

## chapter 7

### Personal Transformation

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."*

*- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

*This chapter and the balance of the book takes you through the Matrix.*

#### **IRRITANT EXPERIENCED**

You know you're in pre-contemplation when...

You have worked in long-term care long enough to be aware of the sense of loneliness and homelessness in your organization. You see elders unhappy and tuning out. You think, "Boy, I'm glad that's not my mom...or me." But then you think, "It's too bad. But I can't do anything about it." You try to ignore it. Still, your thoughts nag you and the situation turns your stomach a bit.

Have you ever noticed how dust builds up without our seeing it? We go about our days without giving the furniture a second look. Everything is fine. And then we get a phone call from an old friend. She's in town and can she stop by? As we say, "Yes! Of course!" we suddenly notice a thick layer of dust covering the bookshelf and coffee table. Tiny spider webs cling to the lampshade and dust bunnies crouch in the corners.

"When did that happen?" we ask ourselves, "I'm sure that was not there this morning." Of course, we know the dust has been building up all along, but not until our friend calls does it draw our attention. Otherwise, it likely would have continued to build.

It happens all the time in our organizations as we prepare for survey. No matter how vigilant we've been, as survey time approaches we begin seeing clutter in the hall and serious problems with the charts. Suddenly everything weighs more heavily on us.

Problems generally go unnoticed, sometimes for a long while, because facing them is hard. We are busy. Solving problems and making lasting change takes time, energy and strength—resources that are nearly tapped out just by dealing with life's day-to-day tasks. We may know a situation is problematic, but we deny that it really needs our attention. In the meantime, the problem becomes more deep-seated the longer it goes unaddressed.

#### **It's Not a New Problem**

It is common to realize residing in a long-term care facility is not a desired way to live out our days. We all fear ending up in a nursing home, yet for the most part we continue to let the ones we work in function as little more than warehouses for frail elders. We may provide exceptional nursing care, but the implied promise of "home" in our nursing home is all but ignored.

Home allows us to find our little place in the world, take it into our hearts and make it our own. We are drawn to our kitchens for a favorite snack to comfort us, or to prepare a meal to share with friends and family. We relax with TV, books or conversation in the living room. We rest better in our own bed than anywhere else. We may even have our own special space like a sewing room, study or lazy chair where we can be alone with our thoughts.

These amenities are what distinguish "shelter" from "home." Despite its excellent clinical care, a traditional facility without an emphasis on the qualities of home holds no more comfort or identity for its residents than a doctor's office, library or hotel. We may visit these places often yet have no emotional attachment to them. Moving the furniture or talking informally with other patrons — let alone taking personal ownership of the surroundings — isn't something most of us would even consider.

While visiting a facility in Michigan's upper peninsula, I met a woman who expressed her discomfort about living in a place that did not feel like home.

"It's not just the large size," she told me, "I was raised among 17 children."

My mom would buy a bolt of cloth and all of us girls would end up with the same dress for Easter. I hated it. But, that was nothing compared to institutional life here. We loved each other. We looked out for each other. We were wild and had fun. We sat around and had great times together. You never knew what would happen on a Sunday afternoon! But here, even with all these people, I am so lonely."

Try on a pair of catalyst glasses that allow you to see the dust, the problems. Let yourself see the degree to which your facility honors home, normalcy, relationships, privacy and choice. Walk through your facility with new eyes and play a game – "Things That Are Stupid" or "Things That Are Not Home" or "Things That Would Make Me Crazy If I Lived Here." Do it not because you can change these things immediately, but because you need to see. We need to experience the irritant as the first step to changing it.

### **Do you see these things?**

- No salt and pepper shakers or sugar packets on the tables.
- Lists that dictate when people take baths; elders pushed in wheelchairs down the public hallway to the bathing room, naked under their robes, feeling vulnerable and cold; the dreaded shower chair experience.
- Schedules for awakening residents, starting at 5:30 a.m. when you dress them and set them in front of the nurses' station to snooze for two hours until breakfast.
- Residents put to bed at 6:30 p.m.
- Waking residents up every two hours to turn them.
- The facility turned into a prison for fear of elopement.
- Alarms placed on the bodies of confused residents that go off every time they get up. What must that feel like for the elder? Does she become increasingly anxious about the alarms yet unable to escape them to somewhere that feels safe?
- No real "alone time" for residents, especially for those paired with a stranger for a roommate after having lived for decades alone or with a spouse. Nowhere for the resident to go for quiet and solitude.

