



Accepting Change

By Angel True

I lost my water bottle. Change was bound to happen after that.

I know it is really no big deal as it's just a little thing – but I really liked that water bottle! It fit perfectly in the cup holder of my car, it had an easy to open lid, a spill guard that made it easy to drink out of and it was decorated with some cool stickers that really spoke about *me* that I'd acquired over the 3 years I had used it. I drink a lot of water and I carried it with me everywhere. My water bottle was very personalized and I was quite attached to it.

Of course it also didn't help that I only very rarely lose things. I can probably count on one hand the number of significant items I've lost in the last 5 years. Though not highly materialistic I am usually quite attentive to my material possessions and do not misplace them often. So I was a little confused and a little disturbed when I realized my water bottle, a very important part of my life, was missing.

Change is an interesting process. Psychologically speaking it goes like this: Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Determination, Action, and Maintenance. But it's more than just a process of decision making and taking action. Change is an emotional journey.

PRECONTEMPLATION

At first I kind of stumbled around for a couple of days thinking it would just "show up" somewhere. I back tracked my path since the last time I knew I had it and checked in with the places I had been (at least 6.) One person even had a recollection of seeing it there at some point but it was still nowhere to be found. I pined about it for days! I was struggling with letting go of my attachments to this old water bottle. I was feeling lost, sad, disappointed and, well, thirsty. I was going through an emotional process of understanding and release – not sure whether I could make it and not sure I was willing to accept the loss of the water bottle yet.

CONTEMPLATION

Finally though, after almost 2 weeks, I came to grips with the fact that it was lost and not coming back. Surely I had left it in a coffee shop somewhere and without my name or number on it someone had very likely picked it up and taken it home with them. I realized that holding out hope that the old water bottle would magically reappear was resisting the truth of reality. It was time to accept that I needed a new water bottle. I almost felt like I was grieving the loss of one of my most important possessions. The process of grief is long and challenging as well. Pile that on top of the emotions of change and I felt like I was spinning.

I know this seems like I am making a mountain out of a mole hill but change can be difficult for me – which is ironic given my life and profession. So often my life is a constant vortex of shift and change and evaluation and growth as I navigate my personal and professional world. I am constantly supporting others in the process of change and growth and discovery. I often can't help but reflect that change into my own life and that's not even to mention the areas I'm doing my own change and growth work on a

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continual basis. As a result I work hard at building stability in my life in other ways and sometimes that is accomplished with the little details and the tangible objects. So letting go of the lost water bottle represented a big challenge for me.

DETERMINATION

When I finally accepted that it was time to purchase a new water bottle a very subtle shift occurred for me. I realized that there was an opportunity here. My old water bottle was made of plastic that scientists say have health concerns. I had known this for a while but wasn't quite ready to let go of it. What I realized was that there was an opportunity to make a new and healthier choice. Not only had I made the decision to accept the change but I'd taken a step up to move forward in the process of change with new ideas, new information and a new sense of ownership.

This was perhaps the most important part of the change process for me. Change can be as simple as making a simple choice between two rather irrelevant options or it can be as complex as shifting behavior patterns or beliefs. In this critical stage of change is an opportunity to make critical shifts. The stage of determination is where we can have the largest impact on our lives. Whenever the opportunity for small change arises we also often have an opportunity to make a large shift in the direction of our choices. Think of it in terms of navigating a plane. At the start of a long flight a directional difference of just a few degrees can result in a final destination hundreds of miles apart!

The ways we choose to engage shift along with change can make the difference between health and happiness in the long run – or not! I chose to make the shift to health and happiness this time.

ACTION

So I did some research and determined what I wanted. A quick trip to the outdoor store and I had exactly what I was looking for – a large, metal, wide-mouthed new water bottle! Emotionally I had reached a place of empowerment. I knew what I wanted and I had acquired it. When I bought the new water bottle I felt really good about the choice I'd made. But my process of accepting change wasn't over yet.

MAINTENANCE

After just a few days of using the bottle I realized just how clean it was compared to my 3 year old plastic bottle and how much cleaner it was than my other old easy plastic straw water bottle that I used when I was at home. I have been a big water drinker for many years but recently I have had trouble drinking as much water as I was used to largely, I think, due to the taste transfer in the bottles I had been using. So I started using the metal water bottle all the time. Once I switched over my water consumption started to dramatically increase and I felt healthier and more hydrated than I had in months. That was entirely unexpected.

EMOTIONAL SHIFT

A little thing like a different water bottle was affecting my health. A simple choice to switch from a plastic to a metal was having a deep impact on my life. What I began to realize was that while my focus is often on large changes such as healing old relationships, changing my behavior emotional patterns, career shifts, understanding new and powerful differences in using language, etc. I almost never focus on the



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little details of how my daily life happens. It's almost as if I'm so acclimated to big change that the little change somehow gets lost in the mix.

The truth for me was that sometimes the most subtle thing in my life can be one of the most important. Maintaining my health is strongly linked to how much water I drink. So although it might seem like something really little it in fact has a huge impact on all of my life. The healthier I am the more active I am. The more active I am the happier I am. The happier I am the more I attract the activities and people I want in my life. So something as simple as how much water I drink could affect my overall happiness if it produced a significant enough change in my body – just like navigating a plane.

Understanding the difference between little and big changes, how challenging or important they were and how they affected me made all the difference. What had seemed like it might be a mountain out of a mole hill was actually a small volcano. Sometimes it is the little things that make for big changes and I had found one of them!