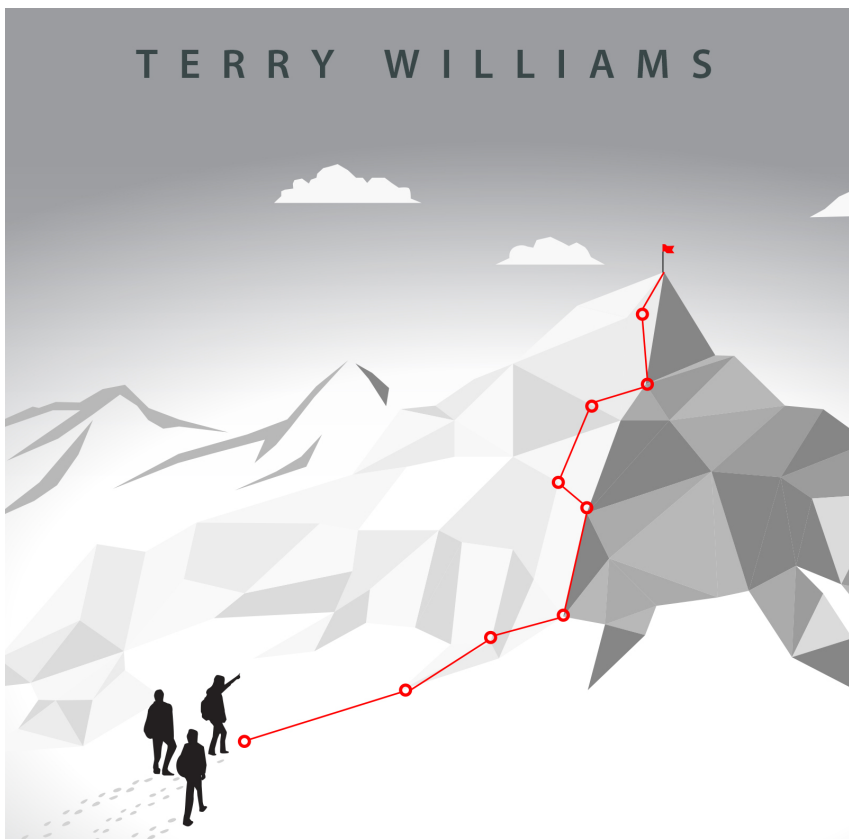


T E R R Y W I L L I A M S



2 DANGEROUS THINGS A YEAR

YOUR CHANGE-EVOLUTION TO GET CHANGE-FIT

2 Dangerous Things A Year: Your 'Change Evolution' to Get 'Change Fit'

A certain path in an age of uncertainty

2 Dangerous Things A Year:

Your ‘Change Evolution’ to

Get ‘Change Fit’

Terry Williams

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1

The Dumbest Person in the Room

It's a Thursday night in Winter 2007. I'm suited up, hosting the New Zealand Bio-Tech Awards. SkyCity Convention Centre, in the largest room they've got. Picture a gala dinner full of black ties and ornate tables with silver service. All around me are one thousand of my nation's best and brightest. I'm starting to feel a little bit inadequate, a little bit underdone intellectually. I turn to the waiter next to me and I say, "Dude, everyone in this room except for you and me has got a PHD".

The waiter turns to me and says, "I've got some bad news for you, bro."

The waiter had a PHD.

I have my own expertise, but in my role speaking at organisations, conferences and events, I often find myself to be, in a very specific sense, the dumbest person in that room. I'm OK with that. I'm always better for the experience.

If you constantly find yourself to be the smartest person in every room you're in, then I suggest you need to get you into some different rooms. And that's the theme of this book: getting out of the 'room' you're in, getting out of your comfort zone, getting better at getting

better, working out your change muscles and building up your reservoir of resilience so you've got them *before* you need them. And judging from what I see in today's economy and society, you're going to need them - change is always on the way. Then it's on the way again.

Or, if you don't need 'Change Muscles' and a reservoir of resilience, then others might - those you lead, those you love, or those in the community you wish to influence.

I'm going to break down change and risk behaviour into three elements:

1. Why you should be proactive about change and risk,
2. Why most people aren't, and
3. How you can – how you can make a start, build momentum, muscle through when it gets tough and bring others along for the ride.

I've read a hundred books on psychology. I've read a hundred research papers. I've done my own research in writing my own books, and for nineteen years I've lived outside my comfort zone. I've made some mistakes. I've learned some lessons. I'm here to share those with you. I'm going to show why you should do 2 dangerous things a year.

Many avoid change because they think it's risky but often, it's more risky to not change...

2

The Risk of Not Changing

It's very early Monday morning in the Summer of 1995. I'm a trainer by trade working for the New Zealand Lotteries Commission. I'm based in Auckland but, once a month, I conduct a week-long franchise management program in Wellington. Remember the days of business class on the red-eye domestic flights? I travelled so much that I got to sit right up the front... not quite in business class, but close enough to *see* business class. This was what I called 'Resentment Class'. I was sitting there bleary-eyed this particular morning at 6 o'clock. Some dude sits down in the back of business class. He looked a bit like Van West from the TV show 'Outrageous Fortune' – somewhere between down-on-his-luck unemployed and low-level criminal. Whatever the reality, he does not look like he belongs in business class. I'm thinking to myself, "Well, they're going to kick his butt back to cattle class pretty soon with the rest of us riff-raff". But no, he stays, gets his own orange juice and enjoys a pampered hour-long journey down to Wellington. Our plane lands. He gets off the plane. I get off the plane. He gets his bag. I get my bag. We both hop into taxis. We effectively form a two-car convoy and both end up at the headquarters of the New Zealand Lotteries Commission.

It turns out my new Westie buddy has won the first division Lotto prize. I shake his hand and I take him to meet Lotto host Hilary and the marketing team to do the big photo with a giant cheque and all that kind of stuff – exactly what you’d expect. I wished him all the best and I walked off to conduct my course. I did not even think about him again.

Eight months later I'm in West Auckland. I'm walking into a large supermarket to do some in-store coaching with some frontline Lotto trainees. Who do I see working at the Lotto outlet in front of the supermarket but none other than the chap I saw eight months earlier who had won first division!

My first thought was, “Fantastic, he’s invested wisely, and he's bought a share in the supermarket, but he's still a man of the people working with the entry-level troops on the counter”. That would have been a great story if that was what had happened BUT that’s not what had happened.

In conversation with him, he told me that he had blown it all and had nothing to show for it. He was working a minimum wage job and I felt the need to take him out for a coffee and talk it through. He seemed quite grateful for the opportunity. I was like, “Dude, what happened? You won \$330,000 eight months ago and now there’s no Harleys in the garage or anything, nothing left.” And he gave me a lesson that has stuck with me for more than twenty-five years. I will not be letting that lesson go. I’d like now to pass it onto you.

He said, "Terry, I was thirty years old and I had thirty bucks in the bank. The next day I had three hundred and thirty thousand and thirty bucks in the bank but the only thing that changed was my bank balance. All the beliefs, associates, habits and behaviors and everything I did before - and thought and saw and the people I hung out with - all those things stayed the same. The things that led me to be worth thirty bucks at thirty years of age, they all stayed the same, and I just kept on with those things. I did not change. How could I not end up right back where I started from?"

I learned from him that *not* changing is a risky thing. People think change is a risky thing. I say not changing is equally if not more, risky. I often vividly recall those words and they drive me to not end up like him.

I may have not won Lotto and, statistically, you probably haven't either. But if you're living in the 21st century and you've got it together enough to read this book, then you've won one of the biggest jackpots in human existence. Learn to change, and to plan for and embrace change. Learn how to evolve or you run the risk of losing what you have and who you are. I want you to deliberately participate in 'Change Evolution' to avoid 'Change Extinction'.

3

How Confident Are You That You & Your Team Are 'Change Fit'?

How confident are you that you and your team are change fit? If they're not, what is the current and future cost of the resulting absenteeism, turnover, sabotage, burnout, disrupted 'Business-As-Usual (BAU), unfulfilled potential, and unsuccessful change projects?

Are you focused exclusively on BAU? Do you look ahead? Are the only changes you deal with those on someone else's timetable and conditions? Could you tell me your people's fears, strengths and weaknesses when it comes to change?

Fear is contagious. You can and should manage it and boost your willingness to act.

Type of fear	Focus that fuels the fear	Effects	Solution
Physical harm	Personal safety	Physiological arousal	Listen to the fear!

Social rejection	Personal performance	Shyness, faltering	Focus outward
Failure	Impact of failure	Stress, worry, paralysis	Focus on progress

You might have a problem and you might not even know about it before it's too late. The solutions above are part of the evolution solution I propose in this book - to *focus* on taking charge of your 'Danger DNA' and evolve.

Why Change Is Necessary?

4

‘Change Evolution’ or ‘Change Extinction’

There is a real concern amongst leaders that their people are unfit for change. Being unfit for change leads to disengaged and burnt-out people who won’t develop themselves nor meet their goals. The lack of development and unmet goals further reinforces negativity and contributes to a downward spiral. I call this ‘Change Extinction’.

The more positive alternative choice (and it is a choice) is a pathway I call ‘Change Evolution’.

Be it a natural predisposition, or be it the result of influence and experience, people will find themselves at some point on the ‘Change Evolution’ path. These points do not define or describe the people themselves but the circumstances in which they find themselves. There are four distinct stages and one indistinct middle state:

1. Change Sloth
 2. Change Strain
 3. Change Inconsistent
 4. Change Workouts
 5. Change Fit
-

It's beyond cliché to say that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step but sayings don't last millennia without some solid wisdom behind them. I'm championing some very specific first few steps. The means to take those steps is doing 2 dangerous things a year, following my 'Change Evolution' path and adapting your 'Danger DNA' to put control back in your hands and create collective momentum. Fear is compounded by surprise. By practising it yourself, you eliminate the surprise. It's the aggregation of many small things that matter and create matter:

- Asking small questions can dispel fear and inspire creativity (ABC: Always Be Curious - "What shapes our lives are the questions we ask, refuse to ask, or never think to ask". – Sam Keen)
- Thinking small thoughts can develop new skills and habits
- Taking small actions increases the probability of success
- Solving small problems creates relief in the face of being potentially overwhelmed
- Bestowing small rewards and recognising small moments reinforces momentum.

A school in England, West Rise Junior School in East Sussex has integrated small, managed dangers into the lives and activities of their students. Subsequently, they have risen to the top five percent of schools nationally academically. There are knives, tools, fires and the

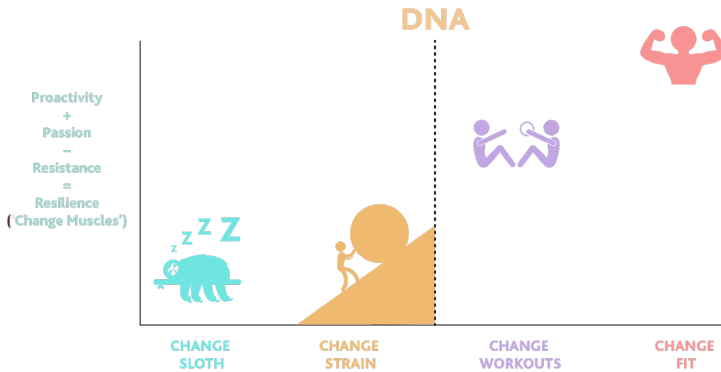
hunting of water buffalo. Give them a Google; it's a fascinating story but not mine to tell.

Our fears become our children's problems. We'll now start getting our fear of change sorted. Let's walk through the 'Change Evolution' model.

5

The 'Why' Axis

Your Change Evolution



I'm going to step you along this 'Change Evolution' path. It's pretty simple and people I've introduced to it have been relating to it intuitively. Let's start with the Y axis, or as I like to call it – the 'Why' axis because it's *why* we are doing this.

The horizontal X axis is going to mark out over time the four stages of the 'Change Evolution'. The vertical 'Why' axis is going to be the measure of success (or lack thereof) at each of the stages.

Your ability to survive or succeed in the face of change is a measure of your resilience. I call this your 'Change Muscles'. If we're intending to move from the low-resilience stage of 'Change Sloth' to

the high-resilience stage of 'Change Fit', it makes sense to compare our 'Change Muscles' at each stage.

The factors that contribute to you or your team's current state of resilience in the face of change are:

$$[\text{proactivity} + \text{passion}] \\ + (-)\text{resistance} = \text{resilience}$$

You want more of the first two and less of the third.

Indicators that you're not in a good place regarding change are:

- Avoiding difficult, uncomfortable or unfamiliar situations
- Refusing to consider change
- Getting left back in learning
- Falling back to familiar patterns and choices (Do you have the same lunch every day?)
- Reacting instinctively and unthinkingly
- Trying to change the world instead of ourselves
- Fixating on the past.

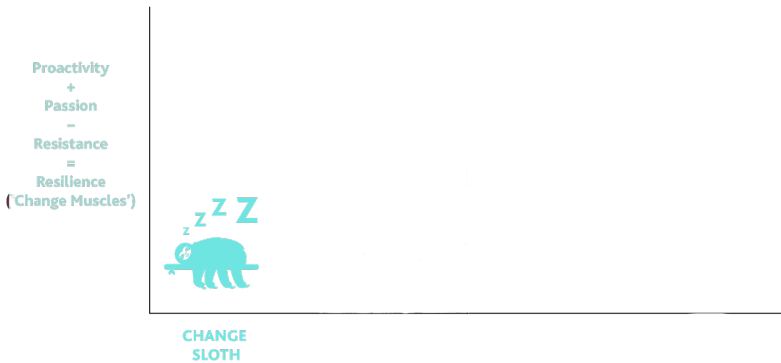
Let's now look at the first stage along the 'Change Evolution' path – 'Change Sloth'. Again, I want to reiterate these stages and descriptions are not about people, they are about the circumstances in which people find themselves. I won't judge anyone for where they

find themselves. I might judge them based on what they do after they realise where they are.

6

Change Sloth

Your Change Evolution



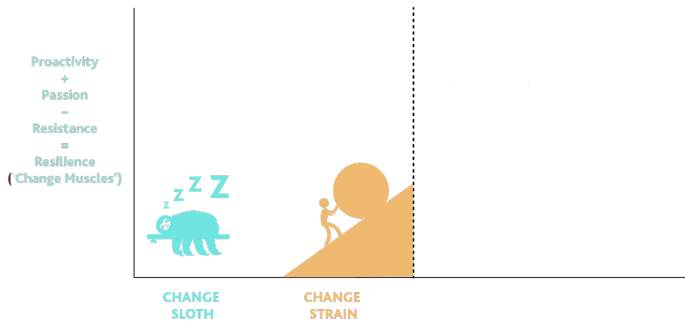
In the 'Change Sloth' stage, you're unaware of, nor actively looking for, changes even just over the horizon; you expect tomorrow to be similar to today; you're caught up in 'business as usual'; and you use phrases like "If it aint broke, don't fix it". Is there a lot of resistance and little passion and proactivity? You're at risk of not changing. Becoming aware that you and / or your team is at this stage might be the wake-up call you need, pushing you to take up the opportunity to evolve to prevent the risk of extinction. If you answered "yes" to the questions a few

sentences ago, it's probable you're here. If you're curious as to the extent to which your personality's natural predisposition towards risk is contributing to this and might be a handbrake on your progress, you can take my online assessment and find out. It's at www.amldangerous.com .

7

Change Strain

Your Change Evolution



In the 'Change Strain' stage, you act surprised & irritated. You may actively oppose change but it's more likely to be passivity or passive-aggressive avoidance and denial. In reacting to external change, you probably go with your first idea, even though our first idea is rarely our best idea. You can seem to others to have a 'Band-Aid / kicking the can down the road' mindset.

8

The 'Development Zone' is Beyond the 'Discomfort Zone'

Even on those occasions where you do try and proactively get some change going, you might buckle at the first struggle or discomfort. If you can picture a circle called your 'Comfort Zone' and a bigger circle around it called the 'Development Zone', there's a red jagged terrain you have to traverse to get to the 'Development Zone'. It's called your 'Discomfort Zone'. Broadly speaking, there are three types of people in this world:

1. Those who never leave their comfort zone;
2. Those who bounce into their 'Discomfort Zone' and repeatedly bounce right back into their 'Comfort Zone';
and
3. Those who muscle through with some techniques in this book to endure the 'Discomfort Zone', perhaps more than once, and end up reaping the rewards of the 'Development Zone'. And, later, they do it again, continuously expanding their 'Comfort Zone'.