I once visited a lovely, recently renovated facility. Included in the renovation was a fenced-in yard costing \$150,000. The door was opposite the nurses' station. I started to go out but the door was locked.

"Why do you keep the door locked if the yard is fenced in?" I asked.

"Oh, we can't have residents coming and going without supervision. Someone might fall," was the reply.

"How often do people actually get to use the yard?" I asked.

"Well, the Activities Department takes people out sometimes. We use it for our Fourth of July barbeque and the administrator had a party for the residents last month."

Later that same day, I spoke with a resident who had lived her entire 87 years on a farm until she moved to the nursing home. I wondered, but didn't ask, if she missed the outdoors.

### **It Won't Resolve Itself**

You recognize that current operating systems do not honor the residents' need for home. You may find the realization overwhelming and think, "This is how it has always been done. Who am I to think there's a better way?"

You may bury it subconsciously so you don't have to face it. You have a job to do, so you become callous to the elders' homelessness so you can continue working without distraction. Still, you have begun to awaken. You hear talk of the "Household Model" or "culture change," but it evokes fear, anger, denial and resistance in you.

You think, "We could never do that because \_\_," or "People will think I am foolish to say such a wild thing," or "That might work for facilities with assisted living, but our residents are too frail," or "Residents don't stay here long enough," or "Residents don't want 'home' here, they tell us they want to go to *their* home."

These thoughts and feelings don't mean you won't move forward in your

transformation. As with any change or journey, there is trepidation, especially at the onset. We can't help being attached to what we know.

As you begin to break down your resistance to seeing the problem and recognizing change is needed, you begin moving from pre-contemplation to the contemplation stage.

There is resistance but also intrigue. We've all seen the old movie where the leading lady tells her leading man, "I despise you," yet she is drawn into his embrace. He has stirred something so strong inside her it scares her. She wants to forget about him but can't. That makes for some serious inner struggle and chemistry.

Everybody resists change. When we finally quit resisting it feels good to be out of those shackles. But resistance is quickly replaced by confusion. And then, confusion increases.

"Yeah. Ok. I need to change but HOW?! What do I do now?"

You want to hide. You want to find someone to help you. You might feel scared. You may even try desperately to forget what you have seen with your new eyes.

### **Listening to the Inner Voice**

But the inner voice that calls us to this work – the little voice shoved aside by our indoctrination – knows the simple truth of it all; that people should not have to live as they do in nursing homes, and that we do not want to live like that when we become old and frail.

Our inner voice is the key to creating deep, lasting change, but heeding it after ignoring it for so long can be painful. Few of us can easily accept that what we are doing is wrong. We rationalize to feel okay about it.

When we collectively cause something bad to exist and finally can no longer tolerate it, we commonly find a sacrificial lamb--somebody or something else to blame. Thus we divorce ourselves of accountability and ease our collective conscience.

If cause and effect isn't direct, (i.e., if we can not see how our role in perpetrating an unnatural and inhumane system contributes to Lee Chung Hi's screaming), it is easy to avoid feeling accountable. Indirect cause and effect is no less powerful (or destructive) than an obvious direct relationship, but it is easier to hide from.

If we honestly listen to our inner voice, we will hear that we individually are integral to the system. Every single one of us is part of the problem—and part of the solution. To change the system, we must first change ourselves. Doing so involves much painful unlearning and a deep commitment to understanding the ugly truth about our current nursing home culture

We can get past internal resistance by letting the quiet voice inside dominate our head, heart and soul. In time, the quiet voice grows into a roar too loud to ignore. That's when fear transforms into thrill.

