

Volume 3, Issue 8

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

A Lesson from the Ants and Bees

High Risk, High Reward

Parenting from the Heart
Helping kids adapt to change

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**Issue
Editor
Design**

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Christina Lane
awexdesign.com

**Contact Us:
Email
Website**

motivated@motivatedmagazine.com
www.motivatedmagazine.com

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We hear it all the time. On TV, the internet, and closer to home, in emails from family or friends.—Stories of job loss, illness, a vanishing pension, or ill-advised investments. While the details of each personal crisis may differ, the effects and the prospect of an uncertain future are often the same.

In these straits, people are frequently faced with the pain of having to start from scratch, with no roadmap to help them regain the ground they've lost. Even though it's not their fault, and they may be just one of millions of smart, high-quality people who have been shown the door, or one of many who face personal crises, that doesn't make it feel any better!

What *can* we do? What *should* we do? How do we cope with the havoc that a personal crisis can cause? Of course, the answers are many and varied, but facing challenges and an uncertain future with a positive mindset and faith is a key element to starting fresh.

We hope the articles in this issue of *Motivated* will provide tips to a positive approach and help identify some of the steps we can take when faced with a challenging, start-over situation.—Steps that can help us get past the trauma and move forward—personally, in our career, or in any part of our life.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Deserted Phone Booths

By Curtis Peter van Gorder

A city where I used to live is dotted with deserted public telephone booths. Obsolete and derelict, they stand silent and empty, eerie reminders of their former usefulness, now simply taking up sidewalk space, useless to all but a few spiders that are ever quick to spin their webs in out-of-the-way corners. Ten or twenty years ago, these booths were a vital means of communication. Long replaced by cell phones that are more convenient and capable, these relics are no longer worth the trouble, either to keep up or to tear down.

Those old phone booths strike a sad chord in me. They remind me of people who are stuck in the past because they couldn't or wouldn't adapt to the new. Any of us can become like that. If we focus on the past instead of the present and future, we will get out of touch with the world around us and be left behind. The world is ever changing, and we need to be ready to change with it, to learn new skills, and continually strive to make progress.

The past year was full of learning experiences for me. I moved to a different country and started a new job. That was certainly challenging. Change is often downright difficult, but I've found that it usually works out for my good. I've needed to adapt to my new location and situation, and I've acquired some new skills in the process.

Human nature seems to want things to remain static, but the ways we did things yesterday are often no longer the best approach to the needs of today. Regardless of whether or not we change with the times, what was cutting edge yesterday often doesn't cut it today. Take a look at the rapidly changing world of computerized gadgetry to see what I mean. I recently looked through back issues of a popular electronics magazine and couldn't help but chuckle at the products that were being hailed as "innovative" in their day, but are outdated now.

As the saying goes, "Time and tide wait for no man." We had better move with the times. ◀▶



Your potential lies ahead of you—whether you're 8, 18, 48, or 80. You still have room to improve yourself. You can become better tomorrow than you are today.

—John C. Maxwell



HIGH RISK, HIGH REWARD

By Peter Kelly

When we get an out-of-the-box idea or an opportunity arises that would be a departure from our normal way of doing things, our immediate reaction might be to play it safe—to shy away from the idea, or to hesitate to capitalize on the opportunity because it's new and untried and seems risky. But if we wait too long to decide what to do, the opportunity may pass us by. At times like that, we need to calculate the risk.

It's not merely a matter of being willing to take risks, because that can also lead to recklessness. Taking calculated risks is about assessing potential gains versus potential losses, and making wise decisions accordingly. We do sometimes need to risk failure for the sake of the potential rewards, but generally there should be a greater probability for a positive outcome than a negative one. The keys are first to understand the odds, and second to do whatever we can to improve them.

It's difficult to decide to do something that involves a high degree of risk, even when there is potential for great reward, but life is full of such situations. Here are a few points to keep in mind the next time one comes our way:

Assess the time factor. Few windows of opportunity stay open permanently.

