



11/04/2008

## Coach's Corner: Who are you trying to change?

By: Sharon Pahlka

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If you have ever made a major change, you know that it had to come from within first. Even knowing that, how often do we find ourselves trying to change someone else - a spouse, a boss, a friend or a co-worker? Think it will work? Not very likely. So why do we keep trying?

There are several reasons. We may feel that we need to change ourselves, but it's much easier to think about changing somebody else. Also, we often don't recognize that we are trying to change someone else. We tell ourselves, "I should just try harder, say the right things, love more, do things better." But that still means we want the other person to change in response. Even when we hear, "Don't try to change me," we don't really hear it.

When I was young and foolish, I once tried to change a person close to me. Because he knew I was trying to change him, he was more resistant than ever. Thinking back, I realize that I should have just let him make his own choices, been clear about what I wanted and continued on in my life. I don't mean I would have necessarily gotten what I wanted, but the chances would have increased, and there would have been less stress and tension in our relationship. I learned a valuable lesson.

Currently, there is someone whose thinking I would like to change on an issue. The difference now is that I have peace and contentment in knowing I truly must leave any changing up to that individual. I can still share my feelings but let go of the outcome. I can focus my energy on changing my own life for the better.

Wanting to change people can sneak up on us. So, we all need to remind ourselves of the plain truth: People only change when they are ready, willing, able and want to. And that includes ourselves.

If you want change, change your own attitudes, actions and responses. Be sure to change for the right reasons -- because you want to, not because you think it might change somebody else or because someone thinks you ought to or because you are afraid. Change yourself for yourself.

### Coaching Question:

What would you like to change about yourself?

### Coaching Tip:

Become aware of who you might be trying to change. Stop and change your focus to yourself and the changes you want for yourself.

**Homework:** Make a list of five to 10 changes you want. Choose the smallest and make a plan. Then do it. When you have a small one under your belt, choose something a little more challenging.

### Quotes:

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

- Mahatma Gandhi

"When we are no longer able to change a situation ... we are challenged to change ourselves."

- Victor Frankl

### Resources:

*Change Your Life and Everyone In It*, by Michele Weiner-Davis.

*The Joy Diet: 10 Daily Practices for a Happier Life* by Martha Beck.

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, *Coach's Corner*, offers helpful tips from her work.

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