There is a fine line between "scared" and "thrilled." Being scared is paralyzing. Being thrilled...well, it means you are on your way. The harness on the roller coaster has been buckled. There is new-car smell in your nose. The rapids splash your face. There's an engagement ring on your finger. You get the point.

As people, we are comfortable and familiar with walking around this Earth. We do it all the time. We know how to walk so well we rarely think about the ground beneath our feet. In fact, being land-bound creatures might not even come into our consciousness until we are 10,000 feet up in the air looking out the door of an airplane and getting ready to jump.

Super heroes, angels and Santa Claus are special to us because they fly. We long to be "free as a bird." But the chance to personally fly is scary. Then, somehow the line between scared and thrilled is crossed and we can jump from the plane. Things will never be the same. The feeling of "thrill" we get is nature's little boost to help us risk what we know for something that can be so much better.

When you realize things can be better and you start to dream about the possibilities, thrill sets in. It's so tantalizing to have something new, hopeful and

radical in your life. It is like falling in love. You can't stop thinking about it. You read up and search for more information. Your feelings of burnout are replaced by the joy of feeling so very alive. This excitement builds the bridge to the next stage. It, like the adorable factor with puppies and children, will help you through tough times.

### **THE INTERNAL VOICE AWAKENS**

So you've jumped out of the plane and no matter how hard you wish it, that's not going to change. You will never go back to being ignorant about our elders' homelessness. But, wow! Now you are falling through the air and you feel you have no control. Your mantra has changed from "It won't work" to "I wish it would work, but I don't see how it can."

The contemplation stage is marked by confusion, questions and misconceptions. It's a time of weighing in. You think about why things are the way they are. Who decided it should be this way? Is it the regulations? Is it the owner of the facility? Is it some long gone DON? Is it the elders? And you know honestly it is *not* the elders.

So now you know the way-things-are is not the way that honors and nurtures elders. You can't *not* see it. You walk down the halls of your nursing home and can no longer ignore the slumping and calling out. You notice the institutional clutter and the sounds in the dining room. Suddenly it is so loud you want to scream.

Ambivalence continues to haunt you. You go through your ideas don't matter. The powers that be would never allow change. There is no other way of operating.

Your optimistic voice answers: But there *has* to be a better way. Those other facilities changed.

You feel the momentum gathering in your mind. You look up "culture change" on the Internet, go to a presentation and have a conversation with someone who has gone through it. You start to look for the rip chord on your parachute.

### **Leaving the Comfort Zone**

One reason we resist change is that it means having to leave our comfort zone. That's pretty basic and most of us know that. But, what we often don't see is that our comfort zone is only a familiar zone. In reality, it does not hold much comfort at all.

Oddly, in organizations that have a resistant or negative culture, leaders join followers in resisting change. The resistant energy is so strong that leaders succumb to the will of the masses. Leaders and followers feed off each other's resistance until it is the only accepted culture.

As a leader, you have to lift yourself above the fray, find your will and acknowledge your primary responsibility to lead and encourage change. If you set yourself apart to lead rather than to resist, you will encourage others to find their will.

We like to think being in our "comfort zone" is easy and relaxing and makes us content the way comfort should. However, staying in a comfort zone that no longer serves us is a lot of work. Everything is changing always. Standing against the wave is much harder than floating with it. We could spend all day blocking out signs of progress around us; simply close our eyes, ears and minds to new ways of thinking and doing.

Organizational change is often stifled because we feel there is not enough time to do what change requires. The organization does not want to divert time away from its primary tasks into having discussions and training that could grow the organization and its employees. But extra time and energy is spent on resisting change anyway, so why not put it to better use.

So let's go there. Let's contemplate what could be changed, what could be possible. It might sound a little like this:

"Is it possible to do something? Can I do something? What have others done? The front lobby where all the residents gather in their chairs for hours – couldn't we do something to make it friendlier? Maybe have magazines or free coffee. What if we met with the receptionist and helped her figure out some things she could do with the residents. The activity room – It's such a great room. It has a stove, refrigerator and cabinets. But we only use it for activities. Why can't we do more with it? I wonder if a small group of residents could have their breakfast there. Maybe residents who are able to get there on their own could form a breakfast club. We'd need supervision. I don't see how we could manage that. I don't know if the state would let us do it. The residents deserve their own rooms. But that would never happen."

