? Do you know this character? Does this sound familiar? If you recognize this scenario, when did “Fear” visit you? What were you doing? What were the circumstances? How did you manage? Fear seizes on people encountering Change Wave Levels 6-10. The more overwhelmed, inadequate, and insecure the person feels the more vulnerable the candidate is for “Fear” to enter the scene. Here is an example of “Fear” in action.

### **When Your Relationship Changes**

They had been married for fifteen years, with two children, a boy of 17 and a girl of 13. They seemed like the perfect family, attractive, healthy, successful, and happy. Every holiday season they would send out greeting cards

to their family to friends with a holiday family photo attached with everyone smiling, looking like the perfect family. No one knew that Rose harbored a secret. She had neglected her regular mammograms, justifying that they weren't so important since no one in their family had ever had breast cancer. Then one day she felt a lump. She went to her doctor who conducted the normal tests. It was malignant, had spread to her lymph glands, they operated and it seemed as if all would be fine. Jack did not get over it so easily. He kept all of his feelings to himself, using sports and alcohol as his two outlets. His dream of the perfect family had been shattered with the cancer episode and he gradually began to distance himself from the family. He started to have more excuses for his absences from family gatherings. He came home late explaining that he had to entertain clients.

One day while Jack was in the shower, an SMS sounded on his mobile phone. Rose reached for it thinking it might be an important business lead when she saw the text message on the phone, "Is lunch still ok? Can't wait! XX" Rose couldn't believe her eyes and she had to force herself to breathe. That moment was the first time that Rose received the information that things had changed. In this case the information came from someone else's mobile phone. Her thoughts immediately started to race, "Who was this? It must be a distant relative or a friend of the family. There must be a logical explanation. Should I confront him? I'll just ask him." When Jack was drinking his coffee, Rose asked him, "What are your plans for lunch? I thought I might drive downtown and meet you." Jack looked surprised, cleared his throat, and responded, "I already have plans." "Oh, with whom?" Rose retorted. "With Anthony" said Jack, "We need to review the

plans for the new project.” He stood up, kissed his wife and said, “See you tonight!” and left the house. Rose was fertile ground for “Fear” to enter her world. Her trust, belief, and confidence in her marriage had been shaken. Then she thought, “Maybe the SMS came to the wrong person. Wrong numbers happen. It may not have been meant for him at all.”

She decided to follow him to his lunch appointment. It was when Jack approached the restaurant that she saw the tall, slender stunning blond, 30 years younger than she; greet him with a hug, a kiss, with an undeniable glow. Now she knew that the SMS came to the right person, and this certainly wasn’t Anthony working on the project.

Fear was delighted because he saw this as his opening. Her thoughts started to race, “What does this mean? What does this mean to our marriage? Is it over? Will this pass? Should I confront him? He lied to me this morning; I wonder how many other lies he has told me. Should I stay with him or divorce him? What should I do?” Then she thought, “I will go see my priest and ask him what to do.”

Rose went to see her priest who helped her deal with the shocking news. She then went to see her therapist, then her friends. She called her mother and sisters for consolation, guidance, and support. After Rose confronted Jack he denied the affair until he couldn’t keep his lies straight. Then he vowed to stop seeing the tall beautiful blond, but Rose found out that that also was a lie. Then Rose filed for divorce, and Jack came back to her saying he would do anything if

they could keep the family together. Now Fear was in full force. Rose thought, "Can I ever trust him again? Can I ever believe what he says? If we stay together will I live with perpetual doubt? If we split up will I blame myself for splitting up the family? Does he still love me? Do I love him?" Afraid to stay and afraid to leave, Rose was caught on a fence of indecision. She couldn't figure out the right thing to do. She kept asking herself if it was right to stay together for the children, but, on the other hand, how can you have a marriage with no foundation of trust? Then Fear used her ammunition on her, "I'm over 50, I've had breast cancer, I have scars, and I'll be on medication for the rest of my life, who would want me? I don't want to spend the rest of my life alone! Being with Jack is better than being alone, and that way the children can grow up with a father in a family. The finances! If we separate, how will I support myself? If we go to court, it will be expensive and I don't have that kind of money."

Rose started to live in the mental ping-pong match: should I stay or should I leave, which is the better option? Fear had Rose in his grip and no matter what she chose, she felt like she was making the wrong decision. She couldn't trust Jack and she couldn't trust herself. She was trapped in the vortex of doubt unable to resolve what to do. Since she couldn't trust herself, she continued to ask everyone around her what she should do. The priest said, "To err is human, to forgive divine. Stay with him and work it out." Her neighbor said, "Go see the blond and tell her off!" her mother said, "He is not welcome in my house ever again!" her sisters said, "You can't trust a liar." Her therapist said, "Bring him with you to therapy and we will work it out together." Her friends

said, "You have a nice home, and he pays the bills, you've got a good life, he is like every other man, just don't make a big deal out of it, and let it go!"

Fear was having a heyday with Rose. No matter what she decided to do, it was the wrong choice. Every time she looked in the mirror, fear would prey on her weakness. This time it was vanity and her fear of growing older, "Another wrinkle; you've put on weight. You are so fat! Look at those sunspots! There's another gray hair. You have no skills. You haven't worked in years. You can't really do anything. Your life is half over. How can you imagine that he would want you? You saw that beautiful blond with that long, thick flowing hair, and he watched all of yours fall out. All men want "twenty-somethings," not "fifty-somethings." You're over the hill, face it! You hag! Who would want you?" Rose looked in the mirror and burst into tears, then Fear attacked, "You look like a prune when you cry. What an ugly contorted face. You are pathetic!" Feeling trapped in a chamber of unbearable judgments, Rose felt like she was literally going crazy and since she had used up all of her available resources, she also didn't know where to turn. She had solicited advice from her entire inner circle and was only more confused than before. People were getting irritated at her indecision and lack of resolve. She didn't dare dial the phone, look in the mirror, or look at a family photograph.

## **“Mini-Me’s”**

Fear is one of the main facets of change. As I mentioned earlier, when life deals you a life-altering unanticipated change, “Fear” enters the picture and takes over if you let him. The degree of Fear depends on the amount of self-confidence, capability, ingenuity, and resources that you have available to you. Just as we described “Fear” as a character, there also may be other characters lurking in the wings. These characters can appear to take on a life of their own beyond simple mood changes or attitude issues. Recognizing a voice that is different from your own doesn’t mean that you’re crazy, instead it means that you are having a heightened awareness of yourself in multiple dimensions. These voices are also referred to as sub-personalities. If you notice different factions within yourself, then definitely document what they are saying in your journal. Read it over and see if you can really make out what the voice is saying to you.

After you hear the voice, write down what it says. Describe the image associated with the voice. Close your eyes and picture who is saying those words to you. It might be someone from your current life, or from your fantasy life. After you have grasped the voice and visualized to whom it belongs, then name it. After naming it, let yourself imagine the voice taking shape before your eyes. Visualize whoever is talking to you and see if you recognize the person.



## **The Choices: Keep, Change, or Make Them Leave**

After you have acknowledged the existence of “Fear” or other “Mini-Me’s” and assigned identities to them, you have some options: keep them, change them, or make them leave. You are not forced to live with “Fear” or the “Mini-Me’s” as your plight in life. There are ways to deal with them and even to get rid of them if they cause you pain, suffering, or guilt. You may have been tolerating them because you didn’t think you had any options. You do have options, and they are:

- 1) Determine if you want each “Mini-Me” or not
- 2) If they are to go, decide the best way to do this
- 3) If they are to stay, make them into allies who are on your side and rooting for you to succeed in life

## **Press the “Reset” Button**

In managing the waves of change you want to become senior to your circumstances. You want to enable yourself to become bigger, stronger, more powerful than any forces that appear to be opposing you. This happens by building your self-esteem and self-trust step-by-step, bit-by-bit. It means validating every step you take regardless of how small.

You have to press the “reset” button in your life, meaning reset your expectations, reset your standards, and reset your entire way of relating to yourself.

## **Morning Meetings**

First thing each morning, have a meeting with yourself. This should happen before you do anything. In this meeting you need to address: what you are going to do today and set yourself up for success. This is like programming your internal GPS for a road trip. In this Morning Meeting you state everything positive that you want to have happen throughout that day: meetings, tasks, accomplishments.

There need to be three elements in every day: 1) Alignment by honoring your highest self, 2) a sense of accomplishment to build self esteem, 3) nurturing through contact with special people, leisure time, entertainment, good food, or just fun.

## **During the day**

Sometime in the middle of your day, check in to see if you are on track. Next, notice moments when you deviate from your plan. For instance, when you obsess about what went wrong, worrying unnecessarily, or talking to yourself in a diminishing or harsh tone. In these "Huddle Moments" you regroup to get yourself back on track with your GPS: you revisit your intention, purpose, and goals for the day that you previously established. The day can start out perfectly, but if it goes awry, it could end up in disaster. Noticing how things are going is an excellent way to avoid beating yourself up at the end of the day. Finally, you end the day with your acknowledgments, your "Good News" list that acknowledges everything you did "Right" throughout the day. What is your personal way to pat yourself on the back? After all, if you don't, who will?

