

Change Is Always Changing

Revisit how to create new possibilities.

A WIDER LENS Blog by Dr. Kenneth Silvestri

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Change occurs at every moment! When I began my studies of anthropology, I remember hearing a quote from media theorist Neil Postman asking, "What kinds of changes are going on right now? Which are important?" It occurred to me at the time, and still to this day, that change is always changing. I like the word "liminal" to emphasize this, because it refers to that space which occurs more than we realize, at the very moment of transition when there is an energy looking for a difference that will make a difference.

To understand change is to recognize how it is a process of moving from one situation or context to another larger, all-encompassing context. This is where we evolve, and change is that vibrant interaction that defines us through our relationships. It is also part of how all systems (including us) will move toward disorder, what we call entropy. However, change still offers positive choices for the future.

Think of it this way, nature is full of part-to-whole interconnected patterns. Trees get nurture from the soil then give back to the environment, and so on. Looking beyond the confines of our existence with a peripheral glance makes it obvious how we are interdependent and connected. Nature exists with the ebb and flow of an almost magical self-correcting power, which is driven by change. This is challenged, unfortunately, by how humans think they can mess with nature.

Improvisational Change

Change will regardless bring unpredictable paradoxes, those seemingly contradictory interactions that are sometimes viewed as conflict or even humor. Comedian Gracie Allen had a friend who told her that she asked her doctor if a woman should have children after 35. Gracie responded, "Thirty-five children is enough for any woman." Paradoxes are not good or bad; they are just what they are, the grist for creativity and self-fulfillment within our complexity. In the wild of nature, baby cubs can be food to a larger predator in one instance, but at the same time relate to the survival of other species. If we don't pay heed to the potential that lies beyond paradoxes, we fail to lessen the inevitable pains of life. This is happening far too much and leads to the trap of creating stagnant double binds, those unenviable "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situations. Many of our socio-political institutions are now stuck in double binds. It is becoming fruitless to just maintain them or to patch them up; nature is crying out for more harmonious outcomes.

Creating Meaningful Change

How can we address change in today's world? We can start with dialogue and mutually share our many different points of view that respect and support our interdependency. Our life can be more fulfilling by being an active participant to affect change. A beginning point would be to ask questions about what influences, strengths, and consequences exist in different contexts. For example, families, learning institutions, media, work, parenting, power, and gender, to mention a few, may need to be revisited and revised.

I believe that solutions exist not in repeating failed systems, but within collaborative, empathic relationships. Therefore, should depression be individualized; education be judged within the confines of bureaucratic schools; economics be dependent on unequal distribution; psychology be based on narrow labels; food production be unhealthy; healing be through corporate pharma; politics be based on re-election; climate problems be denied; gender/race/diversity be inequitable; and so on and on? These are questions that need to be localized, then seen simultaneously in larger perspectives, not polarized. Why not assist change to follow its natural law of recognizing anomalous behavior and then creating alternatives? Each of us has a role to be courageous and participate in providing needed solutions. This can collaboratively occur at those transitional, liminal moments, when the opportunity beckons us with the

potential of new frameworks that can define our quest to be in harmony with nature and to listen to her warnings.

Suggestions for Change

Embrace change, conflict, and challenge. Read about Systems Theory and “Warm Data” (see [Nora Bateson](#)). Meet in small groups. Focus on topics that touch your lives. Then decide on what needs to change with each topic that can be injurious to you, your community and the world. Have everyone articulate a minimum of five different perspectives on the chosen topic, creating several points of view, respecting all as having validity. Make no judgments, just listen and learn from each other.

Come to a consensus with the many things that were discussed. Then begin to explore resolutions through a wider perspective, keeping in mind how interdependence can provide solutions. Share and spread your insights through many different avenues (i.e., poetry, music, and any other forms of communication) with your community and become part of other mutual sharing topics.

Most of all, celebrate change and all its possibilities. Or as Hannah Arendt once said, “the new always appears in the guise of a miracle.”

Image: #5, Natasha Rabin