

## **Experiencing Well-Being in 2009 - Facing the Truth**

*"The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear."*

- Herbert Agar

Think of change this way. Grasp a rubber band between the thumb and forefinger of your right hand and between the thumb and forefinger of your left hand. Think of this rubber band as your life. Now stretch the rubber band. Think of the right hand as representing new ways of do-ing, be-ing and having. Think of your left hand as representing old or current ways of do-ing, be-ing and having. Every time you stretch to act in some new way, your left hand (your mind, your body and your brain) are pulling you back into old patterns. The sole reason 98% of the folks who resolve to change in the New Year fail by January 25th is their falling back into old ways of do-ing, be-ing and having. The pull to passivity, to the same old patterns of do-ing and be-ing is just too powerful. Their challenge of something new is trumped by their need for familiarity – the need to NOT change.

The truth about change

*"The truth, like surgery, may hurt, but it cures."*

-Han Suyin

So, the truth about change. Making changes in one's life is challenging! If you decide your life is more interesting, more satisfying, happier and more worth living by not changing, that is your choice. But, you can't have it both ways – I hate my life and I don't want to change. That's the definition of insanity – doing the same thing in the same way, over and over again, and expecting different results each time. Insanity is a choice.

Taking time (perhaps five minutes, ten minutes or thirty minutes) on a consistent basis to act in a new way doesn't sound difficult but it is! Being honest and serious about your life is difficult, because we've not learned how to express love for ourselves. But, if you can't take some minutes for yourself on a consistent basis, there's a 100% chance you won't be capable of changing your lifestyle or life patterns, because you're not going to feel you're worth it.

So, here are some truths I and my coaching clients have faced over the years, truths which have supported us to change and transform our lives in ways that have resulted in a greater sense of well-being. Facing these truths in an honest, sincere, and self-responsible way, with love and compassion for yourself will jump start your journey towards meaningful change and transformation.

Connect to your life force

Your life force is an energy. It's real. Your life force is what provides you with the qualities of self-love, compassion, forgiveness, strength, courage, will, discipline, steadfastness, wisdom, truth, deep listening, right understanding and right action (notwithstanding those who say it's all about willpower) . To connect to your life force, it's important to engage in some type of spiritual practice – meditation (sitting or walking), energy work such as yoga, tai chi or martial arts, self-reflection or contemplation, quietude and silence, or journaling. A spiritual practice is not about religion or theology. I know atheists who have a spiritual practice; I know avowed religious folks who don't. The truth is, touching in on a regular basis to our deeper self results in experiencing a deeper sense of well-being that supports us in time of challenge and gives us a sense of grounding, peace and calm with which we approach life and make healthy life choices and changes.

Live in a real community

If you find yourself spending more and more time engaged in online social networks, if you live much of your life communing with "friends" on Facebook, MySpace and in virtual communities, there's a better than average chance you're real-world social skills may be eroding. You may find yourself turning down more and more invitations to "real" social events or feeling more uncomfortable when you do engage. You may find your social skills when engaging with "real" people are diminishing. You may find yourself "holding up" in your home more and more, venturing outside less and less. The truth is, a healthy sense of well-being comes from interacting and engaging in community; real, not fake, community. Our personal growth and positive mental, emotional and psychological health and well-being feeds on the nourishment we get from conscious interaction with others.

Eat to live; exercise for health

Do you eat to live or live to eat? What's your diet like? Most everyone knows what a healthy diet looks like. The health of our mind-body-spirit unit cannot maintain without a healthy diet. I've come across countless folks over the years who exercise to extreme so they can "pig out", gorge themselves, and eat unhealthily. So, in the morning, they run, go to the gym, exercise at home so they can dive into unhealthy food and drink at night. Then, it's the guilt and shame. So, the next day, extreme exercise and unhealthy eating or drinking – a mental, physical, emotional and psychological roller-coaster lifestyle that results in anything but a healthy sense of well-being. Not to mention the emotional inner turmoil that erupts when one skips a day of exercising, but not a day of unhealthy eating or drinking. I've seen countless folks come out of the gym being angry, unhappy and sad even after a "great workout."

The truth is that being in good shape, but poor emotional and psychological health, is bound to lead to a life of self-hate, self-loathing, and utter unhappiness and frustration. Asking one's self, honestly, sincerely and self-responsibly why one diets and exercises, or does not healthily diet or exercise, will help one move into a diet and exercise lifestyle that is healthy – physically, emotionally and spiritually. Is exercising and dieting about true and real health or something else? The "something else" usually leads to consistent emotional upset, frustration and failure.

Conscious intention, commitment and focus

*"One must know oneself, if this does not serve to discover truth, it at least serves as a rule of life and there is nothing better."*

-Blaise Pascal

The truth is, without being "conscious" of who and how one wants to be, without being intentional and focused in every moment of change, the forces of old habits and patterns will take over, reducing change to a small idea in a tiny brain molecule – magical thinking at best. Some important questions to ask are: "Why am I choosing to change?" "Do I have any hunch or instinct I won't be able to keep my intention or change?" The truth is many folks want to change to impress or please someone else. If this is the case in your situation, a deeper exploration of what's underneath your desire to please others is in order. "Why do I need to please others and have others' approval?" "What does pleasing others get me?" "Who would I be and how would I feel if I didn't please others?" "Do I love myself as I am, right here and right now?"