## **End of the day**

This is again a check in moment. It is best to do this in writing. Write down the good news of the day. Be sure to include the blessings, the joys, the fun, the accomplishments, and the unexpected good deeds that happened. When you do this you complete the cycle of the day, you reflect on all that is good, and you validate the positive movement you have made. Ideally there will be ways to congratulate yourself for doing what you said you would do, for honoring your commitments, for living up to your expectations. The daily three phase check-in cycle is a way to develop your relationship with yourself, to build your self-esteem, and to increase your productivity. When you actively complete this cycle you will be building your reserve to ward off against a covert “Fear” infiltration. When you are in alignment with your highest values it is difficult for “Fear” to penetrate your personal code of honor. It sounds like a simple, inconsequential exercise that wouldn’t yield significant results, but nothing could be farther from the truth. This daily practice doesn’t cost anything and it only takes a few minutes three times per day and acts like a rudder in a boat to keep you on course with yourself.

Starting and setting up for success, checking in mid-way to ensure that you are on track, and then creating a reflective moment to acknowledge what happened, and to honor how you managed change, noticing what you did “right” is a wonderful cycle to incorporate in your life. I do it daily and it works well for me.

If your immune system is weak then bacteria and viruses can take advantage of the situation and cause illness. If you actively boost your immune

system, then the germs cannot take over and cause you to become sick. If your relationship with yourself is strong and resolute than “Fear” cannot wind his way into your psychological system making you suffer at his urgings. When you are managing a change process it is your responsibility to ensure that you are in good shape: physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, interpersonally, and financially. It takes practice and discipline, however, once you incorporate the positive habits you will be strong enough to fend off “Fear” since now you know his tactics and you can anticipate his actions.

Fear activates Level 6 or surging waves. If you confront the fear that the waves of change can spawn then you don’t need to have those surging waves engulf you. You can be senior to the fearful surge if you use the tools you have learned to keep your head above the surface.

## Chapter 7

### Focus, Intention and Beliefs

“All truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

**Arthur Schopenhauer**

If you spend time watching the sea, observing its movements, getting to know the orchestration of the waves, it may appear as if the ocean has emotions. From level one to level ten, you can observe the changing moods of the waves from peaceful and calm to passionate, to turbulent, to angry and even to violent and destructive. As you sit and absorb the changes of the tides, do you wonder if the sea has thoughts? Do you imagine that behind all that energy and movement that conscious thought exists?

The ancient Greeks saw their reflection in the form of Gods who openly expressed their feelings in nature. They held the god Poseidon responsible for the tides, waves, behavior, and results of the sea. They attributed human emotions to Poseidon and believed that the movements and effects of the waves were a direct reflection of his moods. Poseidon expressed his feelings openly and the Greeks felt the effects, both positively and negatively. When he was happy, the seas were calm and Poseidon created new islands. When he was offended or ignored, he struck the ground with his trident and caused chaotic springs, earthquakes, and shipwrecks. The thoughts and feelings of the Greek and Roman

gods were so powerful that they created and destroyed with their thoughts, emotions, and actions.

### **Thoughts Become Reality**

Whether you believe in Greek gods or not, the truth is that everything that has ever been created by humans started initially with a thought in someone's mind. The moment a thought is conceived, the possibility of that concept actually happening might be very far from reality, however, the seedling of possibility comes into existence the moment the idea is imagined.

Creation is the ability to see that which doesn't yet exist believing that what is imagined is, in fact, feasible. Creativity is the ability to generate innovative ideas and bring them from thought into reality. Whether you are the midwife who supports the birth of an idea, the steward who ushers the thought into existence, or you are the visionary who imagines that which doesn't yet exist, regardless of your function, you have a role in bringing into existence a new possibility. When you reach out with your mind into the world of your imagination and grant permission for it to dream, to explore, to roam in the realms of vision, fantasy, and daydreams you have embarked on the journey of creation. This is how thoughts become translated into reality.

What you think has power, whether you experience it or not. If you are aware of your thoughts, you can use them for the benefit of others and yourself. If, however, you are unaware of your thoughts and your unconscious is the Captain of your ship, you could be taken to many unwanted destinations. Taking

control of your thoughts is like taking command of the ship that is without a Captain, directionless in the sea of possibilities. If you want to align all the various parts of you to be able to cope and manage change, then consider discovering a hidden GPS that you never knew you possessed.

The fact is you were born with an unconscious filtration system called, the Reticular Activation System (RAS), the size of the tip of your smallest finger. Your Reticular Activating System is like a filter between your conscious mind and your subconscious mind. It takes instructions from your conscious mind and passes them on to your subconscious. It is located at the base of your brainstem and controls sleep, walking, sex drive, eating, and elimination. That may not be exciting, however, one of the most important functions of the RAS is its control of your consciousness or thoughts. Your RAS controls your ability to consciously focus attention on something and it acts as a filter, only allowing into your consciousness those “keys” (words or thoughts) that you have informed the gatekeeper to permit, and filtering out or rejecting what has not been mentioned. Your RAS helps to prevent your senses from being over-loaded.

Google’s, Chairman and CEO, Eric Schmidt was recently quoted saying, “Every two days we create as much information as we did from the beginning of civilization through 2003!”

When you are conducting your daily life you may encounter up to two million bits of data bombarding you simultaneously. That quantity of information is impossible for your brain to process. Therefore, your RAS acts as a filter, or Web browser that sorts out which of the 134 bps (bits per second) are

permitted to enter into your nervous system and which ones are rejected. At any one time, you can retain between five and nine new pieces of data. The RAS allows into your system only what you have specified it will focus on by indicating those “key words” are important either consciously or unconsciously.

Imagine that your RAS is like your own “Personalized Search Engine” or “PSE.” You enter the key words and press “Enter” and the search has begun. You have just deliberately programmed your Reticular Activating System by choosing what you want your conscious mind to focus on. This happens automatically whether you are aware of it or not. It happens all the time, whether you are awake or asleep.

Consider that you are a Negaholic and wake up in the morning and say, “Ugh, another day, I feel awful... I wish I could stay in bed. I have no energy and I don’t want to go to work.” You have just programmed your RAS to search and locate options and various ways that will enable you to go back to bed for the day. It is interesting to notice what happens next. Think for a moment of all the things that could happen. The elevator is broken and you cannot get out of the building. There is a traffic accident and everything is completely blocked in the direction of work. You become ill, get a migraine, or start to vomit. If you are powerful enough your RAS will take over and do all the work for you, creating a legitimate alibi that will support your intentions. You will probably have temporary amnesia regarding the link between what you stated and the ensuing events. In other words, you won’t connect the dots between your intention and what actually happened.



Imagine another scenario. You wake up and immediately take a pad and pen and write down what you want to happen during this day. You enumerate all the positive possibilities that you would like to occur throughout your day, whether they are within your control or not. In the middle of your day, things start going awry, and you instantly write down what you said you wanted to happen, and underscore all the positive things that have happened that you ignored or took for granted. Then at the end of your day you list all the occurrences for which you are grateful, including intentional ones that you stipulated that morning, and the miscellaneous “Good luck” items that you never imagined.

In essence, there are two ways to utilize your RAS. The first way is to remain unconscious to your innate ability and power and drift through life as if the waves are in control of your destiny. The second way is to deliberately utilize your ability and power to work for you in setting your RAS on what you want to bring into existence.

You can be the recipient of your worst fears, negative occurrences, or unconscious beliefs or you can establish goals, write affirmations, and visualize your preferred vision. Your Reticular Activating System cannot distinguish between real events and simulated reality. In other words, your RAS conducts a “Search” for whatever information you give it. Telling your RAS to keep certain information out doesn’t work since the RAS doesn’t recognize negatives. You wouldn’t enter this request in a search engine: “Don’t locate anything related to ‘fear,’” since it will immediately focus on the key word, “Fear” and go directly to

all mentions related to “Fear.” As the computer works, so does your mind, only with even more power and effectiveness because you see the results show up in your life.

What you need to do is to create a very specific picture of your goal in your conscious mind. The RAS will then pass this on to your subconscious - which will then help you achieve the goal. Your RAS will also prevent your goals from getting through to your subconscious if your self-image is not congruent with your goals.

There are times when the waves of change pull away the foundation of the beach and leave a new configuration of sand or rock. We call this fundamental contextual or paradigmatic change, because it forces us to question the basis of our assumptions. New ideas by their very nature invite resistance because they challenge the pre-existing paradigm. Any person or institution which is attached to the status quo will have resistance to changing the way things are. Change is when things become different than they were, which creates feelings of discomfort.

### **Are You Aware of Your Thoughts?**

You are, most likely, aware of the thoughts that are in the forefront of your mind, or consciousness. You are probably aware of thoughts like, “I am hungry,” “I am bored,” or “I am tired.” The thoughts that you maybe unaware of are those lodged in your subconscious like, “I am afraid of change,” or “I am a tiny

spec in the universe and have no control over my life,” or “I am afraid of growing old.”

### **Beliefs Are the Engine Behind “Search”**

A belief is something that you hold to be true. It may or may not be true, but because it is your belief, you hold it as the “Truth.” A paradigm is a universal belief that is held to be true by a critical mass of people. A paradigm is a filter through which you perceive the world. Significant Paradigm shifts happen infrequently, however, when they do occur, they change the way we hold reality. A paradigm shift is an event that profoundly alters the way we hold what we believe to be true. When a paradigm shifts it re-contextualizes our belief systems. When that happens it shakes up our perception of reality and forces us to rethink our most basic premises about life.

We accept our paradigms to be so inviolate that we don’t even consider questioning them. They are like smog, ever present, yet rarely noticed because they have become accepted as part of life. Paradigms become locked in the fiber of everyday life and we don’t even consider their validity. They just “are.”