If you're in the 'Change Strain' stage, this is the 'Discomfort Zone' and you do not yet know if you're a 'Person 2' or a 'Person 3'.

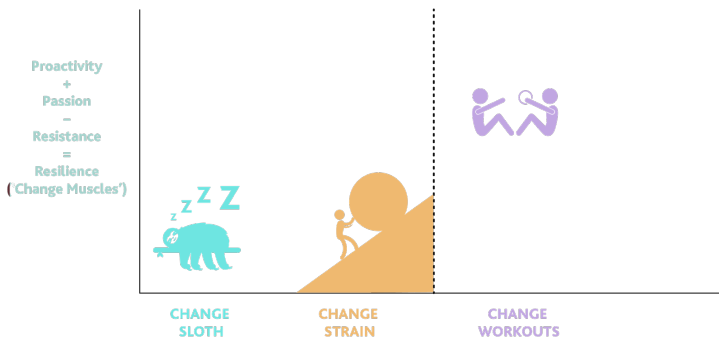
The bad news is, you may be experiencing the discomfort or pain of external change beyond your control but the good news is that might be just what motivates you to evolve, if you can source some help.

If you answered “yes” to the questions a few sentences ago, it’s probable you’re here. If you’re curious as to the extent to which your personality’s natural predisposition towards risk is contributing to this and might be a handbrake on your progress, you can take my online assessment and find out. It’s at www.amIdangerous.com.

9

Change Workouts

Your Change Evolution



In the 'Change Workouts' stage, you realise that change is best proactively addressed by you on your terms and your timetable. Your 'centre of control' is internal not external. You might say things like, "If it's to be, it's up to me" or "No pain no gain". Rather than wait for change to slap you in the face, you're preparing for whatever changes might arise at a time when things are going well enough that you have the resources to devote to working out your 'Change Muscles' and that of the people you need to lead or influence. You're thinking strategically and proactively, rather than reacting with limited short term tactics. You're comfortable that you might not know what specific

changes are around the corner but are confident some change will come at some point. This attitude might be born out of the 'school of hard knocks'. You are working to evolve your DNA but you might need some coaching to save wasted time or misdirected effort.

10

‘Workplace Exaptation’

One example of a practice that may indicate you’ve entered the ‘Change Workouts’ stage is ‘Workplace Exaptation’. Exaptation is an evolutionary term for adaptations that evolved for one reason but later turned out to be useful for other things. Bird feathers originally were for warmth and attracting mates. It was only subsequently that they assisted in flight. There are plenty of Exaptation examples in business and workplaces too – what I call, ‘Workplace Exaptation’. Viagra, for example, was originally developed as a heart medication.

Another significant benefit of taking a more proactive stance on change, trying new things, or doing 2 dangerous things a year, is that you test many small ideas. Even if those ideas don’t initially work out or seem to amount to much, you still have those ideas. Keep them. Store them clearly and logically so they’re retraceable for future reference.

Both my kids worked their way through high school and much of university at the same local supermarket. That store had an idea. The idea even had a name – ‘Fresh Eyes’. Originally, and very successfully, the idea was that the weekly audit walk by managers required in their departments assessing things against a prescribed checklist should be

rotated so that the audit walk was still conducted each week, in turn, but a different manager did it of a different department. It lessened the danger of over-familiarity and assumptions so they wouldn't see the wood for the trees.

The idea worked (and works) great so they could quite reasonably have left it at that and patted themselves on the back. But they didn't. They asked themselves – if this is such a great idea, where else might it be applied. 'Workplace Exaptation' in action.

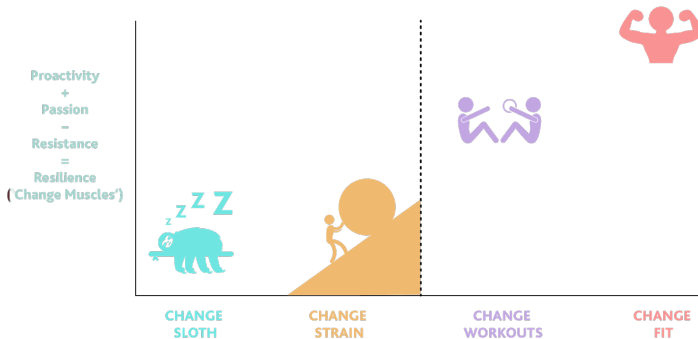
They took that original idea of responsibility rotation and 'Fresh Eyes' and used it with job interviews. My son was employed in the seafood section. He was originally interviewed by someone from HR, not because they were from HR but because it was *their turn*. Next, it was someone from Produce, a less-experienced supervisor. They had fresh eyes and a different perspective on my son, plus it gave the interviewer some experience. Win-win! Lastly, he was interviewed by the manager of the seafood department. It's a robust process structuring-in diverse perspectives, yet retaining consistency with a prescribed checklist. Successful 'Workplace Exaptation' in action.

If you feel the descriptions a few sentences ago apply to you, it's probable you're here. If you're curious as to the extent to which your personality's natural predisposition towards risk is contributing to this and might be a handbrake or an accelerator on your progress, you can take my online assessment and find out. It's at www.amIdangerous.com.

11

Change Fit

Your Change Evolution



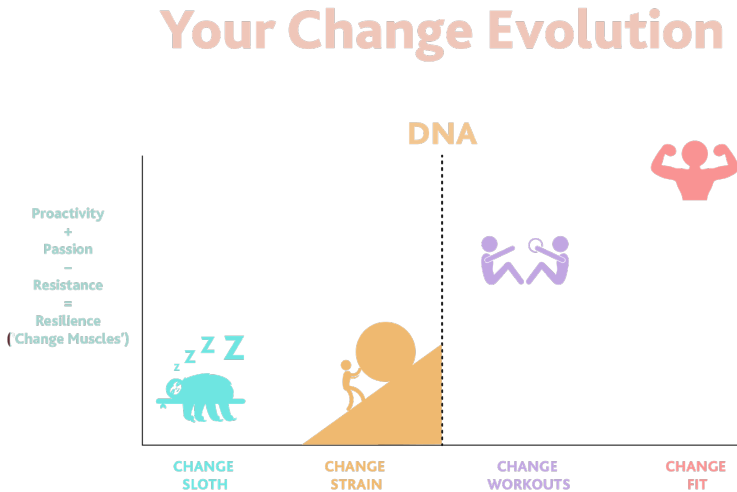
At the 'Change Fit' stage, you are battle-tested. You have heightened senses and notice things – threats and opportunities. The novelty and variety you constantly and deliberately expose yourself to has attuned your brain's focus 'muscle' to expect the unexpected. From experience, you have a toolkit for a range of changes, whatever they might be, but you're not so cavalier that you expect to be able to handle anything. You know that you don't know what you don't know. Like real muscles, your change muscles, good as they are right now, will only stay in mint condition with continued work. You're probably now at a point where you're bringing, or trying to bring, others along their

change evolution journey and you might be seeking some help on how to coach them.

If you feel the descriptions a few sentences ago apply to you, it's probable you're here. If you're curious as to the extent to which your personality's natural predisposition towards risk is contributing to this and might be a handbrake or an accelerator on your progress, you can take my online assessment and find out. It's at www.amIdangerous.com.

12

Your 'Danger DNA'



In-between the 'Change Strain' and 'Change Workouts' stages, is a state of uncertain tension that I call 'Change Inconsistent'. Here, your 'Danger DNA' is in a state of flux. (More about altering your 'Danger DNA' in a later chapter. Adapting it is the solution to your change unfitness problems).

Within 'Change Inconsistent', you're aware of and concerned about the extinction risk of staying in the stage of 'Change Sloth' and the injury risk of staying in a state of 'Change Strain'. You perhaps can see the logical merits of advancing to the state of 'Change Fit' via 'Change Workouts' but your behaviour is not yet fully invested. You talk a good change game but you're probably not convincing others, or

even yourself some days. We all make optimistic statements about our beliefs or our intentions to change but, ultimately, our behaviour betrays us. You're making starts but not generating consistent momentum and, on the down days, that can make you wonder if it's worth the effort that our "lazy brains" do not like. You're at a tipping point. What, or who, can you find to help you break through and tip yourself forwards?

It's a balanced place but it's an inherently unstable place. If you feel the descriptions a few sentences ago apply to you, it's probable you're here. If you're curious as to the extent to which your personality's natural predisposition towards risk is contributing to this and might be a handbrake or an accelerator on your progress, you can take my online assessment and find out.

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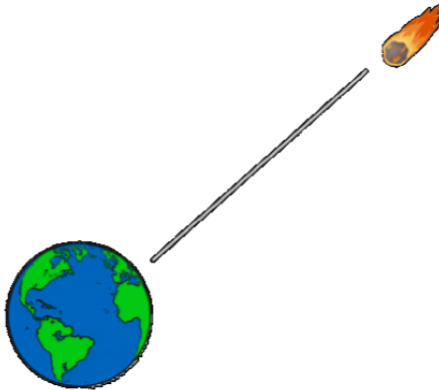
Behavioural Physics

“A body in motion tends to stay in motion unless affected by an outside force”. Isaac Newton

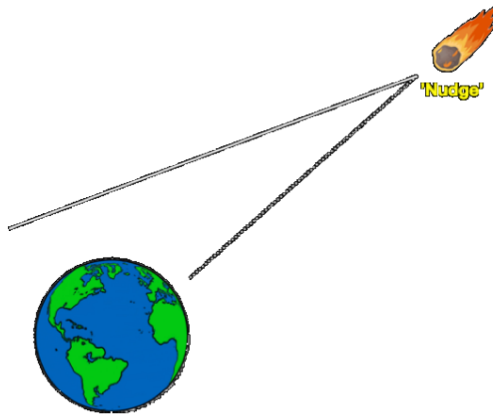
I want to talk about something I call ‘Behavioral Physics’. I don't think anyone else in the social sciences has yet patented that term? I think you're all aware of physics-physics if you can flash your mind back to high school, An object moving at a certain speed in a certain direction will maintain that speed and direction unless affected by an outside force, such as gravity. I think people are the same. Behaving in a certain way in a certain direction, at a certain speed, they will continue to do so for the most part unless affected by an outside force. I'd like you to be your own outside force and to nudge that change earlier on when you need the least energy. Or, you can be the positive outside force for someone else you lead or love.

Getting back to actual physics for just a moment, early nudges would certainly have made the movie ‘Armageddon’ shorter and less

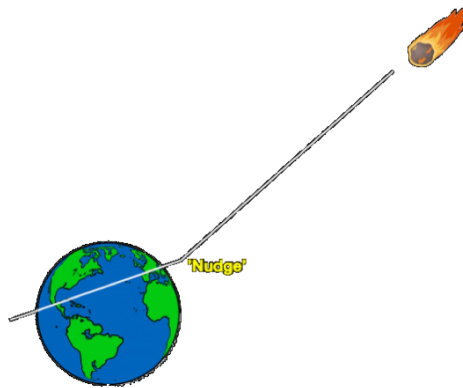
dramatic but [SPOILER ALERT], maybe Bruce Willis' character would've made it home. (C'mon, it was 1997!)



Imagine your behaviour is the asteroid. Left alone, it's highly likely to continue on its path. If it does so, it's predictable that there will be an impact and Armageddon will ensue with drama and damage. Behavioural physics says that an outside force is needed. The key variables in this metaphor are how much force and when is it applied. Timing is critical.



Ideally, the force should be minimal, as little as is needed to avoid the collision. This is known as a 'Nudge'. Nudges result in little drama and damage and require little energy. The critical element with nudges is timing. For nudges to work, early intervention is required. Unfortunately, prime characteristics of those in the 'Change Sloth' and 'Change Strain' stages are avoidance and delay.



Avoidance and delay mean much greater energy is required and it's no longer a nudge. It results in drama and damage, even if it is successful, producing scar tissue. It's also possible that it's too late, leading to an extinction event. Even though the angle and direction of the change is the same, because it's so much later it means the collision is inevitable. It wasn't, but it is now.

In the case of this graphic, then it would be, "Adios Barcelona"!

So, given Behavioural Physics, our 'Change Evolution' efforts need to occur early. I will argue that by the time you see change coming at you, you're already caught up in the gravity of the situation. You must

plan to act and then act *before* then. Doing 2 dangerous things a year, as I'll define them shortly, is good *practice*.

14

The Way Things Are Done Around Here...

“The most dangerous phrase in the
language is,
‘We’ve always done it this way’”.

Rear Admiral Grace Hopper

There was a big earthquake in Kaikoura in November 2016. I was in Wellington at the time. Wellington was equally as affected. In fact, the same day there were massive floods as well, so for the entire day you could not get in, out of or around Wellington. They should probably do something about that.

My troubles were few. I was merely stuck for a while. I blobbed out on the couch at the airport staring at the TV screen on the wall. The chatshow ‘Ellen’ was on daytime TV. I never get to see daytime TV. She’s very good - a bit of a dance, a bit of a laugh, bit of a joke, a bit of a prize, everyone wins. This particular day she’s got a chef on the show and the chef is making meatloaf. She does the classic cooking segment tilt the tray pan shot to camera. Ellen comes along and say, “Hello chef! Welcome to the show. I notice you’ve cut one end off the meatloaf and

put it to the side of the remaining meatloaf in the tray. What's your logic here? What's your technical cooking reason for doing that?"

The chef looks so flustered and embarrassed and says, "Oh geez, I don't know, my mom -- I learned to make meatloaf as a young girl at my mother's knee and she used to do that, and I really just kept on doing it. Even now as you ask me the question on live television, I cannot think why I would do that. It's actually probably no good for the meatloaf."

Ellen says, "It's okay. We'll call up your mom."

They ring up the mom. Mom says, "I don't know, my mom used to do it."

They go back four generations. Great granny is still trucking on. On the phone she says, "I was making meatloaf during the Great Depression. I had a very large family but we were very poor so we could only afford a very small tray so to make it fit we would cut the end off and put it to the side".

Isn't that typical human nature? Back in the day, there was a totally justifiable reason, but people keep on doing things because it's the way it's always been done. That's Behavioural Physics in action. Maybe you've observed this in work places? Maybe you've heard expressions like, "The way things are done around here is the way things are done around here"? Those are dangerous words. I agree with Grace Hopper that one of the most dangerous phrases in the language is, "We've always done it this way." If what you're looking at

is still a totally valid process, fine, but let's get out of this 'Change Sloth' mindset and question such things.

If you're trying to motivate a group of people, here's a catchphrase – one size does not fit all. People are different in many ways but there's one very specific way, they are different *from you*. Whatever you consider to be a change motivator may not motivate significant numbers of other people. In fact, that personal motivator of yours might be someone else's *demotivator*.

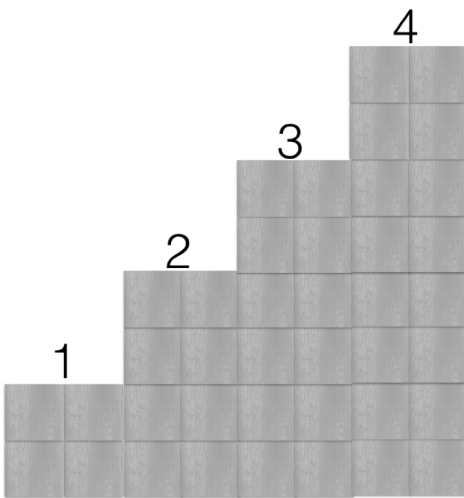
In one of my previous roles, our department was well-known in the organization for our team celebrations. One person, new to the organisation but who had been there long enough to have witnessed several of these, congratulated us on them but did draw our attention to the fact that every single one of our celebrations revolved around food. Why? Because I liked food. In fairness, most people do. But the types of food that feature in celebrations are rarely healthy and we had a significant proportion of our team who were trying to watch what they ate. We weren't helping. So, we mixed it up a bit with varying styles, locations and scales of celebrations. We'd thought we were getting good reactions to our food-based celebrations, and we were, but once we had the comparison of trying different things, responses were even more positive.

The next few pages will give you a couple of tools. The purpose of these is to weave into your change motivation strategies other people's points of view. You might genuinely be open-minded, and you

might genuinely be trying to take into account the perspectives of others but there really is no substitute for actual others providing their own perspectives and representing many additional others.

The people in the group you're trying to motivate will all be starting from different points in their age, gender, experience, education, life stage and so forth. How can those ahead in one area help those who are not and how can those who are new help challenge those who are part of the furniture? There's a model I use when I'm training trainers and it's one of the bedrock ideas driving adult learning. It's got many names and lots of cultures have come up with their own versions. In this book, I'll call it 'The Learning Staircase'.