You may find yourself talking to residents differently. You want to know how they lived before. What did they like to do every day? How did they do meals? What time did they get up? Did they eat breakfast in their pajamas? What did they have for breakfast? You'll hear stories like we have:

Mrs. Johnson laughed about her cold pizza habit. She said she would order pizza in the evening with no intention of having it for supper. She would immediately put it in the refrigerator when it arrived. She'd have the first slice the next morning for breakfast and another for lunch.

Mr. Ransom talked about his life as a farmer. He'd be up at 4:30 a.m. and have coffee and a biscuit or two. Then go out in the fields until 7:30 a.m. when he'd come in for breakfast. He liked two sandwiches and a thermos of coffee for lunch, which he'd take with him to the fields. He'd have a big supper and then a piece of cake or a bowl of ice cream before bed. Now, he only eats three meals a day rather than five, and he rarely sees the outdoors except through his bedroom window. But don't worry about him. He can adjust to anything . . . even this, he said grimly.

Mr. Brown's morning habits included lying in bed and listening for the newspaper to hit the porch. He lived life in anticipation, he chuckled. He'd scoot out the front door barefoot no matter how cold it was. He'd have a cup of coffee with the paper. It often took him an hour to read everything. His wife would have *Good Morning America* on in the family room, but he called that "pop" news. He always folded one page carefully to the crossword puzzle and set it aside for evening. He'd done that his whole life, but now his eyes weren't so good. His son grew up wanting to do the puzzle, too. He'd find his son's penciled words in the boxes, but he always finished the puzzle in ink. He was that sure of his answers. And now, his son always brought a crossword puzzle to work on while he visited.

### **New Tools**

There are many tools and resources to help us through life. In our garages or workshops at home we may have a half-dozen Phillips-head screwdrivers. But, chances are we have one or two that we consistently reach for even though many are available to us. And, if somebody gives us a new one as a gift, chances are it will end up in the pile with the others. We still reach for our favorites even if they aren't the best size for the job at hand.

We all do this. We rely on a few favorite methods for every occasion even if they are not the most effective. (Those methods are in cahoots with the comfort zone.) It's time to dust off some tools that have made their way to the bottom of the tool case, or even discover what new and inventive tools are out there. (See *"Living and Working In Harmony"* workbook for inspiration.)

Our personal characteristics dictate the speed with which we journey through the contemplation stage. You will want to address these points:

- How do I always deal with change? Do I fear it? Roll with it? Embrace it? Go after it? How does it affect my mood? Be aware of this and know the difference between honest reactions to a new situation and reacting to a situation because it is new. Prepare by being aware.

- What do I believe about my own abilities? What are my strengths and weaknesses? Which strengths will help me here? What weaknesses do I need to overcome?

- What needs do I have with regard to approval and acceptance from others? Do I rely on it? Do I not care what others think? What degree of acceptance am I willing to deal with? It's fine if they think I'm crazy, but I don't want to get fired.
- What is my ability to consciously navigate through self-awareness? Am I willing to look at myself honestly? Can I ask myself the hard questions?
- What is my history and confidence as a trendsetter? Am I comfortable going out on my own? Do I like to lead or to be led?
- What is my positional authority and its inherent risks? Who and what am I responsible for? What am I risking in terms of career? What could I gain?
- How strong is my personal support system? Do I have people at home who will support me? At work? Other friends?

Change is both an internal and external journey. Throughout the transformation you must continuously and closely monitor changes going on inside of you and in the environment around you. Consistently evaluate progress on both levels to ensure they are in accord.

