MAKING CHANGE POSSIBLE

Did you make New Years’ Resolutions? And, if you did, are you still keeping them? If you can answer that question with a “Yes!” (and a big, self-satisfied grin) then you’re a very unusual person. It’s hard to change. Statistics show that when medical doctors tell people with chronic medical problems that they’d better “change this or else ---,” only 25 to 35 percent of those surveyed actually manage to make the required change, and then stick to it.

Most of us don’t need a doctor’s admonition – is there anyone left in the Western world who truly doesn’t know that too much alcohol is bad for us, that smoking will kill us, that stress is a killer too, that consumption of sugar creates terrific medical problems, and that eating enough vegetables will lengthen our healthy lifespan, just as will daily exercise? That’s what New Years’ Resolutions are all about –deciding that this year we will do what we know we should. We’re starting the year out clean, clearing the slate and vowing to make our lives better and brighter.

But sometimes something is happening that’s bigger than only making our lives better. Maybe our health is in a really bad way. Perhaps the requirements of stopping disease and reversing damage it has caused demand that we take on a whole slate of very major and very specific changes that we’ve got to start making Right Now. The demands may look impossible. But they’re not. There are ways to insure that you’re able to make those required changes – and keep to them. A French poet, Jean De La Fontaine, once wrote that, "Man is so made that when anything fires his soul, impossibilities vanish." We only need to find that fire!

The first thing to do is to claim yourself a good-sized chunk of absolutely clear time. During this time you cannot, and will not be interrupted under any circumstances whatsoever. Get yourself a pad and a pencil and make yourself comfortable. Make yourself a whole pot of peppermint tea, not just a cup, because you’re going to be doing some serious thinking with a pencil in your hand, and it’s going to take some time. Begin with this:

What do I want? Explore this question from every possible angle and write down every single thing that occurs to you, no matter how crazy it may seem. As you think and write, know it’s never too late, it’s never too much, and nothing’s utterly impossible. Reach out – let your fingertips brush heaven – dream, and write down every single thing that occurs to you. Don’t stop before you have at least 50 items written down – but this is a case where more is even better. If you’re inspired, keep on writing. When you make this list, you’re putting the universe, and/or God, and/or every element of your consciousness on notice that THIS is what you mean to have happen.

Now stand back from your list, allow yourself to be a bit abstract, and think of what’s on it as one large picture.

I assume that, if you’re sick, at least one item on your list refers to being healthy and whole again. And if you’re seriously ill, it’s very likely that a number of the items on your list will show the desire for health weaving in and out. But know this too; there won’t be
a single item on your list that won’t require complete health to be realized. Realizing your dreams requires energy. And energy requires health. It’s essential that you see this for yourself via your explorations of what you want beyond “I want to be healthy again”. It’s all well and good to want complete health, but to make the changes required to attain health, you’ve got to know WHY your health is important to you. What’s your health FOR? It’s not good enough to shrug and say, “Oh, Lord, I already understand all that”. Maybe you do. But doing this exercise will show you a pile of things you’ve never seen before. Your unconscious has a lot to tell you about your life; you only need to find ways to hear it. And a pencil in your hand will make all kinds of things happen.

To give you an example of how this can work, my beloved husband is 20 years older than I am. We live in a foreign country. When I was diagnosed with MS, I was looking down the barrel of radical and increasing disability in a land not my own at a point when my husband might not be able to take care of me. This was completely unacceptable. When I made the first of many lists of what I want after that diagnosis, heading the page was the fierce intention that I would be completely physically independent for the rest of my life. Fast on the heels of articulating that came the knowledge that insuring life-long physical independence meant I had to completely heal the MS I’d been diagnosed with. Which I did, by healing elements and aspects of what created the disease in me.

There were many, many things I wanted to try, to work with and to achieve, but healing MS was required before any of those other things could be seriously considered, much less accomplished. I’m not sure that I would have had such success with making the changes I had to make if I hadn’t known what I wanted and why I wanted it. It was the hard and clear knowledge of what I wanted that made vast swathes of lifestyle change possible. I had to quit smoking, give up alcohol and chocolate, stop eating cheese (and all other dairy), walk away from the high stress work I loved… the list just went on, and on, and on. But I was able to do these things, because I understood WHY they were necessary. And that WHY wasn’t because I wanted better health.

By the way – and this is very important – only by writing these things down will you put the universe, and/or God, and/or every element of your consciousness on notice that THIS is what you mean to have happen, that this is what you WILL have happen. It’s how you fan the fire in your soul to life. With that fire, all things are possible. So you know what you want. What you want is clear like the most beautiful mountain peak on a translucent day of blue and crystal light.

Your next step is to identify what you must accomplish before anything else can be done. I’m still centered on good health being the element required before many other things can be achieved, but don’t misunderstand me. One hundred percent total health is not a prerequisite before anything else can be achieved. Look at what Christopher Reeve achieved after the accident that left him paralyzed from the neck down. He became an international symbol of courage, inspiring people in all walks of life. Or look at Matthew Sanford. He was 13 when the car carrying his entire family skidded off an overpass. His mother and brother were uninjured, his father and sister were killed, and Matt was paralyzed from the chest down. After getting a university degree, he turned to
MAKING CHANGE POSSIBLE

yoga to help him make sense of his life. He became a yoga teacher, also developing yoga for people with profound physical disabilities. He founded Mind Body Solutions in addition to his teaching speaks nationally about the mind-body relationship.

