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Action Focused

Introduction

I need to give you an advanced warning in this chapter. The first part of this chapter we will discuss change, an idea that is very important and when most teachers and parents hear it, they love it for their students and children. Change is the most important thing a person can do, and the first part of this chapter will explain the importance of it. However, this is not the focus of this chapter. In fact, in the no-influence teaching model, we don't even want to try to change your student or child, because it is impossible. The focus will be on helping your child be who they are and taking action to support them in fulfilling their dreams. To do this, we must understand the idea of change and how people make changes in their life.

Are you ready? Let's begin.

The Greatest Piece of Advice

Many people have given me advice in my life; however, only a couple of them have had a great impact on the way I live. One piece of wisdom that has had the greatest impact on me is: **"Things that don't change remain the same."**

At first the idea seemed too simple and obvious. However, the older I get and the more experience I gain, the more I have come to realize this is the secret of life. The goal of education, learning, or living longer **can be summed up as wanting something to change.** Wanting things to be different. Wanting more money, a better job, better relationships, to see life differently, make things easier, and to be happier.

I have not met many people who want things to remain the same. I have, however, met people who want things to change, but don't want to do things differently. Yes, sometimes I have met children that think their life is perfect and want it to remain the same. However, usually these children are ignorant of many things currently going on in their life, and when they begin to see it, they realize their life is not as perfect as they thought.

Amazingly, most people want their life to change, but they want to remain the same. People want more money, but they don't want to change their financial and work practices to make more money. They want better relationships, but they don't want to change how they interact with people. The idea that if we don't make a change, things will remain the same is profound. So many people go about doing the same things every day but are hoping that somehow life will give them more money, a better job, or more time to rest, just because time has passed.

This is the enticement of winning the lottery. Many people hope they can become very wealthy without doing anything different. Unfortunately, most of them never figure out that it is not possible. If they did their research, they would realize that most people who win the lottery lose all their money within ten years and feel they are worse off than before they won. Very few people can handle the wealth of winning the lottery, and the people who were able to handle it, made changes in their life to be able to deal with it when it happened. Because the reality is, if you don't change, then things will remain the same.

This is especially true with children. They want better grades, but they don't want to change their study practices. They want to decrease the amount of work they do, but they don't want to change the way they do their work. They want to decrease their stress but don't want to change the way they think. Many students feel that the only reason they are not earning more money is because they have to go to school or because they are young. They don't realize they are not earning money because they are not doing the right things to earn money and be successful. Many people in life started making money at a young age, and some of these people made a lot of money when they were still in high school. Today, children just aren't taught this simple idea: if you don't change, then your life will remain the same.

I always ask students to imagine themselves twenty years from now. What do you see? They usually see a car, a house, a family, having a good job, and last, but not least, having a lot of money. I then ask them, "Why will you have all of that in twenty years?" This is a tougher question, one that usually gets a facial response that says, "Good question, I never thought about that before." They say it's because they will be older, have an education, work hard, etc. All good answers, but I ask them, "Does everyone that has an education become rich and successful? Does everyone that works hard become rich and successful?" The answer is no.

Then, I show them Figure 7.1 and ask, "Do you want to be like line C or line A? Do you want to be someone that stays at the same level of happiness over their life or someone that increases their level of happiness?" Of course, everyone wants line A, but the only way they can become more happy, successful, and gain more money is if they change.

They begin to realize that even though their environment might be different, they might not be in school, they might have a job, they might be in a different location with different people. However, if they don't change, they will still be forced to do something they don't want to do, they will still feel the same way toward people, and they will still be just as happy as they were today.

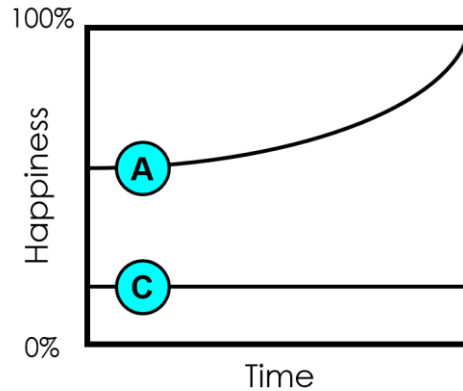


Figure 7.1: Change and Happinessⁱ

I have had the chance to research and get to know many successful people. They all have found success in different ways. However, there is one similarity that seemed to be at the root of all their achievements: the ability to change, starting at a young age.