### **EPIPHANY BRINGS MORAL CLARITY**

It is not enough to merely do no harm to elders. That is a given. You must also honor them. If you pass by someone hurt on the street and do nothing, you have further harmed that person. You have a responsibility to change the system. You can no longer carry on the status quo. *This* is your epiphany. You have examined your beliefs and listened to your inner voice, and now you know the truth. The way elders live *must* change and you must help make that happen. Your mantra becomes, "I must do this." You find you are in control of your own change and you pull the ripcord.

I became CEO of Meadowlark Hills in 1994. One of the first things I did after beginning my work was to get my mom out of the horrible nursing home she had been in for four years and move her to the healthcare center on the Meadowlark campus. During those four years our family had watched in disbelief as Mom declined into someone we hardly recognized.

Mom lived at Meadowlark Hills for the next five years. We were all relieved at the high quality of care she received. She dressed in her real clothes, got her hair styled and wore make up. As much as possible, she looked her old self. Meadowlark Hills was deficiency-free on state and federal surveys year after year. We were proud of what and who we were.

Mom began to quickly lose ground in late Spring of 1999. By early June, it was evident she was dying. In the last five days of her life, I stepped out of my role as Executive Director and became a full time son. Dad and I were at her bedside almost constantly. We did our best, along with a very caring staff, to make her comfortable. She had been a dancer and a classical pianist, so we played Chopin softly in her room.

Being a family member in residence made me experience our healthcare center in a new way. Everybody was so kind but always in a hurry. I lost track of all the different staff members who came into her room to do single, focused tasks. It didn't feel good to me, yet I appreciated each person's efforts.

After several days of keeping vigil, we were exhausted. It really took it out of us to watch her labor to breathe and lose ground by the hour. Neither Dad nor I said it aloud, but we wanted her to go peacefully, not the next day, but right then. It was painful seeing her suffer.

I needed to get out of the room for a few minutes so I walked to the nursing station, set my elbows at the end of the counter and cradled my face in my hands. I didn't realize it, but my life was about to change.

As I rested, I lost myself. I heard nothing, felt nothing. I was somewhere else for who knows how long. Then slowly the unrelenting bustle of the nurses' station returned me to the present. Ear-piercing beeps, clacking carts, telephone conversations and hallway-chatter—the kaleidoscope of noise muffled frail voices calling for assistance. Although I had been surrounded by these sounds daily for five years, suddenly I heard them. As I raised my head and looked around, I saw everything

as if for the first time.

People in uniforms rushed from place to place, nobody spoke to the people who lived there. Residents slumped in chairs around the nurses' station. The sights and sounds played before me like an out-of-tune orchestra with the strings snapping on their instruments.

"This is crazy," I thought. "What are we doing here? The system makes people run around like chickens with their heads cut off doing everything but building relationships with the people who live here. We've got to stop this!"

Sanctioned madness was preying on every nursing home in America, and as CEO I was perpetuating it.

From that moment forward, I had new eyes. Everything about how I felt, what I saw, how I reacted was different. I could not continue with the status quo. Even as Mom lay dying, I became acutely aware that my new charge was to be a catalyst for change, rather than be in charge of a deeply flawed system. It was a powerful epiphany for me.

Prochaska says in his book, *Changing for Good*, "Preparation takes you from the decisions you make in the contemplation stage to the specific steps you take to solve the problem during the action stage."

Basically, this is game plan time. You realize you must change, no matter what. At this point, change is not something superficially pleasant like painting a room a different color. Change is a moral choice.

### **Changing From the Inside**

Personal change, the kind of deep transformation we are talking about, is not just about actions. It is about attitude. It is about how you see yourself and others. In his book, *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It*, Robert E. Quinn talks about the normal and fundamental states of leadership.

In the normal state, he says, we are self-focused, internally closed, externally directed and comfort centered. In the fundamental state, we are other-focused, internally driven, externally open and purpose centered.

Most of us, regardless of what industry we work in, are in the normal state of leadership most of the time. A person in this state thinks primarily of job responsibilities, happiness and comfort. She is not seeking solutions to problems, nor does she see her role in them. She continues to do what she has always done.

In the fundamental state of leadership, she thinks first of the elders. She is driven by her desire to have meaning and purpose in her life by bringing meaning and purpose to the lives of the elders. She is open to opportunities, possibilities and insights from those around her. She honors the person first.

