



How to Change Your Life: ***The Courage, the Risks, and the Rewards***

Life can be difficult and uncertain, especially when faced with the prospect of change. Although change is often the key that will positively alter the path of our lives, we shy away from it for fear of leaving behind our comfort zones and entering into the unknown. This fear robs us of our freedom to make the life choices that can bridge the gap between where we *are* and where we want to *be*.

It may take courage to move from the known to the unknown, but the price of growth is a sacrifice of certainty.

6 Steps to Making Any Needed Change in Your Life:

Be Honest

- **Identify excuses**

You may be unhappy in a number of areas of your life but complaining about it does not change affect change. Are you just skillfully playing the victim role? If you have chosen to stay stuck due to fear, then the change you need is not going to appear on its own. Be honest with yourself. Identify the excuses and rationale that have been keeping you in your life “as is.”

- **Take responsibility**

Only you can change you. Motivation must come from within. Take responsibility and closely look at what part of your life has kept you imprisoned from your own potential. Don't blame your own refusal to make changes based on external things. When you do this you give over all responsibility to things you cannot control. For example, “I would have realized more of my potential, but no one was ever interested in mentoring me.”

Accept Risks

- **Understand everything is risky**

Change is a fact of life and participating in change means stepping into the unknown. It means taking a risk. Wouldn't life be boring if we always knew outcomes before actions? The riskiest step is always the first. But with every step in the right direction, your courage muscles get stronger.

- **Realize risk leads to growth**

Growth always involves risk, and risk always involves fear. Unfortunately, some people wait for an ironclad guarantee that everything will work out exactly right, until all risk is removed and they stagnate where they are. Don't wait on the sidelines while the world passes you by.

Focus Priorities

- **Value your needs**

Many busy women (and men) spend all their time, effort and energy meeting the needs of other people. Remember to place value on your own needs too. Without a focused priority, you may become molded by your environment, and that will foster a stagnate life.

- **Value your time**

Do not play the “when-then game.” Don't tell yourself, “When the children are grown, I'll take some time for myself.” Or, “When I feel like I can make a difference, I will look for a new job.” Sometimes

we wait our whole lives for a “when” that never comes. Value time and do not assume you have until “forever” to take a risk and make a change that can excel your life in new directions.

Renew

- **Evolve rather than age**

Worrying about growing older is a waste of time. Celebrate the knowledge that aging brings an insight and personal growth that is only intensified through life experience. Instead of aging, evolve. Evolving changes your focus from fearing loss to celebrating accomplishment. What you have learned throughout your life can enlighten current and future generations. Having an “evolving” attitude inspires authority to renew yourself and make whatever changes will lead you to that renewal.

- **Connect rather than wait**

Connect with others and connect to a larger perspective. Aging can bring worries about health and fears of loneliness and isolation. Connection brings strength when we feel we are weak. Positive relationships encourage and bring courage to make new and better decisions throughout any life transition.

Face Your Fears

- **Act before crisis**

At its simplest and most benign, fear is an internal warning cry that danger is nearby and we had better do something about it. Many times it takes a warning cry like a marriage failure or a worrisome medical diagnosis to realize we need to make changes. Do not wait for a crisis to occur to have an awakening about the quality and value of your life. Begin making changes now, and you will be more prepared once any crisis has occurred.

- **Do not let comfort control**

Move past the comfort of fears. Fears are familiar and therefore mislead us into thinking they are just a part of who you are. We ruminate over them, fearing they will control us and causing us to live our lives in a state of self-preservation. While life cannot be a 24-hour thrill ride, you deserve more than just contentment. Expand your comfort zone and allow yourself the opportunity for awareness and inspiration.

Imagine

- **Imagine the worst**

What, specifically are you fearful about? Name it. Say it out loud. Then ask yourself, “What is the worst thing that could happen if I take this risk?” Even if you run smack into a wall on your way to making a life change, then at least you will have gained some insight and knowledge. You may even find this knowledge gives you courage to tackle more risks. No matter what the scenario, you will have gained the power and influence to decide your own response.

- **Imagine the best**

Imagine how your life will be different and better once you initiate change in your life. Anticipate the joy, the excitement, and the empowerment that comes from being a leader in your own life. Begin with small steps, but take action. There are no “microwave miracles” in successful life changes. It may take some time to see results. The only instant change is in attitude. You’ll finally be in charge of the direction and outcome of your life. Imagine the best, then live it!

**Contact Centerstone at (615) 460-HELP (4357),
for information about help and support for you or your family.**

Centerstone (www.centerstone.org), a not-for-profit organization, is the largest behavioral healthcare provider in Tennessee and the ninth largest in the nation. Serving the community for more than fifty years, Centerstone provides a full range of behavioral health and related educational services to individuals of all ages and their families. Centerstone is devoted to research that seeks to identify, treat and eliminate mental illness. Centerstone provides services to more than 50,000 individuals annually. Children, adolescents, adults, seniors, and families all receive help from a multitude of different programs at more than 65 facilities and 140 partnership locations throughout the region. For more information about Centerstone, please call (615) 460-4357 or toll free at (888) 291-4357.

About Susan Gillpatrick, MEd, LPC, CTS

Susan Gillpatrick, Centerstone Crisis Management Specialist, primarily works in the field with clients in critical incident response situations, and in Centerstone's wellness trainings and presentations. She is also responsible for planning and implementing marketing and growth strategies for Centerstone's Crisis Management Strategies.

In recent years, Ms. Gillpatrick worked for the Shelby County Government Victims Assistance Center in Memphis. There, she co-developed a model program for the state of Tennessee entitled, "Homicide Response." Her work in this area received the 2000 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

Ms. Gillpatrick is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Certified Trauma Specialist, Certified Workplace Conflict Mediator, and Mental Health Service Provider in the state of Tennessee and a National Certified Counselor. She is also a member the American Counseling Association, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the Tennessee Mental Health Counseling Association, and the Middle Tennessee Employee Assistance Professionals Association. She is a frequent presenter at local and national conferences, and has had numerous articles published. She received her Master of Education degree in Human Development Counseling from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

To request Susan Gillpatrick to speak with your group or organization about complete wellness in living, contact her at (615) 460-4445 or susan.gillpatrick@centerstone.org.