



## Counsellor Comment

Issue 2

### For Things To Change You Must Change



#### Special points of interest:

- Things will not always go our way
- It's not what happens to us that's important, it's how we react to what happens that matters
- With proper support we can break old patterns that don't work for us
- Sometimes, others around us will be resistant to the changes we wish to make in our life

Have you noticed that when you grow and change as a person, so do you change the sort of people that you attract and feel comfortable being around? As you become more spiritual, or active, or strong, that you feel comfortable in the company of other spiritual, active or strong people? You feel a bond with them, easily finding things in common, finding conversation easy and engaging because of all the

things you have in common? An interesting extension of this idea comes when you believe that as you become more successful, you will attract other successful people to you.

In his book "As A Man Thinkth", author James Allen suggests that "we do not attract what we *want*, but what we *are*". That is, "you don't *get* success, you *become* it". Now many might believe that Allen's ideas came out of the drug-induced 1960s or 1970s, or the spiritual and enlightening beginning to the 21<sup>st</sup> century but, in fact, he wrote his book in 1902!

One of the most important aspects of Allen's book is that he suggests that there is no one else is to blame for our present situation except us. This idea has been worded and reworded by many authors since, but basically the idea is that "it is not what happens to us that is important, it is how we react to it and what we do about it that matters most".

This concept is very confronting to people who enjoy (sometimes unconsciously) blaming external influences for their lack of achievement. Take, for example, a salesman who says "I didn't sell anything yesterday because it was raining". To blame the weather for his lack of success might feel good to the salesman, but in most cases, the weather had little bearing on his potential to succeed. Similarly, as we look back at our childhood, we may be tempted to say, "It's all my parent's fault that I have not succeeded in life". This is a defeatist attitude that requires to be challenged in order for the individual, as an adult, to reframe his view of life, and accept that to a large extent, he is living the consequences of choices he has made (or has not made) previously.

Of course, even in counselling, it is important to ensure that a client revisiting his childhood does not move the blame he held for his parents to himself. Beating up on yourself for things in your past is a debilitating and potentially harmful position to hold. Accepting that we could have chosen more wisely in earlier years is a lesson worth learning in order to improve our position in the future, but we should not burden ourselves with the guilt of decisions made in days gone by. There is an expression in

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Embrace Life counselling service is based on Sydney's north shore and provides:

- general counselling for grief and loss, which includes divorce, relationship breakdown, job loss, retirement, or bereavement
- specific counselling for individuals, couples and families touched by cancer, paying particular attention on the impact on men
- a face-to-face, telephone or webcam service including after hours appointments.

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Neuro-Linguistic Programming that says, "There is no failure, only feedback". We should accept, then, that things have not been perfect, nor will they be at all times in the future. But it is for us to learn the lesson about those imperfections in order not to repeat earlier unsuccessful decisions as we go forward.

Learning the lessons from our mistakes is a unique opportunity for personal growth. Today, many of the world's most successful athletes, for example, look back on the difficulties in their childhood and say that those hard times were a magnificent catalyst for them to crack that mould by striving hard to break new ground. People inherently do the best they can or the best that they know how. So to blame parents for incidences in our childhood implies that our parents deliberately set out to harm us, which, in most cases is clearly not true. As adults though, we are in a better position to understand that we tend to live our life in patterns. That is, we react to today's experiences by remembering how we interpreted previous experiences of a similar nature. It is only through personal awareness and insight, that we can truly review the validity of our reactions and performances. It is clearly possible, with the right learning and support environment, to break harmful recurring patterns, and grow to a new level in our life.

There are many examples of how "history repeats itself". James Allen observes that "most of us are anxious to improve our circumstances, but are unwilling to improve ourselves — and we therefore remain bound." This idea has been re-worded by other motivational speakers and authors to say, "In order for change to occur, **you** must change".

But even a willingness to change can create some major challenges. In a family or social system, for example, one person undergoing change will have some affect on the other members of the group, even though they did not ask for anything to change. Therefore, a client excited about undergoing positive personal change might come up against a strong negative reaction from other members of the family who might want the equilibrium restored (eg. an abusive husband wanting to restore the "control" he's previously had on his wife). That restoration can only be achieved by stopping the client from changing! In a supportive environment, of course, change is welcomed and encouraged.

So change does not come easily and we must be persistent in our attempts to achieve the benefits of personal growth. For those accepting the challenge, and at this very time embracing change in their own life, here is some advice: keep a firm grip on the reins, and continue to move forward to reap the harvest of your hard work. Congratulations and good luck.