It's a basic progression model of prerequisites for learning. You can't run until you can walk. You can't walk until you can crawl.



This model is skill-specific. Let's take driving as an example. Right now, it's front of mind for me. My children, now adults, have recently succeeded in getting through the full drivers licence process. I have succeeded in getting through my 'white knuckled parent in

the passenger seat process'. (It makes me nostalgic for when I got my own drivers licence back in the early Duran Duran era).

I'm going to continue to call the various levels of The Learning Staircase one, two, three and four. It's obvious and intuitive what I mean. I will spend a bit of time now though going a bit deeper into what it takes and means to be at each level and to move forwards and backwards. There are a few polysyllabic terms coming up. Fret not, we'll be back to one, two, three, four before you know it. As I said, I use this model in training trainers about some principles of adult learning. It's also a great framework for thinking about motivating people to change. It's also the way you see how you can plan collaborations and use people's natural socialization to spark more motivation. Or, at least, prevent some demotivation.

Step one is also known as (polysyllabic warning) Unconscious Incompetence. It's a terrible term. I prefer to say that if you're a one at a particular skill, then you don't yet know what you don't know. The symptoms of being a one are typically high levels of motivation and low-to-zero levels of actual skill. Taking my own driving experience as an example, before I got behind the wheel of a car, I was going to be the next world racing driving champion, I was going to get that elbow sunburned by hanging it out the car window and I'd be cruising my hometown's main streets on a Saturday night. Good times... in my head. Step one (Unconscious Incompetence), I didn't yet know what I didn't know.

Then I got behind the wheel of a car. Suddenly I'm starting in third gear and bunny-hopping into the middle of the intersection and stalling the car, cars are coming and I'm freaking out. Or, I'm attempting a hill-start in neutral and I'm coasting backwards and the truck behind blares its horn and I'm freaking out. This is step two or Conscious Incompetence. Suddenly, it hits me how little I know and how much more there is to it. The symptoms of being a two are plummeting morale and slightly more than zero skills.

Common to steps one and two is the fundamental need for supervision. By definition, if you cannot do a skill competently without direct supervision then you are a one or a two at that skill.

It might be that you only spend thirty second at stage two before ploughing onwards. Some people, for some skills, never get beyond step two. Perhaps you know them? Perhaps you are one?

The odds of a two becoming a three are very much dependent on the qualities of the driving instructor / teacher / coach / leader doing the supervision. Basically, there are three alternatives. Firstly, people at step two can give up. For some people, for some skills, that might be the best option. Secondly, people at step two can spin their wheels. They neither give up nor progress. They become a burden, get frustrated and produce low quality high-cost work. The third alternative is the best. They get effective feedback, can see the benefits are worth the effort and discomfort. They try to learn then try and learn, until one day they cross the magical 'line of supervision' and can

complete the skill competently by themselves. This is when they hit step three Conscious Competence. The symptoms are medium and improving levels of skill, and variable motivation depending on their supervisor experience during step two.

At step three, they can do it but it's effortful. It's often clunky. Our brains don't like effort.

Have you ever had a day when you've gotten in the car in the morning to drive to work? You've turned on the ignition, searched for the traffic report on the radio, done half a yawn and then, as you open your eyes, you're at work with little if any clear recall of that drive to work. Have you ever had an experience like that? You have. You've had many of them. In fact, you've had many more of them than you can remember.

Step four is Unconscious Competence. We can do it competently without actively thinking about it. This is the effortlessness that our lazy brain likes. The symptoms of step four are high motivation and high competence. We cannot rest on our laurels at step four. The Learning Staircase is something we can move forwards and backwards or get stuck on, spinning our wheels. The two variables affecting our movement are:

1. am I not only skilled enough for the level I'm at but am I developing, and
-

2. is my work connecting with my internal motivation and not conflicting with my beliefs and values?

Step four is certainly desirable but it is no Nirvana. There are some potential downsides to being a four – the curse of genius. One such downside is complacency. The diligence we showed getting to that level is no longer essential. We imagine we can multi-task. You might be juggling activities, but your brain cannot multi-task. The best it can do is rapid task-switching. You might be able to keep some plates spinning but there will always be degradation of quality. Whilst driving, we imagine we can text, put on makeup, install a Bluetooth speaker, clear a windscreen, or, as I saw a truckdriver doing on a motorway recently, eat a bowl of oatmeal out of his lap. (Full credit for nutritional choices, less so for road safety).

Think back to my meatloaf story. Wasn't that so very *human*? There was, at one point, a perfectly valid reason but, over time, people simply repeated it without thought as to whether it was still valid. In workplaces, you'll often hear the phrase, *the way things are done around here is the way things are done around here*. Between social leverage and behavioural inertia, we are very inclined to keep doing things until some compelling or external reason crops up not to. We all need a TV chat show host coming up to us and asking *why*. We don't have a TV chat show host on retainer, but we do have ones and fours. Clearly, there's an obvious value in having skilled fours developing

ones but the traffic isn't one-way. The value the ones bring to the equation is the *why*. Lots of whys. Some days perhaps painfully so.

The downside of being a four, along with complacency might be over-confidence or arrogance, or an inability to deal with non-fours (customers, stakeholders, other departments, etc). When we're very busy, we may not take personal timeouts and look at what we're doing and ask:

- is this still the best way of doing this, or
- is this even necessary to do at all?
- What changes on, or beyond, the horizon am I not seeing that someone else might be?

You can't just hope fours and ones work together naturally. You can't just release them into the wild and hope for the best. How can you systematically plan and manage as skills change who of your people are ones and fours and how they interact in a planned way? Here's a tool for that called 'The Skills Matrix'.

Below is an example of what a very basic DIY skills matrix might look like. Ideally it wouldn't be subjective as to what it takes to be a four or a one but, even if it is just initially your opinion, it's a useful starting point as a planning tool. You can't start buddying up your fours to help develop your ones or use your ones to challenge your fours until you know who is which.

	Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5	Skill 6	Skill 7	Skill 8	Skill 9	Skill 10
Name A	4	1	3	1	4	4	4	1	3	1
Name B	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	2	2
Name C	1	1	3	2	4	2	1	1	3	2
Name D	2	2	2	1	4	1	2	2	2	1
Name E	1	2	3	2	4	2	1	2	3	2
Name F	2	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	3	2
Name G	1	1	2	1	4	4	1	1	2	1
Name H	2	1	2	1	4	2	2	1	2	1
Name I	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Name J	2	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	3	4

In the above example skills matrix, let's look at the column headed 'Skill 1'. Employee A is a four. No one else is above a two. Have a think about the implications of that and what actions you might need to take. For a start, what if employee A left or got sick. You've got a key-person critical risk there that needs to be managed. Quite apart from developing and motivating the twos, you need to create cover, continuity and even a succession plan. Pick your best two and get them buddied up with a goal and a timeframe to get that two up to a four. Then do it again.

Employee 1 is no higher than a two in any skill. That's not necessarily a problem. They may be new. They'd benefit from being buddied up with a variety of fours. This lightens the load on a top performer like employee A and allows employee I to be exposed to a variety of perspectives.

Such matrices are living documents. Some workplaces find it appropriate and useful in a positive way to post it as an A3 on a wall so it's visible to all. The thinking there is that people strive to better themselves. I think this is generally true, but I'd still advise caution in

posting such information publicly. It very much depends on an open and trusting workplace culture.

It's great when you're using a planned approach to manage the interactions of people at different levels within your team with a purpose to drive motivation in both the teacher and learner or general change motivation. However, even the best laid plans still have to contend with people who aren't you influencing your team, sometimes without it being obvious they're doing it, or even realizing themselves that they are doing it. This is hard to plan for directly but keep an eye out for it. It's called *Social Leverage*.

Social leverage is fairly evident all around us. If we haven't had a direct and personal experience of a topic, our opinions can take the shape of those others around us who are like us. Sometimes this social leverage is accidental, sometimes deliberate. For example, the signs in hotels designed to encourage towel re-use. It certainly reduces costs for the hotel in reducing what they pay for laundry services. It might be framed more altruistically than that around benefits to the environment. Both are equally true. What drives the towel reuse behaviour of room occupants though is what previous room occupants have done and those little signs these days often feature a statistic – something like, “75% of previous occupants of this room have reused their towels”. That information does indeed drive up towel re-usage.

However, the notion of social leverage can also have negative or unforeseen consequences. A national park intern in the U.S. took up a

role at a park that was experiencing a disappointing problem with littering. She had studied this notion of social leverage, so she thought she'd use it to drive tidiness behaviour improvements. She convinced park management to give her enough time and resources to construct a large cage just inside the entrance to the park. After surveying and measuring trash collections from the park for three months, she filled the cage with the amount of trash that represented how much trash was dumped in the park every day and posted a large sign to that effect. It was a lot of trash and its distinctive mass struck visitors as they arrived. She then continued the survey and measurement of trash dumping for the next three months to see what influence the cage and sign had on visitor behaviour.

Staggeringly, disappointingly and perhaps surprisingly, trash dumping doubled. What? How? Why?

This is the dark side of social leverage– *everyone else is doing it...* Be wary of applying this principle in your own change evolution journey bringing others along for the ride. What others are doing can turn people on or off to change depending on how many or who those others are.

15

BOHICAns

The odds are very high that any people you're leading, and from whom you're trying to get buy-in for change, have had leaders like you try it with them before. On average, it's likely that those previous efforts and results have not been great. There's even a slang term for it on factory floors where various change projects have come and gone as the flavor of the month management consultants have influenced management: BOHICA! This stands for 'Bend Over Here It Comes Again'. The underlying cynical philosophy of that is if you keep your head down and remain unnoticed, you might survive until the next round of suggested changes. This mindset is the opposite of what you need to get buy-in.

A simple, obvious, yet underutilized technique to try in these BOHICA-response situations is to ask questions. Be it at a toolbox meeting at the back of truck before the shift starts or in a conference room with a whiteboard and flipcharts, you lead a series of questions with people who have been there before. Depending on how you handle them early on in your change efforts, these people can be one of three things as you attempt to move forward with your changes:

- an obstacle,
- an ally with influence beyond your own, or
- a passive non-participant demotivating others around them. ('Last of the BOHICAns').

It doesn't have to be a big, obvious meeting. It could be a subtle series of questions over time. You could conduct it with the entire group, in smaller sub-groups or with key individuals, perhaps popular or persuasive opinion leaders within the group. Or a combination.

You can use your own words, but the simple questions are questions such as:

- why didn't the last change work?
- if you were running the last change, what would you have done differently?
- What are some problems with the way things are now?

In your thinking around developing and adjusting your own change motivation strategies with your people and projects, you need to be on the alert for examples of desired behaviour to reinforce and publicise. At the same time, you need to be on the alert for examples of off-target behaviour – to extinguish any rewards and reinforcement people are getting for that behaviour and making sure it doesn't virally spread. This would include those BOHICAns. Non-participation can

spread if you allow it to take hold, even tolerate it. As a leader and change agent, everything you do has a consequence, even if that something you do is nothing.

16

2 Dangerous Things A Year

Who am I to tell you that you should do 2 dangerous things a year? I'm no one special. I'm just like everyone else in 'the room'. I'm no adventurer like Indiana Jones, who as we know is only afraid of one thing - snakes. I'm no daredevil like Evel Knievel who has broken more bones than records, and he has broken a lot of records. And I'm no life-risking, challenge-smasher like Felix Baumgartner who got a space pod, attached it to a balloon, went up into space, opened the door and jumped out in space. I am not those people, I have not done those things.

But what I have done every year since 2000 is 2 dangerous things a year; dangerous by my own definition of dangerous. Some have literally been dangerous by the dictionary's definition of dangerous. I have jumped out of some things, but most have just been comfort-zone threatening, reputation risking, nerve-wracking experiences that have made me grow, increased my skills, bolstered my confidence, strengthened my character, and expanded my network.

Fear is primal and practical. It kept our ancestors safer and alive. It still does. Anxiety is modern and misleading. Fear is not synonymous with anxiety. Doing 2 dangerous things a year helps us learn the

difference – to embrace and benefit from the former and to diminish and disregard the latter. It does take a willingness to do so and practice.

Unjustified anxiety stymies thinking, hinders communication, decreases performance, impairs judgement and causes us to overlook, or be indifferent to, opportunities.

Steinberg has his own FEAR model to deal with fears such as the big seven of failure, embarrassment, losing control, rejection, confrontation, isolation, and uncertainty:

- F - Focus
- E - Engage
- A - Assess
- R - React

Having a certain structure like the FEAR model in an uncertain situation is one of these consistent responses that we need to develop and doing 2 dangerous things a year will promote that.

I've got some rules with my own 2 dangerous things a year programme. I don't tell anyone about this year or the three previous years as some are quite personal. I need to know how they turn out before I start sharing the stories. But what I'm going to concentrate on the most is my comedy career. It all started – in fact, it was the very first one I ever did - in the year 2000.

I had a couple of young Kids, two and four. (That was their ages not their names. If you ever meet anyone with two kids named 'Two' and 'Four', ask them what happened to 'One' and 'Three'). Do you have kids? Have you ever been a kid? Are you waiting on DNA test results? I like to include everybody in this. You know what kids are like at that age? Everything is amazing, every day is a voyage of discovery, "Oh, wow, the sky is blue again. It's amazing."

At the time, I was in a job that was fine. I was fine. Work was fine. People were fine. Prospects were fine. It was fine and stable and secure. I should have been happy, but I didn't feel that I fitted. I wanted something more or different, but I didn't know what. I wasn't really prepared to do anything about it, but just looking at the kids I thought I needed some of that back, not childishness, but the child-likeness, that curiosity that I'm going to talk about here. So, I resolved in 2000 that every year my New Year resolution would be the same, the variables will change, but the resolution was always that every year I would do 2 new dangerous things, dangerous by my definition of dangerous. And the first one that year was stand-up comedy.

I wasn't the funny guy in my group of friends. I wasn't the class clown at high school. I was a fan of comedy, I was a consumer of comedy and it struck me as something that really fit into this category, something that would scare the bejesus out of me. I signed up for what they called 'Raw Monday' at the Classic Comedy Bar in Queen Street

up in Auckland. Anyone can get six minutes on stage. I thought maybe I'll get a second six minutes.

It's a great show to go to. It's a cheap ticket. Probably you'll see some diamonds in the rough who go on to great things and you also see some colossal train wrecks. They're all entertaining in their own way. When you start out, you know which one you're going to be, and I killed my first time out. (Killing is good). But I died my second and third time out. (Dying is, as you'd imagine, bad). I got back on the horse and I kept on trucking. I've done a thousand gigs since. I've got so much more of this dangerous thing in terms of the skills that I've got, the contacts that I've made, the adventures that I have, the people that I've met.

As a comedian, I've hosted swank events like the Concrete Society Awards. Jealous?! Their awards weigh eight kilograms each. I've performed on cruise ships. I've had the odd TV spot here and there. Mostly though, it's live at open mics. These are free entry high-risk outings where the audience and I get discover at the exact same time if what I just said was funny. The beauty of comedy as my dangerous thing is that open mics never get undangerous. I'm trying out new material, even having done this for over eighteen years and still cannot be sure if a new joke is going to work, but these drunk kids will let me know one way or the other.

At one such show, a stranger took an unauthorised photo. This is generally frowned upon. Twentieth century me would have let it slide

but post 2 dangerous things me does not. The person who took this photograph was a kiwi and a kiwi living in Japan who happened to be back in town. He always takes photographs, that's how he communicates. I ended up hanging out with him afterwards. He was living in Osaka so now one of my 'dangerous' things coming up is I have the opportunity to go to Osaka, and do a gig there, I've got a place to crash and he knows some people. A similar situation arose when I was working in Singapore. I went off the beaten path which I would never have done but met a guy running a comedy room. Now there's the potential for a gig in Karachi. That's potentially literally a dangerous thing to do according to Government tourist advisories. But knowing people there via my getting out of comfort zone removes much if not all of the risk of gong there.

What's your version of stand-up comedy and snow skiing and bungee jumping to work out your change muscles, to build up your reservoir of resilience? You get heightened instincts at times of danger. You can work that up as a skill so you're more aware of threats and opportunities in the marketplace. When you make a change early and proactively and deliberately, you need less energy to do so according to my Behavioural Physics, so it's important to do it early, rather than later when it's not your choice and not under your timing and conditions. And by moving on and making changes you develop mistakes, and you make mistakes and you can develop mistake learning systems. This helps you develop a 'personal continuous

improvement process'. So, practising mistakes makes you better at learning from them.