In your own situation you know there is a lot within you that must change. You suddenly feel inadequate to the task. How can you see so clearly yet act the same as always, or at best, merely stumble at change?

### **"I Must Do This."**

The absolute realization you must somehow change leaves you weak in the knees, anxious and fearful of failure. You may or may not be in a formal leadership position in the organization's hierarchy. Either way you doubt your leadership skills. This is the time to address that fear.

Take a good look at what scares you. You don't have to overcome it on the spot. It is a process. But really think about your fears. Know them well. Anticipate when they are likely to surface and the effect they might have on you. You must make a conscious decision that fear will be a useful tool but that it will not drive your actions. Fears can be dealt with. It helps, however, to know our weaknesses and what to expect. Without the element of surprise, fear loses strength that we in turn gain.

Next, it is time for a pep talk. Cut off that internal negative voice before it gets too loud. Have you ever seen a boxer just before a fight muttering to himself? He's getting ready. He's getting pumped up. He's speaking his mantra.

You have to know *your* mantra – "I *must* do this." You must, you want to and you will.

You may already have checked out the exits in case of emergency. You may have an "Oh, never mind!" speech prepared or someone in mind to hand the torch to when things get too tough. You could set yourself up to be defeated by roadblocks. "Well, if I mention it in a meeting and so-and-so and what's-his-name think it is a bad idea, I'll drop it."

Cut off your exits, commit to your cause and set your sights forward. There will be more doubts and fear in this journey. We won't kid you. But it is time to start practicing your defenses.

### **Self-Awareness**

We are all born with self-awareness that we can further develop to guide our behavior and achieve our true potential. It starts small, of course. As babies we quickly learn if we cry we will be fed. So, we apply crying to other discomforts, like wet diapers, and learn it works there as well. It starts with Mom, who in the beginning is barely distinguishable from ourselves. In time, we apply these same tactics to Dad and other caregivers. As babies, our involvement in the world is pretty basic. We are hungry and that makes us uncomfortable. We cry. We are comforted and fed. It mostly boils down to food, diapers, illness and emotional support on very basic levels.

As we grow, our thinking, emotions, wants and needs become more complex, as does the self-awareness process. We observe the situation and take in data. We use the data to assess the situation and what it means for us. Our assessment causes our feelings about the situation to arise. Our thinking and feelings help us form intentions, and from there we act.

### **The Spiral of Learning**

The Spiral of Learning is an evolution we move through not only in our daily lives, but also on a grander scale in our culture. Similar cycles are the framework for the Scientific Method in scientific discovery, the Learning Cycle in formal education and the Leveling Cycle in psychology. We start with raw data that we process into conclusion, action and behavior. For the most part, this process comes naturally. We do it many times a day and don't even think about it. Sometimes we skip the thinking part or blow through it quickly and let emotions dictate our actions. We also run into problems when we don't take time to get all the information, our thinking is flawed or we don't act. By taking time to purposefully move through the Spiral of Learning, we improve our chances for a positive, productive outcome. Your new thinking will rejuvenate the learning process, enabling you to grow in new ways that enhance your leadership and contribute to the growth of others as well.

#### **Spiral of Learning**

1. Observations
2. Interpretations
3. Emotions
4. Intentions
5. Actions

For example, you observe that the lawn is overgrown. It is your son's chore to cut it. You think, "Maybe he has been too busy with school and activities to have time to do it." Or, you think, "I have repeatedly asked him to cut the lawn and he has ignored me and gone out with his friends." Maybe you feel sympathy because he is so busy. Or, maybe you're angry that he didn't do what you asked and ignored you. You can decide to cut the grass for him. Or, you can leave it and wait for him to notice how overgrown the lawn is. Or, when he returns home you can tell him he can't go anywhere until he mows the lawn. Then, you act on one of those intentions.

