

## **Allowing - the truth about change**

Change is all about facilitating the growth of a human being, a couple, a team, an organization – any organism. But what does this mean? What is it about the growth process that differentiates it from other kinds of processes?

Essentially, change means the letting go of the old for something new to develop. Something will become something else. We do not end up where we started. The end result is very different or completely different from what we start with.

## **The implications of change**

Each of us has hopes and aspirations, certain beliefs and goals - be happier, have a better job or relationship, be free from fear, have nicer things, etc. – an agenda. However, consider that change can also mean that our aims can change. How so? Your aims or aspirations belong to the "you" you are now. So, if you change into a new "you," that new person might not have the same aspirations or goals. If you hold onto those same aspirations and goals, well, you'll be the same person – no change, no transformation, no expansion, no growth.

If you honestly want to grow, you must be willing to actually be(come) somebody who has different thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and experiences. That is, you cannot stay the way you are and change the way you are. To change the way you are you have to become a different kind of creature.

## **Giving up "me"**

To change, to grow requires being willing to allow the old ideas and beliefs to die. But if you say "I want to grow and still remain the same person," there's a contradiction. You cannot change and still be the same.

One of my spiritual teachers uses the process of change that results in a butterfly to illustrate the notion of true and real change. The following is his take. I think it makes sense.

There are several stages in the growth of a butterfly. One of them is a larva which eventually develops and becomes a butterfly. This larva (you) - small, big, yellow, black, whatever, says, "I want to grow," and in your mind, growing means becoming a bigger, happier, more colorful larva. You don't think, "I'm going to be something totally different." You don't want to be something totally different. You want to be a bigger, more beautiful, more loving larva. It never occurs to you to be something other than a larva. The concept of butterfly never enters your head.

Here's the problem. If the larva continues to be a larva as it grows, it will feel constricted. It's getting bigger, it's growing, but there is something definitely wrong. It keeps complaining, it goes to a therapist. The therapist helps it change a little here, a little there: "No, don't eat those maple leaves. They will make your indigestion worse." It tries one doctor after another. It goes to a chiropractor to get its spine straightened. It goes to a masseuse so it will relax. But it never occurs to the larva that it's not going to feel better as long as it continues to be a larva.

That's how everybody actually thinks. Nobody thinks: "I'm a larva who's going to be something else, something that I have no idea about at all now, and I can't even think or say what this might be." A larva can only think of larvae. A larva doesn't think of

butterflies. It sees butterflies around and thinks, "What interesting creatures. Where could they have come from?"

You have your preconceptions, and set of beliefs about change. Maybe you believe that if you grow, if you change, you'll be more intelligent and have fewer problems and make more money and your stomach won't hurt as much. Or maybe you believe that growth and change means you'll be married and have two children, and two cats. And it will be perfect if you and your husband each have a dog. That's the optimal growth.

So, this person starts working on herself, and after a while, she starts to see that having all those things might not be what growth is really about. So she says, "Okay, one cat, not two. One cat, two dogs, a husband and two children." And, of course, a house someplace in the country and two vacations a year and continuous love from a few specified people. If she works on herself for a while, she might be willing to let go of the two dogs. If she is seriously engaged, change she might eventually come to feel the love and security within her own self (essence), viewing the external "goodies" as desirable but not necessary to her contentment.

For your particular larva, changing might mean accepting two cats and a dog but no house in the country. Or you might find out that two cats and one dog won't do, and you believe that to change you need to have three birds instead. Or instead of a husband or wife, you might need to have five lovers at a time. These are examples of how we approach the wish for change with fixed ideas in our heads about what change means.

Perhaps as a child you were interested in machines, and you eventually graduate from college with a degree in mechanical engineering, and work as an engineer. Maybe after a number of years working as an engineer, you need to become something else in order to grow. Maybe the best thing for you is to be a gardener. But you say, "No, I have to grow and change and be a mechanical engineer at the same time. I am not going to let go of any of my cats. I'm going to continue to be a mechanical engineer with my two cats and my dog, and with my house, and everything else. Otherwise, I'm not interested."

So, we see that the most elementary, most external requirement for growth is the willingness to let go of what you believe should happen, what you believe things should be, what you believe will make you happy. Because when you do change, you are no longer the person who thought you knew what you would change into. You will be a different person.

What a butterfly eats is not exactly the same as what a larva eats. The needs of a larva are not the same as the needs of the butterfly. Maybe a larva needs two cats and a dog, and a butterfly does not. So, there is a need for an attitude of allowing, allowing things to emerge, to change, to transform, without anticipating how it should happen. You can direct things only according to the way you are now. You can conceive of the future only according to the blueprints you already know. But real change means that the blueprint will change. The only thing you can do is to be open and allow things just to happen, to allow the butterfly to emerge inside you out of the larva and be a different being. You might be amazed, saying, "Oh, all this time I thought I had to crawl faster. I didn't know it was possible to fly." It is possible to fly, but if you just want to remain a larva, you can learn to crawl a little faster. You can even learn to crawl sideways. But it will never occur to you that you can fly. You see things flying around, but don't think of flying, because you haven't got wings.