### **Paradigm Shifts: The Physical World**

#### **Gravity**

Gravity is a force that is ever present in our daily lives. When you release your hold on a glass it will surely fall to the ground. If you release that same glass in space, however, the exact same glass will float in the air because you are outside the gravitational field of the Earth’s atmosphere. In 1543 Nicolaus

Copernicus published his theory on gravity. Many scientists contributed to the new theory of gravity that ultimately became widely accepted as the new paradigm. Gravity was the only reality until humans started to explore outer space in 1957. At that time scientists discovered that beyond the Earth's force field, there are different gravitational fields. They discovered that we needed to train astronauts to operate in a world different from the gravitational force we experience on Earth. The space age created a paradigm shift for space travelers because they had to relearn daily functions in a world without their familiar gravity.

### **The Earth is Flat**

In ancient Egypt, Babylon, and pre-Classical Greece, the accepted belief was that the world was Flat, not spherical. The debate was primarily between religion and science. In 1269, Marco Polo, a Venetian merchant and pioneer was one of the earliest explorers who travelled throughout Asia for 24 years on behalf of the Kublai Khan. Marco Polo was a courageous adventurer who wanted to discover, to see, and to learn everything about the people of Asia, their culture, and their way of life.

Eratosthenes (276 BC-195 BC), a Greek mathematician calculated in 240 BC that the world was not flat, but the problem was that no one believed him. Then, 1759 years later, in 1519 Ferdinand Magellan was the first man to sail around the world and prove conclusively that the Earth was not flat. This revealed another paradigm shift since the majority of the world clung to the belief that at the edge of the horizon you would fall off the Earth into an abyss.

Only brave adventurers would risk a trip into the unknown, without accurate maps, safe ships, and predictable weather and seas. In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries travel by sea was risky and people were justified in their reticence and fear of venturing out beyond the borders of their village, country, or landmass. Change may hold promise and opportunity for some, but it also holds the probability of dealing with the unexpected, the unforeseen, and the unimaginable for the many who at heart are not true adventurers.

It was because of explorers like these who had the courage to challenge the existing belief systems that they were able to prevail, changing the paradigm and proving that the Earth is a round sphere.

### **Shift from Geocentric to Heliocentric Universe**

From the earliest of times, humans believed that the sun revolved around the Earth (Geocentric). With the invention and perfecting of the use of telescopes, scientists discovered that, in fact, this belief was inaccurate. In 1543 Copernicus was the first astronomer to propose that the Earth revolved around the sun (Heliocentric), rather than the sun revolving around the Earth.

In 1564-1642 AD, Galileo Galilei spent untold hours studying the heavens, and supported Copernicus's theory. In 1610 Galileo published *The Starry Messenger* and invalidated everything the Catholic Church had previously decreed. Telling the truth as he saw it, risking the paradigm shift that was about to permanently change the perception of the universe was the beginning of his eventual demise. He then in 1632 wrote *The Dialogue Concerning the two Chief*

*World Systems*, about the ebb and flow of the tides of the sea. He was ordered to remove all mention of tides from the title because he was proposing in his book how the Earth moved. His book created such a negative reaction that he was tried by the inquisition, accused of heresy, and put under house arrest. His book was placed on the list of prohibited books until 1835. Both Copernicus and Galileo challenged the current geocentric paradigm and because they did serious negative consequences ensued. Challenging the existing paradigm can threaten the establishment and create an enormous amount of negative backlash, especially when the new paradigm is true!

### **Man on the Moon**

On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong was the first man to set foot on the moon. Since the beginning of time humans have gazed at the moon from the Earth conjuring up images of what it must be like to journey into space, and to see the moon close up. When Armstrong did his moonwalk it shattered the old paradigm that humans are Earth bound. Scientist have been asking the question ever since that historic moment, "If we can go to the moon, where else can we journey?" When paradigms change, new questions arise that were never asked before.

Are we the only planet in the universe that has intelligent life forms? According to the best estimates of astronomers there are at least one hundred billion galaxies in the observable universe. Could we actually be the only intelligent creatures in the universe? Could there be intelligent life sharing the Milky Way with us? Consider the number of stars (like our Sun) in the Milky

Way, and take the fraction of planets with a suitable environment for life to evolve, where life on those planets could be intelligent, capable of communication, and the prediction of these variables is estimated at possibly thousands of civilizations, in the Milky Way that could be able to communicate with us. If you imagine that intelligent civilizations exist in other galaxies, what impact might that have on religion? What changes would that cause in your world? What would you need to do to cope with a discovery like that? Are you unaware of the underlying beliefs that govern your attitudes and behaviors?

### **What Are Your Beliefs About Your Capacity to Manage Change?**

- What beliefs do you hold to be true about change?
- What beliefs do you hold to be true about your ability to deal with change?
- What beliefs do you hold to be true that might be untrue but you believe them regardless? What beliefs do you need to examine? Are you willing to challenge your beliefs? Are you willing to change your beliefs? Are you willing to shift your paradigm to become congruent with your life, your capacity to deal with change, and your ability to reinvent yourself when you encounter the waves of change?

Beliefs emanate from either concepts or repeated experiences. When you form conscious or unconscious beliefs, you give them power to cause your reality. Beliefs dictate reality and create self-fulfilling prophecies. In addition,

you unconsciously look for evidence in your life that validates and confirms your beliefs. Beliefs are so powerful that they magnetize reality to line up and conform to the belief. What beliefs work for you? What beliefs work against you?

For example, James had the belief that no one could do any task as well as he could. He was a perfectionist and liked to have things done correctly. He couldn't delegate to others because of his belief. He couldn't trust anyone to execute tasks as well as he did. In fact, he was right because whomever he chose to do any project fell short of his expectations. He finally gave up and did everything himself.

Max, had the opposite belief system. His belief was that although he was quite competent, he could always find people who could do any job as well or even better than he could. He was constantly delighted at the level of professionalism that he found in every field. He delegated with ease and his expectations were always exceeded.

At a networking event, James was commenting to Max about how exhausted he was doing everything himself. Max looked concerned and asked about the cause. James explained how impossible it was to find competent people and that he was forced to do everything himself if he wanted the job to get done correctly. Max was dumbfounded and commented that he didn't share that experience. He, on the other hand, was surrounded by competent people who were trustworthy, and affordable. The two men looked at each other



quizzically wondering how they could be colleagues in the same social and professional network and such diametrically opposed experiences.

As Henry Ford said, “Whether you think you can or you think you cant, either way you’re right!”

Here is an exercise for you to do. Take a blank piece of paper and list as many beliefs as you can that you believe to be true in each area:

- Work...I believe that work is...
- Private life
- Love life
- Children
- Your body
- Your home
- Your car
- Parking spaces
- Delegating to others
- Your athletic ability
- Your ability to relax
- Your ability to have fun
- Your worthiness to be loved
- Your capacity to enjoy yourself
- Your ability to get what you want in life
- Your capacity to experience pleasure

- Your ability to deal effectively with change

Did you know that you had these beliefs?

Do you want to keep these beliefs?

Do you want all the outcomes that these beliefs produce?

Do you want to change them?

What new beliefs do you want to replace the old beliefs with?

Put your belief systems alongside your RAS and see what you are unconsciously telling your “Personal Search Engine” to locate for you.

State your intention, what you want to happen. Then state your purpose, why you want this to happen. Then state the goal that is aligned with your purpose and intention. This process is called alignment. When your intention, purpose and goals all line up, you are then grounded and focused on what you want to manifest.

Seat yourself in the “Captain’s Chair” of your life and ask yourself what changes you want to initiate. Think of yourself as brave, bold, and believing in your ability to create the life you want. Imagine that you could be prepared for all the possible changes that could flood your consciousness. Create a collage that depicts all the images and words that you want to step into. Write out your dream life. Then start to actively “search” for those elements that match with your vision. Look at the collage every day. Read the description daily. Conduct

your research and let your “Personal Search Engine” work for you! Embrace the changes you want to manifest!

## Chapter 8

### Lifeboat Drills and Change Tools

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

**Reinhold Niebuhr**

At night, when the headlights of a car shine into the eyes of a deer and he stares right back as if frozen by the lights, he is at risk of being killed because he cannot move. If you are not going to be caught like a deer in the headlights, then you must map out your plan in advance just in case the waves of change happen to you on a large scale. If you don't want to become “Road Kill” you need to have a plan, tools, techniques, and a support team to help you when you really need it.

Walter had been working for a high tech company for ten years. He earned a good living, each year his reviews were positive to outstanding, and he felt secure that he could support his family, and his extended family, including his aging parents. Life was good, things were working, he was happy.

One day, Walter came to work and was informed that his contract would not be renewed. He was told that his employment at the company would end in ninety days. He asked if this event was related to his performance and was also reassured that his performance was stellar; His boss said that the company had to cut costs and he was unfortunately, the first to go.

The economy in the marketplace was not favorable for a man in his mid-fifties. He couldn't live on unemployment for long and most companies were not hiring. Walter thought, "Is this my reward for doing such a great job all these years? I never thought I would be in this position after having given my best. Should I stay in the same field? Should I branch out? Is this a crisis or can I possibly see this situation as an opportunity?"

Walter faced with this mid-life dilemma with the kind of resolve that he tackled everything. He thought to himself,

"Is setting up my own business the answer for people like me at my age? After all, I have the experience, the resources, and the clientele so it makes total sense to set up my own business. On the other hand, should I sit back and wait for that special opportunity to come knocking at the door? Suddenly all of my colleagues start to drop out of sight and then I realize who my real true friends are. I am sure this is why people who are retrenched sometimes cannot cope with the new situation and contemplate suicide. They give up the hope of finding a job. Hopelessness takes over and possibilities become dimmer and the poor economy drags on for another year."