Sometimes the choice to pursue or not to pursue a certain opportunity must be made rather quickly, but we should not allow ourselves to be pressured into a hasty, ill-advised decision.

Study the situation. Thoroughly and objectively consider the pros and cons, and calculate the odds for success as much as possible. Then we should try to determine what we can do to improve those odds.

Learn from others. Try to find accounts of others who have taken similar risks, and examine why they succeeded or failed.

Don't abandon common sense. Risk-taking is not about abandoning common sense. We've been given the power to reason for a purpose, and we need to think things through.

Be willing to take action. We can't afford to be impulsive, but we also can't wait for everything to be perfect and risk-free; we need to be prepared to commit when the time is right, to seize the day.

If a seemingly golden opportunity should come our way and it's right for us, a calculated risk can become the gateway to success. ◀▶

ALLEVIATING WORRY

Q:

Sometimes I feel like I'm being overcome with worries. What can I do to stop worrying so much?

a:

Who doesn't worry sometimes? We worry about what's going to happen in the world. We worry about failing in school or in our work. We worry that we won't be able to make ends meet financially. We worry about how we're going to make up for mistakes we've made or opportunities we missed. We worry about our future. We worry about losing the ones we love. We worry about so many things!

Most worries come down to one of two things: fretting about past failures and situations gone wrong, or fearing the future.

How can we keep those fears from affecting us? One good answer can be found in an unexpected place—the modern ocean liner. Ocean liners are constructed with fireproof, watertight steel doors that, in the event of fire or serious leakage, can seal off the damaged compartment and contain the problem so the ship can stay afloat.

So it should be in the “ship” of our lives. In order to make the most of today and best prepare for the future, we have to learn to seal ourselves off from worries about yesterday with its mistakes and failures, as well as from overblown concerns about tomorrow. Otherwise, our worries may flood us and drag us under.

Have you ever noticed that it's the things that never happen that seem to worry us the most?

One businessman drew up what he called a “worry chart,” where he kept a record of his fears. He discovered that 40% of them were about things that probably would never happen, 30% concerned past decisions that he could not change, 12% had to do with other people's criticism of him, and 10% were unfounded worries about his health. He concluded that there were valid reasons for only 8% of his worries. ◀▶





A Lesson from the Ants and Bees

Author Unknown

It was one of those days. I had been working for weeks to secure a deal that would give me a nice commission. Everything seemed to go perfectly and I had already been joking with co-workers what I would do with the extra income.

I picked up the phone and called the customer to get the deal finalized, only to hear that the recession had hit the company. He told me that half of the staff had been let go and that all purchases were put on hold.

I had so concentrated on this deal that I had not worked much on my other customers, and knew that instead of getting a big fat paycheck I'd be having one of the smallest ones I had ever received.

I just couldn't stay at my desk. I got up and went to get some coffee. The cleaning lady was just washing the vending machine. I slumped to a chair and felt awful.

"Bad day?" she asked.

Startled, I looked up. The cleaning lady was looking at me.

"You could say that again," I sighed. "What is the matter?" she asked.

She was a motherly type of a woman with kind eyes. I had seen her around for years but I never said a word to her really. Yet I suddenly found myself telling the whole pitiful story to her. She listened intently, finished cleaning the vending machine and nodded.

"Your situation reminds me of my own father," she said. "He was also a salesman, but not lucky enough to be able to sit in one office. He was a traveling salesman. You know, big suitcases and all. Vanished for weeks sometimes and came back with an empty bag, pay check, and a big hug for us kids and mother."

I looked at her, not knowing where she was going with this.

"There was a time when he also lost a big sale. It was just before the holidays and he had to tell us children that there would be very few presents. We were disappointed, but he gathered us around him and told a story, I never forgot.



“First, he asked us which animals we liked best. My answer was cats. My older brother liked dogs and my younger brother loved ponies. Then, he asked if we wanted to know which animals he admired the most and, of course, we did. The bees, the ants, and the spiders, he told us.”

