



By Silver Rose

CHANGE YOUR FOCUS CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Step Two *Dancing with Change*

To recap: the first step in learning to dance with change is to accept that which cannot be changed.

Once you've accepted that the circumstances are here to stay, it is time to decide how you are going to respond. Whenever a change occurs that frightens us (and nearly all change does), one of two instincts is activated in our reptilian brains: *fight or flight*.

Therefore Step Two in learning how to *Dance with Change* is to decide:

Are you going to dance or are you going to sit this one out?

In other words, are you going to stay and work through it or are you going to leave? Although many times leaving seems to be the most attractive choice, it is important to understand that leaving results in change, as well.

I have a coaching client who called to say she's thinking of quitting her job. Although I completely understood her reasons for wanting to (slave-driver boss, not enough money...) it was important for her to work through what changes would occur if she did quit.

Many of the new changes would be positive: no more 18-hour workdays; she would be free to move to the same city as her fiancé' and she could look for a more reasonable job. But just because a change falls on the plus side of a column doesn't mean it's easier to cope with. She would also be faced with finding a new job, packing up to move and let's not forget the adjustment of living with her fiancé' versus a long-distance romance.

She determined that the pluses of leaving outweighed the minuses and she quit. In doing so, she's very clear that she now faces even more change as she moves into this new phase of her life. She decided to sit out the dance she was in and now needs to learn the steps of some new ones.

Deciding to *stay* when change occurs also has pluses and minuses. Of the two choices, staying is usually the easier. This is true even in the face of grim circumstances. The statistics on abused women successfully escaping their abusers only to voluntarily return are sobering. They are often more afraid of being able to do everything it would take to forge a new life than going back to the life they are familiar with.

I see this in companies all the time. Employees have a lengthy list of complaints about how they are managed, the unfairness of their pay, and the working conditions. And yet, when you suggest they consider developing a

strategy for leaving, they have an equally long list of reasons why that's not a good idea.

For many, the theory is: *Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know*. And there's nothing wrong with that unless you make the choice to stay and then act as if you didn't.

When a change occurs that you don't like and you make a choice to stay and work through it, then your job is to figure out how. Please do not stay and then focus all your efforts on fighting the change every step of the way. This would be akin to going onto the dance floor when they are playing hip-hop music and stubbornly insisting on dancing a tango. You might dance the most beautiful tango in the world but if the music doesn't match, you simply look like you don't know what you are doing and you are a distraction to the other dancers.

We face the choice of dance or sit every single day:

- Tackle our projects with vigor or do busy work to avoid them?
- Pay attention in a meeting or daydream?
- Complain or suggest solutions?
- Show up on time or straggle in late?
- Applaud the way others dance or critique their styles?
- Fully support the goals of your organization or secretly sabotage them?

The dancers who win in competition are not always the ones with the perfect form. They are more often the ones who are having a great time. You can tell they are thoroughly enjoying themselves and they bring the audience (and the judges) along with them.

Have you ever seen dancers who clearly are uncomfortable? They look like they hope the floor will open up at any moment and swallow them. In watching them, we become uncomfortable as well and then nobody's having any fun.

If you decide to stay and dance, by all means go for it! Do not hold back. Give it your all even if you're not a great dancer. (Small children can't dance but they have so much fun and are so committed that they win their audience over.)

When you decide to stay and work through whatever change you are facing and you give it your all, you will discover that suddenly you have mastered the dance and you can move your feet without even thinking about them.

Deciding to dance or sit this one out are both powerful choices. Whatever your choice, fully embrace it.

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