In culture change it is important to stop and commit to selfawareness. The

conscious sense of self is vital because with the change in culture comes change in data, thinking, feelings and intentions. Your awareness of how these changes impact your interpretations and emotions will enable you to make the transition in culture as effective and smooth as possible. Keeping tabs on your internal thought processes also will give you a sense of stability and control to help alleviate the feelings of anxiety that accompany change.

The Spiral of Learning techniques can help you break through self-imposed barriers to self-awareness. Ask yourself the following questions and honestly assess your behavior and the effect these issues have on your self-awareness.

- Am I blaming others and avoiding taking responsibility for my role in the situation?
- Is my outlook clouding my judgment?
- Have I articulated my values and goals and used them as a measuring stick for my behaviors and actions?
- Am I too tentative or too imposing; afraid to take action or squelching others?
- Am I seeing myself as others see me?

Practice the Spiral of Learning as you address these questions. What is the raw data? What do you think about it? What is the situation? How does it make you feel? What will you do about it? How will you do it?

### **Your Moral Clarity Trumps Traditional Indoctrination**

The good news is, confusion and ambivalence turns to clarity and you see everything differently. Intellectually and emotionally you can no longer perpetuate the traditional model of care. Still, you continue to do so everyday. You simultaneously feel obligated to make something happen yet incapable of doing so. The struggle is no longer with *your* beliefs and values. It is with the-way-things-are. You have stopped letting the current drag you along. Everybody else is going about doing things the way they always have and you pause to compose yourself before swimming upstream.

You know that you alone can't change the system. You have to get folks to swim in the same direction as you. This does not mean you pick the direction for everybody else or that they do your bidding. Directing others to go in your direction won't work. You know this challenge can't be "managed." Somehow you have to lead. Leadership is helping others do the right thing; they will not *follow* you. You must somehow stir in them what has been stirred in you, and then ask them to *join* you in working together for change.

You must lead by example. It's cliché, but many things are cliché because they are true. It is human nature to mirror what confronts us to some degree. When someone is hostile to us, we can get flustered and feel hostile right back. When someone treats us with kindness we are likely to respond in kind.

When you go through personal transformation, don't be surprised if people behave differently around you. When we ourselves change, we change how people see us. Before you know it, you'll be leading without even thinking about it. Leadership will naturally follow your transformation.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "We must become the change we want to see." We cannot change others. We can only inspire them. Gandhi inspired and did grand, great things we may never equal. But that small quote, those nine words, can move us to become better people. That may not seem like much compared to how Gandhi led millions, but at this stage in your journey, it means everything.

You decide – even if you don't know how and even if the goal proves nearly impossible – you must proceed. There no longer is a choice. You begin to think, "If I can't make this happen, I will have to leave this facility and find one consistent with my values, as I can no longer perpetuate this." You've been called to give meaning and purpose to the lives of elders, and doing this will give meaning and purpose to your life as well. You know what you must do. You have a game plan: You will help every person in the organization go through the same transformation that is well established in change theory. You will band together with others and begin to

transform the organization. The final outcome will be a transformed environment where elders live and create their home.

## **ISPEAK OUT**

The parachute opens and you settle in for the ride. It is time to privately commit to and publicly declare your intentions. Declaring your newfound beliefs will help anchor you in them so you are less likely to slide back into old ways. The spoken mantra is, "I must and I will..." Like an addict who wants to change, you have to look squarely at old habits and begin to think and act differently. If you don't model it, you won't become it.

### **Modeling the Change**

With the declaration, you acknowledge *you* must change. You're not saying, "Ok, everybody else should do x, y and z." You are aware change begins inside you. Your change will be a model for others, giving them a clearer path for joining in the journey.

It may feel a bit awkward at first. When we have done something the same way for a long time we often don't realize we are doing it. Imagine your morning routine: Shower, brush your teeth, dry your hair, get dressed, get the paper, look through the front section and then the sports, grab a mug of coffee, kiss the family goodbye, get in the car...