Then there’s the story of Jacques Lusseyran. Born in France in 1925, he was completely blind by age of seven and 15 at the time of the German Occupation in WWII. At 16 he headed an underground resistance movement of 600 youths. He was 18 when he was apprehended and sent to a concentration camp; he was liberated two years later. He then went to America where he became a university professor and writer. (I think of this fellow sometimes, when I’m having a particularly challenging day.) These are just three examples of people who’ve achieved greatness with broken bodies. But it’s important to add that however broken a body may be, any example of extreme accomplishment on this side of great disability is also an example of maximum health having been reached and maintained.

Now let’s look at things from a more day-to-day perspective. You’re ill. To heal and then maintain your health, you must make significant lifestyle changes. Change is hard. Change is damn scary. But you’ve made your lists, you know what you want, and the fire in your soul is burning bright. What next? Let’s look at what’s required. If you’re reading this, you’re probably among those who are already working with a Quantum Techniques practitioner. Your practitioner can test and tell you what must be done. From there it’s a matter of implementing the change. And what does that take? The first thing to understand is that significant levels of stress make it biologically impossible to implement change. But when you must make change, here’s the first thing to do:

Diminish your stress levels. This is a major topic, and not something I can cover completely here. But I can tell you one thing you must seriously consider doing. If you’re sick, put your healing first. It won’t be forever, but for now, in this moment, as you’re struggling to make the changes that will result in healing, you must come first. You might be surprised at the degree to which doing this reduces your stress levels.

Next, set reasonable goals. When I was doing this, over a period of three months I eliminated a number of food items, starting with those I most urgently had to drop from my diet (in my case, all dairy and all saturated fat went immediately). Then I stopped smoking, and three weeks after that I quit drinking wine. A month after that I picked up a yoga class two or three times a week, and a couple weeks later I quit drinking wine. In six months I had completely remade my life. The positive results came in waves of response to each change as it was securely established. And the degree of improvement in my physical condition in the seventh month was profoundly rewarding. I knew I had an enormous amount of change to make, but I didn’t set myself up to fail before I even began by trying to do all of it at once.

Your situation may be different, and you may not be able to cherry-pick quite as much as I did. You may have a fungal infection that will not heal unless you immediately drop all sugars, grains, sweet fruits, fermentation and yeasts, and perhaps one or two other things from your diet. When you keep to a very strict diet, and add whatever
supplementation is required for healing (for example grapefruit seed extract, or oregano oil), most fungal infections can be cleared in 3 to 6 weeks. Once the fungal infection is cleared, you may be able to add some items back into your diet as you tackle the next steps to complete healing. When three to six weeks begins to look impossible, review your goals, remind yourself of what you want and WHY.

As you implement change, be aware of your rewards. For instance, significant dietary change may start rewarding you within a week or 10 days of implementation. You may have higher energy, be thinking more clearly, and have improved health overall. Don’t be a chump about his stuff, allow yourself to notice that things feel better! (Your clothes might feel better too.) But waiting seven to 10 days to notice a positive change might not be quick enough in terms of rewarding yourself for staying on the straight and narrow, so consider what activities give you pleasure. Make a list of everything you love to do, cross off anything that’s dangerous (smoke-filled bars are almost certain to be a bad idea, however convivial the company) and then DO THEM.

You’re putting yourself first in this period, so you have the time to rent and watch a movie every single day for a week, or even more (but try to avoid those that are depressing or negative). You can comparison shop until you see exactly the racing bike you’ve got to have. Have a massage, and the next day a facial, or have a special barber give you a shave for a change. You can tour the gyms and sample yoga and tai chi classes (even if you’re only able to watch) until you can say for absolute certain – yes... this is the one I want to take. Sign up for that painting class you always dreamt of and go to art stores to contemplate brushes and acrylic versus oil. You can finish a new romance novel every other day (Georgette Heyer is highly recommended) or invest in a pile of magazines on race cars. Sign up for a meditation class, and make time to meditate every single day. Look more closely at your list of what I want, and dream your way further into what you’ve written down. Add colors, geography, smells, textures. Make what’s on that list so real that you can run your hands over it – and make notes of the evolving growth.

The point here is very simple. If you want to make change, you must reward yourself every single step on the way. If that means you must reward yourself every day for 21 days in a row, so be it. You may find that you must invest a little extra money in this process, but so long as you avoid putting yourself into ridiculous amounts of debt, try not to worry too much: it’s money very well spent. (You may also be surprised to discover how little it costs to do the things that give you deep and abiding pleasure.) As you do this, you are literally rewiring your brain. You’re weakening the old, bad habits, and digging new roads and pathways. In his book, ‘Dialogue with Death’, Eknath Easwaran talks about samskaras, a Hindu term for tendencies, or habits. He points out that we’re not born with our habits; we build them. Samskaras are a conditioned, automatic way of thinking and responding to life. A samskara is a thought repeated, leading to words repeated, resulting in action repeated. Continue the thought, allowing it to become ridged, and the samskara, or habit will grow stronger and begin to dictate your behavior. Easwaran quotes Buddha who tells us that “All that we are arises from
our thought.” Change your thinking, and you will change your action. The sum of your newly healthy actions create a lifestyle that is healing, and healthy.

Change is entirely within your power. You may find moments when you’re hanging on by the skin of your teeth, when the only thing that keeps you going is the clear knowledge of what you want and the strength of your desire. At first it’s hard, but – depending on what expert you read – a new habit is built within 28 to 40 days. This means that when you are dedicated to the practice, from four to six weeks from the moment you begin, you will have built yourself a new set of positive and healthy habits. All you need is to know what you want, and choose to take the action required. That will light a fire in your soul that won’t, under any circumstances, go out!

**Useful books:**
Write it Down, Make it Happen by Henriette Anne Klauser
Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers by Robert M. Sapolsky
The Healing Brain by Robert Ornstein and David Sobel
Dialogue With Death by Eknath Easwaran

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