

# A Change is Gonna Come

Change often brings on very different emotions for each of us. For some, it ignites excitement, hope, joy, an opportunity to start fresh. For others it conjures up feelings of apprehension, nervousness, and a healthy (read: paralyzing) dose of Fear. If you are of the latter variety my life this past year would likely have sent you into a dark hollow abyss. Some changes came by choice (closing Kits, new career direction) and others not in a zillion years (health issues, losing our family pet). What has struck me during this past year is that for each event I have gone thru the same process, regardless of how I reacted emotionally to it at the beginning. One of my favourite tools to use when coaching clients is the Change Cycle that Martha Beck (life coach guru) describes in her book Finding Your Own North Star. She uses the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to illustrate each phase we go thru after any major change catalyst (falling in love, getting or losing a job, having children, etc). I thought it appropriate to use one of my most recent events as an example of how this is done.

A major change in my life this past year (and maybe yours if you're reading this) was closing our Kits store. This definitely did come by choice as I made a personal decision to simplify the business and spend more time taking care of my health, with my family, and on my career as a Life Coach. But, even though it was a conscious decision it's still been hard as hell transitioning thru this event...just ask a caterpillar.

## **Phase One: Meltdown**

The first thing a caterpillar does in its cocoon is dissolve. If you were to open the chrysalis early on you would find a big puddle of goop. But in that goop are cells, called imago cells, which contain DNA-coded instructions for turning this bug soup into a beautiful butterfly.

After a catalytic event we enter this same phase as the first step in our Psychological metamorphosis. Also called the phase of Death and Rebirth, we become human soup. It's a scary time, filled with uncertainty and chaos and often feels like death, because it is...of who we used to be. We desperately want to control the process but dissolving isn't something you do; it's something that happens to you. My strategies to cope with this after making the decision to close Kits were:

- Live moment by moment (not even day by day). I tried not to dwell on my fears or even hopes of how this would look in the future. I often felt like I didn't know what the hell was going on, but it was going to be OK. I trusted in my decision.
- I "cocooned" by caring for myself physically...yoga, hot baths, the gym, walking with friends...wine.
- Talking to people in my life that just got it...friends, family, staff, fellow coaches. I wasn't looking for a fix, but I appreciated (and needed) comfort and reassurance.
- Let myself grieve. Man I struggled with this part...I fought every emotion on the rollercoaster from denial, to anger, to sadness and even acceptance. I had to cycle through several times before I was able to move into the next phase.

## **Phase Two: Re-Formation**

This is where the imago cells inside the chrysalis restructure into form. The word imago is the root of the words "image," "imagination," and "magic.". It's in this phase we start seeing images of the life we are starting to create. Also called the phase of Dreaming and Scheming, we literally dream vividly and may even begin to develop new traits our old self didn't have. This rebirth may bring on a new hairstyle, wardrobe, a need to redecorate your living space. I absolutely love this phase. I love doing it in my own life but I also get excited dreaming with friends, family, even complete strangers. The motto in this phase is "there are no rules and that's OK". Clearly I was pretty stoked to move on from bug soup.

- I did a Vision Board. I always kind of guffawed at people that did them but secretly really jealous I couldn't seem to get one started. I love mine...I have it hanging in my office and it's a constant reminder of what brings me joy and where I want to go. Apparently there are giraffes in my future.
- I analyzed my dreams with fellow coaches. This was probably one of the most revealing exercises for me. It helped confirm that I was on the right path and I knew exactly who was going to be with me on this journey. All that from a giant waterslide, an airport, and a woman with a backpack...
- I would sink into my daydreams thru meditation...allowing myself to see who I would be without Kits. Enjoying my beautiful Ladner store and stepping more fully into my career as a Life Coach.
- I didn't change my hair (ok maybe a little...do layers count?) but I did decide to do a little renovation in Ladner. A fresh start requires fresh paint.

## **Phase Three: Emerging from the Chrysalis**

The butterfly begins to come out and this takes work. Lots of it. Aplytly dubbed The Hero's Saga, this phase is about beginning to implement your Phase Two dreams. You physically start to build your amazing new life, you climb that mountain and then...you fall...and you fall again. Press repeat. This is the phase that "is a lot harder than expected and that's OK". When we fail it's often a sign that we need to go back to Square One and possibly dissolve a limiting belief that is stopping you from succeeding or go thru that grieving process again and then we get to move into Square Two and fix the plan. I did this dance several times.

- I was not prepared for the fact that other people weren't on the same page as me. While I worked thru closing Kits...dissolving in phase one, dreaming in phase two, and then taking action in phase three...my customers and staff were clearly struggling in phase one. This is where appreciating how each of us handles change differently is especially important. While it was difficult to see my staff sad and my customers upset (some even rather angry) I had to go thru that and make some changes. We must be willing to start over in phase three.
- Expect things to go wrong. While I was aware of this tip it was still a struggle. I did my best to plan stock levels for the stores during the closure but in a million years I didn't think we would sell thru as much as we did. This left Ladner at a lower than normal level thru the holiday season and had my local customers worried we were going to be closing there also. I stuck it out in phase three and kept trying to climb that mountain (get stock, send out emails, etc) but eventually I had to dissolve. I had to get back in that bath, go to yoga, drink that wine (press repeat) and simply live moment by moment knowing it will "be OK".

- Persist. Every time I hit a bump I realized it was a sign that we needed a new and improved plan and with the help of my most fabulous staff, friends and family we eventually would find the right path.

**Phase Four: Full Flight**

The butterfly is fully formed and able to fly. This phase is The Promised Land and the payoff for all of your hard work. The motto here is that "everything is changing and that's OK." As I am still finishing off final steps of closing Kits I feel I'm not quite ready to fly just yet but I know the strategies I'll use as I take flight:



- Enjoy!! Taking time to appreciate and feel gratitude for how far I've come during this process.
- If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Have faith that I am in the exact place I am meant to be in...running one store in my beloved Ladner and coaching wonderful, inspiring individuals.
- Make small improvements. This isn't a time for any big moves but always finding little ways to make life a little less stressful, and a little more pleasurable.
- Have full knowledge that change is just around the bend...and that's OK!

As Sam Cooke says, a Change is Gonna Come...and regardless of the emotions this conjures up in you every single one of us will go thru the different phases. Some will need to be soup for a little longer than others, some will dream and scheme and dream and scheme, and others will keep on climbing that damn mountain. But if we allow this psychological metamorphosis and have the courage to move thru each phase, we can all find our wings .