### **Lifeboat Drill**

When you take a cruise on an ocean liner, the first thing that is requested of you is to participate in the Lifeboat Drill. It's the first thing that happens after all the passengers have boarded the ship, while you still are in port. All of the passengers and crew are mandated to participate in the Lifeboat Drill and they

literally take role call. Every cabin has a specific station assigned to it. When the alarm sounds, all passengers and crewmembers are to locate their life vest, put it on, and go directly to the appointed station without talking, as quickly as possible. When the passengers arrive at their respective stations, they line up in the order they are directed. They are then told to remember where their life vest is stored, where their life station is located, how to get there, and the order in which they are to assemble. During the Lifeboat Drill, the Captain addresses the entire ship on the public address system. He welcomes everyone and then informs the entire ship that the Lifeboat Drill is very important for the safety of all passengers and crew in case of emergency and in the event something unforeseen happens to the ship. People are encouraged to take the exercise seriously and to make note of what to do, and where to go in case the horn is sounded during the voyage. What does a Lifeboat Drill have to do with managing change?

Having your personal Lifeboat Drill pre-prepared is like having a life insurance policy. You may never need it, but in case you do, it is a wonderful thing to have. The reason that I present the model of the Lifeboat Drill is so that you can understand how important it is to have a pre-arranged plan to deal with sudden unexpected change, for Wave Levels 5-10. The Lifeboat Drill is unique to each individual, therefore, it will require a pen and paper (or computer if you prefer) to do it properly. Part of the Lifeboat Drill is psychological, part of it is emotional, and part of it is physical. When you were a child in school you probably had Fire Drills to ensure that in the event of a real fire all the children would know exactly what to do and would not panic. The Fire Drill was rehearsed and drilled in so that all the

children followed the procedure automatically, by rote without thinking, and without panicking. The procedure was to insure that if there were a real fire that all people would escape unharmed. In my school, when the fire alarm sounded, we immediately put down everything in our hands, stood up, formed a single line in silence, followed the head of the line, staying calm, without running, but moving as swiftly as possible. I remember our Fire Drills to this day. If I heard the fire alarm I would respond just as mechanically as Pavlov's dog by putting everything in my hands down, standing up, forming a single line (of one), and filing out of whatever building in silence.

A "Lifeboat Drill " is a "Procedure" that you follow without thinking when you get a sign that you are in danger...a wave of change is coming your way, or has arrived and you need to activate the "Drill." You custom design it for yourself, and you rehearse it over and over again until it is drilled into your muscle memory system when there is no emergency, so that when the alarm does go off, you respond automatically. For example, you might do one or more of the following:

- Take a deep breath and focus
- Pour a tall glass of water (stay hydrated)
- Get out your journal and answer these five questions:
  - 1) What am I thinking?
  - 2) What am I feeling?
  - 3) What do I want?
  - 4) What must I do first?
  - 5) Who should I tell?

- Call a non-judgmental friend who will invite you to download everything on your mind and who won't tell anyone about the conversation.
- Make a "To Do" list of not more than 10 items, starting with a verb, and ending with a deadline date.
- Keep a photocopy of the Waves Levels nearby so that you can look and see what level your change is.
- You may want to set up an arrangement with a friend where he or she agrees to be your Lifeboat Drill partner so you can call him/her when you feel the need.

• Focus on what you CAN do, not on what you can't do. Force yourself to focus your thoughts on your capability, possibility, and reliability. The questions associated with this are: 1) What can I do today? 2) What is possible to accomplish today? 3) Who can I count on to help me today?

• Take each step one step at a time; do not overwhelm yourself with an avalanche of tasks. Make sure that each step that you consider is deployable in small bite-size pieces.

• Delegate to competent people whenever possible. Do not set yourself up with unfulfilled expectations. Make sure that you choose people who will do what they say, when they say so that you can see and measure the forward movement in each area.

• List 'cues' that could snap you out of "Deer in the Headlight Syndrome" and alert you that it is time to do something. Choose one cue, and list four action steps that you could take after receiving the cue. For example, in school, the traditional Fire Drill states, "Stop what you are doing, put everything down, form a single line in silence, and exit the building walking in a single



straight line.” Your Lifeboat Drill must be just that simple. You need to be able to receive the cue, and respond automatically with four simple actions to move you out of potential danger.

- If you have a pool, and the weather is warm, and you get stuck in your head, make your action step: “Go jump in the pool!” If it is winter and there is snow on the ground, go outside and rub some snow on your face. If you have no pool and there is no snow, get a rubber band, and put it on your wrist and say to yourself, “Snap out of it!” as you snap the rubber band. These actions are to get you to “Snap out of your inactivity,” and do something tangible to positively impact your circumstances.

Don't force yourself to design your Lifeboat Drill in any way that is not easy and natural for you. Remember, a Lifeboat Drill is automatic, and requires little to no effort. Your Lifeboat Drill needs to be automatic, effortless, and mindless. The purpose of a Lifeboat Drill is to automatically get you to react and get yourself out of a potentially dangerous situation swiftly and efficiently, without any need to think. This can be a fun exercise, especially if you take into consideration the way you work and what works for you.

These are the steps to designing an effective Lifeboat Drill. First make a list of the situations, people, and environments that you most dread happening. Then outline what you would ideally want to have happen to counterbalance your worst fear. Then list the steps to move you towards the ideal and away from the worst possible scenario.

## **Level 1 Glassy Surface**

Glassy surfaces or level 1 waves are changes that you initiate and therefore have anticipated. Here is the list of items that you will need (like your life vest):

- 1) Breathe!
- 2) Drink a glass of water
- 3) Your journal and a pen
- 4) Your mobile phone (recharging plug)
- 5) Your computer (recharging plug)
- 6) Your address list (if separate from your phone)
- 7) A laminated copy of your Lifeboat Drill (details later)
- 8) A spare cell phone if you have one; recharging plug
- 9) A list of your closest family and friends, their phone numbers and  
Email addresses (in case you don't have access or forget them.

## **Wave Level 2 Ripples**

Level 2 ripples are unexpected events, minor irritations that cannot harm you.

- 1) Include all items from level 1 and add these to it.
- 2) Breathe. When you become irritated, the first thing that happens is that your breathing becomes very shallow. Taking three deep breaths from your diaphragm can allow you to focus, calm down, and get a hold of yourself. You may want to post a sign up on your bathroom mirror, on the refrigerator, on the dash board of your car; wherever you would be reminded to Stop, Focus and BREATHE!

- 3) List of Items purchased, date, location, warranty, phone number of the store, and name of salesperson in case something goes wrong, you can deal with it because you are prepared.

### **Wave Level 3 Rolling and Spilling Waves**

Rolling and spilling waves are irritating, troublesome, and unsettling but not significantly disruptive. Car trouble, a sick child at home with a fever and no childcare, your pet has a tumor and requires surgery, a traffic jam renders you stuck in the middle of nowhere, or you get food poisoning.

- 1) Have a list of people you can call with little to no notice to help you out in case of a child illness.
- 2) Set up your car so that if you are stuck in a traffic jam, you and your family are not at risk.
- 3) With food poisoning, stay near a bathroom, drink water or carbonated liquids, whatever will stay down, and have a person nearby to support your needs. When possible start eating soda crackers.

### **Wave Level 4 Shore Dump Waves**

Level 4 waves are unanticipated but not life threatening. Having a power outage, a transit strike, political unrest, a volcanic eruption will definitely impact your life if you are in the vicinity, but they will not permanently alter it. You can anticipate and plan to a certain extent in some of the situations.

- 1) Use a pad of paper (or your journal) and download everything in your mind onto the paper. Don't be concerned about it making sense, or being

organized just write whatever you are thinking, Title the page: On My Mind.

- 2) Place flashlights and candles in strategic locations in case there is a power outage.
- 3) If there is political unrest, plan to evacuate the danger zone before it comes too close to where you and your family happen to be.
- 4) Stay informed about the situation hour by hour.
- 5) Obtain a map of the “Risk or Danger zones,” and avoid them.
- 6) Ask questions of anyone who appears to be knowledgeable of the situation.

### **Wave Level 5 Plunging Waves**

First of all, when the “Change” information is delivered, this is when you immediately access your journal. This is the first step in the process. The reason this is important is because Wave Level 5 Plunging Waves are sudden, the impact is strong, and the ripple effect from the damages can impact many people in addition to you. You may be moving rather quickly because of the nature of the incident, but you also want to recall events as they happen. This can help if the situation involves law enforcement or the legal system.

One day in Rotterdam, while we were eating lunch, the car was broken into. The window was broken and many things were stolen. The police became involved and many questions were asked. No one was hurt, and it didn’t radically change our lives. It was an inconvenience and a nuisance, but it was not

traumatic. This is the type of situation where a journal is a valuable tool. A journal can help you capture your thoughts and feelings regarding the violation and the lost personal items. Regardless of the lack of physical and emotional trauma, there is a feeling of loss that must be addressed.

## **Journaling**

To help you track and observe the process of change at Level 5, keeping a journal of what happens and your reactions to it is the first and most essential tool in your kit. Record your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to people, places, and situations. Focus on your internal experience. You need to find a time and place to do this everyday and commit to it, otherwise, it will be a good idea that never came to fruition.

