

Four Steps for Empowering Change By Sandy Brewer, PhD

Change is tricky. We begin with the best of intentions but even when we perceive that we are putting our proverbial best foot forward, our efforts often only meet with failure. So how can we bring purposeful change into our lives and leave behind the baggage of the past that so often defines and limits us?

Like life, change is not a passive journey. It requires choice, will and industrial strength grit. We all have challenges in life, but what we do with them, how we create change as a result of being responsible for our choices sets the framework for how we experience our present and our future.

Here are 4 steps we can use for empowering change in our lives today.

Let's begin with the understanding that no true change is going to happen without choice. And no true choice is going to be implemented without will, heavily laced with more than a little courage. One of the gutsier choices has to be the willingness to give up one's story. A story is: My mother plotted to kill me (true), and so I am screwed forever (false). Too dramatic for everyday life? A story is: The clerk in the store was rude to me but not the skinny blonde next to me, so it must be because I'm fat or drab or that the wart on my nose hasn't fallen off yet. Or maybe all three. A story is: My partner just yelled at me and now I have to be a victim because, after all, people always yell at me.... Nobody *ever, ever* treats me right. I never get *any* breaks. It *always* rains.

Basically a story is anything we get attached to—and play and replay—in order to validate that we don't have any worth. It's the addictive drama—the head noise of inner war. Even if everyone is doing what we think they're doing, we still have to detach from the story—the idea that our value is on the line. It's not. So, our persistent three-act plays, with all their good guy/bad guy dialogues, have got to go. I know that doesn't seem fair. And it's not. But it's required anyway.

These are the choices necessary to achieve change:

Take a moment, breathe deep, and remember this is only a list. Do with it what you will.

1. Adopt a living-philosophy/point of view/passionate belief system that is greater than your history and/or pain. Mine is: My spirit – the source of all that I am – and I am one. Pick one that's right for you.
2. Make the choice that you are not a victim no matter what. Your well being cannot be predicated on who did what, when, or where. My early history was fraught with cruelty. Yet the only way that history could have won, would have been if I had remained a victim. I learned through trial and error that I am only a victim if I give someone else my mind. As difficult as life can be, "I am not a victim" is a choice that has to be made. No excuses. I gave birth to my father's child at the age of 13. I am not a victim. None of us is a victim unless *we* say so.

3. Let go of attachment to drama. It's theatre, and not very good theatre, played out on a stage in a cluttered attic. Change your mind. Constant drama is a way of trying to validate that you are alive, important, and have purpose. It's based on the perspective that you don't feel special and don't really feel alive or connected in your core. If your life is a soap opera, then chances are that you are compensating for a boat load of unworthiness. You're really not unworthy, but you're building a life based on your fear that you are.

4. Do unto others.... Life is in many ways a mirror. The ways in which you repeatedly, both overtly and covertly, criticize/judge others are *always* a reflection on yourself. If criticizing and judging others is a reflection back to yourself (and it is), that's not a kind way to treat someone with whom you're supposed to be falling in love—namely you.

Well, there's my list.

Is this list doable?

Absolutely.

Can it change your life?

Yes. In the doing is the undoing.

Will it take devotion, commitment, courage and effort?

Yes, but we are all worth our own effort.

Is the list simple to understand?

Relatively.

Easy?

Not on your life.

But don't forget, it's very, very doable.

If we have the courage to reach for change, life will find a new way to dance with us, leading, gliding, tripping, and bumping us into new pathways. New lights. New potentials that let us unfold a life greater than the stages of our past. Greater than the stories that keep contracting us into the limitations and darkness of our fears.

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