



Purposeful Wanderings

A Monthly Newsletter for Clients and Friends of **The Road Not Taken**

Volume 14, Number 12 – December 2015

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Where Does Change Happen?

“Possibility lies at the edge of your current perception.”

As a regular reader, you probably have a few things you’re working on in life – perhaps developing a new competency (e.g., communicate effectively with ease and grace) or experiencing new levels of fulfillment (e.g., live with a sense of deep peace and meaning). Like most, when contemplating change, you may think in terms of *what* you want to change, *how* you want to change it, *why* it matters to you, and perhaps *when* you’d like change to happen. Less likely, however, is to ponder the question, “*Where* does change happen?” Even the question itself sounds a bit odd.

Here’s another lens through which you might consider the process of change. Imagine for a moment that your life is surrounded by an invisible frame. (I call it *life context*). Inside the frame is all you know, all you see as possible. Outside the frame is the *unknown*, what today you see as *impossible*. You might also think of this frame as your comfort zone. Context gets molded over the course of a lifetime through assimilation of life’s lessons and experiences. This is why everyone’s context is different. It became your comfort zone because when you’re inside it, you’re comfortable! For purposes of making changes, it doesn’t matter how big your context is; it matters that it has an *edge* somewhere.

The edge of your comfort zone is significant in two ways, both crucial to the process of change: (1) it’s the place you risk getting stuck, simply because it’s where comfort comes face-to-face with *discomfort*; if you’re not consciously aware of this, feeling uncomfortable evokes “old lessons” that tell you to retreat to the perceived safety of the middle; (2) it’s also home of your greatest potential. It’s where you get *unstuck*, where change happens ... when you choose to step into what you previously saw as the unknown, the *impossible*. The point here is that if you want to create anything new, you have to go to the place where “new” happens, and that’s the *edge* of the world you know today. Reflect for a moment; all you’ve ever learned or changed in life was the result of a successful expansion of your previous edge.

As you might guess, this ‘no man’s land’ between known and unknown is not only a source of stress (anxiety, dread, other forms of fear), but it’s also the fertile ground where your dreams become reality. Without conscious awareness, your *unconscious* mind will do what it has done your whole life – tell you that “new” means “scary,” and cause you (unconsciously, of course) to shy away from the edge, thwarting change. But through simple awareness, you can learn to stop, *examine* the edge, and reflect on feelings and thoughts that arise ... which opens you to new choice. In terms of “structure,” every edge is nothing more than a representation of an old thought. Collectively, they’re the thoughts that hold power over you ... until you get to know them consciously. Once you do, your edge expands, and their power falls away. As your edges expand, there is now more room in which you can play. Change “happens.” Your edge will always be a place of both fear *and* possibility; but with awareness, you can choose possibility over fear.

Exercise: Examining Your Edges: In 10 - 15 minutes of quiet time each day, mentally replay situations, conversations and events from the day. Choose a few that went well, a few that didn’t, and a few where you were the only player. In looking back, identify places you felt uncomfortable. *Name* the discomfort – the situation, as well as the thoughts and feelings that accompanied it. See if you can identify, now, *signals* you experienced, then, that told you you’d met the edge of your context. What do I feel? What do I think? How did I get here? What piece of awareness did I miss? Had I noticed, what other choices might I have had? Becoming aware of your edges is one of the most powerful tools available to you for making large-scale, ‘quantum’ changes in your life. If you don’t notice, though, you can’t choose.

From here, you might try an experiment. Knowing what I now know (from consciously examining my edges after an event or situation), how might I replay things? Can I design an experiment that would let me take one (even small) step into the unknown, while at the same time leave the other foot *inside* my comfort zone? Then “do” your experiment, on purpose, with purpose – consciously. Notice what you feel, think, etc., as above. You are a being of unlimited potential. Your comfort zone is held in place only by old, unconscious stories fueled by lack of awareness. Changing your old story (by noticing it) breaks down the edges, allowing you to expand into greater possibility.

A River Runs Through It [Life lessons offered by nature]

Nature loves edges. As noted in the article above, edges are where new invention happens – even in nature. A simple example is the edge between a field and a forest. There's greater diversity of species in these “edges” than you'd find in either the field or the forest alone. Yet nature's love for edges can be seen at far bigger scales, too.

When nature is ‘inside her comfort zone,’ which happens during relatively stress-free times, change happens through *replication* – making more of the same things she made yesterday (trees, turtles, rabbits, river valleys). When ecosystems become stressed, pushing nature to her edge, change happens through *evolution* – making what already exists better suited to changing surroundings (advent of humans, polar bears evolving from brown bears for adaptation to the Arctic). And in times of chaos, when nature is pushed *over* the edge, change happens by *innovation* – creating something entirely new, beyond earlier conception (volcanoes, earthquakes, the first life on earth, the ‘explosion’ of life forms during the Cambrian period 540 million years ago.)

As shifts in resources create openings (or closings), nature responds “naturally,” by creating value – at the edges. To nature, “value” is framed not in our terms of usefulness or reward, but in terms of both “fit” with the environment and sustainability.

And also in contrast to our adopted ways of seeing, nature does all this without guilt, fear or anxiety – that something did/didn't/should/shouldn't happen. In nature, one step follows another into the unknown. By “listening” to how each step goes, using *feedback* – that natural flow of information in every living system – each and every “next step” is guided, as it happens.

Openings to New Possibility

Available for you:

- *The Road Not Taken Community*, a no-cost subscription that offers you connection, interaction, challenge, and learning. Articles, newsletters and blogs [here](#). I welcome conversation; dialogue is how we all learn together.
- “*In Nature's Image*,” 100 of my nature images, each with a simple message to help experience life's meaning.
- *The Road Not Taken* newsletters (13 years, 156 issues of *Purposeful Wanderings*) available [here](#) as a pdf file.
- Photo images from my travels available [here](#) on fun products – note cards, coffee mugs – great gift ideas.

An invitation to possibility: This (or any) newsletter could be the basis of a focused program of personal coaching. So if you read something that evokes the yearning inside you ... and have the courage and determination to challenge conventional thinking so you can live instead with authenticity and freedom, contact me for a conversation that can energize your dream. I will help you reach a level of *clarity and perspective* – about yourself, others, your life, your work, and the world – that will allow you to live your truth, every day. Trade the way it *is* for the way it *could be*.

Book of the month – *Courageous Dreaming*, by Alberto Villoldo. Subtitled “How Shamans Dream the World into Being,” this book might be a good accompaniment to this month's article. I've suggested this book before, along with his others. All are filled with insight. This offers beautifully written perspective and insight into the power of our own consciousness to create the world we want to experience. We possess levels of consciousness far deeper than the level required to get through an ordinary day, but if we experience only the ordinary, we never tap into these more powerful levels. In them, however, is the key to creating any world we can imagine. Given the unconscious slumber our world is in, it's easy to reject his ideas, but that just ensures the slumber continues. As always, life is a choice, and it's a choice based in the power of thought – to dream the world into being. ... And if you're on Cape Cod, you'll find this book at the Market Street Bookshop in Mashpee Commons – 508-539-6985.