



The Rules of Change

By Dennis Wholey

Life is a journey of discovery — and change is the catalyst, the energy source, that propels us toward self-acceptance, unconditional love for others, appreciation of life, and a relationship with God. The journey of life is inward, not upward — and all change is really for the better, regardless of how painful it is at the time.

Life is not a spectator sport: it requires being deeply and actively involved at all times. Change is the process that challenges us and pushes us to the next level of living. To be happy requires not only effort, hope, faith — but also the willingness to move on when faced with change.

“ Life isn’t fair, and change often hurts.”

In putting my book *The Miracle of Change* together, I compiled a list of some of the most important principles, the common denominators, of change.

1. Change creates fear (but the fear can be overcome). That’s true. It’s the nature of the beast — of us human beings. It’s the way the good Lord designed us. Fear is a normal human reaction when our security is threatened. The greater the change, the greater the fear — but the fear doesn’t have to be paralyzing.

2. Change is hard (but it’s doable). A lot of change is about giving up or losing something or somebody you like (or love). Accepting loss is difficult. Making a change is difficult. Life is hard, but whatever the challenge, it’s not the end of the world. In fact, change leads to a new beginning, and something wonderful will come of it.

3. Expect change (and enjoy it). Life is packed with joy; it’s also full of disappointment. We often don’t get what we want or whom we want. Events overtake plans; so plan the action, don’t plan the results. Change makes life exciting and fun.

4. The only person you can change is you (and nobody else). Keep trying if you want to, but people will prove to you over and over again that they will do exactly what they think is best for them. No offense, but change is not about fixing them, it’s about changing you.

5. Courage is action (in the face of fear). No fear, no courage. Action and fear must coexist to qualify. Courage is moving forward despite the fear — and you can do it.

6. Change is really exchange (so go for it). Only with hindsight do we come to realize that what we gain through change is usually much better than what we lost or gave up.

7. Change is possible (even if it doesn’t feel like it). Life isn’t fair and change often hurts like hell; but people have handled the loss of a loved one, being fired, tragic illness

— even quitting cigarettes. Others have survived even benefitted from these changes. You can too.

8. Don’t attempt major change alone (do it with an ally). If you are going to change, the first step is to get the support of someone you trust. It’s probably going to be three steps forward and two backward; so get the help you need to get through major transitions.

9. The answer may be acceptance (and not action). You may have to bite the bullet and accept some things exactly as they are — unchangeable. If that’s the case, take a deep breath, yell, and start changing your attitude.

10. Change is a process (not an event). Change is about the getting, the going, the moving from here to there. Change is even the turmoil, the upsetness, the middle part. The goal is not even the big payoff; it’s what you experience and learn getting to it.

So welcome change into your life and reap its rewards: freedom to be yourself, absence of conflict, a growing sense of well-being and self-confidence, and most of all, happiness and joy. Change is the ticket — and it takes courage to change.

*Dennis Wholey is the host of the nationally distributed PBS television series, *This Is America!* and the author of five books including *The Courage to Change* and *The Miracle of Change*. His most recent book is *Why Do I Keep Doing That? Why Do I Keep Doing That?: Breaking the Negative Patterns in Your Life*.*