Overcoming the Fear of Change

By JP Sears, Holistic Coach

What change are you currently on a quest for? Are you looking for a small upgrade in your fitness? Or perhaps a whole new operating system in your vitality? How strongly do you desire the change that you seek? Oddly enough, would you believe a part of you may be carrying a proportional amount of fear of your desired change relative to the amount of excitement that you have about it? In terms of paving as smooth of a path as possible for making positive changes in your health, maybe it’s a worthy mission to learn how to consider why you can become afraid of the very change that you seek.

If the pursuit of change is to be successful, how can we journey inward to effectively overcome the fear of it? If we don’t, what are the chances that our fear will freeze our ability to give ourselves the gift of meaningful change?

The Hidden Magnitude of Change
The meaningful change on our minds might appear to be something as simple as a one-dimensional drop of the number that the scale reads. However, can you recognize the far reaching ripples of this seemingly stand alone change? If, for example, you lost 25 pounds, what would that weight loss mean to you? How would you perceive yourself differently? How would you perceive other people perceiving you differently? We may just find that our perception of self and how we experience other’s perceiving us creates a blanket of change into the depths of our psyche that permeates us, leaving us with far more change than what we thought we were bargaining for.

To illustrate this example of the covert change that perhaps always accompanies overt change, you’re invited to consider the following summary of a conversation with a client:

JP:
“What does your current body shape (25 pounds overweight) mean to you? What does it make you feel about yourself? How do you feel others view you?”
Client:
- “I’m undesirable”
- “I feel gross and unattractive”
- “Other’s don’t want to be around me”

JP:
“If you achieved your desired change, you were at your ideal bodyweight, what would you imagine that would mean to you? What would you imagine you’d feel about yourself? How do you think others would view you?”

Client:
- “I’d be desirable”
- “I’d feel confident and attractive”
- “Other’s would enjoy their experience of me”

Considering the above, can you appreciate how the simple change of a number on the scale represents a global change that washes over and through the client’s psyche close to 100% of their waking hours? Could this change in how the client see’s them self against the backdrop of life be the one that pulls the trigger on the fear response? We can probably reason that while there is quite a global magnitude of change occurring in the client’s life, it’s all for the positive so there is nothing to worry about. The proverbial “however” comes into play here… However, what if it is any change, positive, negative, or neutral, that evokes a fear response at some level of our being? If this is so, then why is it that we fear change, whether we judge it to be positive or negative?

**Instinct and the Pursuit of Survival**
As most of us live in a modern society, we’ve become very accustomed to not needing to worry about our acute survival in terms of staying vigilant about predators and the harshness of nature. Interestingly, even though this true, if you were to do a self imposed cadaver dissection you’d discover that you have a section of your brain called the Hypothalamus, which is principally devoted to assuring our self preservation. Though we can take ourselves out of a threatening environment, we cannot take our threat detector out of ourselves. How does this have anything to do with you and your desired change?
Imagine for a moment if you will, you're living out in the wild. As your eyes are scanning the terrain and environment that you’re in, your hypothalamus, functioning unconsciously, is scanning what your eyes are seeing in order to detect potential survival threats. What if we learned that how it recognizes threats is through simply noticing change? If the landscape looks familiar, as it did yesterday, then we get to relax into the unconscious knowing that things are predictable and we are likely safe. However, if the hypothalamus notices changes that are seen in our surroundings, perhaps an animal walking by the bushes, another person, a strange noise, etc., the change that we recognize triggers an instinctual fear response. Is our reaction then to avoid that which we are afraid of for the sake of avoiding that which threatens our survival?

As you step out of this imaginary world back into your life, what are the implications of your threat detecting hypothalamus scanning the terrain of the change that you seek? Is there a subtle triggering of fear about how the terrain differs from your familiar reference points? How much change was there in the above client's perspective? Unless we can intentionally address this reaction, will we be left in the pile of the masses who are fearfully defended about change for the sake of saving their lives that were never in danger in the first place?

**Overcoming the Fear that Prevents Change**

Going beyond the limitations of our fear may have little to do with making our fear go away. Short of extracting the fear generating parts of our physiological and psychological anatomy, which happen to be pretty intimately woven into the whole of our being, we’re likely going to be living with some level of the human emotion called fear. How do we allow progress in creating our meaningful change despite the compelling fear? Please consider the following inner exercise steps for creating a functional relationship with your fear of change.

1. Allow the fear. If we do not allow ourselves to be afraid, does it mean that we’re actually afraid to be afraid? If so, perhaps we’ve created a self seduction which garnishes with the illusion of “no fear” while we’re buried by exponential volumes of it.
2. Process the inner perceptual shifts through your imagination. If you were to achieve your desired change:
a. How would you look? How would you feel about your new look? How would you feel about your new feelings toward your new look?

b. What new beliefs and perceptions would you have about yourself? What is it like to consider these?

c. How would other people view you differently? What would you guess their new views and thinking about you are? What is comfortable and uncomfortable to you about these views?

Conclusion
In the quest to redefine our selves and our health with newer versions, are we able to be sensitive to the magnitude of what even seemingly small change represents? Becoming aware of the secondary changes that occur in conjunction with the primary change that we’re driving after enables us to more thoroughly digest the fear that otherwise may constipate the flow of change. With introspection through the simple exercises offered, we can create the inner infrastructure that is necessary to support long-term meaningful change on the outside.

About the Author
JP Sears is a Holistic Health Coach in San Diego, CA. His one-on-one client practice specializes in holistic emotional healing and resolving self-sabotage issues. JP regularly facilitates classes and workshops nationally and internationally on a variety of inner healing and health topics while being widely acclaimed for his heartfelt and dynamic style. For more information on upcoming classes, tele-classes, or becoming a client, please visit www.InnerAwakeningsOnline.com.