

CHANGE

Background and Context

Two thousand five hundred years ago, Heraclitus remarked, in short, “You can’t step in the same river twice.” What he meant was this: You can’t eat the same meal twice. You can’t wake up to the same day twice. And, most definitely, you can’t meet the same person twice. Recall the old biblical exclamation, “this too shall pass.” Whatever we have now—right now—we have, but watch it while it’s here, because if you blink you just might miss it. Though this idea—that the world is defined by change—is ancient, perhaps it remains unknown. For, look around to yourself, to your neighbor; there is a very real and modern tendency: if there’s a change, someone’s bound to resist it. Do not look at a scale so large as the new multiplex going up where old homes are going down; do not look to the clearing of forests. Look to the tiny—someone just called to change the place where you’re meeting, your favorite television episode isn’t airing tonight and instead they’re showing old re-runs. How do you respond? If change defines the world, it is only a small step to a grand claim: Our life, to an enormous extent, is based on how we respond to change.

Setting the Stage: Change Your Seats

Instructions:

Upon entering the room: Do NOT sit in the seat that you are used to. Also, do not sit with the people that you are used to sitting with.

Debrief:

After all are here: Now, tell me, how did you feel about having to change seats? What was your response to this change—good, bad? Recognize that how you responded to this was likely automatic. Most of our life is. But, in this case, what you responded to was *change*. Think of the small things: when you plan on going to see a movie with a friend, but then s/he can't make it; when you plan on having French fries with your dinner, but then the dining commons only has mashed potatoes. Think a little bigger: when you plan on going to Michigan for college, but end up not getting accepted. The point of the lab that follows is to look at how we respond to change, and to try to invoke—if it's not there already—a response which, at its root, is not only positive, but *creative*. So here's a quick question you don't have to answer out loud. Ask yourself, "How do I deal with change?" When you were asked to change seats, was your response creative or combative? Yes, this was small but it was the furthest thing from insignificant. Again, ask yourself, “How do I deal with change?”

Check In

If you could change something about your life as it is right now, what would it be?

The ChangeCycle™, an Introduction

A theoretical example:

Lillie Brock and Mary Ann Salerno have developed a useful method of "Getting Through Life's Difficult Changes," the graphical representation of which is their ChangeCycle™ (below). Looking at their cycle, you can see the movement from the impact of a life change through six stages. Expressed as a primary experience of that change and its accompanying feeling, they are: 1) loss & fear, 2) doubt & resentment, 3) discomfort & anxiety, 4) discovery & anticipation, 5) understanding & confidence, and 6) integration & satisfaction. These words may seem disembodied, and their cycle may look like a board game, but the construct has real power. Reference the ChangeCycle, and consider this:

If you are a guy: Your girlfriend is pregnant, or this girl you had a one-night stand with last month is pregnant. She's telling you this at your door. You did not plan this. Or, if you're a girl: you are pregnant, the indicator is in your hand and telling you this much for the third time. You did not plan this. Now—both guys and girls—*really accept this*: What is going through your head? Your heart? Your chest?

Are you first overcome by a feeling of fear, an overwhelming apprehension of loss? If you move beyond this perhaps your feelings shift to doubt coincident with resentment? And as it sinks in, the main chord struck might be discomfort and anxiety? Yet, can you move forward, into an exploratory discovery and a sudden sense of anticipation? This may take a while—days, weeks, months. With time, a more spacious way of understanding may dawn, and with it, the blush of confidence? And, at last, you might integrate the fact of this change into your life, and find, somehow, that it is not merely something you accept, but something that fundamentally satisfies you? These are the six stages of change, as Brock and Salerno define them.

Let us simplify these six stages—though this may disappoint their creators—and, for the moment, dichotomize this cycle into the opposing stages of Loss and Discovery. In this way, the full cycle is transformed into the less demanding focus of a movement from the sense of Loss to that of Discovery, and from a feeling of Fear to that of Anticipation.

