

EMBRACING LIFE AS IT IS
Encouraging Life—Affirming Change



Article 1 – It Begins with Conscious Choices Made by Individuals

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Successful enduring change and transformation usually begins with small conscious choices made by individuals who are willing to enter into a new relationship with themselves, others and life as a whole. The key is encouraging authentic life-affirming change, while also embracing or accepting who we are now, and life as it is.

Change typically led by rejection of some-thing or someone usually involves a form of violence, including judgement and hatred of what we have decided is ‘other’. This type of change places blame on someone or something we deem unacceptable – an internal stance that we can turn on ourselves or project out on to others. Our individual and

collective human histories are riddled with the actions we take from our rejections and the catastrophic consequences of them.

Most human beings also experience a sense of free-floating guilt, a persistent need for self-improvement, a belief there is a better version of oneself one can become, someone more loveable or wiser than who and what we are now. We fantasize about states of perfection or transcending our difficulties and challenges in ways we cannot achieve – while simultaneously judging ourselves and others for these failures.

These are the ghosts of consciousness that haunt us and keep us locked into old patterns of perception and identity, believing we are **absolutely** who we believe ourselves to be – without conscious awareness of how these ideas limit our ability to function in the world, perceive life as it actually is, and make life-affirming choices. We become locked into default positions and ways of perceiving life and what is possible and not possible, while believing that these are absolutely real and true.

The paradox of being able to question the ways things have always been in a compassionate kind manner is a radical change for it calls us to embrace ourselves as we are and to be willing to see the intelligence in what led us to this place. The typical way of questioning our attitudes and perceptions or what is now occurring is usually filled with subtle and not so subtle judgements and feelings of being bad or wrong or not good enough.

Learning to inquire into what is now occurring in an open-hearted way allows us to see the places where we are confused or have made mistakes or that simply no longer work for us or others without having to reject anything. Even though our decisions were made from within a limited point of view, they still had wisdom within them and we were in effect doing the best we could do at the time.

This means we are willing to be kind to our incomplete and sometimes very confused self. Being open hearted to our incompleteness is what makes us completely human. And, being human, we have the capacity then to encourage change, while still embracing life as it is.

When we do not believe that we have a real right to be here – as we are imperfect, incomplete and limited – we lack the willingness and courage to

inquire deeply into life and open ourselves up to new possibilities. This is where wholeness-making relationship with others can support us. We need to seek out and join other human beings who are willing to invite in and accept all the different aspects of themselves and each other – the weak and the strong, the vulnerable and the brave, the imperfect and the perfectly okay, the one who is willing to take risks and the one who is completely resistant to risks.

As we come into relationship with our right to exist fully as we are –we discover as well that we have the right to our own voice and vision, to make mistakes and to fall down and get up again – and to enter again and again into the stream of life, learning to value each and every being, their right to exist and their voice as well.

Freedom and transformation begin with the individual. We are called to awaken in the midst of our prisons of perception, to free ourselves and in so doing, offer this freedom to others. It was once said of Sojourner Truth, a slave who became famous for her work in freeing other slaves – that before she could free a thousand slaves, she first had to free herself.



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