We are what we repeatedly do. If you keep doing courageous things, you're courageous regardless of what you actually think or believe. New Zealand hero Willie Apiata won the Victoria Cross for heroism in battle, returning to the firefight to retrieve comrades. It is so moving to watch him today as an activist for the welfare of combat veterans fighting this time against his own fear of public speaking. He is what he repeatedly does. Courage isn't a personality trait, it's a set of behaviours:

- Willing to take smart risks on their terms
- Aware of the edges of their comfort zone and where they are in relation to them
- Learning and trying
- Expanding contacts and connections
- Seeking fresh opinions and perspectives
- No leaping to assumptions or conclusions
- Focus on solutions not problems.

There is an upside to fear (remembering that fear is not anxiety):

- Alerts us to danger and genuine threats
 - Makes us more attuned to our environment
 - Drives innovation
-

- Prompts us to make changes and fix problems on our terms while we still can
- Promotes dynamic decision-making
- Fights complacency
- Generates a sense of urgency when action is needed, action is needed now, and action is needed now by me.

This all sounds great. Why isn't everybody doing this all the time?
Why are we not awash with people doing 2 dangerous things a year?

Why You Don't Change

17

Undeveloped Meta-Cognition

Have you heard of the Anablep? I'll be impressed if you have. The Anablep is a fish; it's a very rare fish. It lives in South America. Its claim to fame is that it has four eyes, two sets of two eyes. It's a floater on the Amazon River and some tributaries. It's got one set of eyes above the waterline looking out for the birds that hunt it. It's another set of eyes below the waterline looking for the fish that it hunts. Isn't that Mother Nature having a good day? That is Evolution knocking it out of the park. I like to use the Anablep as a metaphor for communication and for change. You've got one set of eyes on the customer, you've got one set of eyes on your current process. As I'm talking to you, you're my customer, you're the most important person in the world to me right now, but I've also got my Anablep eyes over here on the sidelines watching me, watching you, watching you react to what I say so I'm effectively coaching myself.

Whilst it's easy to say this in a book, it's actually a very difficult skill to develop. You want to develop your people, but you can't be there 24/7. You might have your one-on-one conversations and your performance checks, and you should have performance feedback conversations continuously, but you can't be there all the time. You

need to skill yourself up and skill up your people to be able to be your own Anableps. Academics call it 'meta cognition' - "meta" meaning above, "cognition" mean thinking; to be above yourself, observing yourself, thinking about how you think. You'll start to do more of this now you know it exist, so give it a crack, see how it goes.

18

Under-Developed Focus & Attention

Have you ever encountered a situation where someone asks you a question like, “Hey Terry, have you noticed the new Toyota Prius? It’s that fluorescent lime-green colour”. And you hadn’t noticed it but, the moment it’s drawn to your attention, for the next two weeks you see nothing but lime-green cars everywhere you go. Have you ever had an experience like that?

When I ask that question in my workshops, even though I ask it as a rhetorical question and am in no way asking for, nor expecting, an overt response, virtually everyone present starts nodding. This experience is everywhere, frequent and universally relatable. It’s what I label a ‘UHE’ – a ‘Universal Human Experience’. In those workshops, before I ask the lime-green car question and describe the situation, I first ask if anyone knows what the Reticular Activating System (RAS) is. Only a tiny fraction of people ever say they know and only a small proportion of those do know the correct answer. Yet, most everyone does know what it is. They just don’t know what it’s called or why it exists.

You and I don’t need to get into the minutiae of psychology and physiology as to where in the brain it is. I’ll just address how it comes

to exist, what flicks its switch and how you as a leader or influencer might be able to leverage it to get your people to buy into your change project, mission, etc. It's important and powerful.

The RAS comes to exist as our brain's internal defence mechanism to protect ourselves from going crazy trying to receive, interpret and react to a constant bombardment of external sensory stimuli. We are all being inundated with sights, sounds, tastes, tactile sensations and smells all the time with many competing for attention at once. Picture the RAS as you'd picture a bouncer in a nightclub. The nightclub in this metaphor is your conscious mind and it has a limited capacity. The clubbers in the queue are the sensations from our five senses. Ideally, the bouncer would only let in VIPs and exclude the riff-raff. "You're in. You're in. You, not with those shoes".

But, as we've already demonstrated, riff-raff does get in, such as lime-green cars. And it gets in using the same technique that clubbers have used on nightclub bouncers for years – bribes. For a brain, that's dopamine, a neurotransmitter linked to reward and pleasure.

Whilst our subconscious mind does sterling work on many thousands of bits of information, even while we sleep, our conscious mind is limited. The key words here are focus and attention. You can reasonably assume the RAS developed to help us in our caveman times. (I would say 'caveperson' but they were, well, caveman times). And what cavepeople really needed to focus on was noticing things to eat, procreate with and things that might eat us. Patterns in the clouds

may well be lovely but they do not tick any of those boxes. Rustling leaves could herald the arrival of a sabre toothed tiger or the presence of a boar for dinner.

One of the primary things that can switch on our RAS bouncer is novelty. Changes in patterns, routines and environments can be threats. And that is as true of modern people as it was of our cave-dwelling ancestors.

The one exception is the sense of smell which bypasses the RAS and goes directly to the memory centre. Chances are, some of your first memories and most powerfully emotional memories are smells. There's probably some evolutionary survival reason for that but, by and largely, leaders in the workplace don't need to concern themselves too much with smell. That said, it does happen and you should handle it sensitively.

OK, so that's the potted history and purpose of the RAS. It is the keyholder to our focus and attention. The problem for many of us is that random stuff gets in there like lime-green cars, the ranting de jour on our Twitter feed and shiny things. What we'd like in there are high-value thoughts that can help us and move us forward. How can we switch our own RAS onto deliberate and positive foci and how can we do that for the people from whom we're trying to get buy-in?

To stretch our bouncer analogy a tad further, you'd like to think bouncers receive some training on what to look for in a VIP and what to look for in potential trouble makers. We can also train our RAS and

provide ongoing support, for ourselves and others. Most of the subsequent chapters in this book work because they switch on the RAS.

Before we get to those chapters with their specific techniques, let's look at how you might generally take advantage of your RAS and, more importantly, clear out the trash that's currently getting in there. At a basic level, the RAS is about the WHAT, not the HOW. We increase our odds of getting what we want if we focus on it. We'll then start noticing things around us that otherwise we may not have because we've activated our RAS purposefully and deliberately, rather than letting it have its own merry and random way. I used to work in the gaming industry and there were some interesting conversations around how many big winners got their ceilings cleaned. Sure, they planned to quit the day job, pay off the house and take the world trip but a disproportionate number got their ceilings cleaned. Why? Because when you're a winner and you're happy, where are you looking? Up. Where do sad people look? Down. This works in reverse. Rather than letting your results drive where you focus. Take deliberate, conscious and proactive control and make your focus drive your results.

What do you want – very, very specifically, what do you want? A lot of people might say, “wealth,” “health”, or “happiness”. They're too broad. This question, seemingly easy at first, is actually more challenging than you think if you haven't already been giving it some

thought. For now, let's focus on how you need to represent your goal tangibly in the physical world so it can serve to activate your RAS.

This physical form needs to have three characteristics. The reason the lime-green car activates your RAS and sticks in your mind for ages afterwards is that it's:

- novel,
- distinctive, and
- physically exists in multiple locations.

To leverage this mind-system to your own ends of self or team development and reaching whatever goals you have, you need a novel, distinctive and physical reminder in multiple prime eyelines. For your team, where are these eyelines? What are people looking at all day and as they arrive and leave? Is it their computer screen, clock on the wall, the fridge door in the kitchenette, the entry door to the office?

Mass-produced motivational posters of geese flying in formation or rowers at dawn are all well and good but do they really motivate at all, or are they just good for covering the smudge marks on the wall? If you'd spent the twenty dollars you spent on that poster on a pizza, would that have been more motivational? The trouble with posters and pizzas is that they're both short-term motivators, if they're motivators at all. What would be more specifically motivational for your people on an ongoing basis?

Whatever personalized and customized focus visuals you create with their images and messages will wear off too, so they need to be regularly updated. Short, burst campaigns are more effective than dusty old posters, even if they're in a nice chrome and glass frame. Those things just become part of the wallpaper and certainly quickly fail the novelty and distinctiveness tests.

These RAS activators don't just have to be graphs, pictures or posters. They can be gestures. Let me give you an example. I MC'd an Olympic gold medallist speaking at a conference who told their story of winning that medal. More powerful though was their story of not winning a medal at the previous Olympics at which they'd been expected to. In coming fourth, the speaker demonstrated the distance between them and a medal by holding their hands in front of them about a foot apart. Their right hand represented a medal and their left hand represented no medal. It was simple, symbolic and, for an athlete, a very physical representation of how close they'd come. The expression "coming up short" had never been better expressed. In their speech, they spoke of being disappointed and how they used that to motivate themselves for the next four years. I don't think they realised it, but as they spoke of that disappointment, they constantly repeated that gesture. It had become a short and simple trigger to connect back to that RAS-activating experience. Four years later, when they won their gold medal, they didn't win by a mere foot. They won by, what was at the time, a world record margin.

Have you ever borrowed a car, or rented a car, or got yourself a new car or new-to-you car? When you have to fill it up with petrol for the first time, you pull into the gas station, what's the question that pops into your head? What side of the car does the petrol go into? One of my clients is the Automobile Association. They've done some research. They let me know the results. There was a fact that 82% of adult New Zealand drivers do not know. The side of your car where the petrol bowser goes into is indicated by a little left or right pointing triangle icon on your dashboard. It is on the petrol gauge between the E and F next to the little icon of the petrol pump.

How often do drivers look at their fuel indicator? Twice a day, every day for hundreds of days, perhaps thousands of times. Our brains are very good at filtering out the routine. The problem of not doing dangerous things, and not doing things outside or comfort zone - sameness is the enemy. We don't notice threats and opportunities, things we practically need to know go unobserved. Our brains are wonderful things, but not particularly trustworthy. How can you stimulate your own reticular activating system properly and turn on your teams so you're all going in the same direction and the right direction into what you actually decided are priorities?

The problem is with the reticular activating system is if something gets in there and it's not right, you can be stuck with a distraction or a bad habit.

I was hosting the New Zealand HR Awards -- again, Sky City. I got to the health and safety award, and I thought seeing how I wasn't doing any comedy, I'll put a banter between the awards. I thought it would be a little bit funny if, when I opened up the envelope for the health and safety award, that I pretended to get a paper cut. That's not a huge laugh, I thought it might be a B minus laugh and it got almost an A minus laugh. I thought that was pretty good. The sponsor was Southern Cross Health Insurance and their rep played up to it, searching for a Band-Aid in her purse. It was funny enough for something I hadn't written. In the break, I was sitting down at the organizer's table. I said, "Well, I was pleased with the laugh that I got with that totally made up cut finger thing that I did." And one of the women there who was my assistant giving out the trophies on stage, she said, "What do you mean?"

I responded, "When I pretended to cut my finger?"

"What do you mean *pretended*, I saw blood."

And I showed her my finger, and she could not believe, would not believe, that it didn't happen because she convinced herself she saw it and could still remember it. Our brains are wonderful things, but they're not especially trustworthy. This sort of stuff happens all the time. The thing is, you don't know it's happened because you think it's real. It's really important to make sure that you and your team have the right stuff getting into your reticular activating system. Doing

dangerous things and engaging in practicing proactive change can re-train this way of thinking. It enhances your critical thinking instincts.

Focus is often affected by belief. Marshall Goldsmith in his book 'What Got You Here Won't Get You There' writes about the *success paradox*. Four key beliefs help us become successful. Each can make it tough for us to change:

1. I have succeeded (skill / talent)
2. I can succeed (confidence)
3. I will succeed (motivation)
4. I choose to succeed (self-determination)

You can take control of these beliefs rather than them controlling you by engaging in your own programme of doing 2 dangerous things a year.

19

Dry Times in your 'Resilience Reservoir'

Rob Hopkins in his book 'The Power of Just Doing Stuff' wrote that resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to essentially retain the same function, structure and feedbacks. I've called resilience our 'Change Muscles'. Hopkins cites seven principles of resilience:

1. Diversity (don't put all your eggs in one basket)
2. modularity (one missed domino shouldn't mess up the whole process)
3. social capital
4. innovation
5. overlap (messy is better than streamlined)
6. tight feedback loops
7. ecosystem services (don't kill the goose that lays the golden eggs)

Ultimately, resilience is fueled by a belief that we have options – possibilities not probabilities. The best way to believe something is to generate or seek evidence supporting that belief. What evidence do you have right now – before you need it, before that 'Behavioural

Physics' asteroid of change comes into sight – of the options at your disposal? Have them displayed, shared and keep them fresh and updated. Choice is control, and control is power. And, powerful or empowered people have little problem with change. (They might have a problem with *being* changed).

20

‘Self’ vs ‘Other’ Orientation

I run a quick, fun and powerful activity with groups at events and workshops where I get everyone into pairs. If you are right handed, raise your right hand. If you are left handed, raise your left hand. Click your fingers five times. Drop down your hand and shake it out. In a few moments time I ask everyone to pretend that their index finger, your pointy finger, is a magic marker and you're going to on your own forehead write the capital letter E whilst watching your partner do the same on their own forehead 3 times. Broadly speaking, there are two types of people in the world: those of us whose primary default position is self-orientation and those of us who instantly default to other orientation. Think about how the participants might've written that capital E. Did they write the E so they could read it themselves? Or, did they write it so it would be legible to their partner but back-to-front from their own perspective? If they wrote it so they could read it from their own point of view, chances are they're self-orientated. If they did it so their partner could read it, chances are they are other-orientated. This is what I call a 'UHE Fallacy'.

Being self-oriented is fine but it does mean you can be a step behind in noticing what is going on around you.

21

‘Universal Human Experience’ (UHE) Fallacy

Remember the lime-green cars earlier where everyone knows that feeling and has their own story of their own lime-green car scenarios? That is a genuine UHE (Universal Human Experience). With the capital letter E activity revealing our self or other orientation, we assume that our own experience, practice or paradigm is shared by all or most others. It isn't shared by all or most others but we start from that default position. And, that assumption colours all our subsequent actions. This is a 'UHE Fallacy'. Beware the 'UHE Fallacy'. Adopt and adapt a critical thinking approach to assess assumptions and invoke different perspectives.

Okay team. There's no right or wrong answer; there's no good or bad. What it does mean though is those of you who have a self-orientation, your default position is inward-looking, you are at risk for missing opportunities and threats that are external to you. By doing dangerous things, by my definition, getting outside of your comfort zone, you'll see things from different perspectives. You'll get outside your bubble, you'll meet people different to yourself, you'll see things from their point of view. Now, putting yourself in the shoes of others.

That doesn't happen accidentally, that's a proactive position you've got to make.

22

Lacking Practical Empathy

It's not enough though to see things from other people's perspectives. Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence model has four principal elements: self-awareness; self-management; empathy (awareness of others) and; relationship management (social skills bringing others along for the ride). I've coined my own additional term here: 'Practical Empathy'.

Somewhere in-between observing, identifying and relating to the feelings of others and relationship management is a toolkit of tangible micro-actions I call 'Practical Empathy' we can choose to take. How can you bridge the 'Feeling-Sharing Gap'?

Propinquity sounds like a made-up word. I know I've created a few terms of my own in this book so far. (There are more to come). But Propinquity is a real thing. It's a relationship born of proximity and familiarity. Research into long-term friendships looked at where these people originally met. Often it was people we were next to: sat next to at school for no better reason than alphabetical order of surnames, enlisted in the military on the same day, and so forth. Propinquity is easy and natural so let's leverage that to bring others along for the ride on our change evolution path.

Between empathy and relationship comes *movement* – a small, initial physical effort deliberately chosen by you to shift from your space non-invasively into theirs. With today's geographically distributed workgroups, or workgroups split by shift or timezone, technology at least provides some means of bridging gaps and e-Propinquity if sharing someone's physical space is not literally practicable.

Many cultures have wisdom around walking a mile in someone else's shoes. (Billy Connolly had a joke about that – that you're a mile away AND you've got their shoes!)

23

The Challenge of Change

People have different levels of natural tolerance to risk. I'll talk about that shortly and direct you to find out what yours might be. Society is increasingly frowning on both risk-taking and curiosity as schools become more structured and focus only on narrow curriculum. We don't encourage or teach how to explore, how to investigate, how to put on our Anablep eyes. It's down to teams, organisations and workplaces to set yourselves up by doing that. Your competitors, for the most part, are not. They are process-focused. They're inward looking. Do something different. Be something different. Do 2 dangerous things a year.

