



ARE YOU FACING UNWANTED CHANGE (PART 2)?

One of the certainties of life is that things will change. Some things we will change by choice, such as our job, our furniture, our hairstyle and even sometimes our spouse. But some of the changes we face are unwanted and unwelcome. We did not choose them. They choose us, and if we don't handle them well, we can become unglued.

Whether it's an unexpected job loss, health problem, divorce or simply losing our luggage or wallet while on vacation, changes happen. Most time we don't know why, but we can successfully navigate through unwanted changes if we learn to do these three things.



1. **Accept change:** In my last newsletter, I talked about accepting unwanted change. Many times we acknowledge the truth of what happened but we refuse to emotionally accept it. We get stuck in the anger of "this shouldn't have happened this way." In doing so, we resist the change and fight it. On the other hand, acceptance allows us to move through our anger to grieving the losses we face because of the change. Allow yourself to feel your painful feelings. Let them serve their purpose. They are here to teach us something about life, about ourselves or about others. Learn from them, but don't coddle or save them, especially when they're negative. They become more toxic the longer we hold on to them.

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The second thing we can do to face unwanted changes is to prepare for them.

- 2. Prepare for Change:** When we accept that life changes, we prepare for it best we can. Make sure your will is up to date and you know where your spouse keeps financial records and insurance policies. Preparing for your own death or your spouse's death doesn't erase the loneliness, but it sure mitigates some of the stress. Ask your aging parents to do likewise so that if they die suddenly, you know what their wishes are and where they keep their financial records. In the midst of grieving, you don't want to feel angry at them that you have to spend precious time figuring out where they kept their things.

Is empty nest sneaking up on you? What are some things you can do in preparation for the changes you will face once the children are all gone? Do you feel called to a specific ministry or to go back to school to finish up a degree long ago abandoned? What are some things you can do today to refresh your relationship with your spouse now that you won't have kids to distract each of you?

We all know even the best preparations don't always hold up. Those who prepared for retirement are now facing less than they thought they would have. The apostle Paul said that he learned the secret of contentment. He enjoyed whatever God gave him without holding it too tightly. We can practice not clinging in small ways today in order to prepare for letting go in bigger ways later on.

Part of accepting unwanted or unwelcome change is learning to let go of our dreams and wishes of what could have been or should have been so that we are free to embrace what is new in our lives.

- 3. Embrace Change:** When we embrace change, we don't deny that there is a problem or pain, but in the midst of it we ask ourselves the question, "How can I sit with this in a good way?" Several years ago, my younger brother lost his wife to cancer. They were high school sweethearts, and it terrified him to be alone. He didn't know how to do many of the things his wife normally handled, but he decided he could learn.

Although he would never have chosen this path, he's learned things about himself and his strengths in ways that would not have been possible if he had not embraced the unwanted changes in his life as a result of widowhood.

When change is unexpected and unwelcome, our attitude is the only things we can still control. When we choose to stay positive and look for the good in a situation, we often

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discover unexpected blessings and opportunities that would have never happened had not this change entered our life.

Although my brother would have never wanted his wife to die, he now says, "I am not the same man I was back then. Not only my life circumstances have changed, I've changed. I was reborn. This is a very good thing."

What unwanted changes are you facing? You can learn to accept them, prepare for them and embrace them and thereby transform their negative impact on your life.