One way to approach this is to draw a grid with these headings:

What happened	My thoughts about it	My feelings about it	What I did about it
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Each morning, afternoon, or evening make a point of entering your experiences related to that day. When you document your experience in a journal or in a computer journal, it helps you track what has happened both externally: the date, time, place, people involved, what transpired, as well as internally: your reactions both positive and negative. Since change often feels like a ship in a sea of corkscrew-like waves, there will definitely be emotional up and downs. Rather than having each day unconsciously morph into the next without noticing what happened, then eventually forgetting what happened and how it impacted you personally, keeping a journal makes the process of staying awake and aware, deliberate and intentional. It becomes

much more difficult to sort out the details later on if you don't document both the subjective and objective parts to the experience on a daily basis. It is just too difficult to remember the chronology of events later on when reflecting back. If you do a little each day, it is comfortable, however, if you wait until "someday" in the future when you have more "time" on your hands, it may never happen, or it can become truly overwhelming.

### **Wave Level 6 "Surging Waves"**

Surging waves are: a significant reduction in your financial situation, an increase in friction with those close to you, disconnection with your mate, family or work associates, sexual challenges, insomnia, and conflict with your in-laws.

Self-reflection is very helpful in these situations. Here are some questions to write about:

- 1) When did this start?
- 2) Was there an incident?
- 3) What did I do?
- 4) Could I have handled the situation differently?
- 5) What can I do now to alleviate the tension?
- 6) What steps can I take to reduce the stress?
- 7) Can I increase my earnings, or reduce my spending?

Chose your battles, not everything is worth creating an incident. Some topics are better left alone. Those are the moments when there is something

more pressing to attend to. Healing core relationships may be more important than taking a stand on political, religious, or family issues.

### **Wave Level 7 Rip Tides or Currents**

Wave Level 7 Rip Tides or Currents involve more serious losses that rip you apart including: divorce, loss of job, loss of income, home foreclosure, loss of business, loss of functionality, including the onset of Alzheimer's. When Wave Level 7 occurs it often has a ripple effect compounding one wave on top of another.

When you feel like life won't give you a moment's peace, you need to ask yourself, "What am I supposed to learn from these multiple events? Am I to stop or start doing something? Am I to make a significant change? Is the "Bigger Picture" of my life trying to tell me something that I don't want to listen to?" Taking those moments of reflection can enable you to see your life from the helicopter perspective which can be profoundly illuminating. Rather than merely slogging through, write down the series of events that have happened, read them over then ask your helicopter-self, "What is the message?" Whatever you sense, feel, or hear, write it down immediately. It might come to you in a way that you have never experienced before, but it will reveal something important to you. When you listen and heed the guidance, the cascading unwanted events will cease. Life is doing everything in its power to get your attention, and when it has succeeded, the unwanted events will no longer be necessary.

## **Wave Level 8 Hurricane**

Wave level 8 involves permanent life-altering events. Events like, terminal illness, burglary of a home, financial ruin, fire, flood, earthquake, or tornado which may cause you to lose your home.

Marion's home was burglarized while she was away on a business trip. Upon returning, she discovered her house in ruins. Mattresses turned over, couch cushions pulled from the sofa, clothes were pulled from closets and dressers and strewn throughout the bedrooms. Her safe was missing, containing her emergency savings, credit cards, jewelry, and many irreplaceable items. Many of her family heirlooms were stolen, some only held sentimental value, and this caused further upset. Questions overwhelmed her mind, "Why would the thief want that?" "Why me?" "What if I were home when this happened? Would I have been harmed?" After coping with the initial shock, Marion leapt into action, first calling the police to file a report and possibly collect key evidence to nab the perpetrator. She then contacted her bank and informed them of the incident. She asked them to be on high alert for any suspicious transactions that may hit her accounts. Next, Marion contacted the insurance company to file a report of all stolen items to try and recover some cost for the items that were now gone. Days later Marion received a call from her credit card company; the card had been used and now totaled over \$7,000 in fraudulent charges. This thief not only stole some of her most prized possessions, now she was using her identity! She contacted the police once more to inform them of this new victimization but they did very little other than take another report. The wave level can cause permanent damage if it is not addressed quickly and in a very positive, loving,



and intentional manner. If you are facing level 8 waves, here are some steps that you can take.

1) Take inventory of the items you treasure, photo albums, family heirlooms, collectibles, jewelry. Take photographs of these items and keep them in a safe place in the event that something happens to them.

2) Know who you need to contact when a level 8 wave happens. For Marion, it was important she contact the police first to secure the scene, then the banks to secure her funds, and finally the insurance company. If, a level 8 wave occurs which involves the loss of a family member, you may need to contact other family members, friends, and a funeral home to make the appropriate arrangements. It's important to know who you must contact and who you can contact for support.

3) Make a list of items that you cannot live without if you have time to collect certain treasures before you must abandon the premises: photo albums, jewelry, birth certificates, etc. When you are in an emergency, you have no time to think. You must have conducted your preparations in advance because you need to act quickly since there is no time to ponder what you have to retrieve before it is too late.

4) Keep cash on hand

5) Be sure to have an external back up drive for all important computer data.

6) Have emergency credit cards that have a substantial available balance

## **Wave Level 9 Rogue or Freak Wave**

Wave level 9 comes totally out of the blue, with no warning, and no related incidents. This could be like going into the hospital for a simple procedure, then having complications and resulting in a medical crisis. It could also look like a hostile takeover in the corporate world. You discover that your mate is having an affair. You are informed that all the funds have been drained from your account with no explanation, a case of identity theft.

For example, on May 13, 2000, in Enschede, there was a catastrophic fireworks explosion that killed 23 people and injured 947. An area of 40 hectare surrounding the warehouse was destroyed by the blast. Four hundred houses were destroyed, 1,500 homes were damaged, 15 streets incinerated, leaving 1,250 people homeless, essentially obliterating the neighborhood of Roombeek. Ten thousand residents were evacuated. The damage cost exceeded \$640 million USD. Prior to this incident, the building had met all safety requirements. As the saying goes, things happen, and some you can anticipate, and others you cannot. It is best to imagine what you would do in each type of emergency so that if it were ever to occur, you would have given it some thought.

## **Research**

Depending on the nature of your disaster and the type of research that is available to you that will determine what you are able to do in the circumstance. If you have access to a computer and Internet connection, the obvious first step related to research is to 1) go on the Internet and retrieve the most current news about your situation, 2) let people in other locations know where you are and

how to locate you. 3) gather information on what successful people have chosen to do in your circumstances to resolve it.

- 1) If you have no Internet available, then TV, radio, or survival manuals will have to suffice. Regardless of what is available to you, one member of your team will need to consider all possibilities to resolve the immediate situation.

### **Level 10 Tsunami**

Wave Level 10 Tsunami involves world events that are so powerful that they impact everyone globally in some way or another. Wave Level 10 is when a disaster strikes and you have literally no time to prepare. You may never have such a catastrophic event happen to you in your lifetime, and ideally you won't, however, in case you do, it isn't a bad idea to be as prepared as possible. A survival kit in case of emergency becomes a reality.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in southern Plaquemines Parish Louisiana as a category 3 hurricane with winds estimated to be near 125 mph. Katrina caused massive flooding, which most devastated the area of New Orleans where significant levee failures occurred. Approximately 80 percent of the city was flooded, destroying the thirty-fifth largest city in the Nation and causing damages which totaled more than \$96 billion dollars. When the winds and floods of Hurricane Katrina subsided, it was estimated that 1,833 people died directly or indirectly from the massive storm, and around 770,000 people were displaced.

More recently in 2010, there was a Libyan plane crash in which all but one of the Dutch passengers were killed. An eight-year-old Dutch boy was the sole survivor. This change is at level 10 Tsunami for not only the boy, who lost his entire family, but for all of the families that also lost loved ones.

You may say I have no need to prepare a survival kit, however, in case you want to take this last step in emergency preparedness, the list of items has already been prepared for you. Based on the potential hazards and risks in your area, determine the most appropriate equipment, supplies, and specialty items. For example, if you live by the Sea, you need to plan for possible flooding. If you are in an area where mosquitoes are an issue, include repellent in your supply list. If you live on a cliff, you might have mudslides; sandbags and high rubber boots would be advisable. If you live in cold weather, have warm clothes and firewood in case you lose your electricity.

Since you don't know where you might physically be when an emergency occurs, preparing three sets of supplies for 1) home, 2) work, and 3) car to put your mind at rest.

Home	Work	Car
Your disaster supply kit should contain essential food, water, and supplies for at least three days.	This kit should be in one container, and ready to "grab and go" in case you are evacuated from your	In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car.

<p>Keep this kit in a designated place and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.</p> <p>Additionally, you may want to consider having supplies for sheltering for up to two weeks.</p>	<p>workplace.</p> <p>Make sure you have food and water in the kit. Also, be sure to have comfortable walking shoes at your workplace in case an evacuation requires walking long distances.</p>	<p>This kit should contain food, water, first aid supplies, flares, jumper cables, and seasonal supplies.</p>
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Put everything into lightweight zippered durable bags and store the checklist with them just in case.

## **Water**

### **How Much Water Do You Need?**

You should store at least four liters of water per person per day. A normally active person needs at least two liters of water daily just for drinking.

Additionally, in determining adequate quantities, take the following into account. Individual needs vary, depending on age, physical condition, activity, diet, and climate.

- Children, nursing mothers, and ill people require more water.
- Very hot temperatures can double the amount of water needed.
- A medical emergency will also require additional water.