I accept it's not as easy to do as it is to say. There are natural systems working against us. Can I ask you please to fold your arms? Just have a look where they are. Where's the left one? Where's the right one? Which one is on top? In a few moments' time, I'm going to ask you to overly unfold them to shoulder width, give them a bit of a shake and leave them hanging for a sec, and shake them again. Then refold them BUT the opposite way around. Try it now – go!

Now put your arms where ever you like.

I wasn't there when you did this but I've done this with individuals, a crowd of 4500, and crowds sized in-between. It's very consistent. A tiny number manage reasonably accurately and reasonably quickly. A number nearly lose their minds. Most think they've done it but it took a while, you're not sure and it felt bloody weird.

What we've just demonstrated is a natural human system that doesn't help us when it comes to change. I read some recent study about how many times we fold our arms. The average person does it the same way every single time. Between the ages of two and forty, we do it over a quarter of a million times. Every time you do a behavior – right or wrong, good or bad, accurate or inaccurate, there is an electro-chemical charge between brain cells called dendrites that form connections call synapses. The more often you do a behavior; right or wrong, good or bad, accurate or inaccurate, the stronger that connection is and the easier and more automatic it is to repeat that behaviour. Sometimes it's a silly arm-folding activity; sometimes it's the way you treat people.

I like to compare it to a motorway. The way that you folded your arms originally, the way you've always folded your arms is a 10-lane motorway. No other cars are on it, it's wide and flat and straight and smooth. It gets you where you're going instantly and effortlessly without thinking about it - unconsciously, automatically. It's easy. It

feels natural when you're doing it. Even those of you who did it the other way relatively quickly, it still felt weird, didn't it? Even though logically, mechanically it's exactly the same, but back to front takes longer and it doesn't feel right, because it's not a 10-lane motorway in your brain, it's a gorse-covered bush track, a grass-covered bush track you have to hack at with a machete. And worse than that, it's a gorse-covered bush track you have to hack at with a machete, that's right next to a freaking 10-way motorway. Every behavior you're trying to change: your dieting, your exercise, your relationship, your old practices, they're 10-way motorways. The new way is a gorse-covered bush track. You're all leaders of someone even if it is just yourself right now. It's true of the people who sometimes you're trying to change; positively and logically they might see the benefit you're describing, but logic doesn't enter into it, there's got to be some treasure on the other side of that course to make it worthwhile. Or, something scary chasing us through the gorse to make the effort, sacrifice and pain worthwhile.

24

Lazy Brains & Push 'n' Pull Motivators

Our brains don't like effort. Make a fist. Then make another fist with your other hand. Put them together wrist to wrist and knuckles to knuckles. Look at what you've got there. If there's anyone else around, get them to do it too.

It's a weird fact of human physiology that there is a one-to-one size ratio between those two fists and the size of your brain. (This has nothing to do with intelligence. I now realise I should have started by saying that).

On average, your brain is that size. That is roughly four percent of your body mass. Despite being only four percent of your body mass, your brain consumes twenty four percent of your energy on a typical day. At any given moment, twenty percent of your body's oxygenated blood is in that small space. It is, to put it bluntly, a hungry little critter.

Consequently, our brains are constantly on the lookout for what psychologists call 'heuristics', or what I would call 'shortcuts'. Like your TV's can slump into power-save mode, so too can our brains, unless we intervene.

Henceforth, I shall call this our 'lazy brain'. It will notice change if it makes itself apparent, but it is not consuming power going looking for it unless we make it. We have the 'lazy brain' and the 'challenge of

change' gorse-covered bushtrack working against us. What works for us, if we use them, are push and pull motivators.

Human nature and Behavioural Physics mean most people will keep on the track they're on unless affected by an outside force. Even if presented with, and agreeable to, the logic of an argument, people will be uncomfortable with the new. The lazy brain and arm-folding demonstrations earlier illustrate this every time. As long as that 'motorway' is there next to the gorse-covered bushtrack, people will revert back to the path of least resistance due to the unfamiliarity, discomfort, pain and effort of change. It would be useful if we could just 'blow up' the motorway – make the old way of doing things physically impossible. Often that is impractical.

The alternative is the use of push and pull factors, either by us, or by someone else on our behalf. I call the pull factors 'the treasure beyond the gorse'. What are the things we are drawn to? What do we want and desire – the finish line, the gold medal, the mountain top, the love of our life, the job, the promotion, the pay rise. Or if we are not being pulled forwards through the gorse towards the pull factors, we are running away from the scary things behind us. These are the push factors, the things we fear and by which we are repelled. What do we strongly wish to avoid – the rejection of the group, the mocking of friends, the abandonment of loved ones, the job loss, humiliation, the heartbreak, or the disappointment.

Kahneman and Tversky won a Nobel prize in economics (despite not being economists) with their study into the relative effectiveness of the different types of motivators. It seems we are, on average twice as motivated by push factors as pull factors. We are equally as motivated by the fear of the loss of a dollar as by the desire for the potential gain of two dollars. But we do not have to choose between push and pull. In moving ourselves and others forward, we need to observe and learn what our motivators are. Then, the artful combination of both push and pull will accelerate our evolutionary change progress.

25

How You Can Change

I've developed a framework to take control of your own 'Change Evolution' and to influence the 'Change Evolution' of the people you lead, love, or the communities you wish to influence. It has eight components but it's not a step-by-step process. It's a framework and you could pick and choose any or all of the eight components to move forward along your path. You're more likely to progress faster and experience more enduring success if you apply all the components.

The eight components, or *strands*, of the 'Danger DNA' model together make us what we are when it comes to change readiness. Vary any and we turn out different. I see akin to DNA. We are all very different people. Some of that is down to influence and experience but much of it, perhaps a third according to studies of twins, is down to genetics. I am not saying that our attitude towards change and risk is inherited. What I am saying is that it is similar or analogous.

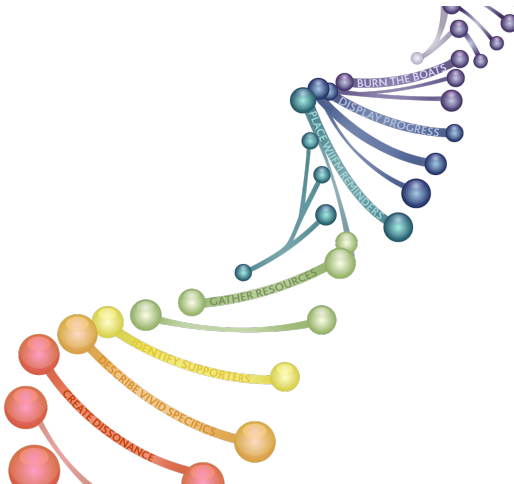
The eight strands of the 'Danger DNA' are the solutions to being stuck in an undesirable spot on the 'Change Evolution' path. Earlier, I outlined the problem needing solutions: There is a real concern amongst leaders that their people are unfit for change. Being unfit for change leads to disengaged and burnt-out people who won't develop

nor meet their goals. Their lack of development and unmet goals further reinforces negativity and contributes to a downward spiral. I called this 'Change Extinction' and nature's way of dealing with the threat of that is changing DNA and evolving.

Next up is the 'Danger DNA' model in one snapshot graphic. After that, I'll outline each of the eight strands, providing information and actions you could take to make some positive adaptations to your own 'Danger DNA'.

26

Adaptation: DIY Your 'Danger DNA'



Your 8 Steps to Creating Change

1. Create dissonance (Compare your current state in detail to a desired future state, noting the gaps, to create a discomfort or itch in your brain that only change can scratch),
 2. Describe vivid specifics (Write, speak or paint a picture of that desired future state, not only logically but emotionally and multi-sensorial),
-

3. Identify supporters (None of us is as strong or smart as all of us so seek and recruit like-minded people with strengths that fill your gaps or people who have already walked ahead of you on their change evolution path),
 4. Gather resources (This is exactly what it sounds like it is),
 5. Place WIIFM reminders (Create, display and repeat evidence of why the effort, sacrifice and uncertainty are worth it),
 6. Quick wins (Success loves company so create some early and often. Our brains don't just love progress, they love even the perception of progress),
 7. Display progress (Breaking through barriers and dealing with hard days require some sense of movement towards the objective. Knowing that is not as powerful as seeing that in your peripheral vision at all times),
 8. Burn the boats (If the old way is a ten-lane motorway and the new way is a gorse-covered bushtrack, sometimes you have to blow up the motorway...).
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27

Strand 1: Create Dissonance

Worrying as it might seem, I had a room full of learners recently who did not know who Nelson Mandela was. I called a time-out and we had a mini history lesson. I know he was man of the century, but it was last century and that was 19 years ago, so maybe it's not surprising that he might not be top of mind for a chunk of the population. But he should be. And, for more than the obvious and usual reasons. Give me a few moments of exposition and you'll soon see why a less well-known aspect of his life can be useful for us in our own change efforts.

As a teenager myself, I first became aware of the existence of Nelson Mandela via the 1984 hit song by Special AKA called 'Free Nelson Mandela'. It was a big hit. Thanks to it, Mandela's imprisonment got into more young ears, hearts and minds that it otherwise would have, including mine. Once it was drawn to my attention, I started noticing more and more about it. (Remember the RAS? Songs can be quite effective in hooking into that).

What I was even less aware of was what happened prior to 1984. In the mid-90s, I read Mandela's autobiography, 'Long Walk To

Freedom'. Around 2000, I saw an interview. Both really helped to fill in a lot of the gaps for me prior to Mandela's imprisonment. The African National Congress was not originally a political party, nor even an activist movement, it was a workers' rights organisation. Mandela was not a rah-rah frontman. He was a workers' rights lawyer, quite happy shuffling paperwork in the background. There were others to go rah-rah and get people hyped into action.

Soon enough, the movement had become so popular and effective that the authoritarian government felt the threat they posed and started arresting and frightening followers. One night there was no one to get out on stage and go rah-rah. Mandela was the next cab off the rank, so to speak. In the interview, he described how he thought of a couple of people that he knew whom he considered to be highly effective and confident speakers. Then he wrote down on a blank piece of paper a list of behaviours that he thought those people did that made them so effective and confident. Then he took that piece of paper on stage with him and he did those things. It went well. The next time, he did it again and so on. We all know how, eventually, it turned out and the influence he had.

Flash forward 40-ish years. It's the year 2000. He's just been named Time Magazine's 'Man Of The Century' and is addressing the United Nations General Assembly. A man who decades ago was reticent to step out on stage in front of a crowd is now leaving the biggest public speaking gig on the planet to a standing ovation. It is

then that he is interviewed and it was this interview that I mentioned earlier. In it, he speaks of the list. What I call 'The Mandela List'. (Mandela himself would probably just call it a list).

He said something like, "Look, I no longer literally carry this list around with me onto the stage". As he said this, he held out his hands to indicate a pretend list in his hand, then moved his hand with that pretend list to his heart and continued, "But, I still carry it around with me".

Since I saw that I've used the concept of a 'Mandela List' in my training, writing and coaching. I've used it in my sessions and often at the end when we go around and people say what tool they've found the most useful and intend to implement straight away, this is one of the most mentioned.

The technique is simple:

- On a blank page, write down the names of two people you know who are highly effective at whatever it is you're trying to do.
- Write down ten specific, observable, repeatable behaviours that they do that you believe makes them so effective.

A two-step process seems easy and simple but it's deceptive. For a start, let's look at the two people you choose. In workplace-based

training, I deliberately do not limit their range of choices to workplace people. They can choose from family, teachers, sports coaches, community leaders, etc. The only constraint is that must be real and known to them. They can't choose someone famous for being cool as a leader like a Richard Branson – unless they know him. They can't choose a famous sports person – unless they know them. They can't just think of a generic composite of what someone who is effective might be like. They have to be real and observable. The point of this is to link to activating your RAS and for that you have to be able to see the object of your attention.

Chances are you won't be able to remember every aspect of their effective behaviours when you're put on the spot. In workshops, I get people to share their answers and ideas and collectively we build up onto a whiteboard a long list which becomes our model of best practice against which everyone can compare themselves.

I ask for ten behaviours in their Mandela List, not because there's anything magical about ten. With experience, for most people, this is on the upper end what they can come up with from memory. By setting a specific target, it drives more people to move beyond merely three or four. It's often a driver of creativity to set tangible targets. Another micro-motivator.

I'm quite pedantic as they report back their answers and for their own good. I asked for specific behaviours – observable and repeatable. If they come back with “good attitude,” “confident,” or “friendly”. I get

them to be more specific and describe *behaviours*! What do they do and say and how do they do and say it? What do they *not* do or say?

The exercise is a short one in a classroom, but it links back to the real world and it starts a habit of people seeking out high performers to observe and model them. Not in a vague way by hopeful osmosis but in a structured and planned way with lists and goals. It's a small world, maybe you've been the target of one of my Mandela List writers?

As its most basic, the Mandela List gets people self-identifying models of best practice and target behaviours. The Mandela List combines activating the RAS and the strength of self-identifying. This becomes a foundation for several other methods to come in this book. By itself, the list is just a list. Other things are required to get people wanting to change.

They need to:

- see that these behaviors are possible because at least two people they know are doing them,
 - see that these behaviours are observable and repeatable; they're not just inherent to the personality of some people,
 - the two people are reaping rewards and benefits as a result of the behaviours, and
 - the effort to learn each behaviour on the list, one at a time, is do-able and worth it.
-

The additional spark to the flame of change is discomfort between how they see themselves now and how they could be, illustrated by the list. What's missing as of now and what's needed to fan that flame is something against which to compare the list. And that something is how they rate themselves against that best practice identified in The Mandela List.

Dissonance is a sense of discomfort or mental conflict in someone holding two conflicting views or between two compelling but mutually exclusive positions. People tend to avoid dissonance or freeze in the face of it. You can also use it to drive motivation. By combining several of the techniques we've already covered, such as RAS and self-identification, we can create in ourselves, or in others, a purposeful sense of dissonance. This is one fuel of motivation.

The first point we need people to self-identify is the status quo, or as I sometimes call it the 'as-is'. You can simply ask people this face to face, perhaps giving them time in advance to think about it. You can ask for an individual's perspective or for that of a group.

The second point we need people to self-identify is a future desired state, usually within a defined timeframe. I call this the 'wannabe'. My default timeframe is three months. That's not too far in the future but it's enough time to get something of substance achieved.

Even without any more direction than that, people will describe the 'as-is' and they'll describe the 'wannabe'. The difference between the two creates the dissonance.

I use a number of techniques in workshops to enhance this effect further. I have a set of 100+ laminated photos. They're varied and colourful. There are people, vistas, quotes, sheep, wine. It's just a set of varied and colourful images, laid out flat on a table with lots of room around the table for people to move. Then I ask participants to wander over to the table and for each person to select two photos. One represents how they see themselves today – the 'as-is'. If we're talking about presentation skills, it's how they see themselves today as a public speaker. Their second photo of choice represents how they see themselves as a public speaker in three months – the 'wannabe'.

Once people have their two photos, they move away from the table. Once everyone has their photos, I get them to pair up, allowing them to choose their partners thus giving them some control in a situation which some might be nervous about. Often nerves are caused by a sense of lost control or powerlessness, so anything I can do to mitigate that, even symbolically, is often disproportionately effective.

In pairs, they then tell their partners what photos they chose and why. So, in a small, low-risk, semi-public way they reveal the gap between where they are and where they believe they can and should be. This public revelation is a dissonance magnifier. Depending on the

size of the group and the personalities of the people, I sometimes get people to again share those photos with the whole group.

Taking self-identification, RAS and then the Mandela List along with ‘as-is vs wannabe’ is a powerful combo. You can probably imagine what conversations follow once you’ve got people wanting to move away from their current state towards the benefits of an improved future state. Feelings are all well and good, and indeed are the real driver of motivation whatever the facts say. What areas do they need to focus on and what do they need to do to get moving along this path between their two points?

Once they’ve identified a model of best practice using the Mandela List and given their brain an itch with ‘as-is vs wannabe’, the tool to start the thought process about focus areas is a self-ranked list using a 5-point scale.

My rule of ABC:

A – Always

B – Be

C – Curious!

Criteria					
eg communication skills			✓		

From their Mandela List, they choose their own top seven behaviours and then ‘grade’ themselves on each. This will identify the areas they need to focus and work on. For them to tap into why they should keep doing that work after the initial enthusiasm wears off, we’ll need to proceed to strands 4, 5 and 6 to clarify and reinforce what’s in it for them.

