

Work in Progress

Published monthly by Michele Crawford
Work in Progress is an electronic newsletter intended to assist individuals seeking optimum well-being.

www.michelecrawford.ca

www.willowhousewellness.com

E-mail to michelecrawford@dccnet.com

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Feature Article: Resistance to change: A metaphor for pain

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In this Issue:

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- 1) Note from Michele
- 2) Feature Article
- 3) About Michele
- 4) Counselling Services

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1) Note from Michele

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Dear Reader

Usually, people enter therapy seeking help to address change. Changes can be both personal choices and externally imposed.

Personal changes include self-developmental transformation, enhancing ego strength, mastering mood and body regulation, addictions recovery, gaining expertise in personal and relationship spheres such as assertiveness, making decisions, stress management, communication proficiency, empathic responses and more.

External changes include relationship conflict and termination, death, accidents, trauma, job loss, unresolved issues rooted in your past resurfacing, stress, pressure to deal with addictions and so on.

The goals of both personal choice and imposed change require addressing irrational thinking, energy psychologies, mindfulness training, learning coping skills and resiliency, conflict resolution: to name a few.

In the psychotherapy arena, it is common knowledge that happiness grows in direct relation to acceptance for change. Inversely, misery festers when change is ignored, denied or opposed and individual expectations are not met.

There are people who are open, adapt and embrace change and there are people who are oblivious, encompass defiance or fear, rebuff or try to control change.

Herein lays the problem. The only constant is change. Pain is often defined as resistance to change. Therefore, focusing on your acceptance and adjustment to change is far more realistic and productive as well as empowering.

The concept of acceptance is not that you like, enjoy, approve, condone or promote what occurs but rather, acknowledge reality as what is and start there. It is what it is. When you begin with reality as your absolute authority, you are at your most empowered to deal with it.

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## 2) Feature Article: Resistance to change: A metaphor for pain

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Progress through human developmental stages includes moving from an external locus of control to an internal locus of control. While it is reasonable for children to depend on their exterior environment for all their needs, it is detrimental for adults to do so.

An external stimulus is relying mainly on the outside world for cues to your identity, emotions, behaviour, goals, direction or decision-making.

With an external focus, in order to feel better and get more of your requirements met, you would need to absolutely control people and

your environment. As most know, these are entities you cannot directly control and often your attempts to do so end in disaster.

An internal locus of control initiates within you. An internal motivation rests on a core belief that even when life is difficult, you will handle it and recover stronger and wiser.

Your concept of control is healthy and adaptive: you know you can only control yourself in this moment, influence a limited amount of your environment and future and learn to be calm enough to let go of the rest during adversity. Then you can concentrate your attention on learning improved resiliency-related competence when discord or hardship arises.

By definition, a metaphor is a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used to portray one thing, is applied to another. A metaphor often adds to clarity and emotional content.

Metaphors are emotional word pictures designed to enhance understanding. My metaphor for internal versus external motivation is an oak tree and a willow tree: designed to promote acceptance, then true adaptability when change happens.

Looking at an oak tree and a willow tree standing side by side, many people would describe the oak tree as appearing stronger. To assess a tree's true power, the question is which has maintained its shape and integrity the day after a storm?

The oak tree is damaged, broken or completely uprooted. The willow tree proves stronger by a significant margin. The willow emerges unscathed because its branches bend with the wind and its root system grows under the ground considerably deeper and wider than other trees.

Oak Tree Thinkers

Oak tree thinkers appreciate the damage a storm will do so you disallow their existence. With this disclaimer, your single-mindedness is on the need to control your environment so you can feel safe.

Due to your denial, you're astounded when a storm (change) hits: there is no advance anticipation, knowledge, preparation or plan. Your first reaction is being indignant, then getting angry or panicked and of

course, resisting. Since a tree cannot with-stand gale-force winds, you are soon overwhelmed by its magnitude.

Your focus is limited to the storm’s destruction. When it is finally over, you reflect on your wounds, the unfairness of life and others and emotions like bitterness, resentment and depression surface.

Willow Tree Thinkers

Willow tree thinkers understand the reality of life’s storms. Actually, there are some storms you take pleasure in while others you perceive as meaningful.

Your focus is centered on inner resources like rational thinking, courage and fortitude, fostering your moral compass, flexibility, learning coping and stress management skills, assertiveness, problem solving, etc.

Because willow tree thinkers recognize storms do take place, you watch the weather network and sniff the atmosphere. You tend not to be caught off-guard. Acceptance is your first reaction and your strategy is bending with the wind during the worst of the tempest.

At this point, your focal point is the light at the end of the tunnel; the dawn that follows this squall; brighter days: this too shall pass.

When it is over, you concentrate on the gifts this storm produced that will help you manage the next outbreak.

Grant me the courage to change the things I can change; the serenity to accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference.

Michele Crawford RCC CCC
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com or
Phone: 604-515-9727
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca

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3) About Michele  
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Michele Crawford is a therapist who assists individuals who are struggling with trauma, anxiety or depression. Her passion for

her work remains embedded in being able to connect with you in your suffering, helping you find real solutions no matter how complex the issue may be.

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#### 4) Counselling Services

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Are you prepared to live with more happiness, optimism, confidence, self-worth and hope? If your answer is "yes," then your next step is to contact me for a free 20-minute phone consultation. We can then discuss how I might best help you resolve your problems of Trauma, Depression and Anxiety.

The benefits of counselling with Michele include: significantly reduced stress levels, an optimistic outlook in life, increased confidence and hope.

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I want to reassure you that your e-mail address will never be shared or sold to anyone else.

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Michele Crawford RCC CCC
Willow House Wellness Ltd.
Web Site: www.michelecrawford.ca
E-mail: michelecrawford@dccnet.com
Phone: 604-515-9727
Fax: 604-515-9728