### **How Should I Store Water?**

To prepare the safest and most reliable emergency supply of water, purchase commercially bottled water. Keep all bottled water in its original container and do not open it until you need to use it.

Observe the expiration or “use by” date. If you use the water, replace the bottles with new ones so that you always have a current supply.

In addition, include:

### **Basic Disaster Supplies Kit**

The following items are recommended for inclusion in your basic disaster supplies kit:

- Three-day supply of non-perishable food: freeze dried, or canned.
- Three-day supply of water – four liters of water per person, per day.
- Portable, battery-powered radio or television with extra batteries.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- First aid kit and manual.
- Sanitation and hygiene items (moist towelettes, toilet paper, and tissues).
- Matches with waterproof container.
- Whistle.
- Kitchen accessories and cooking utensils, including a can opener.

- Photocopies of credit and identification cards.
- Cash and coins.
- Special needs items: prescription medications, eyeglasses, contact lens solution, and hearing aid batteries.
- Items for infants, such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers.
- Other items to meet your unique family needs: cards, books, and games to occupy people for long periods of inactivity that can be very boring.

If you live in a cold climate, you must think about warmth. It is possible that you will be without heat. Consider your clothing and bedding needs. Be sure to include at least one complete change of clothing, underwear, socks, and shoes per person, including:

- Jacket or coat
- Long pants
- Long sleeve shirt
- Sturdy shoes
- Hat, mittens, and scarf
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket (per person)
- Pillows for all
- Towels
- Garbage bags
- Sealable plastic bags to keep open supplies fresh longer
- Individual canvas bags so that people can keep track of their things

## **Reaching out for Support**

When tragedy strikes, you need to reach out to others for support. This is a critical time when pride is inappropriate. One of the true blessings in tragic times is the pulling together of people who are impacted. For example, after the Earthquake and Tsunami hit Japan on March 11, 2011, there was a worldwide outreach to all the tsunami and earthquake victims. Radio and television stations, both public and private, collaborated to raise funds for the survivors and to assist in rescue efforts. In less than a week, \$105 million dollars was received by Japan, with more than two thirds of this money raised by the American Red Cross. When Americans see a need, they absolutely rally to the cause. The American people do miraculous things when they are focused and pull together.

No one wants to obsess about disasters. There is a difference, however, between obsessing versus anticipating and planning for the worst that could happen. If you have anticipated possible disasters, you would be as prepared as possible. That preparedness will provide peace of mind for whatever waves of change may come your way.

Enough of disasters! Most of us deal with change at wave levels one through seven. It is rare that people must cope with levels eight, nine or ten, but it does happen.



The purpose of the Lifeboat Drill is to have a plan set in place that you may never need to activate. It is like an insurance policy. If you have it, you can forget about it until the time occurs when you may need to use it.

Most importantly, you want to know what to do when the waves of change appear in your life. If you know yourself well, you can anticipate what will work for you. If you can't bear the thought of anticipating and planning for change, then delegate this task to someone whom you trust. If you are cavalier then find someone who pays attention to the details of life. If your basic philosophy is, "This could never happen to me!" then pray that you are right.

Before completing this chapter, take a pen and paper and write out not less than three and not more than ten steps that you would take if the waves of change washed over you in a totally unexpected way. What would you do? Who would you contact? What items would you gather together? Where would you go? Place that information in the hands of at least three people whom you love and trust. Having these four answers can alleviate one level of stress from your life, and provide a sense of peace and calm.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Take Care of Yourself**

“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.”

**Anatole France**

When the waves of change knock you down it is challenging to face them and interpret their meaning. Depending on the level of change and how seriously it has impacted you, will determine how rapidly you respond, how easily you will cope, and how quickly you integrate those changes into your lifestyle. There are several factors that enable you to find the energy and strength to pick yourself up, face and deal with new realities, however massive they may be. It is this ability to confront the unthinkable and get your life on a new track that will help you let go of the life you left behind. Those factors are:

- The condition you are in
- Your ability to reach out to others
- Your capacity to manage yourself through the transition
- Taking care of yourself on a daily basis

### **The Condition You Are In**

Dealing with change wave levels five through seven requires excellent condition, and levels eight through ten requires Olympian condition. If you are not in good shape you will be ill-equipped to deal with massive changes. By good

condition, I mean on all levels: physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, interpersonally, and spiritually. This doesn't mean that you need to be perfect, but it does mean that you need to be prepared for anything. The reasons have to do with the impact of change and how it affects your total self.

### **Physical Condition**

With change comes stress. The better your physical condition, the better you will be able to face change. When Darwin wrote about survival of the fittest he didn't mean it figuratively, he meant it literally. If you are to survive, you need to be physically fit. When receiving shocking news, if your heart is strong you will be able to deal with upsetting news and not risk a heart attack. If you face a flood, tornado, or hurricane, you have better chances of surviving if your legs are strong and can carry you out of harm's way. If your body has an appropriate weight for your height and size, you have the possibility of jumping to escape a burning building, negotiating in small spaces, climbing to high ground, or maneuvering around debris if you must. If your lungs are capable of taking in large amounts of oxygen you will be able to hold your breath if you need to submerge yourself in water. With increased stress, higher doses of Vitamin B will enable you to better cope with the stress. Your lungs require a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and high-quality protein. This doesn't mean that you need to attend aerobic classes to prepare for the end of the world, however, it does mean that the better you care for your body, the more likely you are to be able to cope with the stress of change physically.

## **Emotional Condition**

Change impacts your emotions. Whether you are primarily a “Thinker” or a “Feeler” you will have emotional reactions to change which will impact your well-being and lifestyle. If you are told that your job is being eliminated and you have been given 60 days notice, you will most likely have an emotional reaction. If you discover that your spouse has accepted a job on a different continent you will have an emotional reaction. If you discover that your teenage daughter is pregnant, you will have definite feelings about that...positive, negative, or both. What makes humans different from rocks is that we have feelings. Those feelings provide you with a gauge as to how you are in relation to a person, an event, or a change in circumstances. Those feelings are important since they provide feedback regarding what must be done.

To be in good emotional condition, it means that you are connected to your feelings. This includes noticing them, experiencing, expressing, and releasing them in appropriate ways that don’t cause upset and trauma. Noticing your feelings means that you check-in with yourself each day, paying attention to what is happening with your feelings, attitude, and behaviors. Being in good emotional condition means that your emotions are accessible to you...whether they are joyful or sad, excited or bored, angry or peaceful, apathetic or passionate. You know what you are feeling and why you are feeling it. You have the ability to manage those emotions in appropriate ways.

## **Mental Condition**

For your mind to be in good condition, you need to be mentally alert, able to make connections, and be fully present in the moment. If you consume too many artificial substances, like alcohol or drugs (prescription or recreational), you could be mentally “fuzzy” and unable to respond or react to sudden change when required. If you spend the majority of your time watching TV, you may not be mentally alert since television puts your mind on “Hold” rather than stimulating it. To keep your brain active, you need to be doing some sort of brain aerobics each day. This could mean doing crossword puzzles, playing bridge, or learning a new language. Any activity that supports you making connections in your brain will keep your brain active and alert. If you must make many decisions quickly, it is helpful to have a brain that you can count on. If you must think of consequences and ramifications of certain actions, you want your brain to be thinking clearly. If you don’t want to forget anything, you want your mind to anticipate what might be required, well in advance, so that you don’t have any reason to fail when you are put to the test.

## **Financial Condition**

It is always a good idea to have cash available in case you discover that you must act immediately and time is of the essence. When there is no time to go to the ATM, you don’t want to add one more item to the list of urgent concerns.

I remember receiving a phone call about my daughter having a bicycle accident on a school biking trip. We immediately had to get into the car and leave at night, drive several hours and pick her up, bruised and in pain. It was

fortunate that we had a full tank of gas, and a wallet with enough cash to buy dinner on the way back home.

Putting your financial house in order is always a good idea. You may have heard yourself say, “Someday, I will get my papers in order...” When will that “Someday” happen? You never know when those papers must be accessible. Knowing the status of your credit cards is also helpful so that you don’t run out the door and realize that the cards you took are rejected. Knowing what you have, where the items are, and that your critical papers are safe in case of sudden change, can provide peace of mind.

### **My Personal Rogue Wave: Level 9**

In 1983, I came home one day to discover that my husband had left me. We were having the usual quarrels that couples have, but I never would have imagined that he would just walk out leaving a note to explain that he was gone and not coming back. I first experienced shock, and then when I came into present time, I realized that he handled all of the legal, financial, insurance, and mortgage papers. I didn’t even know where they were kept. When I finally found the financial box with the details in it, I discovered to my shock that I had \$569 to my name and all the rest of the funds were gone. Not only was I financially devastated, the mortgage and utilities hadn’t been paid for months and I was facing foreclosure and the disconnection of water, electricity, gas, and phone. My eighteen-month-old baby on my hip, I had to think fast. I was overly trusting and believed, “That could never happen to me!” When I caution to have your financial

house in order it is because I have experienced first-hand what it is like to have life come crashing down on my dreams and to pick up the pieces one-by-one.

### **Interpersonal Condition**

The first thing I did when I realized that my life had just changed without my permission was to reach out to my support network. Fortunately I was surrounded by very supportive, non-judgmental friends who were there to lend a helping hand. They helped me face the worst news imaginable to me at that moment...that I was alone, penniless, and the creditors were at the door. My friends helped me sort out the paperwork, find my courage, strength, and willingness to get back on the surfboard of life and tackle the next wave. I couldn't have done it without the support of family and friends helping me through that crisis.