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Strand 2: Describe Vivid Specifics

As a trainer, leader, or change agent, it's tempting to *tell* people things. It's time efficient. It's possible that you know something, and they don't, so why wouldn't you tell them? It turns out that the research shows that, if your objective is to influence people to choose to change their own behavior in your absence, telling is much less effective than using questions to guide people to self-identify their own conclusions.

There go another couple of the themes of this book in a nutshell:

- self-identification, and
- the true test of your change leadership or influence is what happens when you're not around.

This predisposition to telling people leads to what I call 'tick-box' communication. Someone delivers an instruction in person, by phone or email and, in their mind, they tick a figurative box labelled 'communication done'. Reality has a way of tripping up such tick-box communicators when their instructions gets ignored, misinterpreted or forgotten. Just because you say something doesn't mean they hear it. A simple factor such as a nosy workplace or poor phone reception

could lose part or all of a message. And, “I never got that email” has become the, “My dog ate my homework” of the 21st century.

Even if they hear it, it doesn’t mean they understood it, whether it was technical complexity, unfamiliar jargon or the issues for those with English as a second language. There are plenty of possible gaps in the communication chain from misunderstanding. Coupled with that are issues around people not asking or revealing that they didn’t understand for ego or face-saving reasons. I will sometimes deliberately and repeatedly drop a piece of completely fictional jargon or an acronym into conversation with groups. At a suitable gap in proceedings, I will take on the character of the TV detective ‘Colombo’. As we are about to take a break, I’ll turn back and ask, “Oh by the way, what does [insert fictional jargon] mean”? Clearly, no one can answer the question because the jargon was made up. Their assigned questions for conversation in the break, upon which they’ll be reporting back are:

1. What might be some reasons very few people ever say they don’t know what I’m saying and ask for clarification, and
2. What impact might this have on communication and subsequent productivity in the workplace?

Even if they genuinely understood your instruction, they might unilaterally choose not to implement all or part of it, due to their own

agenda, biases or fears. Earlier, we covered the BOHICA effect where people can simply passively withdraw effort without overtly opposing change. The communication chain is another place the BOHICA effect can come into play and threaten your change efforts if you are not vigilant.

Even if they did hear, understand and agree, they might be constrained from acting upon your instruction for other reasons, such as a lack of resources, poor cooperation from others or conflicting advice from someone else.

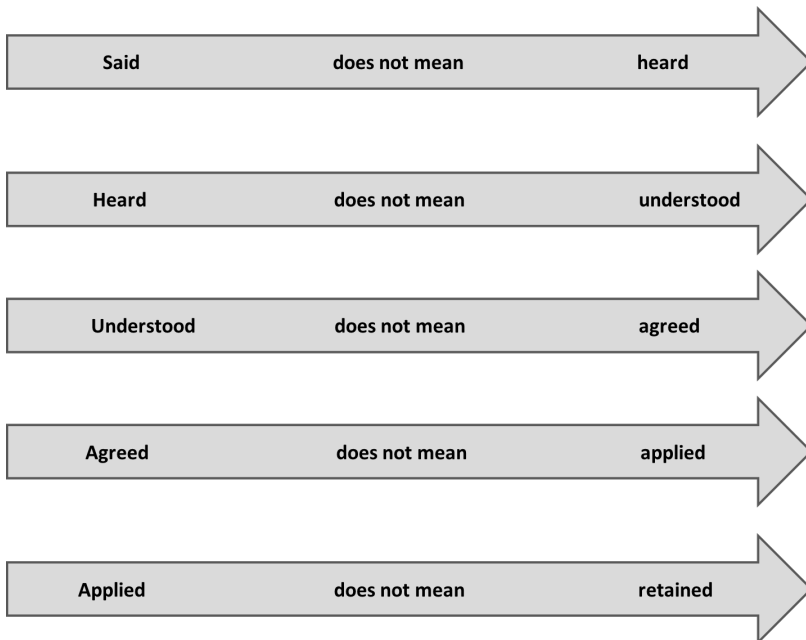
Ultimately, they may have followed your instruction and carried out the action you intended as you intended it but then you discover they fail to repeat the desired behavior. They might not display the initiative to do so without further instruction from you or they might revert to old ways of doing it.

Communication cannot be a linear, one-way broadcast with a tick-box mindset if it is to be demonstrably effective. And, that is what telling people is - a linear, one-way broadcast with a tick-box mindset. There is no one 'magic bullet' solution to this. It's lots of little things.

One of my favourite techniques is what the military call 'The Back Brief'. An instruction is delivered by an officer to an individual or team and it is then delivered back to the officer to ensure that it has been heard and understood as well as indications of how it will be carried out and questions. A simple task assigned to a single person will result in a quick and short verbal reply as a back brief. A more complex task

might result in a short group presentation back to the officer after a specified time in which they've had time to reflect and respond meaningfully and collectively. I mentioned the back brief in passing to a law firm recently and they now use the practice.

Be wary of asking someone, "Do you understand," as they'll likely nod or say yes regardless. Get them to show they know, even if it's just repeating back in their own words. This is more likely with less experienced team members.



The military do have an advantage in that there is far less likelihood of the BOHICA effect, due to the inherent hierarchy and command-and-control authority. Us civilians need to leverage persuasion and influence strategies. I'll now outline my 'ask don't tell' strategy which has a far different meaning from the one made familiar by the U.S. military.

Influence Continuum

Force threaten tell ask suggest imply hope



The 'Influence Continuum' graphically represents a spectrum of options by which we attempt to move others towards change. At one extreme, we have force. There are few situations in which that is appropriate but if someone refuses to leave a burning building and you drag them out, I guess that's OK. In less dramatic situations, the

downside of force and threats is that it might achieve what you want in the immediate term but it damages the relationship moving forward and you have to be there. To put a figurative gun to someone's head, you need a gun, be thought to be willing to use it and be physically present. In the introduction to this book, one of our stated aims was to lessen your burden and get others to do the heavy lifting. Force and threats are not long-term fixes and are very much in the heavy lifting category.

The other end of the continuum with the vagueness and inaction of implying and hoping are for avoiders. With that come regrets and poor results. Avoidance is only a short-term fix and it doesn't fix anything.

The good old middle is the happy hunting ground for change agents on the Influence Continuum. Which of *tell*, *ask* or *suggest* you choose to use depends on at least three things:

- the individual with whom you're dealing,
- the objective of your interaction, and
- the situation in which you find yourselves.

For example, you may lean more towards telling when the individual is new, inexperienced or lacks knowledge on a particular topic. With a proven, reliable and experienced veteran, you'd likely lean more towards suggestion, specifying the result you're after,

offering some options as to how it might be gone about but leaving it up to their discretion. A situation with significant health and safety, legal or cost implications might be more directive than discretionary, so you'd apply the 'tell' mode.

This chapter is about the relative power of asking versus telling, so let me give you some research that backs that up. This relates to when you want to influence others to choose to change their own behaviour in your absence. You don't have to be there (with or without a gun). You don't have to do the heavy lifting and it sets up behaviour change on an ongoing basis.

A study was done with smokers. Smokers were invited to a seminar. There were many smokers and many seminars. Each smoker attended one seminar. Half the seminars had an expert at the front of the room, looking and sounding like an authoritative expert. Maybe they wore a lab coat. Maybe they used PowerPoint graphs. They said something like, "Hello. I'm one of the world's leading experts on smoking cessation and I'm here today to TELL you why YOU should give up smoking". They then proceeded to do just that – telling them why they should change. All very logical and credible but not very interactive, with no opportunities for involvement which, as we know from chapter 2, is very important. So, that was seminar type one – an expert tells you.

The second type of seminar was different. Similar types of people entered a similar room but, this time, there was no lab coat and no

PowerPoint graphs. A casually attired person stood at the front of the room holding a flipchart marker and welcoming attendees. They asked one participant something like, “Hi Kate. Kate, if you had a friend that wanted to give up smoking, what might be some of their reasons? Help her out everybody”. Audience contributions were written up on the flipchart and, soon enough, they’d drafted a list which was usually not a lot different from the list that the expert could have told them. It was quicker when the expert told them, I’ll grant you that.

Twenty minutes into every seminar, secretly out the back, an assistant pulled the fire alarm. Everyone had to leave the building for an unspecified amount of time. Of course, they were all smokers, so the researchers videoed everyone and timed how long it took on average for seminar groups to light up. Which type of group do you think took longer to light up?

It wasn’t even close. The groups who had been asked to self-identify reasons why someone (not ‘them’, but ‘someone’) might (not ‘should’ but ‘might’) want to give up smoking took three times as long to light up. Smoking is a behaviour borne of chemical addiction so that result is amazing. Similar studies have been done looking at other behaviours which are discretionary choices and the time disparities have been even greater. Let’s take that 300% as a conservative baseline.

If people come up with ideas themselves, facilitated by leaders or change agents or themselves, they are three times more likely to listen

further, three times more likely to believe and trust the information, three times more likely to be willing to try it, (here's the really important stat) three times more likely to keep going when it gets tough, and three times more likely to advocate the idea to others once they've normalized it themselves.

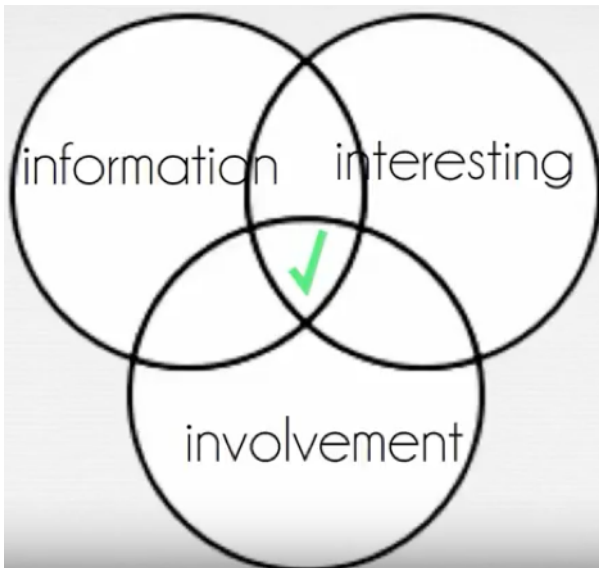
Just to reiterate, I'm not saying you should never tell people things. There are clearly situations and types of information where telling is both effective and efficient. But, when the objective is to nudge people into choosing to change their own behaviour in the long run in your absence, then guided self-identification is the smart way to go.

By itself though, just them listening, believing and trying isn't enough to sustain the motivation to change. Some support is required and, again, that heavy lifting shouldn't fall solely on your shoulders. You need to identify and recruit support.

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Strand 3: Identify Supporters

I've been a trainer and facilitator for over twenty-five years and, in that time, my observation, experience and research tell me there are three critical components for the optimum learning environment. I try to make sure they are present wherever I'm hoping to get some learning to take place – in a classroom, online or one-on-one. I need to make sure my learners publicly declare they're on board with these things before we even start doing any learning.



Whether or not the learners are themselves paying for the learning, there is a cost to them being there. There are no magical pixies doing their work for them while they're learning so that work will be waiting for them upon their return. The cost to them is time and time is money. Apart from the cliché, I genuinely look at time these days as a currency and measure many of my decisions with a time metric, as do many others. I need to ensure my learners believe they are getting something of value in return for their time currency. So, I make available before the learning some evidence of that. For example, testimonials from previous learners addressing the value they got from the information they learned.

You might be thinking at this point, what has this got to do with you? You're probably not a trainer. You're a leader, project manager or some other form of change agent trying to get better buy-in and move your people to move with you. Bear with me please. You'll soon see as I go through the 'Triple-I' model that there is a very strong overlap between me as a trainer trying to create an optimum learning environment and you trying to nudge people towards change. My people and your people both need the same things and certainly that first thing is something of value in exchange for the time and effort. For me that is information and I'd be surprised if that wasn't the same for you too. People do not like operating in an information vacuum. Uncertainty and ambiguity are the enemy. Even if you don't yet have all the facts yourself, anything you can do to lessen uncertainty and

ambiguity can only help your buy-in efforts. In an information vacuum, people tend to default in their thinking to worry and worst-case scenarios. That does not help make them participative or productive.

Whether it be a little motivational speech you choose to give to your team, some data you pin to a noticeboard, or an emailed story or article you circulate, it would pay you to provide initial and ongoing evidence to your team of information relating to, and the value of, the changes you propose. Somewhere, some other team or teams similar to you have done something like this before. Make a connection. Get in touch. Who do you know that knows them? Buy someone a coffee, smoothie or sparkling water and extract some info. If you agree time is a currency, you'll be even more pleased at the value of real-life connections and information from people ahead of you on the change curve.

You might think that your change is new and different and innovative. What you're proposing to do has never been done before. You're inventing the next iPhone. Fine, maybe the specific goal of your change is new but the nature of the change process and its effects on people, are not. That is a well-trodden path and why reinvent the wheel? It's a bit like seeking advice as a potential new parent from people who already have kids. I'm sure your kids are going to be amazing and your friends' advice won't apply wholesale to everything you need to know about kids, but you're obviously going to be having those conversations. Take everything you hear with a grain of salt and

look for patterns rather than taking any one piece of information at face value as a literal and universal truth.

The first 'I' is information and your people need it. If they don't get it from you, where are they going to get it. How can you verify that competing information's accuracy? Get ahead of the game and provide what info you can as soon as you can and as often as is practical.

The second 'I' is interesting. What do most people find most interesting? Themselves. When we get to strand 5, we talk about stimulating internal motivation with the WIIFM Grid. WIIFM stands for 'What's In It For Me'? It's not as selfish or Machiavellian as it sounds, it's more about point of view. The information that you provide needs, for the most part, to be from *their* perspective. Leaders and change managers are all too guilty of providing information from their own, or the company's, perspective. If you're a team leader of midnight shelveers at a supermarket and you're trying to lead them to self-identify ways of improving their processes, they're less likely to be motivated by the possible impact on the millionaire owner's gross profit than they are by the impact on them and their friends with whom they work. How can you honestly link increasing the store's gross profit to something of benefit to the team? That might be something like job security or team stability which is more likely if the store makes money. Hopefully.

The first 'I' is information – something of value in exchange for their time and effort. The second 'I' is interesting – having the change framed from their point of view. The third 'I' is involvement.

Often, one of the reasons people resist change, avoid change, or don't participate in change is a sense of powerless or loss of control. To the extent that you're able to give them some control, or at least influence, or at the very least a sense of influence, can break down that resistance to a degree. Sometimes it's quite a challenge for you to find the opportunity for that. Things need to be accomplished and there's a budget and a schedule. But to the extent that you can, you should, as it will bring people along for the ride. If you can't give them control over what they need to do, can you give them some choices? Choices and options are great for lessening that sense of a loss of influence over their own environment and outcomes.

For example, when I was running a project to shift a contact centre and build some new accommodation, I had a lot of constraints but, if I looked hard enough, there were plenty of small opportunities to create options for the people who would be most affected by the shift – the actual CSRs working the phones sitting in the new space. The centre needed new carpet tiles and they had to be within a price range and had to be a certain durable type to handle the 24/7/365 rolling of office chair wheels across them. Based on experts' advice, I narrowed down a range of carpet tiles options and gave it to the CSRs to decide. It wasn't just the carpet tiles they had to decide but also the

means by which they would fairly and wisely make their selection. It's amazing how people step up to the plate if given some room, clear direction and the opportunity.

They formed a team to look at the options, get samples, trial them in the space so everyone could see them in the light and next to the furnishings etc. It included the various shifts over the 24 hours so everyone's point of view was included. Importantly, they decided in advance the means by which they'd make their decisions, and a process for dealing with disagreements. To make a demonstrative act of trust, I also publicly declared at that preliminary stage that I would abide by whatever decision they made. Little acts of trust-building have a greater effect down the line when you need them to trust you. Think of it as an emotional bank account. You make many small deposits so when you need to make a large withdrawal later, the balance is there and in the black. Always remember, the emotional bank account does not allow overdrafts.

With the 'Triple I' model, just like in the image at the start of this chapter, we're looking for that sweet spot of intersection in the middle. The people from whom you're trying to get buy-in feel they're informed and getting value for their time and effort. They feel their point of view is being taken into account. There are concrete activities in which they, or their representatives, are involved.

As a last act in covering this topic in my workshops, I always seek a public declaration from my learners that they agree they will be

involved. Everyone is different and extroverts will clearly be more overtly involved than introverts, but involvement doesn't have to be loud or obvious. It can be subtle. It can be as subtle as asking rhetorical questions. That's another low-effort, low-risk way of activating people's RAS.

