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10 WAYS TO OVERCOME THE FEAR OF CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

If there's anything about life that you can absolutely be sure of, it's that it is always changing and evolving. While some people can handle change well - or may even thrive on it, there are many of us who find it to be a big source of fear and anxiety. This is especially true when it's a LARGE change, like a new job/career, a life transition, or a significant shift in a personal situation. Our innate fear of the unknown can make it difficult to adapt, and our internal narrative gets hijacked by this fear, encouraging us to resist or avoid that change as much as we possibly can.

But as you already know...avoiding something doesn't make it just magically go away.

Many times, we really CAN'T avoid the changes that are coming, anyway. And...other times...we really SHOULDN'T, because they are for our own good, even if we don't think so at the time they are happening.

Whatever the case may be...understanding and conquering the fear of change is essential for personal growth and your overall well-being. In this article, we'll explore ten ways that can help you stop fearing change and start embracing it.

1. ACCEPT THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

The first step in overcoming the fear of change is to acknowledge that it is a normal, intrinsic part of life. Everything is in a constant state of flux...it's just how the world works. There are many things in life that you can control, but this is simply not one of them - it's going to happen whether you want it to or not.

Once you accept this fundamental truth, you can begin to approach change with a better mindset. Be open minded about it - because, well...an open mind ALWAYS gets you further than a closed one. When you are faced with something that's inevitable, refusing to accept it only makes it for difficult for you to process.

2. FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Many people tend to think of change in *only* a negative connotation, or as a loss, i.e. *"Things are never going to be this good again!"*

But this isn't always true. While sure, some changes ARE about loss - many are not. Many are about "new" things, such as new opportunities, and fresh experiences...and that's NOT a bad thing, even though fear may try to convince you that it is.

When you consider this fact - that change is not ALWAYS bad, and can, many times, be an improvement, or an upgrade - you can begin to look at it in a different light.

Instead of dwelling on what might go wrong, concentrate on the potential positive outcomes. Recognizing the potential benefits of change can alleviate fear and make it more manageable.

3. CULTIVATE A GROWTH MINDSET

By it's very nature, the human brain is wired to seek comfortable things and situations, and avoid stressful and disagreeable ones. In fact, it releases stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline to encourage "fight or flight" - so we either fight off or flee from things that the brain deems "unsafe." This was once our primary mechanism for survival (and sometimes still is.)

With that said, just because something is "hard wired" into our brains does not mean that is always the correct way to handle ourselves, nor does it always have to be our only choice.

When you are faced with changes, especially difficult or painful ones, it is important to remember that in EVERY mess, there is a message. Even in things that are tough emotionally or that seem to be happening to us for no reason, there is almost always something that we can learn from it.

Consider that whatever the change is might be happening FOR you instead of TO you. Putting learning and development as your focus will help you see that so many times, change, even when it's painful, presents an opportunity for some type of personal growth. This perspective can make change less intimidating and easier to process.

4. BE PREPARED AND MAKE A PLAN

Change almost always has some kind of anxiety associated with it, even when it's a positive change. However, if you properly prepare for it, it can really help you reduce that stress and make whatever the transition is a bit smoother for you mentally.

Create a plan or set achievable goals for yourself when facing significant changes. Knowing what to expect and having a road map can help you navigate uncertain waters with confidence.

5. SEEK SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking for help sometimes. Please read this sentence as many times as you need to.

Don't be afraid to lean on others for support and guidance. Friends, family, mentors, or even a professional therapist can provide valuable insights, encouragement, and a sense of security during times of change.

6. EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY

One of the biggest reasons we fear change is because it brings quite a bit of uncertainty along with it. Nobody really likes uncertainty for obvious reasons - it can make us anxious and stressed because, as we mentioned in #3, our brains are hardwired for familiarity and comfort.

I hate to be the one to tell you, but there really isn't much we can do to avoid uncertainty, either - much like change, it's one of life's constants. But, you can make it less anxiety inducing by seeing it as a possible opportunity to have a different experience and learn something new.

When you do this, you begin to transform your fear into curiosity, and you re-frame uncertainty in a different, more positive manner.

7. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a type of meditation in which you focus on being intensely aware of what you are sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment.

Some excellent mindfulness techniques that you can use are guided meditations (many are available on YouTube, etc) and deep breathing exercises. These things may seem very simple, and they ARE - but they can be very helpful in teaching you to be "present in the moment" and can help reduce anxiety.

It can take a little bit of practice to get used to doing these, but they are an excellent way to learn about yourself and quiet your mind, especially when you have a lot of things running through it at once. It will also help you to become more adaptable and better equipped to face change head-on.

8. CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

When undergoing any kind of transformation, negative thoughts can creep into your conscious even when you are trying very hard to avoid them. Sometimes, your inner voice can be the most difficult thing to keep quiet.

Recognize that the voice exists, but challenge what it is telling you. Start replacing negative thoughts with more positive, constructive thoughts, that might sound something like:

"What if everything goes RIGHT?!" instead of "What if everything goes wrong?!"

"What if I CAN do it?!" instead of "What if I CAN'T do it?!"

"What if I WIN in a huge way?!" instead of "What if I LOSE in a huge way?!"

When you do this enough, it will create a cognitive shift in your mind, and that can be a VERY powerful tool for overcoming your fear.

9. TAKE SMALL STEPS

I think when it comes to change, Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said it best: *"A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step."*

When changes happen and the road ahead is unknown, it can be difficult to see where you are going. This is especially true when the change is something deeply personal that is shifting, like a relationship or a career change. ***It's important to remember that change doesn't always have to be a radical leap.*** You can start by taking a small step forward and continue to do that until, before you know it, those small steps have built your confidence and helped to make big transitions easier and more manageable.

10. REFLECT ON PAST SUCCESSSES

Someone once told me that when faced with difficult or uncertain times, that it's important to look back on my own track record. I have shared this wise advice countless times with others, because so often we are faced with changes in life that we don't feel we can make it through...but yet WE DO. We think we will never adapt to something new, but we DO. We think we will never reach a point of happiness again, but we DO. So when you think about it that way, your track record has brought you this far...so you have no reason NOT to trust it.

Remind yourself of that track record as many times as you need to. Reflect on all those past instances when you successfully navigated changes in your life. Thinking about your successes and these moments can boost your confidence and help you see that you DO have the strength and resilience to overcome new challenges, you just have to give yourself a little more credit than you probably are right now.

CONCLUSION

Fear of change is a common human emotion, but it doesn't have to hold you back or keep you stuck somewhere that you really should not be. By accepting change as an integral part of life, focusing on the positive, and adopting a growth mindset, you can transform your fear into excitement and opportunity. With the right support, preparation, and some mindfulness practices when you need them, you can confront change with confidence and use the lessons and experiences you gain during it to help you achieve personal growth.

Remember, change is not an enemy but a partner in your journey of life. Embrace it, and you'll be on your way to dealing with whatever life throws at you with confidence.

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