Two successful characteristics are gained with being able to change. The first is flexibility and being able to adjust quickly. The ability to change means as soon as life, work, or technology makes a change, you can make the change to move with it. Second, since understanding comes with change, the person that changes the quickest will be the person who knows the most. This makes the ability to change the most important skill to have. Now, changing is just like any other skill: the more you do it, the better you get at it. The more times someone goes through the cycle of change, the quicker the cycle will go in the future. Learning how to change is the most important skill to have. I find it amazing that we spend an incredible amount of money on teaching our children sports, chess, dance, etc. However, we do not understand and focus as much on helping children to change. A talent that will help them in anything they do, even playing sports, chess, or dance.

Success is the Why, Not the What

It is important to remember that success is not **what** people do; it is **why** they are doing it. We need to first start with the idea that certain habits and characteristics bring success. For example, it has been found that the most influential people in the world and throughout all time have all been found to utilize the expertise of others to accomplish great thingsⁱⁱ. This means whenever they needed to do something that they didn't know how to do, they would find someone who was an expert at it and let that person help them. This is a successful characteristic.

Traditionally, what happens is a parent/teacher knows a successful characteristic and because they want a child to be successful, they will try to force them to change and to imitate the successful characteristic, like utilizing expertise. They will require the child to have a tutor, talk with the teacher, or allow them to help find someone who is an expert at math or another subject. This will help the child, but only temporarily because even though the

child is imitating the successful action, their mind is resistant to it, and when left to themselves, they will go back to their old ways of not utilizing expertise or asking for help from an expert. Actions don't make someone successful. Success comes from understanding.

There is a quote by Rudyard Kipling: "They copied all they could follow, but they couldn't copy my mind, so I left them sweating and stealing, a year and a half behind." Throughout all time people have tried to imitate actions of other more successful people to somehow copy their greatness, but what makes people great is the ability of the mind to see and understand. You don't want your child to get good grades because they were just following what you are saying. You want your child to know for themselves what they need to do to become great and successful. However, this will require the child to learn and understand. How do you know if a child understands? They will want to do and will be able to do what you ask or actions that lead to success.

It is important to realize that trying to force someone to change, or another way of saying it is focusing on changing someone, does not help them, and in many cases, we find children in this type of environment are worse off. For the child to be successful, they need to realize that utilizing expertise will help them and be self-motivated to figure out how to find and get help themselves.

Parents then ask, "So, can I help my child at all?" The answer is yes, but usually you only want to help when the child asks you for it. Sometimes, a child won't ask for help, but you might still feel the need to offer advice. If you feel you need to do this, it is okay, but if the child puts up resistance to the idea, you probably want to let it go. Remember what we have discussed in chapter 2 and 3—lower your expectations and allow the child to do what is natural for them.

Next, parent's usually think, "But I have observed that when I have pushed my child to do things in the past, my child ended up loving it." Now this very well might have happened. But we must ask some questions:

1. Would the child have eventually found it themselves? If so, wouldn't they have loved it more?
2. Would the child have found something that was better suited for them that they loved more if they weren't pushed?
3. Even if a child loves the activity, was pushing them a detriment? In the process of pushing the child, did it hurt their confidence, proactiveness, or their relationship with the parent or teacher?

In this model, the main concern above all else is to enable a child to be happy and confident with who they are. Not to change, develop, or teach them anything because someone that is happy and confident with who they are is more likely to do something. Those who do something are more likely going to improve, gain experience, and learn to change on their own. They will be self-motivated, and we have found they usually progress more rapidly than other people. They will also be more likely to find something they love to do. So, we are not

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concerned as much with what they are doing at any given time, but that they are doing something on their own.

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Cycle of Change

This is a good time to recap what we have discussed. Change is an important part of life. If someone doesn't change, they will never improve, become more successful, be happier, become better. And, yes, the ability to change is a skill, it can be developed, and it is probably the most important skill to become successful. However, no one, yes, not even a parent or teacher, can change a child. People are who they are. The only person with any hope of being able to change is themselves. Thus, as a parent or teacher, as frustrating as it might be, we cannot focus on trying to change a child.

So, what do we do? Unfortunately, we can do very little to impact a child. However, research has identified that students that have someone that understands life, loves them for who they are, and supports them how they want to be supported, tend to be more successful and happier in life.

