

Change

“Nought endures but change...”

Ludwig Boerne, 1825. *German Political writer*

“We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature.”

Edmund Burke, 1796. *English Writer and Orator*

“There is nothing permanent except change.”

Heraclitus, ca. 500 B.C. *Greek Philosopher*

Change is the siren’s sound of our age – seductive and dangerous. Seductive, because of the promise that change offers; dangerous because it may lead us into uncharted territory. Change could be an American preoccupation because it’s based on the optimistic assumption that the future has unlimited opportunities, and that perfectability of the human soul is a goal to be pursued.

In our quiet moments we often yearn for change, and believe that with just a little more effort we can achieve our dreams and desires. Yet when we confront our own reality, we often have to acknowledge that our goals are often just outside our grasp. Why does this happen, and more importantly, how can we learn to be more successful in making those changes that are so important to us?

I believe it will be helpful to break change into its constituent elements.

- **Level 1** Conduct
- **Level 2** Consciousness
- **Level 3** Character

Change can occur starting from any of the three levels, but the motivation to change and the strength and durability of the change depends on its source. Let’s use a common issue to describe this process: *weight loss and weight maintenance*. I believe that no health issue receives more attention than weight loss. And there is probably no health issue that has been subject to more failure than weight loss programs. It has been estimated that fewer than 5% of people who achieve weight loss are able to maintain their desired weight over an extended period of time. The reason for this is simple: weight loss programs focus on *conduct*. How much to eat, when to eat, what to eat, when not to eat. The emphasis is on what to do. There is nothing wrong with any of the programs; prolonged weight loss doesn’t work because the problem does not exist at the conduct level. We eat the way we do because of what eating does for us, not because we don’t know enough about correct eating habits. After all, the essence of

all weight loss programs is simple. Eat when you're hungry, stop when you're full. Cut way down on sugars of all types. Exercise regularly. This is not new information, yet most weight loss programs act as if the program itself is the key – it's not.

A more effective way of losing weight is to get a deeper sense of why you eat too much. This obviously requires introspection and self-examination, and is based on the assumption that our eating habits are based upon how we feel. Are we willing to uncover those inner feelings and deal with them, so that we uncouple our feelings from our eating habits? Going through this process is definitely more difficult, but raising our *consciousness* about our deeper motivation offers us a better chance of making the changes we truly desire.

The deepest, most profound and most powerful changes occur when we plumb the depths of our being and discover, for example, the essence of who we are. The goal of meditation and therapy is to give us the opportunity to access the deepest connection between ourselves, others, and the universe at large. Disciplines such as the enneagram provide a way in to discovering our true purpose or calling. These insights take the most work and also provide us with the greatest opportunity for making long lasting change. When we make changes at this level it actually changes our *character* – who we really are.

When you want to make a change, it's always easiest to start at the conduct level. But when the desired change doesn't occur, it's then time to go deeper and discover the root cause of the resistance. Is the resistance caused by objections or internal issues which have previously not been brought to consciousness? Or the block may be due to even deeper issues, such as discovering our basic purpose in life or perhaps, our connection to the greater whole. The deeper we go in discovering the "why" behind our behavior, the greater chance we have to bringing about positive changes in our behavior. It takes courage to go down the path of self-discovery. *Are you ready?*

*Nick Ray is a personal and business coach.
He can be reached at nick@coachnickray.com or at 510-898-3245.
A complimentary coaching session is available.
www.coachnickray.com*

Nicholas R. Ray
CLU, RHU, ChFC
Personal & Business Coach