

How We Change

Human beings rarely like change. The status quo feels safer, more comfortable and more predictable. In addition, when we make a decision to change, we tend to expect change to happen all at once. It helps to understand that change is a process. It takes time. We must support and encourage change. Be your own best cheerleader and read the following story.

The Story of Change

Every day I walk down the same street because it's the best way I know to get where I am going. Sometimes I fall in a hole that is in that street. It's pretty dark in that hole. I don't know how it is that I fall in and I sure don't know how to get out. I only know I don't like it when I'm in the hole.

I keep walking down the street. Now I see the hole every time I go that way. I keep falling in. I better find out how I keep falling in and how to get out. I'm tired of being in the dark.

Now when I walk down the street and continue to fall in the hole, I know how I got in the hole and I know how to get out of the hole.

The Story of Change Explained

This is the period before we are aware any change is necessary. If someone suggests we should change, we feel unjustly criticized or coerced into changing. It is often only when “falling in the hole” creates obvious and painful problems that we decide to change.

In this first stage of change we recognize the problem after we get into it. We still respond without thinking. We have a long-standing habit and it takes time to change it. If we tell ourselves “I'll never change” we give up and don't change. If we tell ourselves that we are now in the first stage of change, we can move to the next stage.

In this second stage of change we recognize the problem in the middle of what we are doing, but we still don't stop. We have a long-standing habit and it takes time to change it. Encouraging ourselves that we are now in the second stage of change moves us to the third. If we discourage ourselves we give up and don't change.

Now I walk down the street and sometimes I walk around the hole.

Now I often walk down a different street.

The third stage of change is recognizing the problem before we get into it. We often go ahead and do what we always did. We have a long-standing habit and it takes time to change it. We must encourage ourselves that we are now in the third stage of change so we can move to the final stage.

We recognize the problem before we get into it and more and more often decide to do something different. Some habits can and will die out completely and we always walk down a different street. Others are not that amenable to complete extinction so we may have lapses, but we readily turn away from the old street and walk down the new one.