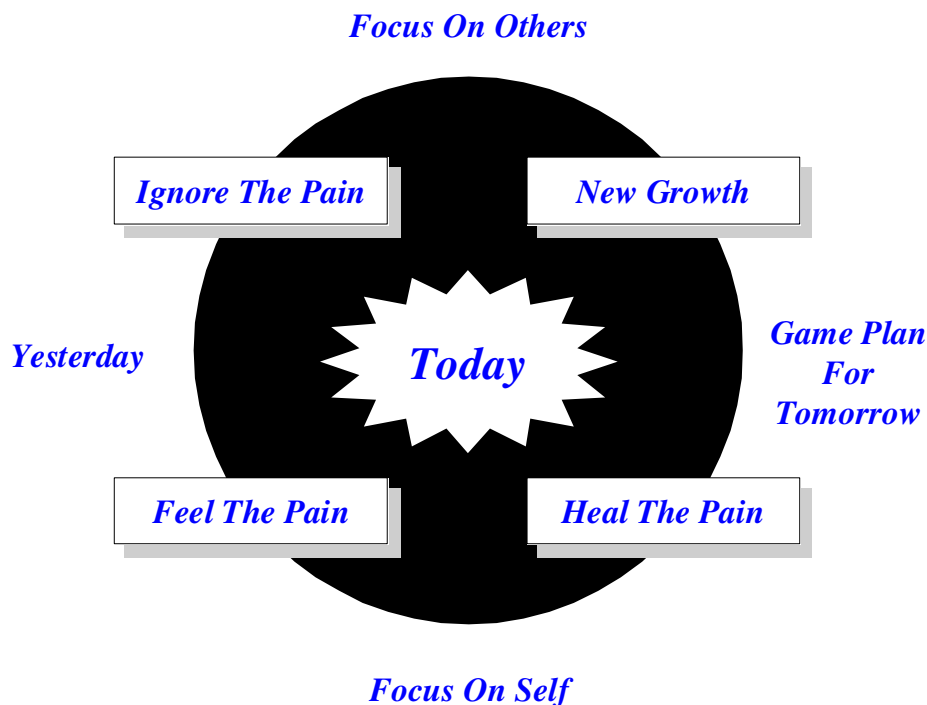


## *Change is a Many Splintered Thing*

by Patti Hathaway, CSP

Mergers and acquisitions continue on an upward trend. This is far beyond what experts had predicted earlier. As mergers in the United States keep increasing every year, more and more people are affected by significant levels of change. Add to the merger boom, increasing competition, organizational reorganizations, and changes in governmental programs, and you will find a rare person NOT affected by change.

How do most people react to change? I think Alexander Graham Bell's quote applies "When one door closes, another opens: but we often look so long and regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us." Most people instinctively resist change. *The Resistance Cycle* depicts what I typically see happening in organizations today.



**In Phase 1: *Ignore the Pain*** - people do just that - they ignore the fact that a change is even occurring. Their focus is on what others are doing to them. They make comments such as "why are *they* doing this to me?" or "it will never happen". They tend to avoid any information that pertains to the change(s).

When people begin *Feeling the Pain*, they recognize that this change is going to be worse than they initially thought. They experience a sense of loss over what used to be and they mourn the "good old days" of yesterday. People ask, "have we been doing it wrong all these years?" They feel like they have no choice or control over decisions which affect them directly.

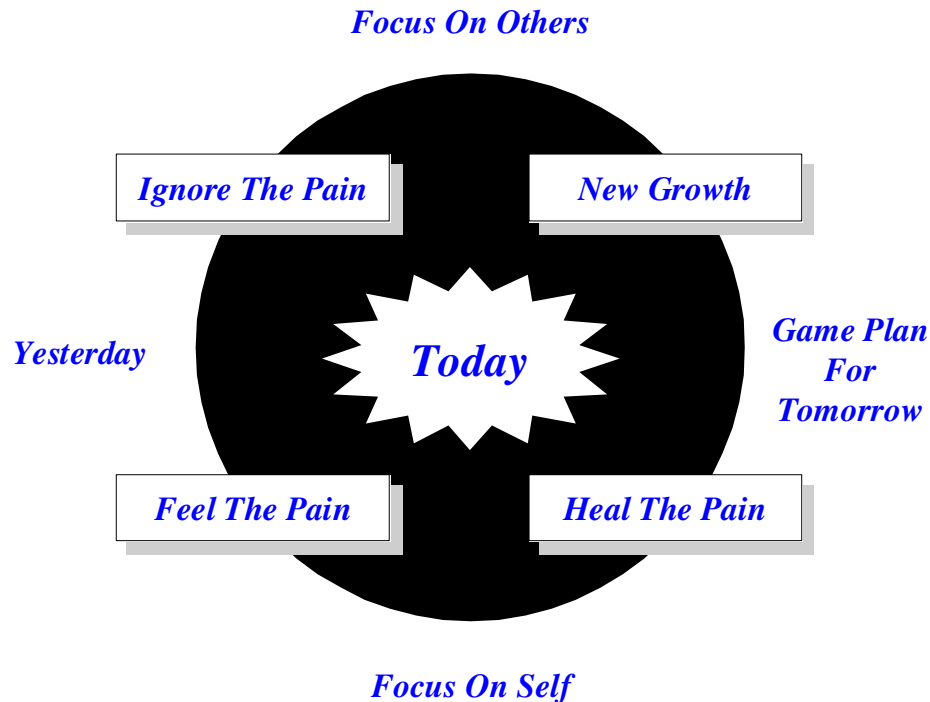
This is the most difficult phase to be in because of the painful reactions. I typically find five types of reactions in this phase:

- 1. Keep to Yourself and Lick Your Wounds** - You stay to yourself and deal with the pain alone. You don't allow others to know about the pain you feel. Your internalized stress skyrockets and it begins to affect your attitude and productivity negatively.
- 2. Whine and Manipulate** - You are angry about the changes and whine behind the boss's back to other people. You try to manipulate the system for your own agenda regardless of the impact on others. Morale in the organization becomes affected negatively.
- 3. Hiss and Pick Fights** - You become aggressive and say things in anger. You no longer care about others' feelings and your main goal is to make other people feel as miserable as you do.
- 4. Mark Your Territory** - You decide you can't influence the entire team so you'll just stick to your territory. You cover and protect any mistakes or problems in your department or area or responsibility.
- 5. Withhold Warmth** - You don't share information with the rest of the team that could be beneficial. Since your boss appears to not recognize your contributions to the team, you are not going to share information with them. Information is power.

Following are some actual examples of reactions of people in the first two phases of resistance based on past program participants. The most common reaction is to withhold information; people may leave the organization; lots of whining and manipulation (one organization I know gives out "No BMW's" t-shirts - BMW stands for "bitching, moaning, whining"). Some employees concentrate on their product in order to avoid the process of change. Other employees pick fights with their peers over territory issues. Many employees are fearful because they don't get much information from their leaders and the leaders firmly act as if they have the new "right way" to proceed and therefore need no input from their staff.

Let's look at the final 2 phases in the *Cycle of Resistance*.

In **Phase 3: Heal the Pain**, the focus is still on self and how the changes will affect me. But now, at least we are past *feeling* the pain and the focus on yesterday and are now beginning to look to the future and challenge for tomorrow. It is important to note that we are still on the bottom of the cycle and we are still dealing with pain.



One of the main things people experience in the *healing* phase is organizational chaos and indecisiveness. Indecisiveness in many organizations is what they call committees or task forces. The organization doesn't know exactly what the game plan is so they assign a committee to help them figure it out.

As we discussed earlier, many people just want their boss to tell them what "The Plan" is. In reality, there is no specific, concrete, well-defined, set-in-stone plan - particularly when it comes to defining the how-to's of the change that is being introduced. Most game plans are fluid in nature and may and will change as the needs dictate.

*Time is an issue. This "car" is being built as it's moving along. Lack of preparation kills momentum. Staff crave information and are frustrated due to the lack of information.  
Vice President of Customer Relations*

What is critical in this phase is for you to give your input and ideas into the plan and for the management team to listen to your ideas and concerns about the plan. The second critical aspect of this phase is to learn to forgive those who have wronged you in the past so you can move into your future.

It's almost like a coach at half time giving the team information and revising the game plan prior to the second half of the game. Sometimes the strategy/game plan the coach originally designed doesn't work out in the "real world." Effective team players need the strength and ability to give honest input from a front-line perspective. Why return to the game with a plan that you know

will not work? (On my website is an article on how to provide feedback to your boss by “whining with purpose”).

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“There is a force that somehow pushes us to choose the more difficult path whereby we can transcend the mire and muck into which we are often born. Despite all that resists the process, we do become better human beings.”

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M. Scott Peck

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Eventually, people build enough trust in the leadership of their organization to consider committing themselves to **Phase 4: New Growth** for Tomorrow. It means making a commitment to a not-exactly, non-specific, vague tomorrow. The best analogy for this final phase is marriage. For those of us who are married, how many of us really knew what marriage was going to be like before we got married? Very few of us. Yet most of us hopefully and willingly made our commitment to our spouse -- even with all the unknowns. Does this mean that every single day we absolutely love and adore our spouse? Hardly.

I once heard a well-known evangelist interviewed about his 50+ year marriage to his wife. He was asked the question if he and his wife ever discussed divorce. Without hesitation, he replied, “Divorce no, murder yes.” I think I’m in good company and so are you. Even though we love our spouse, we may not absolutely like them all the time.