Stage 1 - Loss:

A question: Why does change concern us? Why does change concern you? In the opinion of Salerno and Brock, the deepest, most fundamental reason that change concerns us is because it brings loss. First, there is *the loss of what has been*. Perhaps some or many of the things of our old life we will no longer have. Second, there is *the loss of what might have been*. We are concerned because we have plans—we all have plans and visions, dreams for ourselves—and when we derail these plans, we lose our future. It is true that we never had it in the first place, but it is also true that we had a vision and a hope, and now both of these are lost. Therefore, one of the greatest things that we lose is not just what we had, but what we thought we were going to have.

Secondarily, change concerns us because we are afraid of the "unknown." Since the "unknown" is unknown, however, perhaps we are only afraid of what we think the future might hold. "We can never underestimate the power of our negative imagination" (pg.50, Salerno and Brock).

When we are afraid of loss, cautious, and paralyzed before the havoc of change, we feel ourselves to be a victim of chance, karma, or our own actions or another's. We feel ourselves to be a victim. Do not forget this.

Transition:

The point is to move out of this sense of loss, paralysis of action, doubt and resentment.. Yet, what are we to move toward?

Stage 4 - Discovery:

Water under the bridge. Milk spilt all over the floor and seeping into the carpet. "Shit happens." and so do good things; they happen, too. Change is a fact of life. If you want a less fearful life—as far as nerves and the currents of the heart go—then accept this. The opposite of the fear that comes from loss is the anticipation that accompanies discovery. And what is the opposite of a victim? Look, you are ten years old, you just woke, and it is your birthday. What do your parents have for you on the floor beside your bed or on the kitchen table? What gifts will you unwrap? See? This is what anticipation feels like. This is what it means to be in the mood of discovery. This is the opposite of what it is to be a victim.

"When most people land in Stage 4, they are momentarily stunned because with just a small twist in their actions, they have found themselves with a perspective of wonder, purpose, and possibility. Suddenly, the blinders are pulled away and they can see an array of options and resources that were never obvious before" (pg.117, Brock and Salerno).

Activity One: A Skillset for Change: Change in Your Life

For some of us, the consideration of pregnancy may have been a theoretical one. Now let's get real. What about the real change in *your* life? Although we all lead different lives and have different fears and springboards of anticipation, there are two things that you all share in common: 1) right now, you are all college students; and, 2) some day soon, you won't be. That's what we call a change; and that change, in particular, is the one we will now ponder. "College is over. You're an alumna/us. What now?"

Instructions:

1. Ruminant over for this statement for a minute or two,
"College is over. You're an alumna/us."
2. Open your journal. Find a clean sheet. Write down the answers to these points (p.32, Brock and Salerno):
 - Define the change as clearly as possible.
 - What specific losses does this create for you?
 - Which loss is most important to you now?
 - Why?
3. "Inhabit" Stages 1 through 3, Loss to Doubt to Discomfort. To inhabit a stage is to place yourself in that time and place and into the particular emotion, thought, and behavior. What is it really like to be there? Take your time on this, and only move to the next stage when you feel ready. For example, can you remember a time when you met someone who was in denial that they were really out of college, whether their

- actions flagrantly displayed this, or they simply were not able to "move on?" They embody the essence of what it is to doubt the change—they inhabit Stage 2.
4. Partner up—do your best to find a partner about whom you know little and who knows little about you. Be careful to listen with great depth to what your partner has to say. And, when you speak, speak with candor and without haste.
 - A. Share with your partner what you feel and think of when you ponder the losses that come with this change.
 - B. With the help of your partner, "inhabit" Stage 4, "Discovery." In the box below is a skill set with three techniques to move out of fear and into discovery. It applies to all kinds of change which you may encounter in your life. For the moment, however, please utilize it in response to the given change: the completion of your college education. With your partner, discuss what comes up for you when you read each of these five steps. What are you trying to discover? You're trying to discover all the places or persons you could be, the things you could do. (Again, go to the box.)