Have you ever arrived at work and thought, "How did I get here?" Chances are your morning routine is the same every day in every detail. It's habit. You do it without thinking. Now, let's say you are going to start going to the gym and eating a healthier breakfast. You will have to wake up earlier. You take your shower at the gym instead of at home. You eat some fruit and cereal before you leave instead of stopping for a raspberry jelly doughnut on your way to work. You will have to fight the urge to stay in bed, and remember to take clothes and toiletries with you to the gym. You will have to say goodbye to the baker who always had your donut and a weather update waiting for you. You will have to think about what you are doing because it all is new and not yet habit.

Let's say you're a charge nurse on D-Floor West. You normally punch the clock and then get report. You always tune in when the third shift nurse tells about the clinical change of conditions. You review the paperwork and make a note to check on the more serious changes immediately. You review the other changes as you pass out meds. You may say, "Hello" to the CNAs in passing, and you definitely will speak with the aide who is caring for the resident in need of extra vigilance today. "If you don't model it, you won't become it."

But then you think, "What about the other residents and CNAs?" You need to pay attention to them all, but how? It's such an overwhelming thought. You decide to start small with one strategic, person-centered change. You decide to always ask the third shift nurse which resident isn't doing real well today, who doesn't seem happy and who might just need a few minutes of your time to help them have a good day.

Keep the ball rolling by constantly evaluating and monitoring how your actions are changing, perhaps by keeping a journal or sending yourself a daily email. This helps you work things out in your head and provides a written record so you can look back and see how far you've come. Talk about your feelings, struggles, accomplishments and plans. You can keep it to yourself or support your peers' journey by sharing it with them at a team meeting or in a learning circle.

### **Start With Small Ripples to Make Big Waves**

You cannot change what is outside of you without changing what is inside. However, once you change the inside, changing the outside goes from being a desire to becoming a necessity. You change from being a believer in change to becoming a leader of change. This is how others will begin to change, too. You model your change by what

you see, do and say.

You point out the elders' need for home. You share culture change literature. You take time with residents, do with them instead of for them; ask them instead of tell them. The things you say and do--the conscious choices of a self-changer--are symbolic, substantive models to guide others. Speaking out is a pivotal point. You suggest the journey, lay out the map and call others to action.

## **I BECOME A LEADER**

You have landed on the ground safely and are elated. "Wow! I feel fantastic!!" you say. Those who have been watching...well, they want to do it now too. You testify to your experience with enthusiasm and commit to making leaders of everyone. You stand on the knowledge that elders must have home and direct their own lives. This knowledge will motivate your every action. It will be the context of your relationship with elders and caregivers. You will commit to serve toward that end.

### **Facing Barriers**

It takes courage to continually identify and confront self-imposed barriers. Fear, insecurity and the draw of that which is comfortable are never gone for good. You've reached the point of no return but that does not mean the path is obstacle-free. Of course, the more you encounter these barriers, the better you get at overcoming them.

The institutional barriers also will get in your way. The hierarchical structure of the organization has a well-worn path for information and responsibility. The new structure will need new paths. The current culture may be traditional, patriarchal and hierarchical. Things are done the way they have always been done. The organization is not one for risk or change. There is a protective, father-knows-best tone to procedures and care.

You may be willing and ready to do your job in a new way. However, that does not mean everybody else is going to like it, or even that you will know how.

Everything you do must become person-centered. How else can residents be acknowledged and direct their own lives? Organizational and departmental practices will be tested as priorities begin revolving around people rather than the institution. You will also have to confront traditions and staffing structures that discourage personal relationships.

### **Make It Contagious**

Obviously, this is too much to take on by yourself, so now you commit to making leaders of everyone else in the organization.

It was at this very point that a small group of staff at Pennybyrn at Maryfield in High Point, NC, including the CEO and Administrator, began realizing the need for change in their nursing home. As Eden Alternative Associates, they could see things no one else could. So, they invited others to train and become Eden Associates until they were a group of ten. They met every two weeks. "Did you see that? What should we do?" they asked one another.

As this little group with new eyes (and moral clarity) struggled with how to change their organization, they realized enormous work lay ahead. Though it appeared daunting, no one wanted to turn back. Their first challenge was to get others to join them in demanding change.