The same is true with your organization. When you make the commitment to **New Growth** for your organization and their vision for tomorrow, it doesn't mean you will always like what's going on in your organization or the direction they are headed. But, it also doesn't mean you are any less committed to the organization. I believe commitment is a gift you give yourself because riding the fence and wavering with your commitment only means you're prolonging an inevitable fall in marriage and in your organizational life!

*“I made complete job change. I can now see the plan come together, we can advocate for our clients and make the new planning system a true reality. Now when we see the glass half-full, we can assist with filling it up. It has opened our minds to new avenues.”*

*Primary Service Coordinator*

How would our world be different if we were all 100% committed to our marriages? How would your organization be different if all its employees were all 100% committed to the success of your organization? It would be much more difficult to fail. When you only give part of yourself to success in your job, you are asking for failure. It means constantly updating your resume and looking for other options. Remember, the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, but it still needs to be mowed over there. If you think you're going to leave your current organization for a less tumultuous organization, in most cases, you will be in for a rude awakening. Change in organizations is the norm, not the exception nowadays. Instead of leaving

your current organization, consider learning how to effectively cope with change and you will learn skills that will last you for a lifetime.

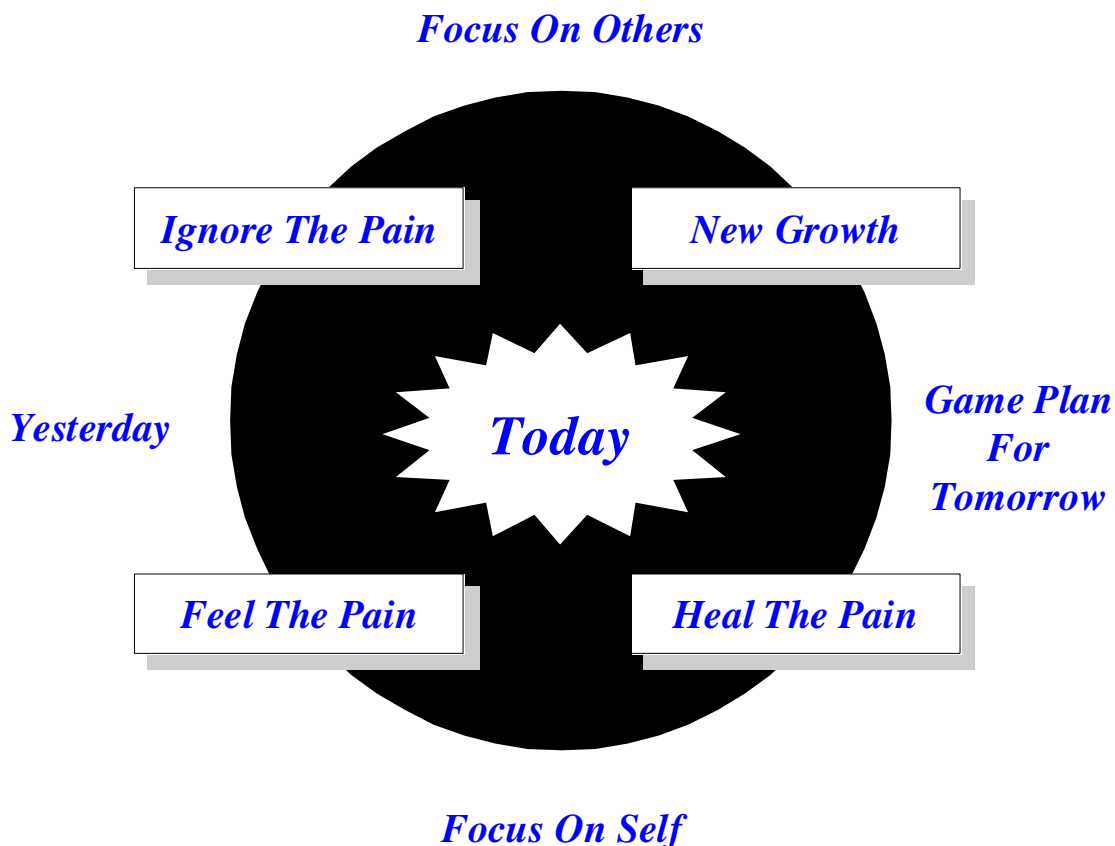
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There are too many people praying for mountains of difficulty to be removed, when what they really need is courage to climb them.

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*This article is excerpted from Patti Hathaway's book **Untying the 'Nots' of Change Before You're Fit to be Tied**. Patti is a Certified Speaking Professional and author of 4 books, is known as The CHANGE AGENTK. She works with organizations that want to make change work and with those organizations that want to change their customer service culture. Patti provides customized keynotes and workshops. Contact Patti at 1-800-339-0973 or at her website: [www.thechangeagent.com](http://www.thechangeagent.com) for information on her speaking services or to receive her free e-mail newsletter/blog.*