Discovering Your Way Out of Fear

1. Find Your Answer, Then Leave It

Search yourself for one strong and "right" response to this change. This is your answer. When you come upon it, it should feel a little like finding an "answer." Write it down with affirmation. Then, remember, "***there are no answers, only choices.***" For the moment, say, "This isn't the answer." Find a new one. When you have found it, write it down with affirmation. Again, there are no answers, only choices. The world is more open to you than you imagine. For the third and last time, find a new answer. When you have finished, you will have three good answers to your problem of change. In this case, the question is: "What am I going to do after college?"

2. Reframe The Change (context reframe)

A "context reframe" is one in which you think of "a separate context or situation where you or someone else would respond differently to the same behavior" (pg.75, Brock and Salerno). For example, how would Bob respond in this situation? How about Jane? Ferris Bueller? A Buddhist Monk from 7th century Nepal? How about your grandfather? Be aware that this "response" is multi-layered, involving, at least, their emotional response to this change—and "change" in general—as well as the direction(s) they would take when this change confronts them.

3. Never Say "No" To An Idea Or Suggestion

"Be creative. Approach everything in your life as though there were no limitations. If you will do that, you will be amazed at the options that become available. Why not? What have you got to lose? Before long, you will be so excited by the possibilities that present themselves that you will automatically be energized to find a way to make them work!" (pg. 126, Brock and Salerno).

- C. Write down on a sheet of paper two things that you can envision yourself doing once college is over and you are an alumna/us. Give this sheet to the guide—he/she will shuffle and re-distribute to the class.
5. Re-group.
- A. For a minute or two, "inhabit" what this sheet of paper presents to you. Say, "Yes," to it.
- B. One-by-one, each person in the group will read what this paper says to the group. When it is your turn, speak it as though you are the one who wrote it in the first place and as though this *is* what you expect to do.
- C. Share with the group any discoveries, realizations, impressions, or questions.

Activity Two: A Mindset for Change: Just Say "Yes"

"[T]he truth about any change (good or bad) is that it is rarely accurately described because the brain labels and stores it too early in the process, generally relying on initial emotional responses as the main criteria." (pg. 21, Brock and Salerno). "As a concept, change is broad-based and sometimes difficult, but our responses to it are very predictable. The simple fact is, change is going to happen. **The issue then becomes, if change is inevitable and my responses are predictable, then how will I respond?**" (pg. 16-17, Brock and Salerno)

"One of the most dramatic differences between *Successful Changers* and others is their use of language. It seems that *Successful Changers* somehow understand that what they say to themselves and to others has an impact on their behavior. Every word that is said (out loud, as well as self-talk) is internalized by the unconscious mind. These words are the catalyst for your behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. The truth is that we talk to ourselves just like we talk to others. We need to be careful to choose our words wisely." (pg.40, Brock and Salerno). As the saying goes, "We are what we think about."

So, here are some liberating words to say to yourself: "Be open to this. I have something to learn from this. For, where might it take me? Stay flexible. Remember: Just say, 'Yes.'"

"It should be noted that flexibility comes in many disguises, so we must beware. There are people who meekly say okay to whatever comes along and appear to be flexing amiably. However, inside they are engaging in the self-talk of a victim. Such self-talk takes a terrible toll on their emotions and bodies ... Sooner or later, as the prophets of old have said, "What doesn't bend will break" (Brock and Salerno). What we want to learn from *Successful Changers* is this:

Flexibility means to consistently bend and flow for the purpose of creating resolution and forward movement (pg.165-166, Brock and Salerno).

Instructions:

1. Partner up.
2. Look over your partner—the physical person before you, their history as you've witnessed it, and who you believe them to be as a person.
3. Identify something for your Partner to change about him/herself. It can be an attitude. It can be something about his/her clothing style. It can be a belief.... Anything that you want them to change.
4. Partner A: Tell your partner to change (in the way that you identified). This should be considered as a command. Be strong in telling him or her this. This may feel entirely

wrong, to tell someone to change, but that is the point—not to do wrong, but to feel challenged.

