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The fall begins. Growing up in the northeast provided me with a new beginning every September. First, school would open again after a summer of play. Second, for those of my faith, the most significant holidays of the year came in early fall. Those holidays, known as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were not only about reflecting over the past year but also about the harvest and a new year (or season beginning).

So, for much of my life, I started over in September. That pattern continued for many more years into my adult life as I taught in college and then I had children. The pattern to begin a new continued every September. Now, as I contemplate the start of a new year, I cannot help but think of change.

The power behind three words

Starting over encompasses awareness, acceptance, and action. These three simple words can prove to be difficult to achieve and painful to fulfill. Still, these words are the key to living a healthy life. My life has been filled with many changes, some voluntarily made, others forced upon me by the universe. Change is not easy. I believe and write about all manifestations of change, and still I fight against it --one of many ironies that run through my life.

Yet, I know all that is powerful and good in my life, is a direct result of a change I have experienced. All around me I see people struggle to obtain balance in their lives, but sometimes they do so in an environment that has grown static. If I have locked a door, no matter how hard I bang upon it, it will not open unless I unlock it. For some of us, we must face truths about ourselves that are disturbing. Those truths may be that the marriage we are in is unhealthy, that we have neglected to take care of ourselves and now suffer from depression, over-eating, workaholism, even arrogance. Or, that our children have grown and we have never taken the time to sit and play with them, to laugh with them or make faces with them. Such awareness comes because our present reality no longer feeds us spiritual,



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physically, emotionally, or intellectually. Only through such knowledge can we hope to move forward and change.

If we have been filled with pain over some aspect of our lives and we have not confronted it, then we have buried it deep within. We pay dearly for every pain we bury, for every issue we leave unattended. But, having come to a new awareness, we are freed to look at the problems. That profound moment thrusts into the struggle of acceptance; and the more sincere our level of acceptance, the greater our opportunity is to change our reality.

The struggle begins a new

Acceptance, like awareness has its roots in change. If we stifle the process at this moment we are still bound to be victim to it. I have never met anyone, who having come to acceptance was willing to go back- to bury the truth.

Once we have reached acceptance, we can experience a new energy, an inner power. It may be the first time in our lives that such feelings of liberation have entered our consciousness. It is an extraordinary feeling. And we may linger too long for our fear may rise up to stop the change. Acceptance presents us with yet another dilemma: to change that which is unhealthy or limiting in our lives means we must admit the truth.

Sometimes, it takes years for us to achieve awareness and acceptance. Self judgments may be dangerous and need to be checked carefully. Other people, who are positive about us, and are willing to support our change can be useful. That outside support often keeps us from sabotaging our process. Deprecating self - judgment can quickly halt any change – it can never provide us with anything positive. Do not be confused, deprecating self - judgment is different from that part of us that is a critic, that part of us that has a solid and healthy concept of who we are and what we can achieve.

The journey takes a turn

Suddenly, after years, or perhaps moments, we find ourselves ready for action. Action, based in positive self images, leads us to alter the path of our lives. We must change the path we have taken thus far. Action incorporates all levels of our existence, just as denial did; we can not make change without it impacting our physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual lives. Moving into action requires change, determining what action to take requires change, and change requires change and courage. In the end, regardless of the issue, we have moved through many stages of change and each and everyone of these changes has been a creative process. Where the process will take us is always unknown.

So, as the new year proceeds, and routine settles in, it is the perfect time to embrace a much needed change. When we open ourselves to change, to starting over, we have the opportunity to broaden our experiences on this life's journey, to meet new people, to find parts of ourselves that have been closed off or simply unknown. If I want balance in my life, if I want success in my life, I must be willing to change. With the fall, I sweep away that which dead and decaying and make my environment ripe for new growth. Now the new year is here and it is time for the change to take root. Spring, quickly approaching will expose the first blossoms of the changes made now.

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