With small changes, you might be able to think of opportunities for involvement and keep track of them in your head. For any changes of meaningful significance, this approach will fall over very quickly, doing more harm than good. If you have a project plan or similar forms of documentation, add a page headed 'Opportunities for Involvement'. Have the names of the participants, stakeholders etc down the first column. The top row can be the timeline. Use this planning document to make sure those that need the most involvement get what they need. It might be one large thing or many smaller but regular ones. Having a written plan makes it far more likely it becomes reality. How do you know what opportunities for involvement they'd like, or you would find useful? Well, for that, there's a little technique called 'asking'.

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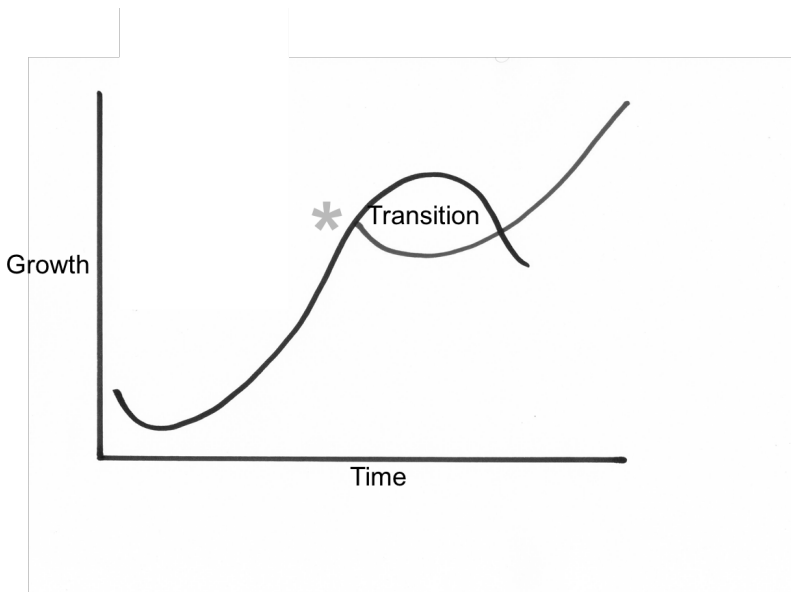
Strand 4: Gather Resources

Some people however, and I like to call these people ‘successful’, *choose* to change on *their* terms. They consciously, deliberately and proactively choose to change their path before being forced to do so by any external event. And in that act of choice they have more options and aren’t pressured into taking regrettable options, or only having one or no options. Finding a job is much harder when you don’t have a job. Selling a house after a breakup is not a great place for leveraging negotiations with time and money pressures you wouldn’t be facing otherwise.

So, for the purposes of this book, as a leader or change manager etc, you are an agent of change. A critical element of managing change is timing and for most people their preferred time is “never”, or “later”. You need to be, in a planned way, that outside force in your people’s behavioural physics. One useful mental model of change-timing is one I picked up from the writing of Charles Handy back in the 80s – The Sigmoid Curve. His thinking is about changing when you have resources to hand. Old-school sayings like “If it aint broke, don’t fix it” would have us head-down focused on BAU in the good times and that does seem sensible. It would be sensible in predictable and certain

times. These times are not those times. The good times are when we have the resources and the goodwill. Even though changing when things are going well seems counter-intuitive, it will be harder later when friends are scarce, the pickings are slim, and the competition from the others affected by involuntary change is fierce. Success leads to sameness. Sameness leads to comfort. Comfort leads to complacency.

Illustration 9.1 The Sigmoid Curve



Change in nature is often cyclical. Take a plant for example. Initially it expends a lot of energy in just getting going so its actual growth curve drops at the start. Then as it accumulates resources and

energy, growth constantly and regularly increases to an eventual peak, followed by a gradual diminishing to some end-point. Various writers observed that this life cycle and growth pattern seemed to also apply to products, companies and teams. (Unless affected by our new friend the outside force). Obviously, this is just a model and there are always exceptions but it's a useful way to simplify and view change over time.

Handy's observation was that we tend to change only when we feel the need to. "If it aint broke, don't fix it". Sound familiar? If you or your team are on the upwardly progressing curve, why on earth would you change? Things are going great and, from where you sit, you cannot see why it would ever stop. But it does inevitably stop at some point and we know that from experience. What we don't know is *when*. Handy argued to be in charge of your own change by self-determining when your asterisk of renewal should be. If you wait until the original curve tops out and starts dropping, it's too late. Then you won't have the resources or energy to start a new curve while still maintaining the old one. You need the old one to sustain the new one in its early stages. Gather resources while there are resources to be gathered. By all means make hay while the sun shines but keep some of that hay for the lean times to come.

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Strand 5: Place WIIFM Reminders

If we look at basic animal behavioural psychology (and we're all animals), fundamentally we're supposed to be motivated by moving towards pleasure and away from pain. We're a bit more sophisticated than animals but, dress it up as we might like to, there's still a lot of truth to that. Remember, we called them 'push' and 'pull' factors'. Apparently if you had to choose one of them, then push factors are slightly more influential over us but we don't have to choose one. It's most effective if we use both at the same time. Or, to be even more practical, it's most effective if we can facilitate other people to use both themselves.

The WIIFM Grid

	My GAINS if I DO	My LOSS if I DON'T
Me Professionally		
Me Personally		
Others I Care About		

Again, we could *tell* people what is in it for them and why they *should* be motivated about what we're proposing. But we know from previous chapters that self-identification is the way to go. The WIIFM grid is a simple little planning tool you can use in its physical paper form to stimulate that self-identification, or it can be the basis for a conversation or conversations and the people never need to see an actual grid at all.

WIIFM stands for *What's In It For Me?* From the point of view (POV) of the people you're trying to motivate, what are the potential personal and professional benefits of moving with you and what are the potential costs if they do not? I use both a personal and professional perspective because many people are way more interested in their non-work life than their work-life and if you can involve them in thinking about both, it's a more powerful lever.

Because of the FM part of WIIFM, I'm always reminded of a radio station call sign. WII-FM. It reminds me to broadcast my message on a frequency that *they* can receive. I've done this as a trainer and as a leader. It's a helpful focusing technique.

It's also often productive to get people talking about and completing their WIIFMs in pairs or small groups. Some people might struggle to think about the benefits of something they've never done before. The group dynamic does spike up the outputs of brainstorming. There are also some people who are hard to reach. Some have personal agendas contrary to yours and some have genuine

issues. You may never convince these people but it's important to get them to at least participate. For one, as devil's advocates they might identify some pitfalls that an overly optimistic you did not. And non-participants, even if they're not overtly negative or saboteurs, can suck the life out of a team. I've found that even initially unwilling people will at least make some overt effort for their peers. If they're in a pair, and their colleague is depending on them to help develop a WIIFM, most will. And, in doing so, their RAS gets activated as those benefits and risks get drawn to their attention, like so many lime-green cars. It's almost a subtle variation on DeBono's six thinking hats as anyone developing a WIIFM has to temporarily suspend their negativity and deliberately look for those benefits.

The diagram at the start of this chapter is just to give you a feel for the format. I generally use a single A4 pre-printed template for an individual or an A0 flipchart sheet for a group. As you move forward with your changes and hit some walls where motivation might be tested, a constant visual reminder of the WIIFM – the why – can sometimes be a difference maker. Like my example of that Olympic athlete with their two-handed physical gesture of the distance between 3rd and 4th, it's a trigger to motivation via the RAS when the going gets tough. It's not just for your team, you're going to hit some walls too and you'll need your difference maker.

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Priming

'Priming' is important and pervasive as a means of influence and persuasion with changes. Many of the other techniques rely on it to some degree. It's also probably the one that generates frequent accusations of being a tool of manipulation. I'll explain and address the concerns in a moment after I outline what Priming is but, for now, I will say that Priming is a tool. A hammer is also a tool and used properly to bang in nails as it designed to do, it is incredibly effective and always will be. It could also be used as a weapon or a toothbrush resulting in damage and / or ineffectiveness. That isn't the hammer's fault and doesn't justify not using or knowing how to use a hammer. This odd sidebar will become clearer soon, I promise.

John Bargh, Mark Chen and Lara Burrows ran a simple study with marked results on the impact of Priming even with a simple and subtle approach. Participants were individually given sets of words to unscramble into meaningful phrases. Half were given word sets loaded with words such as aggressive, rude, annoying and intrude. The other half were given word sets loaded with words such as honor, considerate, polite and sensitive. All were told there was another part to the study, and they needed to go to another room where an assistant

would give them their instructions. On arrival at the room, each individual found the assistant there but engaged in a conversation with another person staged to look obviously intense. How long did people take before they interrupted the conversation?

Group	Avg Time To Interrupt
Intrusive Primes	5.5 minutes
Polite Primes	9.3 minutes

Melissa Bateson at Newcastle University looked no further than their own workplace's cafeteria for one of their studies into influencing people's behaviour through primes. Their employer placed an honesty box for consumers of tea and coffee to put money into. (I admire their optimism). Bateson and colleagues alternated their primes each week with a poster next to the honesty box. One prime poster was of flowers. Every other week, the poster was of a pair of eyes. The 'eye' weeks resulted in three times as much honesty ending up in the form of cash in the honesty box.

The very act of ringing people up to survey them on their voting intentions increases voter participation by 25%.

How can you alter the physical environment in which you wish change would occur to practically influence behaviour? Even if you can't drive change forward with Priming, you should at least try to make sure you're not making it harder. Our lazy brains don't like effort

so the last thing we need in our change efforts is a deadweight holding us in place or dragging us backwards in the form of negative Primes.

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Fixed vs Growth Mind-Set

You've probably got a fair idea that praise is a useful tool for leaders to influence behaviour but what, precisely, are you praising? Think back to the past few instances of praise you've delivered. Was it for some general and vague, "Good job"? It's more effective if it's targeted to a specific behaviour and as soon as practicable. But, again, what types of specific behaviour? Ideally, the behaviours you'd like reinforced and repeated. But, yet again, what are they? Let's come back to this stream of annoying questions.

Psychologist Carol Dweck, currently Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, ran studies on students of a range of ages. They sat tests. Afterwards each received one of two statements of praise, either, "Good job, you must be very smart," or "Good job, you must have worked very hard." They were then told they needed to do another test, either one similar to the one they had just completed or one more challenging that could be fun to learn from. Most of the kids praised for "being smart" opted for the easier test. Ninety percent of those praised for "working hard" opted for the challenge.

Then all the kids got another test and this one was hard. No one did very well. Dweck and her team observed that the group originally praised as “smart” took it badly. The other group interpreted the result as them not having worked hard enough. A final test was given and this one was much the same level of difficulty as the first. The group praised for being “smart” did 20% *worse* than they did on the original test. The “hard workers” did 30% *better*.

Dweck’s famous finding from this and other studies was that people tended to fall into one of two groups. There are those who believe their talents are a fixed trait. They are fast, strong or smart. This is the *fixed mindset* group. There are those who believe that talent is something that can be developed. This is the *growth mindset* group. You can tell them apart by their behaviour towards work and mistakes. If you have a fixed mindset and believe you are what you are then why would you work hard and why would you attempt something new or challenging that could lead to you making mistakes and being judged on them? Growth mindset people do the work and see mistakes as a pathway to learning. They use the word “yet” a lot. They say, “I did” versus “I am.” For them, becoming is better than being.

Once Dweck’s kids were labelled as “smart”, their avoidance and dishonesty behaviours picked up. To them, work is for those who don’t have what it takes. Dweck says, “Emphasising effort gives a child a variable they can control.” Emphasising natural talent takes it out of

their control, makes image maintenance their primary concern and gives them no help in how to deal with failure. Fixed mindset people often give up. As I'll detail later in other research, the number one contributor to success is perseverance.

So, what?

In your work (and life) you want people who love challenge, believe in a connection between their effort and their results, and exhibit resilience in the face of (inevitable) setbacks. Dweck's research proves this.

It would be helpful to assess and observe yourself and your people and where their natural predispositions lie in this regard. My 'Change Sloth' stage of the 'Change Evolution' path is likely ground zero for fixed mindset people. My 'Change Fit' stage of the 'Change Evolution' path is likely ground zero for growth mindset people. Again, you can use the assessment at www.amIdangerous.com as part of your evaluations.

Scott Steinberg in his book 'Make Change Work For You' writes about the metaphor of physical inflexibility. As we get older physical inflexibility is not just a reminder of getting older and an inconvenience, it is often a surface indicator of physical problems below the surface, such as heart disease. One study found a significant correlation between being unable to stand up from a sitting position on the floor and heart disease. How flexible in the figurative sense are you and your people? Before you answer that question in your head as

you read on, bear in mind that if I was asking you in person, I'd be following up with the question, "Give me three recent examples of being flexible".

Steinberg stresses that change isn't as difficult as it seems. The status quo is no longer a safe bet. Forward movement no matter how slight leads towards competitive advantage, personally as well as collectively. Different isn't just good, it's essential. Perhaps it's better to be first than flawless, to make mistakes rather than miss opportunities.

Steinberg makes the great point that courage is a characteristic we can actively cultivate in ourselves and others, nurture through repeated application and consistently put to work - little tests to reinforce confidence and taking control. Sounds a whole lot like justification for doing 2 dangerous things a year. Disrupt yourself more often and develop consistent responses. In the early stages, you'll lack structure and responses but with fast and deliberate little failures, learning, support and experience, over time you'll bolster your set of effective responses that will serve you well beyond the dangerous things programme.

One such consistent response might be your own '8 steps to problem solving' or 'critical thinking framework'. To get you started, here are a couple of common ones you might like to adopt or adapt and remember evolution is all about adaptation.

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Problem-Solving Steps

1. Specifically identify the problem (the facts, assumptions & possible root cause(s))
 2. Set objectives, redefining the problem into a positive, forward-moving statement
 3. Investigate, apply divergent thinking techniques and generate *options*
 4. Evaluate and rank those options
 5. Draft a plan involving all those needing to be involved
 6. Implement
 7. Evaluate
 8. Maintain.
-

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Critical-Thinking Framework

1. State the question or problem
2. Gather relevant and sufficient information
3. Identify and check assumptions
4. Deliberately consider alternate perspectives comprehensively
5. Interpret the information in a disciplined and structured way.

The optimist in me must now declare that that wherever you start on the 'Change Evolution' path is OK because mindset is not like height – something you're born with and generally stuck with. It's like a muscle that we can develop and change via a choice to do so, some effort, direction, support and feedback. That leads nicely to our next strand in the 'Danger DNA' model – strand 6: Quick Wins.

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Strand 6: Quick Wins

Misattributing quotes is not a new thing, but the internet has certainly enabled it to go into mass production. One of my favourite satirical memes on this is, “Don’t believe everything you read on the internet,” which is then attributed to Abraham Lincoln...

Albert Einstein is supposed to have said many wise things and I’m sure he did. It turns out he didn’t say the quote I’m about to give you, but it sounds like the sort of thing he might have said and, once you hear it, I think you’ll agree it’s indisputably wise. So, please be advised someone’s definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over again and expecting a different result.

When running workshops around the topics of change or personal development, I’ll often start with a slide with this sketched headshot of Einstein and that quote in text beneath, while I verbally admit I do not know who actually originated the saying.

At this point in the workshops, we discuss why people find it so hard to change, even when logically we can see the merits of doing so. Practice doesn’t make perfect, practice makes patterns. Repetition (doing things over and over again) reinforces those patterns making

them stronger and less effortful. The term 'rut' is a useful one here. When we are in a literal rut – a deep trench in the ground – we can only go forwards or backwards and to climb out of the rut, whilst possible, is quite an effort, possibly an insurmountable one and it's uncertain as to whether it's worth the effort. It's the same with a figurative rut. We tend to keep going forwards, following the path of least resistance. Perhaps we might go backwards, retracing our steps, but nothing new lies there. To scramble out of the behavioural rut is time-consuming, dirty and maybe even dangerous and any possible benefits above ground are not guaranteed.

So, most people keep plodding ahead doing what they know, stuck in the constrained safety of their comfort zone, even though that comfort zone might be a hole in the ground never likely to take them anywhere new, exciting or better.

Another reason I used an image of Einstein to open this chapter is that he was a physicist. I vaguely recall Newton's laws of motion. (Hopefully, I'm not misattributing them). The first law is that an object, stationary or moving, will continue on that path and at that speed, unless affected by an outside force. I'm certain those aren't the exact words, but you get my drift. (Except, of course, there won't be any drift without the influence of an outside force).