5. Reverse roles: Partner B, tell Partner A to change.

Discussion:

In light of the entire preceding conversation, why did we do this exercise? Is it not true that life is always asking us to change, though perhaps it does not always speak in so near and traceable a voice? How did you respond to your partner asking you to change? If you look to your ChangeCycle™ chart, can you identify where you fell among the six stages? Were you able to be flexible to their demand? Was anyone deeply offended or upset?

Check out: A Question to Ponder

Here is a quick question. Throw out as many answers as you can imagine:

Q. What is one thing at which one gets faster as one gets older? That is, *as you get older, you get faster at doing what?*

A. Saying, "No."

OUT-OF-CLASS FIELD STUDY: CHANGE

Work with the ChangeCycle™ is not only about getting through the change that you encounter in your life; it is about understanding your response to that change, in particular, and your response to, "change," in general. To gain awareness of any resistance to change, then, is really to gain awareness of any tendency to stasis. As flipsides go, the ChangeCycle™ may be about more than dealing with change; it may be about creating it.

Field Study:

- 1) Ask yourself: "How do I want to change?" Write down between five and ten responses.
- 2) Ask yourself: "How is the world asking me to change?" Write down between two and five responses.
- 3) Interview at least two people—at least one of whom you do not know at all. Ask them the same two questions: "How do you want to change?" & "How is the world asking you to change?" LISTEN to what they have to say—it is their turn to speak.
- 4) Compose a response piece to this experience.

Field Work: Say, "Yes"

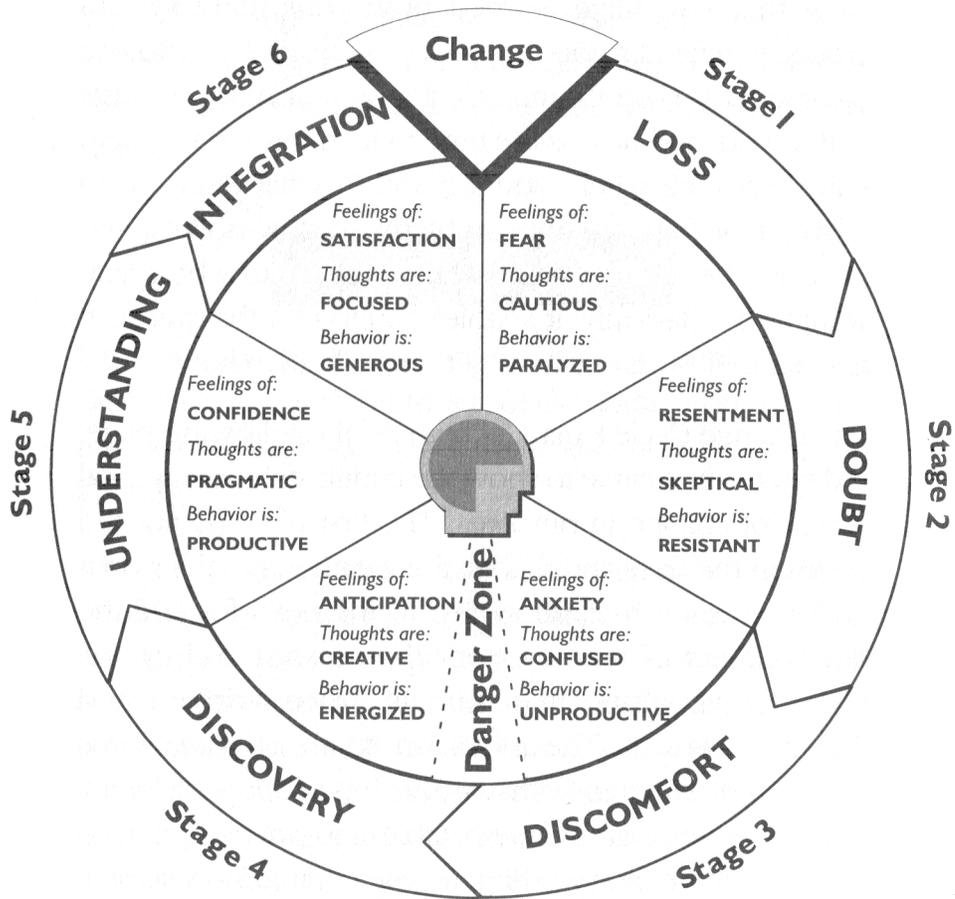
When most people wake, they have already within their minds the expected path of their day. It makes logistical sense: there are things to do and there's a "best" way to do them. Yet, how much of this path is habit and momentum? In both the things we do, and in the ways we do them? Consider that path—the habit of your day—as "the gray world." It is without color because it is a path for a person on automatic pilot. Diverge from that path, and the world reappears, in all its presence, color, and opportunity. This field work is about diverging from that path. It is very simple. Here is how to do it.

