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What's Your Part in Creating Positive Change in the World?

Do you ever wonder how you fit into the bigger movement of change that the world so greatly needs? My colleague, Dorene Mahoney, of StepWell Coaching, has agreed for me to share some ideas, taken from one of her articles on the topic of change. Read on to see what it will take to create positive change for yourself, your community and the world to survive and thrive. Afterwards, answer the questions I pose to help you take this into your personal life.

"I have grave concerns about how speeded-up the Western world has become, with its emphasis on multi-tasking, quick fixes, and shallow reports of 'the bottom line'. As a spiritual person I muse that-- if there were such a thing as Evil-- what better way to put a society into decline than to make its population so busy that citizens can no longer hear the quiet inner voice of guidance, unable to reflect on or spot deeper implications of knee-jerk reactions to complex social problems. I am reminded of the dynamics of chaos and complexity that I learned about at a conference on leadership given by Peter Senge and Society for Organizational Learning. Focused on the challenges of solving complex problems like changing a multi-national corporation, or eliminating global warming, I learned that intervening in complex problems often has a substantially lower success rate than doing nothing at all-- it is impossible to adequately account for the thousands of variables that have contributed to the situation. Active interventions may produce short-term results and eliminate one symptom, only to be replaced with others.

When it comes to complex issues, most individuals respond in one of two ineffective (and further damaging) ways:

- They get angry, so that their ideas are marginalized (e.g., some members of the environmentalist movement).
- They become overwhelmed and withdraw, rationalizing that someone else will deal with it (like the government).

The only response that effectuates positive and sustained change is to stay open and continue to engage with the issues. Complex systems change over time, as more people reflect on and engage openly and deeply with the problems, creating a critical mass or "tipping point". Senge spoke passionately about work he and SOL have been doing with indigenous peoples around the world over several years-- as one example, they might spend hours sitting quietly in a circle, passing a talking stick among the Elders. Simple but sustained engagement with others on issues that hold particular meaning will bring change to complex problems. Indigenous peoples, taking the long view, have employed this approach to problem solving for thousands of years.

The very best thinking of our most esteemed and well-resourced world leaders has led us to where we are today, awash in social and environmental problems that simply will not be solved by quick fixes. Fundamental and sustained positive change will only be achieved when more of us (critical mass?) courageously choose to stay open and reflect on and engage openly and deeply with the problems."

So what does this mean to you and the way you engage with the needs that you see in your world?

Take a few minutes right now to reflect and write down your thoughts about what being more engaged might be like for you:

- What social, environmental, health or other issues and causes am I most concerned about?
- What specific disadvantages, discriminations and challenges do I see in the world that I want to see change?
- What particular groups and types of people do I feel most drawn to and stir in me a desire to help?

Of these issues, situations and people, which of them moves me enough towards taking action that I will make the time to do so?

- What is one action that I will take this week or this month to stay engaged and be a part of the critical mass that can contribute to being the solution to the issues, causes and people that concern me?

For instance, I will research the issue on the internet, I will talk with organizations working on the problem, I will write a check, or I will investigate how I can volunteer some of my time and skills toward addressing the issue.

- Set time in my calendar for when I will carry out these activities.
- Find one person to share my decision to take this action and be part of the solution. By sharing my commitment I will be building support to keep me in action and in the process perhaps inspire one more person to become engaged in this issue or another that is important to her/him.

YOU too can play a bigger part in creating Positive Change. It's a choice!

If this has raised some bigger questions about how you can leverage your current life circumstances or personal skills and resources and contribute to the critical mass for positive change, you are welcome to have a conversation with Mary by contacting mary@pathmakercoaching.com or visit www.pathmakercoaching.com for additional resources.

References

Dorene Mahoney, StepWell Coaching and Consulting, www.stepwellcoaching.com

Senge, Peter, and Hanig, Robert (2005, May). Foundations for Leadership. Conference conducted at Society for Organizational Learning, Boston, Massachusetts.

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About Pathmaker Coaching and Roadmap to Meaningful Midlife® Mary Radu, MS, MSW, CPCC

Positive Change Coach and Philanthropy Mentor, Mary Radu, guides midlife individuals and couples to discover how to share their unique gifts and resources and get into action. If you're a professional or entrepreneur who craves to have a bigger impact in the world, and make your life AND this planet a better place to live, *you need to activate your intentions*. Let Mary Radu of Pathmaker Coaching help you design and execute your unique path, aligning your life with your passions and values. If it's time for you to get moving, you'll find resources at www.pathmakercoaching.com/resources/index.html, or contact Mary mary@pathmakercoaching.com to discuss how you can get supported to make a bigger impact. (707) 824-8836

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