

## Is Fear of Change Holding You Back?



By Gayle Crist,  
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I love this quote from author Edith Wharton: "In spite of illness, in spite even of the archenemy sorrow, one can remain alive long past the usual date of disintegration if one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual

curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways."

Myself, I've always been unafraid of change. In fact, I love change! I love variety (the spice of life!), which comes from trying new things, going to new places, and/or embarking on new adventures in terms of jobs, homes, or routines. To me, it's exciting to experiment, to expand, and to explore uncharted territory.

This hasn't often been the case with the clients who've come to me for life coaching over the years. Many times, they're not only afraid to make changes in their lives, but they also fear calling someone like a coach to help them. Even though they're stuck and even miserable doing what they're doing, they're scared to stop doing it and to do something different instead.

For example, as part of my life coaching business, I've offered divorce coaching services. In that role, I worked with several women who were very unhappy in their marriages—often on the verge of a nervous breakdown due to anxiety about their relationship—but still frozen with fear of leaving to start a new life as a single. Many times, they used their children as an excuse to stay in a failed marriage, but underneath I could tell it was their own lack of self-esteem that prevented them from taking steps toward peace and happiness.

If only they'd known the truth: an unhappy wife is usually not a great mom either.

I'm proud to say I was able to help these women get over the fear of change that held them back from creating a new, happier life for themselves, which ultimately enabled them to be better parents as well.

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I helped them find, as the famous prayer says, "the serenity to accept the things I cannot change and the courage to change the things I can."

An interesting thing happened: Once they committed to hiring me as their divorce support coach, they began to feel empowered. They were less afraid to explore new options to solve their life challenges and to pursue new paths in their life journey.

Sometimes, all it takes is a moral supporter (like a coach) to give you the courage to change something in your life so you can move forward. Or maybe it's a friend who sees you suffering and offers suggestions. Or, as in my case recently, maybe it's your intuition and inner voice telling you to make a big change because you can't stay in the situation you're in any longer.

I was at the 6-year point in a long-term relationship and 4 years into living with my partner when I began to feel strongly that I'd be happier and the relationship would be healthier if I had more space, autonomy, and independence. I grappled with the decision to move to my own place for about 2 years. Twice, I almost broke off the relationship, thinking that's what I needed to do in order to find the solace and sense of self that I sought.

But then I realized I didn't want to sever relations with my partner; I just wanted to have fewer fights about our shared space in his house and to absorb less negative energy in the household related to some ongoing, unrelenting stress he was experiencing. I tried for a long time to help him cope but then realized there was nothing more I

could do. As a very independent person himself, he'd be OK doing that on his own and turning to me if he wanted to vent or be supported in any way.

In the month since I began living in my own place, things between us are much better, and I'm more content and at peace. If I'd been afraid to make this change, I'd still be stuck in the emotional turmoil caused by self-doubt and frustration. I can't tell you how much lighter I feel after making this change.

### Are there some changes you'd like to make in your life but feel that fear is holding you back?

- Are you so fearful that you can't even name the first step you'd take toward change...much less how you'd attempt to take it?
- Have you already tried "facing your fear and doing it anyway" but couldn't follow through long enough to effect the change you were seeking?
- Are you very close to success in overcoming your fear and making a change but just can't seem to go the last mile?

In each of these cases, a coach could be the key to your long-awaited success! Wouldn't it be great to have someone in your corner motivating you with tips for how to overcome each doubt and fear that comes up? Someone who believes in you and your goal and is excited about helping you achieve it? Someone who can help you stick to the steps toward making a change and be there with a plan to enable you to get back up and start again if you fall?

Every change starts with this baby step: make up your mind to do it! Let's start now!

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