1) If you are only mindful of one thing, be mindful of this: of when you say, "No." When do you say, "No?" ... to the weather, to yourself, to a friend, to a new idea, to someone else's opinion, to your inner voice that proposes something somewhat risky. What is the challenge? **Say, "Yes."**

2) Recognize that you are on a path of habit, then diverge from it. See, there *is* color in this world. There are a million ways to perturb the path of your day. Walk to class along a different route. Eat somewhere else for lunch; have something you've never had before. If what you are about to do is not necessary, do something else. If it *is* necessary, do it in a different way.

Do the above steps, 1 and 2, for at least one whole day. When you have completed this, you will know that this field work, at its core, is a kind of practice, a spring that will continue to flow even if you drink from it for the rest of your life. What does it taste like? Compose a response piece to your experience.

The I N T E R Change Cycle™



#	Primary Experience:	Feelings of:	Thoughts are:	Behavior is:	Major Focus:	Stage Objective:	Motivated By:	Overuses:	Challenge:	Opportunity:
1	Loss	Fear	Cautious	Paralyzed	Self-protection	Creating personal safety	Pain or security	Paranoia	Defeating the "endless victim" mentality	Learning to channel fear into appropriate action
Skill 1: Clearly Define the Change Skill 2: Establish Desired Outcomes Skill 3: Distinguish Between Real and Imagined Fears										
2	Doubt	Resentment	Skeptical	Resistant	Ego-strength; being right	Gather accurate information	Opinions or facts	Blaming self and others	Accepting valid information differing from your position	Securing and utilizing new information
Skill 1: Reframe The Change Skill 2: Remember The Law of Cause and Effect Skill 3: Gathering Information That Creates An Accurate Picture										
3	Discomfort	Anxiety	Confused	Unproductive	The "problem"	Self-motivation	Impatience or possibility	Being overwhelmed	Keeping anxiety from becoming depression	In the midst of chaos, learning to take small, breakthrough steps
Skill 1: Take Mental Action Skill 2: Create Mental Distraction Skill 3: Commit To Physical Action										
4	Discovery	Anticipation	Creative	Energized	The solutions	Making decisions from available options	Frustration or multiple choices	Enthusiasm	Acting on your decisions	Knowing how to keep focused on the priorities
Skill 1: Never Say "No" To An Idea Or Suggestion Skill 2: Understand And Practice Perspective Skill 3: Identify And Use Your Strengths Skill 4: Be Willing To Take Risks!										
5	Understanding	Confidence	Pragmatic	Productive	Accomplishment	Knowing the benefits of change	Features or benefits	Pride	Keep moving to complete the ChangeCycle	Acknowledging assistance and support from others
Skill 1: Identify The Benefits Skill 2: Give Credit Where Credit Is Due Skill 3: Celebrate Your Progress										
6	Integration	Satisfaction	Focused	Generous	Learning new skills	Stability	Recognition or ego	Arrogance	Avoid becoming complacent	Successfully make the change a part of your life
Skill 1: Gain New Knowledge Skill 2: Offer Assistance To Others Skill 3: Be Flexible										

Brock, Lillie R. & Mary Ann Salerno, *The Secret to Getting Through Life's Difficult Changes*, Washington, DC: Bridge Builder Media, 1998 [1994].