

Spring is in the air!

Spring has come to Minnesota at last... just yesterday, as I looked outside into my backyard, I saw a big fat robin, one of the heralds of spring pecking the ground, enjoying the first seeds of the season. A warm feeling washed over me as I watched her slow progress across the yard. Then I noticed my yard was full of robins. I counted at least 30 grazing in the grass. It was an amazing sight, and I took a moment to pause and enjoy nature in all her glory. Seeing a robin is thought to be a sign that new growth is coming in many areas of your life. Imagine what seeing 30 must mean? I guess I'm going to see a lot of changes this year. It's probably a good thing that change is a subject I'm very familiar with.



One of the most important things I've learned about change in my life is that it isn't going away any time soon. We all experience it, throughout our lives, in both small and large ways, from getting a new purse to changing careers and moving across the globe. We all need to learn to be our own personal *change-agents*. In fact I believe learning to manage change is a critical life skill which is second only to the skill and practice of self-evaluation. Here are 10 helpful hints that I believe can help anyone be his or her own personal change-agent.

1. View change as an opportunity for growth. Attitude is everything!
2. Create a support network, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't try to be superwoman! The Beatles had it right - "I'll get by with a little help from my friends."
3. Ask yourself what losses you are perceiving and how might you overcome them. Remember that to grab onto something new, you often must let go of something you are holding on to. There is a gift in every loss; find it and remember it often. As Milt Campbell says "Let your loss be your lesson."
4. Remember it's OK to make a mistake. Carry a personal rewind button around and use it often! As Bil Keane, author of *The Family Circus*, reminds us "You can learn from you mistakes, so be sure to make some."
5. Give yourself time! Even the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years looking for the Promised Land. Let's hope it doesn't take forty years, but remind yourself you need time to reorganize.

6. Think about your relationships and connections. Ask yourself, what connections will facilitate your emergence from your cocoon as you become a gloriously new butterfly?"
7. Be aware of the context in which you exist. Even the best seeds will not grow when planted in fallow ground. A little water, sunshine and fertilizer go a long way toward helping even the smallest seed to grow.
8. Think like a systems thinker; think of feedback loops, time and the whole. Systems thinkers understand the synergistic nature of change which explains why small changes can have big impacts.
9. Remember what PCT (perceptual control theory) teaches about the change process:
 - ☞ You will probably feel out of control.
 - ☞ We experience change as a winding path of growth.
 - ☞ You may experience opposing feelings like sadness and joy.
 - ☞ We humans are extremely adaptable creatures.
 - ☞ You will eventually "figure it out" because that's how we stay alive.
10. Celebrate your small successes! Because PCT teaches us that we are designed to see what isn't working, it is especially essential during change to focus purposefully on what is working in your life.

As I watch spring come to Minnesota and think about change, I am always reminded of my favorite Anaïs Nin quote "There came a time when the risk to remain tight in the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom." It is through change that we can live our lives in full bloom!