

Discover: Coaching!



Reinventing Yourself

by Tony Stoltzfus

Over the years I've coached a number of individuals through the process of completely reinventing themselves. For instance, one leader's goal was "to move from being a critical and demanding boss to one who is approachable, kind, and builds strong relationships with my peers and reports." That's a major attitude adjustment! However, over the course of six months he actually succeeded in altering the fundamental way he related to others in the workplace. How did that happen? And what can we learn from those stories about how we can reinvent ourselves when the time comes to do it?

Part of the magic of reinvention is that it happens most frequently when things are going poorly, not when they are going great. So your difficult situation already contains the seeds of greatness! Here are three principles of how reinvention works:

It Takes a Teachable Moment

People don't just wake up one day and say, "I think I'll become a totally different person!" It takes a powerful experience to motivate us to make this kind of change. In the example above, the teachable moment was a feedback process that shook this leader's self-perceptions to the core. This kind of change can spring out of being fired from a job, from relational breakdowns, dry or disappointing seasons in life, or times when circumstances isolate or idle you. Your greatest opportunity for personal transformation lies within these major shaping events – in fact, transformation almost never happens without them! Your greatest challenges contain the seeds of our greatest opportunities for personal growth.

Behaviors Change when Beliefs Are Shaken

What we do always seems reasonable in our own eyes. Our conduct, no matter how irrational it seems to others, makes sense within our own belief systems. Therefore, our belief system must first be shaken before change will occur.

For instance, if a person thinks she is really great at facing conflict (even if everyone around her knows different), little real change will occur until that belief is challenged. Teachable moments supply these challenges. It may be honest feedback from a friend, facing the consequences of our actions, or simply seeing that our paradigms don't work under real life conditions.

We all have unreasonable beliefs – things like, "I can't change," or "I have to keep things under control," or "I need to protect myself from getting hurt." Coaches are trained to help you pick up on these beliefs, take an honest look at them, and decide whether that belief really serves you or if it holds you back. It's when we figure out *why* we do what we do that we most often see lasting, transformational change in the way we operate.

Track Progress

When people are in the process of reinventing themselves, they consistently lose perspective on their own progress. Transformation not only changes who you are but how you view who you are, and where you are standing when you look at yourself. Here's an example. The first step in changing a habit is becoming aware of the behavior as you do it. In the initial stages of the change process, this growing awareness of

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falling short makes you feel like you are going backward, not making progress. But the awareness itself is progress!

A valuable service a coach brings to the change process is perspective. Your coach will keep reminding you of how far you've already come from your starting point, and keep pointing you forward toward your goal until you reach it. Most of the time, we fail at change because we lose energy to keep going. A coach is a faithful ally who will help you stay energized and focused until you reach your objectives.

Reinventing yourself is difficult process. A coach's encouragement and perspective can make all the difference!