

The Audio Series

Choosing Change

Understand the
Three Phases of Change

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Choosing Change

Audio Series #1

Understand the Three Phases of Change

Hello! This is Peter Hiddema.

Welcome to the Choosing Change – a 6-part audio course to help you learn how to survive and thrive during change.

In this 1st audio course, we're going to look at the three phases of the change process and the steps you can take to more easily navigate through the changes in your life.

Change is a necessary occurrence in all life. Without change we simply would cease to exist. We have all survived changes – or we wouldn't be here today. But, I believe that you can do more than survive. You can thrive.

Chances are you have experienced more changes in your world during the last 5 years than at any other time in your life.

Because of increasingly fast-changing technology, the cycle of change has been compressed. Change occurs faster and faster – and the longer we live, the more change we'll experience. It will serve you well to understand and embrace change.

Think of a change you experienced in your world in the last few months – even the past few days. I bet you can think of many.

What this tells us is that we're all experiencing changes all the time and that no longer can we predict what life will look like over the next few years. The world we know now will quickly change. We will change.

So, how can we embrace – and thrive – during fast-moving times such as these?

It is important to understand that change is an external event that requires you to make an internal adjustment. That adjustment involves three phases:

- 1) You are saying goodbye to the past—to something you knew. This is also called the “letting go” stage.
- 2) You are in Transition—in the present—the time between letting go and embracing what is to come.

- 3) The final stage of change is Beginning Anew. You have left the old behind; accepted the present; and are now moving forward in an optimistic and healthy way.

In other words, you must let go of the tried and true; make adjustments to learn new skills, behaviors, and even attitudes; and then move forward.

Even though you may not realize it, you are already skilled at this because you make small changes every day.

Perhaps your favorite restaurant has closed. Or your favorite brand of cereal is no longer available. Or maybe the person you have counted on to prepare your taxes has moved away. You adjust to the information, make another choice, and move on. Sometimes in the process you are even happier with a new restaurant, new cereal, or new accountant. New things are often better than the old.

Or maybe you are faced with bigger changes – life changes.

Your job description has changed. Or you've lost your job. Perhaps a child has left home for the first time – or an adult child is returning home.

Maybe you have had to deal with the loss of a relationship or divorce or death.

Whatever the change, you've to adjust.

The first step of the change process requires us to let go of what is familiar. This is hard even with the smallest of changes. But we cannot embrace the new if we are holding on to the old.

Letting go isn't easy. And the more significant the change, the harder it is. When we let go; when we say goodbye, we feel a sense of loss. With the bigger the change, the greater the sense of loss.

When we have a loss in our lives, we experience grief. I'm not going to go into detail about this grieving process but I do want to introduce the model that was developed by Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross as a result of the amazing work she did with people who had experienced a death in the family. Her great contribution was to identify and codify the 5 steps that people go through as they 'let go' and grieve the loss of the loved one. Soon after, she came to realize that people who were going through difficult life changes were also going through this 5-step letting go/grieving/healing process.

The first thing we experience in the process of letting go, is "denial". We can't believe this situation is really happening to us. We try to lull ourselves into thinking these new circumstances are just temporary. When we realize the

circumstances *aren't* temporary, we then try to bargain our way out of the situation which is step # 2 in the process. And when *that* doesn't work, we move to step 3 and start to get angry. Anger feels pretty uncomfortable for most of us, but it is an emotion that has the ability to clear out the past; so much as we'd like to ignore it or talk it away, it's best if we just let ourselves feel it. Sadness or depression follows quickly on the heels of anger, and it's important to monitor ourselves during this period as step 4 can sometimes extend into long-term melancholy.

It is only when these 4 steps are taken that we begin to feel ourselves healing and are able to move into the 5th and final 'letting go' step which is acceptance. Said another way; only after you've given yourself time to experience and work through your emotions, are you fully able to accept the change or your loss.

As you accept what is here and now instead of dwelling in the past, you enter into the Transition and Choice Stage of Change. Initially you may be convinced that nothing is happening to you; that your life is static. It seems to many people as if they're going to be forever stuck in a way-station between what once was and what's going to be.

You may also feel vulnerable and uncertain during the Transition stage, for you are preparing yourself for something new—and you're not certain what it is!

People who are in the agricultural professions understand this fallow time. The fields seem barren, when in actuality; the soil is renewing itself so that it will be prepared for the next crop.

Human beings need this same kind of fallow time – this idle time – to prepare for the new. At this stage, you may want to curtail the sense of emptiness and indecision you are feeling. You may feel tempted to rush into the first thing that comes along, but if you can be patient and begin to think about the choices that might lay ahead for you in the future, you will be amply repaid.

And finally, the last stage of Change is to Begin Anew. You are now spending most of your energy on the future rather than on the past or even the present. Your focus has shifted; your energy increases; you're beginning to feel good again...all because you have chosen to go through the change process in a new way.

Before we end this first audio session, here are three things to focus on over the next week to help you thrive during the time of change.

First of all; trust yourself more. You are a competent individual who has successfully dealt with change in the past. You can do it again. It might be helpful to make a list of some of life changes that you have encountered.

- ✓ Give yourself credit for handling those past changes. And if some changes were hard to overcome, that's okay. You still triumphed.

- ✓ Secondly; accept that change is awkward. You will be out of your comfort zone. Out of the tried and true. That's okay. That's how we all grow.

- ✓ Thirdly; do something that makes you feel in control. This can be simple as organizing a closet; building a bird-house; learning a new recipe. The trick is to do something familiar that uses skills you already have.

So, between now and next time, trust yourself; accept that change is awkward; and do something that interests and pleases you, and lets you feel in control!

Until then, to paraphrase Leo Tolstoy, remember that:

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing themselves.”

If you haven't already downloaded my Guide: **Choosing Change**, click here to download it. It has techniques and tips that you can implement right away to help you achieve purposeful change in your life.

And tell your friends about these great 4-6 minute audios!

- Audio #1 **Understand the Three Phases of Change**
- Audio #2 **Discover Your Individual Style**
- Audio #3 **Learn How to Transition**
- Audio #4 **Bounce Back from Change**
- Audio #5 **Move Forward – The Best New You**
- Audio #6 **Help Others Navigate Change**

Until Next Time.