My mind is not me, but mine

On the other hand, if you are honestly and sincerely committed and intentional about your choice to change, consistently monitoring your thoughts can support you in your change efforts. When you want to run faster, longer, and harder (when you know it leads to injury or burnout), when you want to eat the whole bag of M&Ms (when you know you'll be upset with yourself afterwards), when you want to have another cigarette (when you know it's unhealthy), when you want to spend the extra \$100 (when you can't afford it and it jeopardizes your credit score), monitor your thinking and explore what mental messages you're hearing, what your Inner Judge and critic is saying, what old rationale is coming up for

acting in ways that are self-sabotaging. The truth is, you are in control of your mind, not the other way around. If you stay "awake", and ask yourself questions like: "Why am I choosing this...?" "Is this really supportive of my choice to change?" "Am I choosing to sabotage myself and if so why?", you'll come to a deeper understanding of your behaviors that are self-sabotaging and slowly be able to wean yourself away from old patterns and limiting beliefs that keep you from changing .

### Consistency and specifics, not extremes

The truth is, change comes in small steps and for most, there are steps backwards. The name of the well-being game is consistency – moving forward on a conscious and consistent basis. One obstacle that interferes with change is making the mistake of "moving away" rather than "moving towards. In other words, focus on what you want, not on what you don't want. The energy of moving toward a goal is more alive, juicy, positive, enthusiastic, exciting and motivating than the energy of moving away which is heavy, negative, and unpleasant. Another obstacle is acting in extremes: exercising every day (rather than (at least) three days a week and increasing time incrementally), meditating for an hour (rather than starting with five minutes and increasing time slowly); reading the whole book (rather than beginning a chapter, or reading a chapter every few days). The problem here is that our ego gets in the way and our ego's need for perfection to impress ourselves or others dooms us to failure. The truth about achievement is to start slow, be gentle with ourselves, and move forward incrementally and consistently. How does a mouse eat a round of cheese? One small bite at a time. It works!

Finally, use the word "choose" instead of want or need. The energy of choosing is self-empowering and gives you ownership. The truth is change is about feeling light and emotionally free, not about feeling needy for security, control or others' approval. Consistency allows the brain to create the new neurological pathways that have to be ingrained for new ways of do-ing and be-ing to become habitual. No consistency, no change. Extremes only lead to failure.

### Time

*"Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth."*  
-Franklin D. Roosevelt

If you're one who says your life is out of your control, that you don't have enough time in your day to get things done, that you waste your time watching TV or hang out online to an extreme, the truth is that you're doing a poor job at self-management. Time management is NEVER about time. Repeat, NEVER! It's about self-management. Time is the symptom; "me" is the problem. When we work on self-management and self-regulation from a conscious, proactive (not reactive) place, time then ceases to be an issue.

The truth is our values or lack of them play a large role when making choices as to what to do, how and when. When our choices are based on values that are murky and misguided, our efforts lead to confusion, mistakes, "so-called" and self-defeating multitasking and chaos - "inside" and out. With respect to priorities, the truth is, many folks ask the wrong question, i.e., "What's next?" instead of the needed question, "What's first". Lack of self-management skills and clear values produces a lack of clarity and direction so everything is next and now and we know that leads to inner and outer upset and dis-ease.

### Support

I know of very few people who have been able to make honest and lasting change by themselves. Very few. Most folks who succeed with change have a support system of one kind or another. A support system helps us overcome the immune system many of us have towards change. The truth is going it alone hardly ever produces real and lasting change. Who is your support? Are they nonjudgmental? Are they affirming? Do you feel safe talking about your life with them? Do they help you gain clarity?

Living with awareness

*"In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth."*

-Mahatma Gandhi

When we are in touch with our deeper Inner Self, we become free and this sense of freedom helps us make those change that bring lightness within. Awareness supports us to become more center- focused and allows us to discern what serves us from what does not.

The one major element that we can truly control in our life is self-awareness, the awareness that says "I'm the master of my life", the awareness that brings meaning and purpose to our journey on the planet, the awareness that supports us to move forward along the right path. The truth is, without self-awareness, chaos rules our lives and with chaos comes unhappiness, unfulfilled dreams and unmet goals, confusion, overwhelm and stress.

So, what's the truth about you and your life? What's the truth about the stories you tell yourself about why change is so hard and frustrating? About your definition of "insanity?"

The final truth

Most people are free-falling through their lives, ping-ponging from one crisis to the next. Living in this type of spiral leaves no room for conscious living.

The real truth about lasting change and transformation is that true change, transformation and sense of well-be-ing comes with self-awareness and a healthy integration of the body, mind, spirit. Change is a reality that can happen in every moment of our lives, every moment of every life – but only if we are aware of it and see the truth of "who I am" and "how I am" as I live my life.

Why so much emphasis on the truth? Simple. The truth shall set you free.

**So, our \$10 food for thought questions are:**

- Who are you (can you describe this without defining yourself by what you "do")?
- How do you feel when you define yourself?
- What do you want?
- How do you feel when you define what you want?
- Where are you in your life at work, at home, at play and in relationship and, why are you there?
- How do you feel when you describe where you are and why you're there?
- Who are your allies in life?
- What are the "truths" about you and your life?
- How do you feel when you speak the truth of your life?
- Do you have a spiritual practice?
- Is time your friend or enemy? Why?
- At which end of the rubber band do you live most of your life? Why?
- Is your social community more real or virtual?
- Are you optimistic or pessimistic about your life in 2009? Why?
- On a scale of 1-10, where are you when it comes to experiencing a real sense of well-be-ing?
- Can you visualize a world where you are moving effortlessly and consistently toward personal change and transformation?

*"All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them."*

-Galileo

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