Do you have friends whom you can count on? Do you have a network that will roll up their sleeves and sort out the clutter and help you when you feel like you can't cope...when you feel like one more wave and that's it! When you feel like you just aren't strong enough to handle the sea of change that has surrounded you? I believe in my heart that it was my dear friends who helped me get through that crisis. I was in such denial and disbelief that I could barely come to terms with change Level 9. Know who you can count on. Know who you can call. Know who will be there for you when you really need them.

## **Spiritual Condition**

Some people start to pray when they are on their deathbed. That is not called having a really solid spiritual life. I am not recommending that you attend church, unless you really want to. I am not suggesting that you join any organized religion unless you have the calling to do so. What I am suggesting is that you exercise your “spiritual-side” in whatever way is right for you. Consider praying or meditating in a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque that could nurture your spirit. It maybe practicing yoga, joining a spiritual retreat, chanting, or Sufi dancing...whatever your spiritual proclivity, follow it now, and don’t wait until the waves of change happen to you. Practice your spiritual discipline daily, and if not daily, then at least weekly. The moment to discover your spiritual side is not in the middle of a Sea of change.

## **Your Ability to Reach Out to Others**

If you believe that reaching out to others is a sign of weakness then that will be an obstacle that you will need to overcome. If you think that you are burdening others when you ask for support, then you will be shouldering an additional burden yourself. If you think that you should handle your own issues simply because they are yours, then you will be missing an opportunity.

When change has knocked you down, that is the perfect occasion to reach out and ask for support. It doesn’t mean that you are weak, quite the contrary, it means that you have enough self-esteem to feel that you deserve to ask for support from others. Asking for support invites people to participate in your life. It is an acknowledgment to them because it shows how much you trust them. If



you push people away in times of need, it sends a message that communicates that they are only valued during the happy times and not during the scary and vulnerable moments, when you are truly in need. When you invite people into your disaster zone, it communicates that you are not perfect and that you are willing to be human with your faults. You are willing for them to see your foibles and imperfections and love you regardless. Having a support network is only as good as your capacity to use it to help you through the waves of change.

### **Your Capacity to Manage Yourself Through the Transition**

There will be times, however, when you are alone. Those are the moments when “Fear” can come knocking at your door, late at night, when you lie awake trying to sleep. As we discussed previously, documenting your process will help you track progress and acknowledge success. At the end of the day, you may *not* want to journal the good news, but if you commit to do it before brushing your teeth, it will probably get done.

Managing yourself means staying on top of the details of life to be prepared when change happens. It means putting an end to procrastination. It means taking on what you least want to do and doing it first. As was previously stated, managing yourself means executing the three steps that build a ladder to success or “SEA” change:

- 1) **Set up** for success. Make your To Do list each night before you go to bed with a realistic list that you can win at.
- 2) **Execute** your realistic list with conviction and get it done.

- 3) **Acknowledge** what you accomplished in writing and allow yourself to experience the feelings associated with success. Build self-confidence each day so that no matter what change life throws at you...you can handle it!

### **Taking care of yourself on a daily basis**

Men, by and large, are much better at taking care of themselves than women. Women tend to put others first, and if there is anything left at the end of the day or night they feel justified in taking some of the “Left-overs” for themselves. Some men, on the other hand, feel entitled to eat first, shower first, get into the driver’s seat first, and take the last piece of cake. This entitlement might be connected to the hunting instinct and the need to store up energy and resources necessary to bring home the “kill.” Women don’t possess that “chip.” Therefore, if you are a man, you will have an easier time with this, and if you are a woman then this may challenge you.

Caretaking is different for each one of us. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to daily caretaking. You must create your own plan to care for all of your needs. Caution to women: put yourself first, rather than last, otherwise there may not be any crumbs left. Remember what they say on the airline briefing, “Put on your oxygen mask first before helping others!” Follow the guidance from the men in your life who have figured out something essential to survival...and put yourself first.

If you take care of yourself, you will be much better prepared for the waves of change. You never know what will happen; therefore, being prepared for anything is always your best policy!

## **Chapter 10**

### **Learning to Surf**

“Life belongs to the living, and he who lives must be prepared for changes.”

**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

It is possible for any person who is willing to invest the time, energy, and effort to understand the skills involved in learning to surf. If you are surfing in life you are riding the crest of the wave, anticipating opportunities rather than missing them. Catching the right wave at the right time rather than fearing and resisting them is about timing and embracing the adventure.

Opportunities are attractive because they reach out to you with an open hand with the promise of benefits and rewards to follow. Receiving a promotion at work presents lessons like responsibility and willingness. Embarking on a new love interest presents lessons like trust and flexibility. Becoming a parent for the first time is replete with lessons of patience and letting go. These lessons are easily recognized because you chose the bigger picture and in choosing that you also chose the process. When you choose to have a baby, you don't focus on changing diapers. You focus on giving to a helpless tiny creature that needs your love and nurturing. When you want something, and then choose it, it makes it easier to absorb the challenges along the way, even if they are temporarily unpleasant. Being open to these lessons isn't so challenging because of the element of choice.

## **Recognizing The Lessons**

It is much more difficult to recognize lessons that seem to indicate that life is unfair. These lessons come wrapped in less attractive packages and tend to cause most people to quickly put on their resistance lenses. When you are not open to learning lessons, getting laid off can look like a catastrophe rather than an opportunity to learn the lessons of letting go, empowerment, or forgiveness. Experiencing heartbreak can look like a crisis, rather than a hint to learn the lessons of kindness or generosity. Becoming a parent to a disabled child can appear to be punishment, rather than an opportunity to learn about healing or support. While less attractive lessons may not be fun, they can actually be the biggest gifts of all.

Making the shift from resistance to receptivity can be accomplished by following these steps:

- 1) Recognize the signs and signals of resistance. Notice the physical clues that alert you that resistance has engulfed you. Notice the clenched jaw, tightness in your chest, or the very deep sigh.
- 2) Notice your thoughts, like, "Why me?" "Why do I have to deal with this?", "I don't like this situation!" Once you discover the location in your body or the thoughts in your mind that resistance dictates, you can easily identify it in the future.
- 3) Remind yourself that you have a choice! You can continue resisting feeling resentful, angry, and unfairly treated or you can learn the lesson that change is attempting to teach you. Presenting yourself with options and choices enables you to see that you have control over your

circumstances. You can choose your attitude, your behavior, and the manner in which you deal with life's changes and challenges.

4) The final step is to ask yourself this question: "Am I willing to give up resisting to learn the lesson that is here for me to learn?" Remember, if you want to become a true surfer of change, you must be open to learning all the lessons you are given so that you may grow into who you want to become.

There are several elements that must come together for you to feel like a competent surfer. They are learning about: 1) Balance, 2) Position, 3) Paddling, 4) Lining up, 5) Reading and catching a wave, 6) Wipeout, 7) Recovery and return. These seven steps can also be compared to competently surfing the waves of change.

Just as you can learn to surf ocean waves, you can also learn how to surf the waves of change. If you are going to be a successful surfer, you need to integrate all of the key elements that you have learned in order to surf the waves of change rather than becoming engulfed and devoured by them. Keeping your head above water rather than tumbling beneath the surface is essential if you are to be a proficient surfer. Let's take them one by one.

## **Balance**

Standing on a surfboard in the ocean requires balance. To have balance you need to be able to locate your center of gravity and anchor your energy in that center or chi. To do that you need to be in fairly good physical condition. Let's assume that you are in good shape and ready to practice your balance, but

you don't want to keep falling off the board eroding your self-confidence. One option is to practice balancing on the board on the sand before you enter the water. Sand is stable while the water is constantly moving so practicing on the stable sand will build your confidence. Practicing your balance on solid ground is similar to a dress rehearsal. You get into position, knowing full well that it is not the real thing. You practice your stance in the safety zone before you set foot in unpredictable waters. Remember in chapter 8 when we reviewed your preparedness in dealing with each different type of wave?

Learning balance, on the sand, is similar to storing sufficient water in case an emergency arises. Standing on your board in the sand, shifting your weight on solid ground, will never compare to finding your center of gravity when you're standing on your surfboard in the middle of the ocean, however, it is a good starting place to simulate conditions without putting yourself at risk.

The other aspect that compares to finding your balance is being in good shape. As I mentioned in chapter 9, the better your condition, the easier it is to learn and eventually to master surfing. The more you have made advance preparations, the easier it will be for you to access muscle memory when you're required to do so.

For example, balance is a concern to new parents. They envision having a precious new member of the family, yet they never anticipate the amount of time, energy, and commitment it will require. Perhaps for the first time the parents must learn how to balance many factors simultaneously: home, work, errands, the baby, extended family, and their relationship without being exhausted all the time. When change impacts your life with a new commitment

without eliminating any of the previous ones, balance becomes the challenge.

### **Having the Right Position**

Having the right position is like having the right intention. In chapter 8, we addressed focus, intention, and beliefs. If you have the right attitude, or face the right direction, it becomes much easier to anticipate what is coming at you. Imagine standing with your back to the oncoming waves; it sounds silly, and the thought of it may make you roll your eyes, however, there are many people who go through life leading with their back, facing and clinging to the past, rather than embracing the future. Being in ready position, anticipating whatever may come at you, having the right intention, will ensure a successful launch to your ride.