To understand the best way to support a child, we must understand the cycle of change. The cycle of change is a simple process that all people must go through to improve and understand more. It is a simple four-step process (See Figure 7.2):

1. Observe—A person perceives new information.
2. Think—A person thinks about the information.
3. Apply—Once the person thinks about the information and accepts it, they then apply it to their life.
4. Change—Application always will bring a change into a person's life. And the change enables them to observe something new.

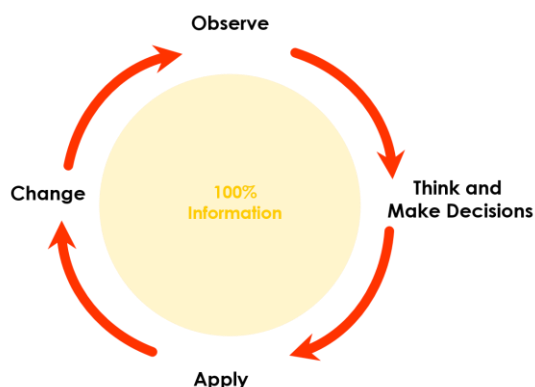


Figure 7.2: The Cycle of Learningⁱⁱⁱ

Understanding the cycle of change helps us to understand what is wrong with focusing on trying to change a child. Even though change is important, in order to change, a child must go through three steps before that, beginning with observing or perceiving new information on their own.

For example, a parent wants their child to change by getting better grades at school. To the parent, this might seem very simple and involve doing homework, participating in class, and studying more.

However, to the child that doesn't even know why it is important to get better grades at school, they are totally confused. For them, they haven't even gone through the first step of **observing** that they are not doing well in school. To them, getting Bs and Cs is okay. However, if they do realize they are not doing well in school, then they have to go through the process of **thinking**, questioning is this a problem, should I do something about it, will this detriment my future, and even, is this something I can actually do? If they get past this step and decide they should **apply** and act and do something about their grades, then they have to determine what they can do to apply this understanding. This is a very difficult process for a child to go through on their own, especially if they don't care about their grades. Or if they don't even want to go to school.

Now when you look at the cycle of change, you also learn that the easiest step of the cycle to recognize in another person is the **Apply** step. It is difficult to identify exactly what a child is observing and what they are thinking in their mind. However, it is easy to identify if they are applying something because you can just watch them and see if they are doing it. If they are not doing it, then you know they are not applying it.

This is why the No-Influence Mentoring is action focused. Change requires application, so when a parent focuses on helping a child find actions that they can perform or do, it gives the child the best chance of learning to change and improve. Identifying what type of actions a child might be able to perform is also the easiest thing for a parent/teacher to do. And it is simple to know if they have already done the thinking and observing and are ready for that action. If they want it, they will do. If they don't, they won't.

You must remember a child cannot apply something they don't understand. Thus, you need to find the right action for the child to perform to enable them to complete the cycle of change. Many times parents or teachers will try to get a student to apply something in their life that the child is not capable of understanding. When this happens, it stops the child from learning. It is much like trying to teach calculus to a child that only knows how to add. You will not get far before the child is confused. They will never be able to learn it unless you go back to their level. This is the same way with performing different actions: to help the child change, the action needs to be at their level. Remember, you will know if it is at their level if they do it.

Action or application is an important step in the cycle of change. It is the step that allows them to move on in the cycle. If a student spends all their time on the first two steps, they will not learn. In fact, they will become really frustrated and stressed, because they will spend a lot of effort but will not see any progress in their capability. The child must go through the entire cycle of change to learn. This means they must act and change. In other words, they

must do something different from what they are currently doing to learn more and to learn quicker.

For example, instead of studying for many hours, you should want your child to either, one, know how to do it and do it quickly, or two, spend very little time studying and more time going out and looking for a quicker way to get the information. This will get them to go out and do something different, and in return will help them learn quicker. In my experience I have found that students who study less are more intelligent. This is where parents and teachers can find actions that a child can do, help the children to learn quicker, and develop their ability to change.

ⁱ Dean Kashiwagi, *2019 Best Value Approach Lessons Learned*, (KSM inc., Mesa, AZ 2019)

ⁱⁱ Jacob Kashiwagi, *Leadership is Alignment Not Influence*, (Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, 2007)

ⁱⁱⁱ Dean Kashiwagi, 2019