

Chapter 3
Change
Creating New Circumstances

Change is one of the most difficult tasks a human faces, it is also at times the most *necessary* objective that one has yet to accomplish. We can tend to become so familiar with a situation that we begin to create a *comfort zone*, the mere thought of change can bring with it fear and anxiety. Even when change is for the better we are sometimes unwilling to take advantage of the opportunity. This is a trait we must focus on in order to reach success.

Before I could begin to live a positive lifestyle I had to make some major changes in my thoughts and actions. This included my beliefs, behaviors, and values. The longer I continued to repeat the same *habits* the worst my *circumstances* became. It started for me as a youngster. I began by breaking small rules, disobeying directives, and throwing tantrums. My behaviors earned me spankings on my butt when I was at home and time-outs in the corner while at school. Following my disciplinary consequences I would still continue to misbehave, not for the reason that I enjoyed the spankings and time-outs, but for the reason that I was *seeking attention*. I thought that changing my actions would strip me of the attention I was receiving due to my behavior. As I got older my behaviors evolved. Small rules turned into big rules, tantrums turned into raging anger, and besides disobeying directives I was aggressively lashing out towards authority figures. The consequences grew steeper as well. The spankings turned into whoopings with a belt and I would also lose privileges such as talking on the phone, playing videos games, or going outside with my friends. While at school, the time-outs turned into detentions and suspensions. Even while receiving this new tougher and stricter form of discipline I continued to perform the same disobedient behaviors. During this time, along with seeking attention, I was aiming to create a “name” for myself, searching for where I could fit in amongst my peers, I was *seeking acceptance*. The years progressed; I was coming to the age of a young adult. By this time I’ve already gained acceptance in my community of peers, yet my negative habits persisted. The *rules* I used to break became me breaking *laws*, my raging anger was no longer verbal; my expressions became physical. Rather than lashing out towards authority, I began to avoid authority all together. I skipped school and spent days at a time away

from home. I became rebellious and refused to accept consequences. I insisted no more suspensions, no more whoopings, and no more restrictions. Throughout these experiences I nurtured a fully blossomed seed of core belief. I believed I would do *what I want, when I want* and if I say *Ima do it, Ima do it*, no one can stop me.

Skip forward into my adulthood as I'm living my life according to my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors relating to the core beliefs I have established since a jit. Even as my habits caused me to face circumstances of going to jail, being kicked out of my home, creating chaos in the streets, and neglecting those that love me I was content with the way I was living and had no intent to *change*. By this time I was so comfortable I was *afraid* of change. I feared change because I feared *losing my identity*; I wanted to stay true to my beliefs and prove anyone wrong if they were to challenge me on it. I feared *criticism*; I didn't want to be viewed as unauthentic, as if I was trying to be someone that I wasn't. I feared *poverty*; I couldn't see myself giving up my illegal activities in which put money in my pocket. My perception was ridiculously profound. Engaging in these beliefs and fears left me vulnerable to not only become *familiar* with, but also oddly *satisfied* with **failure**. It took for me to hit "*rock bottom*" before I took a personal inventory on my life.

As I stretched out on a cold slab of penitentiary concrete confined in a solitary lockdown cell, or in other words "*the hole*" I came to the realization that doing things *my way* was only producing negative results and I knew I had no one but myself to blame. Spending time in the hole put me in the position to be introduced to my "*other self*". For the first time in a long time I was thinking rationally. Although I was incarcerated I was *free* from all my past associations, influences, and temptations. My mind was finally clear. I used this moment of clarity to make the decision that enough was enough. I convinced myself that I wanted more out of life than an inmate number or an early grave. I understood that by hitting rock bottom my last option was *death*. So at that moment I took the first step towards change; *I accepted the fact that it must happen*. I prepared myself by *identifying my issues*. I believed what I had to change was **everything**. I opted to start with altering my *thought patterns*. Instead of focusing on what I speculated to be the *cons* associated with change, I shifted my focus to recognizing the *pros* linked with change. I mentally destroyed my fears and developed my new attitudes into allies. I let go of the fear of losing my identity as I prepared to transform my beliefs to create an entirely new identity. Rather than

fearing criticism, I was ready to *embrace* criticism and use it as a tool. I then altered my mind state to no longer *fear poverty* but to *pursue wealth*. I feel it is better for us to chase after what we want than to run from what we don't.

After *preparing* myself mentally my next step was the *action stage*. It was time to put my money where my mouth is so to speak. Anyone can *say* what there're *gonna* do, but to follow those words with action is the real test. The only other thing tougher than putting action towards change is *maintaining change*. Failure can occur with no effort at all, but to succeed requires *desire* and *persistence*. I don't know how many times I woke up hung-over from the night before and told myself I would never drink again, to only find myself later that night the first person with the cognac bottle to their lips. I don't know how many times I said I would stop gambling, how many times I told my girl I wouldn't cheat, or how many times I promised my family I wouldn't return to jail. It was always easier to stop for the moment than it was to pass up on the opportunity as it re-presented itself. Once I was able to maintain positive change in my thoughts and habits, my circumstances drastically changed for the better. My relationships grew stronger, I stayed out of jail, and my finances were more consistent. Everything in my life became more manageable.

Maintaining change is an everyday battle. Whether it is staying sober, being faithful, or avoiding becoming an inmate number. No matter how much good we acquire in life through change we could lose it all in an instance by one minor slip. I now live my life *one day at a time*.

Looking back, I wish I didn't take so long to make change in my life because in doing so sooner I could have avoided a lot of misery and misfortune. I say to you, don't wait to hit rock bottom, commit to a better life today, right now, this second. Change could be the difference between *life* and *death*. If you continue to regress downwards, eventually you will have nowhere to go but *under*. Believe me; the grass is greener on the other side.