

A chapter from the book, *The Greatest Opportunity*
By Raymond Gerson

Change and Stability

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The world we live in is rapidly changing. Our education, training, and skills can quickly become outdated and obsolete. New skills, education, and training are often needed to keep abreast of the quick pace of change. Companies are looking for employees who can learn to learn; i.e., people who have a high aptitude for learning itself. Unless we can adapt to change, we will fall behind and become less competitive in the job market. Large companies which previously had a policy of not laying off their employees have done so in unprecedented numbers. Where is the job security? This is a question increasing numbers of people are asking.

In addition to dramatic changes in the workforce and frequent economic fluctuation, many other changes have left people feeling less secure. Widespread crime, problems in schools, high divorce rates and the breakdown of the family unit, new deadly diseases, the return of old diseases which are resistant to standard treatments, earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters have increased our awareness that there is no absolute security in this world. Because of these events and circumstances, many people feel unsafe and insecure. Some feel that the old security blankets and props are being pulled from their grasp.

Where can we find security and stability in this world of frequent and fast-paced change? How can we adapt more readily to these changes without losing our self-confidence and mental equilibrium? I believe the answer is to reconnect with our spiritual center which is within us. We can begin by discovering the still, quiet place within which is stable and lasting. We can start by gradually connecting with that part of ourselves which is unchanging. We can become attuned to our higher nature and learn to trust our inner knowing.

There may be times when we feel lost and don't know where to take the next step. There are periods in our lives when we may seem to be in a thick fog, and are unable to see where we are going or want to go. During this period, we can begin by determining the next small step that we want to take. It is not necessary to always have a clear vision of the entire journey to our destination. It is enough to begin moving in a general direction that feels right according to our intuition. Then, as we take a step into the fog, we can see far enough to determine our next step. We can move forward one step at a time. We may make adjustments in our direction as our destination becomes clearer, while continuing to move forward, step by step.

In order to adapt to the rapid pace of change, we can build our life on a rocklike inner foundation. If we lose our jobs or homes, we can rebuild. Security lies in having confidence that we can use our creativity to discover new opportunities. Believing in ourselves and having faith in a higher power can see us through many difficult times.

Opportunity is Often Contained Within Crisis

Hard times, suffering, pain, dissatisfaction, disenchantment, and unhappiness can serve as catalysts for significant changes within ourselves and in our lives. It is often pain and dissatisfaction that provide an impetus for a paradigm shift which changes the way we look

at ourselves, others, and the world. It is not easy for most of us to change ourselves. When we are content with our lives, we rarely make significant changes. Major changes in our thinking and habit patterns often occur after a crisis. Opportunity is often the flip side of crisis.

When I was in my senior year of high school, I became ill with glandular fever, and was out of school for six weeks. Prior to my illness, I was getting little rest, and I was not eating well. One of the powerful lessons I learned from my illness was the importance of good health.

After I recovered, I began exercising, eating better, and taking proper rest.

During my illness I was bored. I asked my sister to bring home my school assignments. For the first time in my life, I applied myself to the homework and studied. I had always been a mediocre student at best and was unsure if I would go to college. My parents had been told earlier by a school counselor that I was probably incapable of succeeding in college.

After my six-week illness, I returned to school and was given a series of make-up tests. Although I had missed six weeks of school, I was amazed at the test results. I made A's

and B's on all of my tests. My self-esteem increased, study habits were developed, and I decided to attend college. After I received a Master's degree, my parents told me about the counselor who said that I would probably not succeed in college.

The crisis of my illness proved to be a great opportunity that changed my life. It was a blessing in disguise. I adopted a healthier way of living and obtained an education that provided me with many valuable job opportunities. I also developed a new belief in myself that led to other success experiences. I learned to take greater responsibility for my health and for my life.

Being an Active Participant in Your Life

We can choose to take greater responsibility for our lives in this unstable world. Many of us are learning that we cannot totally rely on the government, the corporation, the medical profession, or others to take care of us. If we give up total control of our lives to others, it will leave us with a feeling of helplessness. There are always choices. For example, we can choose to take care of our health. If we become ill, we can research our options. I am not advocating that we avoid doctors or medicine. I am suggesting not to give up total control of your life to a doctor or anyone else. We have a responsibility to take care of ourselves. We also can play a role in preventive medicine and our own healing.

We can choose to take positive action. We can be active participants in our own lives. There is a tendency on the part of many people to obsessively watch television and to live vicariously through TV, movie, and sports stars. Watching positive TV programs and movies are fine in moderation, but we don't have to live our lives through them. We need not spend our lives on the sidelines watching others; we can participate in the game of our own lives. If we live our lives through celebrities, then what will happen to our sense of security if we become disillusioned with one of them?

We are More Than Our Jobs, Relationships, and Possessions

If we are not involved in the process of discovering our true selves, we will tend to strongly identify ourselves with our jobs, relationships, and possessions. If we think we are our jobs, for example, then what happens if we lose them? It can be devastating to lose anything that we strongly identify with. Our security must come from within or we will be frequently rocked by the ups and downs of life.

In summary, we can begin building security by reconnecting to the unchanging, stable, and permanent place within. We can start by connecting with our spiritual center, and then connect with that same essence in others. We can radiate our own inner light to others. In this way, we can become beacons of light and a source of strength to others. Discovering inner stability will enable us to have a stabilizing influence on others. Adaptability, through inner stability and creativity, are some of the keys to discovering security in this ever changing world.

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