

ARE YOU A CHANGE CATALYST?

"Time does not exist except for change."

Aristotle

"The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds."

R. D. Laing

"When two people in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary."

William Wrigley, Jr.

Change.....how do you react when you hear that word? Personally, I tend to have a bimodal response of excitement and apprehension. While there is a wide range of how people entertain and respond to change – from little appetite for it with very long change cycles to a significant need for change every few years – I think it's safe to say that we all prefer to be the initiator of change rather than having change thrust upon us.

That's why it's so important to look at one's own willingness to be a change catalyst. I find it fascinating that the word "change" comes from the old English "cambium" which means "becoming."

For there is no life without growth or "becoming" – thus, like it or not, we must embrace and accept change unless, we want to live life in a numbed or deadened state. Discovering ways to anticipate and embrace change is a key competency of emotional intelligence. After all, whenever we don't get what we want we have to change course.

The process of "becoming" is enlivening and indeed critical for life. To be human is, by definition, to continually integrate to higher levels of complexity, an ability conferred by the incredible nervous system humans have evolved, with its' multiple iterations of intelligence: from the residual reptilian brain (instincts) to the limbic (emotional) brain to the cerebral neo-cortex.

If we're alive, our nervous systems are continuously driving us to higher levels of integration. If we embrace that drive, we will become a more whole person. If not, we become unhealthy (on some level) and eventually die. Harsh as that may sound, it's just a law of nature.

Ask yourself:

"How alive do I feel?"

"Am I present to the possibilities of the moment or am I dwelling on what isn't happening or what I wish would happen?"

Change catalysts generate movement. Movement is life, even if it's not always in the right direction. Movement is better than stuck-ness.

"Becoming" and change produce movement that is guided by purpose, movement that is on purpose, movement that is driven by intention. Movement without purpose is only activity while movement with purpose is change.

Here are some ways to know if you're a change catalyst:

1. Do you take your discontent as information that something needs to change?
2. Do you take your complaints and transform them into constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement?
3. Do you personally lead change initiatives or wait for others to do it?
4. Do you continue to advocate change even if you meet resistance or opposition?
5. Are you willing to tolerate the discomfort that occurs in the transition from the old to the new?

If you'd like to catalyze more change for your self or others, here are some things that can serve as catalysts for you individually or for groups in which you want to be a catalyst:

- Give and get authentic feedback.
- Create a force field for yourself of environments that support and reinforce the direction in which you want to move
- Continue to visualize what you want to create – we know that the subconscious brain starts paying attention to those things in the environment that we place in the foreground of our consciousness.
- Create some cognitive dissonance for yourself by bringing more diversity into your life so that you interact with ideas, people, and situations that challenge your beliefs about how reality is. When you do this, you allow yourself to open to new possibilities.

This article wouldn't be complete, of course, if I didn't say that when change isn't happening the way we want, acceptance and patience can be the greatest virtues.

For, as Buckminster Fuller said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Here's a challenge: Use this next month to change something you've been discontent about or perhaps have been putting off moving forward on! Create some new movement in your life or your team's life, and pay attention to the new possibilities that open up!