Usually the particular things you want and the ways you want to experience yourself, are determined by your self-image. Regardless of what you think the image is that you want

for yourself or the way of life that you want, what it really means ultimately, if you look at it closely, is that you want particular things because they will give you certain inner sensations, feelings, or perceptions.

You're not really in touch with the cat, you're in touch with your inner sensations. There's a cat there, so what? But the cat makes you feel a certain way, and that's what you want ultimately. You don't want a cat because it's a cat. You want a cat because it makes you feel a certain way about yourself. What's the big deal about having a cat or a house or a husband or wife? If you didn't have a particular feeling about these, what difference would it make if you had them or not? If you felt the same, one way or the other, then why bother? You might as well have a rhinoceros.

Let's look at this now from the perspective of the inner experience. In the beginning you want certain inner stimuli, certain inner sensations and feelings. At first you may think that you want a house, a dog and a cat, a particular job, and so forth, so that you can feel a certain way — probably secure or comfortable or fulfilled. You want the inner experiences of the larva - inner stimulation and assurances that you recognize and that you see as a kind of nourishment.

But to allow transformation, you need to be open to the possibility that even what you want in terms of inner stimuli and inner sensation will change. The kinds of pleasure you valued so much before will not necessarily be relevant to the butterfly. It's a different stage. You need to be willing to allow even the desire for the inner sensations and inner stimuli, and the quality and the type of those inner sensations and inner stimuli to change, to be something that maybe you've never known, never thought about. And you might not know until it happens. You might say, "If I'm going to change, I will feel loving. I will feel love and happiness." But maybe the love and happiness you want are not the same love and happiness that a butterfly would feel. Maybe the love and happiness of a butterfly are totally different from what your ideas are about it now.

So, you need to be willing not only to allow your dreams of what you want and your current self-image to change completely to something else, you also need to allow even your inner experience, your inner sensations, to change in kind and in quality. Otherwise you'll stop your growth. And you will discover after a while, after a long process of growth, that some of the deepest and most cherished inner sensations that you can have are sensations or experiences of being yourself, the experience of your true identity, or essence.

When you allow for broader possibilities, you start appreciating different kinds of experiences in your environment and your relationships, in which you can be more of who you really are, more intimate with yourself. Something else becomes valuable.

So, what you value will change. If you keep wanting to value the same thing, you won't change. But you may discover that one of the most satisfying and fulfilling things is to feel, "Oh, that's me!" — the experience of inner identity. Your value shifts from an external self-image to an inner sense of self. That's me!

I'm trying to eliminate those ideas and barriers in your mind to allow for possibilities that you cannot conceive of. There is no way for you to conceive of these things as long as you are set in a particular place. To allow the process of growth, you need to allow that anything is possible, anything can happen. You don't know what it will be. There is no way for you to know the next step. If you try to direct it in any way, you're just going to stop it. You can only be yourself, be what you are now and allow the next thing. After all, the core of life is a mystery.

Your most important work is to understand the barriers you have against change, against your unfolding. Wherever you are, you look at yourself and understand what are your barriers, what are the things that are stopping you from experiencing fully what is there. When you do experience fully, you don't try to hold on to the experience or determine what direction it will take. You just experience it fully and that's it. Your mind is open for anything to happen.

This requires a certain trust in the process, a trust that there is such a thing as transformation, and that it will be good, that it will be the best thing. The attitude of trusting without knowing what will happen, of allowing things to emerge, is needed at all levels and stages of the process of inner development. It applies on the external level, the emotional level, the deeper, essential levels, all of them. Any idea of how things are going to be will only work as a boundary. The way things are and the way our true nature works cannot be bounded that way.

Even when you're working towards something, you need the attitude that anything can happen. You're working towards something, but the experience itself needs to be open and completely spontaneous.

Finally, the trust is not trusting in anybody; it is not trusting any theory; it is not trusting any authority; it is trusting reality – trusting trust itself. It is just trust—confidence in the essence itself. It will take time for the trust to mature and deepen.

You will tend to trust in certain areas and not in others. When we have more fear we tend not to trust, we tend to stick to our walls more. But when you find out that it is fear, really, more than anything else, that makes you hang onto your walls, you will tend to let go of more of the walls. The more free from fear you become, the more willing you are to let go of those walls.

Part of the process of development and growth is learning to trust the attitude of allowing. The final development is not trying to have your "self" in a particular state, but allowing for whatever is there to happen. So, the final development of allowing everything to happen is nothing but the final dissolution of the ego — personality, because the walls are the personality, are made by the personality, fueled by the personality. The personality is nothing but these boundaries.

You can allow any possibility. Allowing has no restriction. It is the greatest freedom. It is a freedom that does not say it wants to be free from anything. It is a freedom that is just freedom, whether there is a wall or no wall.

(Source, Allowing, Diamond Heart Book 1, Elements of the Real in Man, A. H. Almaas, Diamond Books, Berkeley, CA, 1988)

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