

THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

In order to manage change effectively, you must understand the dynamics of the change process. Change is extremely difficult for about 95% of the population. Most people resist change, while others, a very small percent, thrive on it. Since we are all creatures of habit, we tend to cling to what is familiar to us. We unconsciously construct our frame of reference out of all those experiences, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, points of view, and perceptions that we have accumulated over the years and hold to be true. Since we hold these perceptions as true, the frame of reference has become part of our identity. We associate with it, and we very often think of it as ourselves.

Change disrupts and disorients our frame of reference. When our frame of reference has become disrupted, we find ourselves clinging to the familiar; in other words, going back to what we know. Forging ahead into the unknown, the void, presses us into the realms of risk-taking and of relinquishing the familiar. Any normal human being would resist leaping into the void, the unknown, the uncertain future.

In order to manage yourself through the change process, you must intentionally and deliberately reinforce the direction in which you are going and diminish the orientation you are leaving. You must perceive the past as less attractive than your picture of the future. You need to envision and reinforce the vision of a positive, desirable, and inviting future. If you let nostalgia kick in and drag you back to the memory of "the good old days," you can forget any hopes of succeeding in your change endeavors. Nostalgia will seduce you back to your old frame of reference, because it is familiar, predictable, and certain. Even if your old frame of reference is undesirable, uncomfortable, painful, or traumatic, you will still gravitate to it over the new way: You associate it with your identity because of its familiarity. The transition state is so uncertain and unpredictable it is difficult to sustain without wanting to regress back to the previous state. It's like an old friend: You may not like him, but you know him so well you can't just throw him out. After all you've been through, you would have to start all over with a new one.

In any situation which involves changing from one state to another, there are three Phases: the known, the transition, and the future. The present state is known, familiar, and predictable. You are less likely to want to leave any situation which is familiar. We are creatures of habit. Even if the situation is painful, you are more likely to stay with an undesirable situation rather than leave what you know.

Moving from the present, familiar state to the transition state is disruptive, and disorienting. It involves moving into the unknown, the unpredictable, the uncertain. The transition phase is highly unstable, since there is no familiarity. Most people who are unsure of their motives or reward for choosing to change, will regress in the transition state. They will retreat to what they know, not necessarily what they love, rather than aim for the future state.

The future, desired state once achieved becomes the new status quo. The future becomes the present, after you have passed through transition. Another way of saying it is, "There becomes Here when you eliminate the T." The "T" is the stage of Transition. The challenge is to manage yourself through to the desired state without letting yourself regress midway.

The following chart lists the characteristics of each phase. If you are undergoing a change, check where you are on the chart. Cherie Carter-Scott. *Negaholics*.

