

CRIBB<S>NOTE – JUNE 27, 2010

Change is one of the great and wonderful challenges and gifts of life. We may not always want to make change; but, change we must. It is inevitable. In order for life to go forward change must occur. The opposite of change is stagnation.

A static person or environment is dead. We should not mistake static for stable. There is a significant difference; one that cannot be dismissed or ignored. Stability allows for constant change without the frenzy of flip-flopping with every whim. Static means to stand guard against change in a vain effort to delay natural evolution. It is impossible. Thus, such unwise exertion is wasted while being in the very process of becoming different.

Change brings both positive and negative results. Change happens desirously or against our will. There are times when change is greeted with glee. It is embraced and its results are welcome. Sometimes, change brings about discomfort of the unfamiliar and undesirable. Even when the initiation of change is cause for celebration and approval, the impact of change may be too severe to appreciate.

People who stop smoking decide to make a change to improve their health. In fact, we now know 'second-hand smoke' is possibly more harmful to others than to the smoker. So, the decision to stop smoking is good for everybody. However, to persons who are most intimate with the ex-smoker, the decision to stop smoking may bring unexpected personality shifts that make the ex-smoker a very unpleasant person. They may become grouchy and rude; irritable and unkind. Their closest friends and family may wish for them to start smoking again just to maintain peace. But, the wisdom to end a dangerous habit requires patience and endurance. Change comes with a price.

A few years ago while working with a group of youth in Los Angeles, I met a young man who had changed his life almost entirely. Once a fierce "soldier" in the street wars, he turned his life around and became an even fiercer proponent of peace. He worked to transform his gang-riddled neighborhood into a haven of safe conduct. He helped to organize a truce between rival organizations. For all the good he did, there was a counter reality that started inside his home. His wife threatened to leave him because the changes he was making within himself shaped into a person she did not recognize.

"I loved and married him for who he was," she once told me. "Now, he's somebody else. He's not the man I knew." He had changed right in front of her and beyond her. That is how change can take form; even when it is for the better.

How do we deal with change? Can we support a loved one who moves in a new direction and changes into someone else?

Among the millions of people who have joined Alcoholics Anonymous, there is the recognition that others may become more aware of the changes taking place in their lives before the alcoholic realizes what is happening. Sometimes the changes are subtle but certain.

The "Twelve Steps" are part of a journey that transports people addicted to alcohol and other substances to a place where they confront themselves openly and honestly. It can be a very rough road with setbacks and disappointments. That's the way change is.

In most faith traditions, people are encouraged to change their minds, world views, and ways of life. We are instructed to think about the Higher Power and to consider others ahead of ourselves. Change requires the ability to experience humiliation without losing our humility. There are times when the journey feels lonely because cruelty in the world is unrelenting. But, we are never truly alone.

There resides within each of us a deeper knowing that carries us through the difficult moments of introspection and reflection. God's love and mercy will sustain us. Eventually, friendship and family ties will strengthen our resolve to be the change we desire and the much needed change we require.