

CHANGE TAKES TIME



In the world of things, change barrels ahead at warp speed. We live in a material world where success is largely associated with money and the acquisition of things. So naturally, most of the time our attention is firmly fixed in the rapidly changing world of things.

In the world of social human interaction, change is much slower. This is because it requires more than just a change in behaviour. It also requires a change in attitudes and beliefs that are deeply rooted in personal, family, societal and cultural histories. You may have held yours and lived by them for a very long time. Deciding whether or not you want to change them is no easy task.

In order to make a good decision, you have to know what your attitudes and beliefs are. Many people are not consciously aware of them. Understanding where they have come from is not essential, but it is often helpful. Sometimes people hold a belief or attitude just because “that’s how it’s always been in my family or in my culture.” That does not mean it is right for you.

You have to see the positive and negative ways your beliefs and attitudes affect your life. How do they get you ahead and how do they hold you back? You have to assess the costs and the benefits of changing them. There will always be both. Sometimes you can only take a best guess about the impact of changing them. There is no certainty. There is always risk.

As you go through your journey of change, be generous and flexible about the time it is going to take. So many people get frustrated, give up, and feel as though they have failed because it didn’t happen as fast as they wanted it to.

Some changes do happen quickly. We’ve all heard a story about someone quitting a 40-year, two-pack-a-day smoking habit cold turkey. Behavior can change easily when a significant reexamination of one’s attitudes and beliefs is not necessary. The benefits just have to outweigh the costs, and the more they do, the easier it will be to make the change.

But look at the decades it has taken for society to change its attitude about smoking. In the 1920’s it was glamorous. Somewhere around the late ‘70’s or early 80’s it began to lose it’s appeal. Now we have smoking and non-smoking sections in public places and in many workplaces smoking is banned. It’s considered socially unacceptable now to smoke in someone else’s home without asking first.

If the changes you are making in your life are requiring you to reevaluate your beliefs and attitudes, set yourself up to succeed by giving yourself all the time you need. It may be weeks, and it may be years. Be patient.

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