

How to Get Started On Making A Successful Change

The one thing in life we can all count on is change. Some changes come about because of unexpected life circumstances that we'd rather not be going through, like a job layoff or an unexpected health limitation. Other changes may be welcome and happen through personal design, such as choosing to get married, changing careers or deciding to improve your health through regular exercise and better eating habits. Chosen or not, each of these new situations disturbs the equilibrium or "balance" of our lives to some extent. Current routines and previously successful ways of managing everyday activities may no longer work. We may find ourselves ill at ease or uncomfortable. Perhaps we may feel "stuck", not knowing what to do in order to get back in balance.

How can we shift from the discomfort and turn these life circumstances into truly invigorating, life-enhancing experiences? Making a successful change can be easier than you might think. In her book called *Walk On! A guide for babies of all ages*, Marla Frazee reminds us to "only begin when you are ready".

My research on making successful transitions suggests that before you take committed action and start walking down a new road, it's best to start with some preliminary activities. Just like the child who needs to spend time developing her brain and muscles to be able to walk, we as adults have our own level of preparation that is worthwhile and can support our successfully walking down new life paths. This preparation includes taking the time to recognize that your life is changing, be truly honest about what's important and mapping out where you want to go next.

What if you don't know where to go next? Here's an effective exercise that can help you clarify what your next step can be, and it involves introspection. You can consider it part of your planning prior to the action phase of making a successful change on your life journey.

Take 10-30 minutes of undisturbed time to assess the situation. The purpose of this inward journey is to understand what is changing and what will make your future be as fulfilling as possible. If you're feeling stuck with this exercise, now is a good time to ask someone you trust to go through it with you....a close friend or a partner.

1. Describe the aspect of your life that is changing or that you want to change.
2. Brainstorm the answers to the following questions:
 - a) What would be negative about making this change (to me, my life, and other significant people in my life)?
 - b) What would be positive about making this change (to me, my life, and other significant people in my life)?

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3. Has writing down the positives helped you feel a sense of balance in viewing this situation? If not, check to see what additional positive points might offset each negative.
4. With these realities in mind, what do you want in a best case scenario?
5. What's the timeframe when the change will happen (or you want it to happen) and is there anything you can do to give yourself more time to be prepared?
6. What qualities or practices can you use to support this change in a successful and positive way? For example, you might need to focus, prioritize, maintain a sense of calm or centeredness.
7. What's a practical next step to get you moving towards what you want? For example, one of my clients is adding file storage space to her computer to be ready for additional business that will increase her income.

With this completed exercise, you now have a fuller, more balanced understanding of the situation you're facing. You know the internal resources that you can draw on to carry you through this time of change. Finally, you're ready to move towards what's next for this part of your life, with a practical action step. May this step down your life's path lead to your successful change, one that is fulfilling and enjoyable!

If you'd like some additional support in taking this first step, email me a copy of your answers to these questions to mary@pathmakercoaching. I'll respond via email with my feedback and/or additional questions for you to deepen your preparation.

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Coach and Author, Mary Radu, guides midlife individuals and couples to find the core of what's truly important for life's next stage and get into action to achieve it. She helps end the struggle and uncover career, lifestyle and retirement options built on experience and passion. Get immediate tips and resources from her ezine plus a f.r.e.e sample of her audio/workbook program, **Roadmap to Meaningful Midlife®** at www.PathmakerCoaching.com or contact her at mary@PathmakerCoaching.com .