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### How People Change

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**Published Description of Workshop:**

*“Anyone working with congregations knows that change is difficult and deep change in people and organizations is rare. How do people and organizations change? This workshop describes four things that take place whenever people or organizations have significantly changed, and gives practical advice for leaders trying to facilitate such change.”*

**What factors are usually present when a person or organization has undergone deep change?**

**A. The status quo isn’t working any more.**

1. We all like equilibrium, however dysfunctional or counterproductive, and usually give it up only when there is no other choice.
2. Change threatens equilibrium and causes two emotional responses: fear and loss.

**B. I get a vision of a better future. (the emotional component)**

People who change deeply have usually come to a point where they truly believe there is a better way. They have *hope*.

In significant change, a new emotional relationship is formed.

Deutschman: “Change is inspired by personal relationships, not created automatically by processes, even processes that have been tested and refined over decades of experience.”

[Interlude: What is the relationship between these change factors and the work of the Holy Spirit? Could it be that the Holy Spirit often works in and through these factors: i.e., convicting someone that the status quo isn’t working anymore, giving someone hope. In that regard, may we say that deep change is a gift of God as much as it is human accomplishment.]

**C. The first steps of change are clear. (the behavioral component)**

Does new thinking create new behaviors, or does new behavior form new thinking?  
Answer: Yes. Point #3 stresses the latter of these two and stresses how critical it is that people have a clear picture of the first behavioral steps involved in the new change.

A key insight for leaders orchestrating change: *What often looks like resistance to change is simply confusion and lack of clarity.* Put positively, “Clarity dissolves resistance.”  
(Heath)

Suggestions for leaders:

1. Don't confuse resistance to change with confusion and lack of clarity about exactly what the change is and what the next steps are.
2. Be crystal clear about next steps when such clarity is possible.
3. Make the new behaviors a little easier (and maybe the old ones a little harder).
4. Lower the bar, shrink the change (Heath). People find it more motivating to be partly finished with a longer journey than to be at a starting point of a shorter journey.
5. Set up short-term wins. (Go for low hanging fruit.)
6. Avoid decision paralysis. If you give people too many choices, they wither. (Heath)
7. Avoid Analysis Paralysis. Big problems are rarely solved with big solutions, but a series of small solutions. (Heath)
8. When you implement changes, do it well. Change is hard. But it can be helped immensely, by clear preparation, clear direction, clear expectations and outcomes, clear communication, etc.

#### **D. I reframe the situation (the cognitive component)**

Something shifts deep inside of me in terms of how I frame the situation and see the world.

Theory X–Theory Y Consequence model of change vs. Identity model of change.

Deutschman: “Change is a paradoxical process, and trying to change your own life means opening yourself up to new ideas and practices that may seem illogical or even insane to you, at least until you’ve experienced them for long enough to develop a new understanding.”

#### **Conclusion:**

"People change when they hurt enough that they have to change; learn enough that they want to change; receive enough that they are able to change."

#### **Resources:**

Alan Deutschman, *Change or Die: The Three Keys to Change at Work and in Life* (Harper Collins, 2007)

Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr, *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* (Jossey-Bass 1996)

Tim Hartford, *Adapt: Why Success Always Starts with Failure* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011)

Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (Broadway Books, 2010)