



Coping with Change - Exercise: Why Do We Often Resist Change?

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

*"We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark;
the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light." -- Plato*

"I Want to - but I Can't!"

Have you ever felt as though something in your life needs to change, maybe even something that's causing you great distress, yet you seem to resist making that change anyway? Perhaps it's smoking cessation, or weight management, reacting lovingly to parenting challenges, or other behavior patterns you'd like to change, yet you resist. We've all resisted making changes in our lives at one time or another, and there is actually an interesting reason for that.

There's a Part of Us That Just Loves the Status Quo.

There's no place like homeostasis. It is the nature of the body-mind to endeavor to maintain the status quo. This is what the human stress response is all about. The body-mind is always working behind the scenes to maintain homeostasis, constantly trying to maintain equilibrium.

But sometimes the status quo can be harmful. Have you heard stories of brutally physically and emotionally battered children who, when social services arrives to remove them from a criminally abusive parent, wail and beg to stay with that parent? Once we understand why it is that we are resistant, healthy change becomes not only possible, but appealing.

10 Questions to Ask Ourselves When Contemplating a Change

1. If I could peeled off the layer of anxiety, what emotion would I find underneath it?
2. Is this change necessary? Why or why not?
3. Do I have a choice about how or when this will happen?
4. In a month, might I feel some relief if I do/don't make this change?
5. Would _____ (someone you deeply respect) do this?
6. What aspects of this change can I control?
7. What aspects must I learn to accept?
8. What's the worst that can happen if I make this change?
9. What's the worst that can happen if I don't?
10. What are three possible positive results if I make this change?

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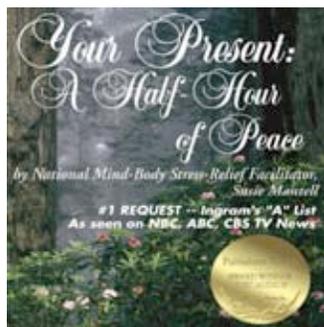
Exercise: Why Do We Resist Change?

(Safety Note: If you have any medical limitations, just visualize this exercise.)

1. Close your non-dominant hand into a tight, tight fist.
2. Okay, now squeeze even tighter.
3. Maintain this tension, continually tightening again and again if your grip loosens.
4. Hold the fist as tight as you possibly can for 60 seconds, gently breathing into it.
5. After 60 seconds, *v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y* (!) begin to gradually unfold your fingers.

Lesson: It is often more uncomfortable to release the pain and tension to which we've become accustomed, than it is to just keep holding on to it. But once we finally release that hand, we discover that we have doubled our potential!

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