I've taken to adapting that law of physics to people's behavior – a convenient hybrid I call 'Behavioural Physics'. Most people, stationary or moving, will continue on that path and at that speed, unless affected

by an outside force. And don't we just? We stay in a town, or a job or a relationship until something from outside slaps us on the face, either figuratively or literally in the case of a relationship, and then we're forced to change or at least rethink our situation. Maybe that external event is a heart attack or a job loss or a relationship breakup or an earthquake. But whatever it is, it's external and it contributes to a feeling of powerlessness, helplessness and / or being out of control. It's demotivating.

We have lived through and observed a rapidly accelerating rate and volume of changes. It's a lot easier today to convince people that change is inevitable. And, in their logical minds, your people might see the points of your argument and say out loud that they agree with you. But then they still don't change. It's not that they don't want to. It's not that they don't see the potential benefits. Perhaps they don't know how? Perhaps they still have an emotional and literal investment in the status quo? It's the getting started that you as leader need to inspire and instigate and, you know what might be able to help you? Coffee! But not in the way you might first think.

When I cover this next concept in my workshops, I ask people to raise their hand if they have a coffee loyalty card. Quite a few people do. I then ask people to keep their hand raised if they have more than one coffee loyalty card. Quite a few people do. I then joke about the meaning of loyalty. (Hopefully, I also remember to tell them to lower their hands). It's a cute joke and it helps to make sure that everyone in

the room knows what I mean when I talk about a coffee loyalty card – a business card sized piece of cardboard, perhaps laminated and branded, with a number of images of coffee cups which, with each purchase of a coffee earns a stamp or holepunch. Once the stamps reach a pre-determined number, the next one is free. A lot of places do this electronically these days, so I need to make sure you have the old-fashioned card in your minds' eye.

A large chain of coffee outlets conducted a study. They produced many thousands of coffee loyalty cards in two batches – 50 / 50. One batch had 'buy eight get one free'. The other batch had 'buy ten get one free' but the first two cups were pre-stamped. So, effectively, logically, economically, they were exactly the same. The company released an equal number of the cards into the market and sat back to see how many of each would be redeemed for the free coffee by the end of the months-long campaign. Which batch do you think came back the most?

Statistically you'd expect an even number of each but the second batch – buy ten get one free but with the first two pre-stamped – came back twice as often. Something is happening here, and it isn't statistical, economic or logical. It's something very human. It's a phenomenon that psychologists call 'Endowed Progress'. People tend to move with a behavior when they perceive they've made a bit of a start. Even if it's just a bit of a start and even if it's just a perception. So, if you want to move your people, you need to provide some evidence that they've made a bit of a start. At a personal level, if you're trying to

run a marathon, lose some weight or save some money, you're more likely to stick with it, if you go with some initial momentum. Again, with the physics.

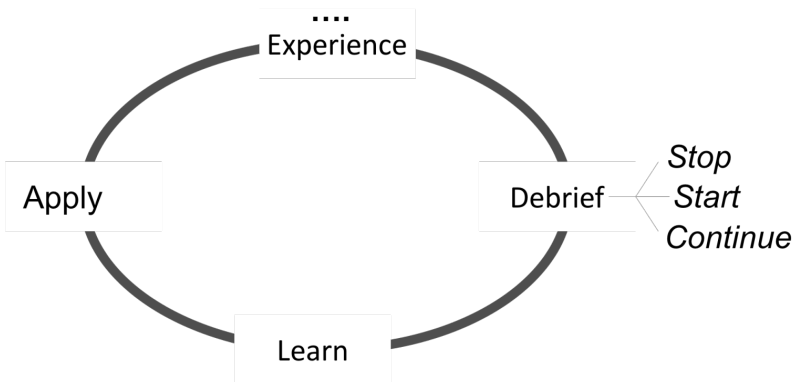
As a change agent, you need to help your people self-identify their metaphorical two free coffee cups.

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Strand 7: Display Progress

The Experiential Learning Cycle sounds like a mouthful but it's simple really. It's the way we learn naturally. I use a lot of different techniques as a trainer with my learners but if I had to choose just one – my desert island training technique – I would choose experiential learning.

The overwhelming majority of people I met can walk. They've never been to walking university. They never did Walking101 at nightschool. Yet, somehow, without being formally trained at the skill of walking, most everyone manages to become competent at it.



We were once a pre-toddler. We had parents or caregivers, perhaps older siblings. We could see them modelling the act of walking and we could see the benefits of being able to walk. That ever-elusive cookie jar would be within our reach if only we could walk. We had a go, we fell down, we had a cry, got a pat on the head and some words of encouragement. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. A cycle of learning, encouragement, practice, feedback. A combination of logical learning with purpose and emotional responses. Eventually, we got those cookies.

If you look at the diagram at the start of this chapter, we start with the experience. It could be the tentative first steps of a toddler or a sales call by one of your sales team. That sales call succeeds, or it doesn't. There is a point of reflection which I call the 'Debrief'. Based on that we extract some learning and apply it which leads us to a new, hopefully improved, experience. And so, it goes on.

I've taken another popular model and fused it into the standard experiential learning cycle to create a hybrid. At the debrief point, rather than rely on people generally being able to reflect on their experience in an unstructured and undisciplined way, I've added three simple questions. I'll outline these in a moment.

I work in a lot of different organisations. Often, someone senior will take me on a tour of the workplace. They'll proudly show me the new computer system, the digger, the warehouse. I'll meet the team. The boss will say how proud they are and how, "Around here Terry,

we learn from our mistakes". At that point, I'll ask them, "Wow, that's really interesting. I'm writing a book on that. Tell me, how, how do you learn from your mistakes"? The conversation takes a bit of a dive at that point. They don't really know how they learn from their mistakes, or even if they do learn from their mistakes. It's just something they say. It's something a lot of people say.

What my hybrid model gives people is a simple, low-effort discipline that enables individuals, teams and organisations to genuinely learn, not only from their mistakes, but also from their successes. So often, one person will be thriving but not everyone gets the benefit of learning from the positive experiences of others.

And it all happens at that 'debrief' point of the experiential learning cycle.

Let's stick with the unsuccessful sales call as a simple example with which to work. The debrief for a small experience is itself a small debrief. You drive to your next sales call and in the car, you and the voices in your head have a three-question conversation. If it's a big deal, then the debrief becomes larger and more formal – multiple people in a room with laptops and whiteboards – but still the three questions remain the same.

The first question is 'stop' – what's one thing, the main thing, that next time I will stop doing? Not thirty-seven things but one thing, the main thing.

The second question is 'start' – what's one thing that next time I might try? Notice the language. The words 'might' and 'try' imply an openness to possibility and innovation. But you don't know what you don't know so you might need to phone a friend or do some research. You might not be able to answer it on the spot but, once again, it activates your RAS and you're more likely to notice that one new thing you might try as you go.

The third question is 'continue' – always finish on a relative high, a personal pat on the back – what's one thing you will continue to do?

If you can normalize and habituate this discipline then you will structurally build into your life, and that of your team, a continuous improvement loop. It creates lots of little learnings and brain rewards which bolster feelings of motivation. If you keep at it, it becomes part of your team culture – *the way things are done around here*.

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Motivational Interviewing and the 'Self-Defined Scale'

When change is afoot, the temptation is to ask your people, “You OK?” or “How’s it going?” The problem with the former is that it’s a closed question and a simple yes or no is not that useful to you or them. The latter is an open question which is better, but human nature leans on people to not answer that question with a “No”. You’re more likely to get a disingenuous, “Fine thanks”. That’s no use either.

You should be asking purposeful questions with specific intent – to glean evidence or example of where they really are at or how they really are feeling. Problematic also is that many people do not have a highly developed emotional vocabulary. A simple and practical technique from the world of counselling and drug rehab is useful for leaders in the change space.

The acronyms OARS and DARNCAT are useful structures for questioning with genuine interest and concern:

O – Open questions

A – Affirming

R – Reflective

S – Summarise

D – Desire

A – Ability

R – Reasons

N – Need

C – Commitment

A – Actuation

T – Taking steps

So, we move from the traditional and conveniently lazy open one-off question, beyond even a list of questions, to a structure containing possibly several questions in combination with comments in response to what's being said and how it's being said.

There's a two-part type of motivational interviewing question I call the 'The Self-Defined Scale' that I'd like to outline for you. I've found it useful in behaviour-change scenarios, particularly nudging others to change their own behaviour.

Part 1: On a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest, how ready are you to do this change? (Or, how positive are you feeling about this aspect of the change? Or, how anxious are you about this aspect of the change?)

Part 2: Depending on how they answer, respond with curiosity. If they say "three", ask why they didn't say one or two. If they say "eight", ask what's missing to get to nine or ten.

Principles of Motivational Interviewing:

1. Express empathy through reflective listening.
2. Develop discrepancy between clients' goals or values and their current behaviour.
3. Avoid argument and direct confrontation.
4. Adjust to client resistance rather than opposing it directly.
5. Support self-efficacy and optimism.

Here's some examples of questions or statements at the various steps of DARNCAT change-talk:

D	Desire	"I want to ..." "I would like to ..." "I wish."
A	Ability	"I could ..." "I can ..." "I might be able to."
R	Reasons	"I would probably feel better if..." "I need to have more-energy to play with my kids."
N	Need	"I ought to" "I have to" "I really should ..."
C	Commitment	"I am going to ..." "I promise ..." "I intend to ..."
A	Actuation	"I am ready to ..." "I will start tomorrow..."
T	Taking steps	"I actually went out and. ..." "This week I started ..."

I'd also suggest, if you can, modelling yourself describing a range of how you're feeling. The one-to-ten scale is useful. Your "five" might be someone else's "nine" so the absolute number is not as relevant as the direction you're heading. If you were a "four" and now you're a "five, that's progress. If you're a "five" and you've been a "five" for a while, that's being stuck. Talking in these terms does feel odd initially but highly effective leaders and teams know where everyone else is at and which direction they're heading in and intervene when that direction is not the one agreed on or needed.

I've even seen people, myself included, use an arm-movement gesture representing a speedometer or temperature gauge. That's more for kinesthetic folk for whom physical actions might be more relatable than numbers.

You can influence others in having greater granularity with their emotional descriptors. If you only have "great" and "terrible" as emotional descriptors, and the situation isn't currently great, then it must be the other one. What adjectives lie between great and terrible? There's irritating, unfortunate, and inconvenient. There's acceptable, improving, and favourable. Also, be seen to think and reflect before to answering when people ask you how you are or how the change is going. Demonstrate that you're not replying instinctively and glibly. Demonstrate that they're getting a thoughtful and honest response from you.

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Strand 8: Burn the Boats

Often when, for example, the change you're involved in is the implementation of a new computer system there is a critical mass of users who still love the old system. There are arguments for running things in parallel until the new system is proven and bedded in but there is also the option of a stone-cold approach – flicking an off-switch and an on-switch and shutting down the old system with the activation of the new. Reverting to old ways is rendered impossible.

In comedy, there is an old saying, “Don’t give up your day job”. You will find many comedians who have a day job. It’s a bet-hedging, risk-spreading safety net. For many aspiring comedians who may never really make it, at least in a commercially viable sense, it’s a prudent strategy. But it means you don’t HAVE TO MAKE IT. Having to make it is no guarantee of success, but it is a big odds-booster of you hustling to do whatever you can in your power to succeed. If you have a safety net / plan B, then you’ll never give it your all.

Cortez addressed the reluctant conquistador invaders into South America he commanded who were disinclined to attack the locals who seemed way more organized and motivated than they’d anticipated. His solution to them not wanting to move forwards was, “Burn the

boats". With no way backwards, the only way home was forwards, regardless of the obstacles ahead. There was still no guarantee of success but there was only one option. What boats do you have to burn?

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Conclusion

The benefits I've acquired from doing 2 dangerous things a year, and particularly the comedy, have given me real courage. Sometimes it's only fleeting daring but it's real and the more often I generate it, the easier it is the next time I need it. I've got quite -- well, I used to have I think, quite serious social anxiety. I was very averse to social interaction. It held me back a lot. I think I'm okay now. And I give my comedy experience a lot of credit for that. I worked on, and continue to be working on, my change muscles, building up my resilience reservoir. I tested myself on my timetable and my terms. That gave me skills and beliefs I needed when I encountered changes that weren't on my timetable or terms.

A particularly special benefit I acquired was having a childhood dream come true. I always wanted to be a published author. I didn't know how. I didn't know why. I only knew that I did. It was my fifth year of doing 2 dangerous things a year when I literally walked off the street into the publishing house nearest where I lived and simply said I wanted to do this. The idea that I had - a book of life skills for young people told in a comedic, non-preachy style was all I had. I had written nothing. What I just told you is what I told them.

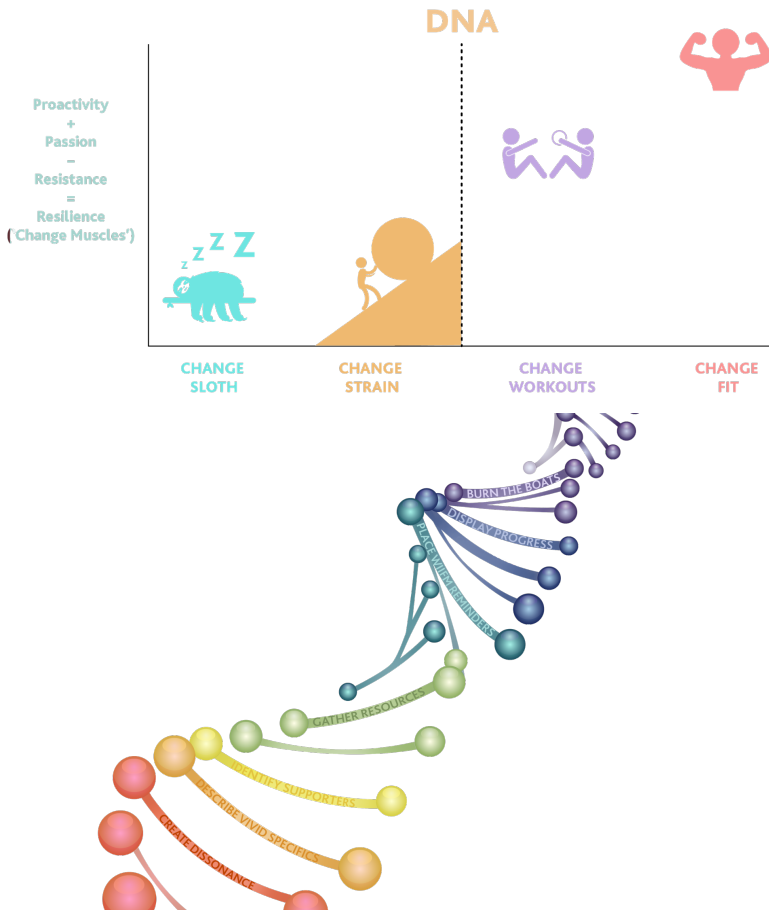
You make your own luck in this world. They'd just let go someone else they'd been working with for a year with exactly the same idea, but it was very preachy. And they wanted the idea, but maybe in a comedy way. If only someone would walk in off the street and suggest that type of thing. And I freaking well did. First was identifying supporters like my co-author. Nothing was signed on the spot. We still had to do some writing to prove ourselves. We got a commission and an advance. That's a long time ago. It rarely happens these days for first-timers or unknowns in publishing. I did that dangerous thing and I got out of my comfort zone. And I've not been in that comfort-zone since the year 2000. It's never not scary, and I often doubt myself, but I'm loving the results.

(I would offer to autograph this book for you, but I saw one of my books for sale online recently and they referred to my autograph as "slight damage".)

I'd wish you good luck with your own change efforts, but I believe we make our own luck in this world. Once you make your initial decision to adapt your 'Danger DNA' and evolve along your own 'Change Evolution' path towards becoming 'Change Fit', you'll definitely *feel* lucky. (Better than winning Lotto).

The Models: 'Change Evolution' & 'Danger DNA'

Your Change Evolution



Immediate Actions

Three things I will get underway immediately after reading this book are:

1

2

3

About Terry Williams

The People Engagement Expert

Terry Williams is a speaker, trainer and facilitator based in Auckland, New Zealand. He also has a sideline as a stand-up comedian.



His first book was about life skills for young people told in an accessible and non-preachy style. His second, for workplace leaders, was about workplace engagement and motivation. He speaks and trains on a range of topics but, broadly, they all relate to people engagement. If he makes any claims to being an expert on anything at all, it is people engagement.

Recently moved to a rural lifestyle block, his writing time is being impacted by horses and chickens, although he is pretty sure there is a workplace productivity metaphor somewhere amongst the chickens.

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