## Part 1 - Are You The Same Person Everyday?

### Think About It.

May I suggest to you that for the most part, who you are, is who you are today; not who you were yesterday? So in the rest of Part 1 of this post, I will try to explain what I mean. I will leave you to judge whether or not I succeeded in convincing you. Later on I hope you will see how closely related this idea is to getting rid of unhappiness and emotional turmoil from your life.

The expected reply to this section’s title question, normally, is: “ Of course. I’m the same ‘me’, everyday day”. This view however, does not take into consideration that changes are constantly happening around us and that we too are part of the alteration or unfolding that continues to take place in the living, non-living, animal, plant and chemical worlds. In the case of people, this process may be physical, mental and/or emotional.

For example, you were a mechanic the day before and today you are a soldier or vice versa because you changed jobs; or you were a student whose thesis has been accepted, so now you have a PH.D and become a doctor, which the day before, you were not. You were a businessperson who, today, is elected into political office, which you were not yesterday. Very unfortunately, you lost a leg, a job or an all-important relationship, yesterday, which makes you a very different person the next day. Today, you are separated or divorced; yesterday you were not. This morning, you are moving in with your child, because of illness; all along, you have lived in your own house. It is one o’clock in the afternoon: you just accepted Christ; or, you are staring outside worrying, since floodwaters from the once distant river has begun to encroach on your property; yesterday your life was different. These are examples of minor and major occurrences that change people, in some cases, unexpectedly.

I can testify to this because one day my life changed suddenly, in a drastic way. I was on a moped with my wife enjoying the sights in Cozumel, just like many other tourists were doing. Within minutes into the ride, the rear tire exploded and we were thrown off the moped. With that, almost in an instant, I became a paraplegic! For a very brief period after the loud bang, which sounded at a distance, when the tire burst, I did not know where I was. That was probably because of a feeling of weightlessness while I was travelling through the air. My awareness was cut short, no doubt when I hit the ground and passed out, neither of which I recall being aware of. Needless to say nothing like this had ever happened in my life.

Yes, just taking the moped incident by itself, my life, body and mind, went through a series of changes. Operating a mini-motor bicycle, observing the changing scenery, talking to my wife through the rushing wind, various thoughts and emotions from enjoying the ride and the feel of my wife’s snug hold around my stomach and then the huge shift to a fall followed by unconsciousness, were all events representing a variety of changes that took place within about ten minutes. The alterations to my being, of course did not end after the lights went out, so to speak. My wife told me that when I came around briefly my first words were: “I cannot swallow”. This struck me after the fact, as strange because I was also aware that I could not move my limbs, yet it was my inability to swallow that was immediately important to report. Go figure!

My wife’s life changed as well. Thankfully, not as severely, physically, as mine. She broke nine ribs and a toe; but the emotional damage was much more serious, however, mostly because of what happened to me. Clearly we were not the same people the next day after the accident as we were the day before. Let’s look at the topic in a bit more detail.

### SO HOW AND HOW MUCH DO WE CHANGE?

Each of the events or circumstance in my life and yours tells a tale of different kinds of change that people go through, of which there are countless. The examples I have used so far are of events that are for the most part public and open to anyone to observe. There are numerous other occurrences however, which are private and not available for inspection. Together, they all result in outer and inner change in the person subjected to them, regardless of how serious or unimportant the involved individual or an observer considers the event to be. In that sense they (the subject or observer of the event) are not exactly the same as the day before, not even a moment before the event occurred or knowledge of it is encountered, as the case may be.

The main point is that we are faced with very many happenings, to which we respond, whether in a small way or to a major degree, publicly or privately, internally or externally, and as a result we are changed to some degree. The fact that we are always changing, as is the world around us, is important because the common experience of wanting and searching for ways and opportunities to deal with our physical and emotional problems comes from knowing that change occurs inside us. Of course, this goes on constantly though almost entirely silently and outside our awareness. The fact that very tiny alterations in our bodies, such as cell division, are going on all the time may not seem important but it definitely is. Nor do we necessarily recognize repeated adjustments to our attitude, for instance, to believing statements a parent makes or to ordinary events we experienced, say from the time we were the age of two to when we are ten years old.

It is the same change process of cell division that brings a child from the age of two to ten and older; and in the same way many bits of attitude change towards taking a parent’s word may make the difference in a child between ages two and ten. In general, however, it is the big changes that grab our attention or that are clearly recorded in our memory. From small adjustments to major alterations we manage a large amount of emotional issues leading to various stages or levels of contentment or displeasure in our life, depending on how we handle each problem. Because we are all different in makeup, our reactions to the changes even in similar situations will not be the same. There are times when one person’s trash is some else’s treasure and vice versa. What is a favorable outcome to one person may not seem that way at all to another.

Take, as an example, my reaction to the injuries my wife and I suffered. At first, right after I learned about the extent of my condition, I was not sure how to react. But soon thereafter I learned about my wife’s physical trauma and saw her able to walk and do things, mostly for me, I changed and have adopted a definite attitude of gratitude, which I have till the present. Other events since then have also contributed to the appreciation of my changed circumstances. The contrast between what changed for me compared to what changed for my wife made it more likely for me to accept my changed situation easier than if she was the one who was paralyzed and in constant pain. I will explain why this is so.

### WE CAN CONTROL THE WAY WE CHANGE

The reason for my feelings of consolation about my hurt being more extensive than my wife’s, is very straightforward. In the first place, I know that I can handle such issues better and as such, I am able to accept my injuries by just deciding to do so. Secondly, I believed she would be a much better nurse to me than I could be to her. As a rule though, my reaction to life has always been: Go with the flow. As such the way I react to my changed life is simply to be realistic and positive about it. It boils down to the truth that we can train ourselves to take charge of how change affects us. I decided to deal with my situation with gratitude rather than distress. As a result I have gone on participating in my rehabilitation with peace of mind: not 24/7 but a good deal of the time.

The way things alter our lives, generally speaking, is really simple. The new events (and their effects on us) are recorded and interpreted in our thoughts, which then influence our behavior. All events leave their marks on us; and that fact also changes us in various ways. As an example let’s say you hear the sound of a gun being fired. One type of change is caused by the noise, itself, which was probably startling. A second arises from your having to also consider what to do about it, depending on how far or close you are to where the bang came from. So then, hearing that sound brings changes, which begin to occur immediately in your life.

Your bodily state would change, likely because of being startled and with that some thoughts would be formed about how it felt to hear the noise and confirm it was indeed the sound of a gunshot. Now because the noise was judged to be from a gun, it would, probably, cause you to come up with ideas about your safety. So the focus of your reaction has now shifted more so to your state of mind. If you’re home and it makes sense, you might consider moving to another area of the house; if out, on the way somewhere you might choose a different route. Or you might curse or cringe etc. depending on your particular style, circumstances or mood. So now mood or emotional state is in the picture.

A great number of thoughts, actions and emotions do alter our lives in a variety of ways. If you are like most people I bet you probably never really stopped to examine life in this detail. Well I broke it down to make this point: Every day, every hour, every moment is new and presents new experiences, which generate new thoughts, causing us to react in the many ways we do. Obviously, the different patterns of life events and experiences that occur in the short term are typical of those that happen in the long term.

At one level, the variations in everyday living mean that we will not be the same the next moment or in the short and long run of days weeks, months or years. How life went last month, last year or further in the past, could never be exactly the same as it is going today. In the same way, as we move into the future, we are going to experience and witness alterations in all the ways they happen in the present. This reality guarantees that we will not be the same in the future, as we are at present.