Consider the person in midlife who has been informed that he or she must become proficient in certain software programs and he or she feels utterly inept. The change is challenging them to overcoming their shortcomings and be bigger than they imagined. The inner negotiation they encounter is whether they are able to break with their past decisions and beliefs and step into a new vision of their “self.” Whether this happens or not depends on their ability to embrace the future and deal with the wave that is in their face.

### **Learning How to Paddle**

Learning how to paddle is about readiness, navigating into position, and setting yourself up for success. It is about getting your houseboat in order. Remember, in chapter 4 when you asked yourself the questions about managing change? Those questions are like little paddles that help you move from where



you are to where you want to end up. Paddling may seem boring or insignificant, just like answering those questions in chapter 4, however, both are required if you want to advance. The better you become at paddling the easier it will be to cut through the water and reach your desired destination. The more effective you are at developing a rhythm synchronizing your body movements, the faster you will glide through the surf. The more you do your due diligence the easier it will be to assess where you are and determine what must be done to manage whatever change you are facing.

The person who hates completing expense reports because they deal with so much repetitive detail and aren't any fun is a good example of this. Putting off tasks that seem boring and redundant will not make them go away. Resisting completing taxes will not make them easier to tackle in two weeks or two months, it will only add to the discomfort. The opportunity the procrastinator faces is to confront the change that is required, choose it, jump on the board, and glide into the future.

## **Lining Up**

Lining up is about keeping yourself out of stress, and ensuring that your RAS is in alignment with your intention. Lining up isn't easy because the motion of the water constantly alters your direction. The clearer you are about where you want to go, the easier it will be to get where you want to go, despite the waves of change that have other ideas in mind for you. Utilize your RAS intentionally. Like your GPS, use your RAS to cut through the waves of life changes to materialize what you want to ultimately emerge from the change process. If you don't turn on your RAS, give it direction, and focus, it can never

work to your advantage.

Writing down your goals makes them concrete and sends a message that you are to be taken seriously. It also activates your RAS. The person who stays in an intolerable relationship, putting up with abuse is not looking at what is possible, but rather merely getting through the day. Envisioning the desired future shifts your attention from problem to solution and gives the RAS something to do.

### **Reading and Catching a Wave**

Reading and catching a wave can be compared to determining the level of change you are encountering and selecting an appropriate plan based on your assessment. The right position is one of readiness and anticipation so that you don't get knocked down by the waves because you weren't sufficiently prepared. This can be compared to making certain that you are clearly focused on what you want to manifest, not fearing the disasters you have observed in surfing films. Whatever you focus on grows and shows...up! When a really huge wave starts to grow and swell, you may experience fear creeping into your consciousness. Keeping fear at bay and managing yourself when encountering the unknown, is important both in surfing and in life.

Moving to a new home requires an assessment of needs, priorities, and lifestyle. If you wait for the wave to catch you, informing you that your building is going co-operative and you must pay a substantial fee to be a part of that building's future can cause serious discomfort. With some anticipation of the future you could be prepared for that wave and make a choice before it sends

you tumbling in the surf.

## **Wipeout**

You “Wipeout” when you forget to do what you knew you must do.

Wipeout is when everything turns upside down, you become disoriented and unable to find your way. In life, overwhelm strikes and you feel as if you are drowning. A Negattack descends upon you and wipes out all of your intention, your preparedness, your RAS and you are left exhausted, breathless, with little hope or energy to carry you further.

A wipeout is useful only if you learn from it. If you don’t learn valuable lessons from every wipeout, then it was a waste of time, filled with unnecessary punishment. You have options and choices: 1) get back in the water, 2) quit surfing, 3) learn something new and apply it to your skills, thereby improving your skills every time you venture out.

Imagine the man who contracts a chest infection, then his wife becomes ill, and then he is robbed of all his possessions. He then cuts his foot on a rusty nail, his finances are in crisis because he is unable to work. His health renders him unable to work, his relationship is in crisis, his car has a broken timing belt, and he is so worried that he cannot sleep at night. His life is in “Wipeout” condition, he cannot find his equilibrium, and he is desperately searching for the “Reset” button.

## **Recovery and return**

Recovery and return is about learning the lessons that the “change” was designed to teach you and subsequently growing from that experience. It comes back to taking good care of yourself. If you don’t care for yourself in every imaginable way, there is no chance to manage the waves of change. When you recover from the wipeout, you must review what happened so that you learn from each wave, and don’t unconsciously repeat the same maneuvers over and over again. Surfing waves with no reflection is foolhardy since you are destined to repeat what you did previously. Habits are behaviors that you do over and over again that become ingrained and subsequently, automatic. When a habit becomes automatic you can no longer learn from it, you become a slave to it.

It is recommended to find a moment to retreat, review, and reflect on your situation to determine if you are on track. Consider the film producer who earns a substantial income but feels dissatisfied because he is making commercially successful films that don’t feed his sense of purpose. His opportunity is to take a sabbatical to assess what changes he must initiate before life decides for him. Choose or have the wave choose for you is the lesson when experiencing dissatisfaction.

If you are on the continuous improvement program, you are open to learn from everything that happens to you. Perhaps one of the most important notions to learn when managing change is “Unattachment.”

## **Unattachment**

Unattachment is about releasing expectations. It means that you let go of having to control the situation and surrender to whatever is meant to be.

Attachment means that you have an agenda and want the change process to resolve a specific way, yet you are open to whatever the universe deems appropriate. It means that you are not seriously invested in the outcome going a certain way. When you're unattached, you know in the core of your being that you are sufficient without any changes, additions, or alterations. You allow the object of your desire to flow to you without any force, pressure, or control.

Unattachment means that you have accepted the possibility of the goal happening; and at the same time, it is equally permissible for the goal to drift away and never materialize. When you are not seriously invested and attached to something happening, you can magnetize desired outcomes to you easily and effortlessly because you know if the goal occurs, it won't prove anything at all. The ultimate example of unattachment is the archetypal character of the "Fool" depicted in the Tarot card deck.

### **The Fool in the Tarot**

The Fool is the innocent, whimsical, "inner child" mixed with the "wise old sage" that lives within all of us. He faces change and his journey fearless, trusting the process, with utter surrender that all will turn out all right, that every experience has a purpose that is eclipsed from us in the moment. The Fool rides the waves, regardless of any hidden peril or disappointment; his eyes are turned towards the heavens since he knows he will be protected on his journey,

through the waves of change. In his small boat he carries all the possessions he needs.

The Fool represents a time of newness, a time when life has been "re-started" feeling remarkably free, light-hearted, energized, and refreshed, as if being given a second chance in the sea of change. In addition, the Fool has no idea where he is going, nor does he know exactly what he is going to do. Those details are not important. The most important thing for the Fool is to see, experience, and enjoy the world. Happy to be doing something different, the Fool sets sail where others fear to row.

The Fool is trusting and open to all experiences and he provides the perfect role model as you too embark on your personal sea change. The Fool encourages you to trust your own inner voice, your intuition, and your inner knowing when encountering change. You need an undying trust in the goodness of people and in the belief that all will work out exactly as it should. The Fool stands for new beginnings, important decisions, and perennial optimism.

The Fool is the ultimate "Free Spirit" - the self-actualized person, free from societal constraints, who is able to let go of old beliefs and possesses the courage to pursue his own special path.

### **Embracing the Lessons Change Offers**

You can be certain that you will be presented with lessons when surfing the waves of change and those lessons are precisely the ones that you need to embrace.

As you transit through your waves of change, you will encounter challenging lessons that others are spared. You may never understand why you are blessed with a wonderful marriage, while your friends suffer bitter arguments and painful divorces, just as you cannot be sure why you struggle financially while your colleagues enjoy comfort and ease.

Align yourself with your own unique path by embracing your individual lessons. You need to remember that you will only be faced with lessons that you are capable of learning and are specific to your own development.

Change will present you with innumerable lessons, which will only be of value if you recognize them for what they are, and are open to what they may teach you. These lessons will show up whenever you encounter change, and as difficult as some of them may be, you need to alter your perception and consider seeing them as gifts helping you evolve and grow.

When you accept the lessons that change brings, no matter how unpleasant or challenging they may be, you begin to cultivate the essential attitude of willingness. Willingness is the capacity to say, “Yes” to what life offers you with a positive attitude. Willingness is the ability to see life as an enormous Treasure hunt from a helicopter hovering 1,500 meters above the Earth. A Treasure Hunt is a game in which teams of people receive clues in the form of riddles, that they must de-code, go to a specific location, find the “treasure,” and receive the next clue. The team that wins the game is the first to reach the final destination, having de-coded each clue at each checkpoint along the way.

Life is like a treasure hunt. You are given clues that you can either heed or ignore. If you pay attention and take action, you will be given the next one. If you ignore the clue, it will show up in yet another pair of surfing shorts riding another wave, coming straight at you.

### **Bring it on!**

Surfers do not run from the ocean, but rather they search out the waves that will give them the most exciting ride, and then they race towards them. If you are to become a Master Surfer of Change (MSC) then you must be willing to trust yourself when encountering the unknown. You must tell the universe, “I am ready! I can manage. I am up to the challenge. Bring it on!” When the universe hears your request, you can be certain that your skills and abilities will be tested. You will see how well you have learned by how well you pass the “change” tests life offers you!

You now know the levels of change, the challenges, and opportunities. You know the risks, the rewards, and you have everything you need to successfully surf the waves of change! Apply the knowledge you possess and use it when encountering the waves of change. Change is inevitable, the ride... is up to you.

Happy surfing!