

## Helpful Hints on How Not to Change

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Many people find change hard or scary but only some have developed a skill in staying stuck.

Recognising the patterns that make this possible can be useful for everyone as it gives us more control of what we're doing. You'll find these patterns show up in individuals, teams and organisations so I've made a list of some of the tell-tale signs. I call them Recipes for Inertia.

If you want to discourage change:

- Maximise fear of the unknown
- Spend a lot of time with people who think about problems the same way
- Don't finish anything you start
- Better still, just don't start
- Create debilitating isolation
- Presume change is hard work
- Have unrealistic time frames for the change
- Have limiting beliefs about yourself
- Never think about new avenues
- Give up
- Believe it can't happen
- Believe your fears
- Doubt your own competence – always
- Avoid thinking about change
- Accept you can't do anything
- Don't plan
- Stay distracted and don't ever focus
- Form a committee for change and have daily meetings with compulsory attendance
- Never deviate from routines
- Keep yourself under constant pressure
- Accept 'No' for an answer
- Create a very large 'Standards Manual'
- Tense up and stay that way
- Be conflicted and blame others
- Become cynical
- Above all, don't ever dream.
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Recognise any of these? One thing they all have in common is that they are driven by underlying beliefs. The question is whether these beliefs are useful to you or others. Surfacing these beliefs is often the beginning of getting back in control.

Beliefs are **about** reality. They are not reality itself. I find the change work I'm involved with, whether it's with individuals, teams or organisations, often involves updating these beliefs and aligning them with current realities. Doing so gives people new choices.

Your sense of self has a history and provides continuity and meaning to your life. This is true not just of people but also organisations. If you have concerns about a proposed change compromising your identity you're going to find yourself much more resistant. That's why whether you're thinking about getting married or merging with another company it's important to be clear about how any change will actually help you be more who you really are and how this will support you in your future. We may live in an uncertain world but it's worth being clear about the possible pay-offs of your imagined change.

The secret to changing easily is to incorporate the positive payoffs of your present behaviour into the change you are wishing to make. If you want to know more about this have a look at my earlier post [Purpose of Unwanted Behaviour.](#)

It would be smart to have a look at the beliefs that are impacting attempts to make a change. This holds true whether the challenge is personal or professional and whether it applies to an individual or an organisation. It's often easier to this with a skilled uninvolved professional who has no axe to grind.

NLP and Coaching can be used to create rapid, powerful and effective change, and there are plenty of practical how-to skills you can learn that can change how you think and what is possible for you. Henry Ford wasn't making it up when he said:

*“Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right.”*

## “I wish I didn't do that”

This is an all-too-common phrase in one form or another – we may say it to ourselves (sometimes on a daily basis!) and we may also hear others say it. Most people have an element of “I wish I didn't...” in their lives. Knowing it is one thing, but too often knowing it and not knowing how to change it can lead to further frustration. The good news is that there are practical how-to skills available that allow you to engage with the unwanted behaviour or pattern and ultimately change it, making room in your life for something you do want.

### Change

Human behaviour is purposeful, even though at times what you are doing may seem to be unwanted, negative, or self-destructive. If you don't like a particular behaviour and you want to change it then you need to understand its greater function. It must have something going for it, some payoff, otherwise you wouldn't be doing it.

The secret of changing easily is to incorporate the positive payoff of your present behaviour into the change you are wishing to make. This is true at an individual level, and organisationally, if you don't know what the positive payoffs are of the present behaviour then when you propose change you threaten to violate a system that up to now has kind of worked. And therefore, you will encounter resistance – either within your own psyche or within an organisation.

### Start from where you are

To make real and long-lasting changes in yourself and organisationally, it is essential that you, or they, know what you already have. Part of having a **well-formed goal** is that you know what you have going for you right now. If you don't take the time at this stage, you risk the possibility of an ineffective and short-lived change which can lead to another demotivating episode of “I wish I didn't...”

Take stock by identifying the positive payoff of the existing behaviour or situation and then considering whether they are worth keeping. Think bigger picture here; go to a higher level to discover your intentions, values, that part of your inner-self that is driving your present behaviour.

Here are some questions that can help:

Personal	Organisational
What is this behaviour doing for me?	What functions/purpose does this behaviour or practice perform?
What are the positive payoffs of my present behaviour?	What are the positive payoffs of the present behaviour or practice for the individuals doing it and for the larger system?
What else happens – directly or indirectly – when I do this?	What else happens – directly or indirectly – as a result of this behaviour or practice?
What do I get out of doing this?	What do they get out of doing this?
What else do I get out of doing this?	What else do they or others get out of doing this?
What of this is worth keeping?	What of this – in their opinion – is valuable and worth keeping?

### **Incorporate the positive payoffs**

Once you have identified the payoffs, get clear about how you can incorporate them into the proposed change. Imagine the future having made any proposed changes to make sure that you have everything that you want. If something doesn't seem right, then there is further exploration to do. Get curious!

### **Working with others for personal change**

If you are working with a client and they wish to make changes, before you go in with a change technique, acknowledge their current reality. Until you know what the positive payoffs of the present behaviour are, do not try to change anything. Often people begin to say things like "This doesn't make sense" or "I know this is crazy, but . . ." If so, pay particular attention to what comes up, because it will almost certainly be significant – usually important information that is being allowed into consciousness because of your questioning but which the conscious mind cannot make sense of – yet.