I lifted my eyebrows. The cleaning lady smiled.

“Now, of course, we did not agree with him but asked why ever would he like such nuisances. Didn’t they bite or sting, or just look plain ugly? He explained it to us and what he told us has guided me ever since.

“He said he liked the bees because if a bear breaks their nest and steals their honey, they keep on building their honeycombs, making more honey. He liked the ants because if the same bear destroys their nest, they also immediately start building their nest anew, working together for a common goal. And he liked the spiders because if their webs are destroyed, they start repairing the damage right away—or

building a whole new, better one.

“He said that the lesson he had learned from these little insects was that the world may surprise us sometimes by destroying even our most carefully-built plans, but if we choose to be ready to start all over again, no matter what, we eventually will see great results. We just have to start again, one step at a time.”

At that, the cleaning lady nodded to me and pushed her cart out of the room.

I sat there for a while, thinking of what she had said. Then, I got up, walked back to my desk, and started to build my next paycheck, one customer at a time. ◀▶



Helping kids learn to adapt to change

By Cindy Jett, adapted Web Reprint

We work hard to create a world of structure and predictability for our children, with routines, a regular schedule, and consistent expectations. We aim to make their lives stable, safe, and secure. As they grow up, we hope that this early experience will center them, and that they will be solid in a world of flux and change. In addition to providing children a safe and secure beginning, we also have to prepare them for the ups-and-downs of life. One way is to foster a positive attitude towards change. Following are some steps that parents can take to prepare children for change:

1. Observe your children and note how they react to the prospect of change.

Is there a pattern? Do they generally dig in their heels? Do they become anxious and fearful? Or do they look forward to new experiences? These patterns and attitudes can become the modus operandi as they grow into adulthood. The goal is to change negative patterns and attitudes now, before they become entrenched.

2. Talk with your children about their feelings

before they face a new situation or impending change. Depending on the children's age, temperament, and background, they may or may not be able to discuss their feelings directly. If children have trouble articulating how they feel, approach it indirectly. Perhaps

bring up a parallel example from your own life and discuss how you felt at the time. With younger children, it is helpful to use a picture book in which the main character goes through similar experiences.

3. Discover the picture your children formed of the change.

Children's feelings about an impending change directly correlate to their understanding of what is happening. If they are telling themselves that they will move to a new neighborhood, and won't have any friends, it makes sense that they are feeling sad and fearful. Ask them what they think the future will hold once the change occurs.

4. Look for catastrophic thinking.

Are your children envisioning a catastrophic outcome, a worst-case scenario? Are they using words like never, always, everyone, and no one? "I'll never make any friends at my school." "Everyone already has friends." "No one will want to be friends with me." These statements might feel like reality to your children, but they are not. Challenge these statements and help your children develop a more balanced view of what the future may hold. If you repeatedly challenge catastrophic thinking, your children will pick up the technique and will begin to use it, too.



Where Is Hope?

By Mila Nataliya A. Govorukha

5. Prepare your children in case some of their fears become reality.

Suggest alternative ways of making friends. If they are very shy or there are other obstacles, adjust suggestions accordingly. Also, ask the children if they can think of solutions. Teaching a child to be proactive as a response to change will have immeasurable benefits over a lifetime.

6. Allow your children to grieve their losses

brought about by a change in circumstances. Acknowledge the losses as real and comfort them in their sadness. If children do not have the opportunity to express their sadness, it can heighten anxiety and possibly lead to depression.

7. When appropriate, ask children to try to envision a positive outcome to the change.

Encourage them to think of all the wonderful possibilities that a change might bring. This exercise teaches them to think optimistically.

8. Call attention to their successes once the change has occurred and the children have adapted. Remind them how they'd pictured the change, and contrast it with the reality of the situation. This will help them to "reality test" future thinking. ◀▶

I didn't like my mood. It wasn't exactly cold—more like chilly with a chance of thunderstorms. Exactly like the weather that day. I knew why I was feeling that way, and it scared me. Changes were in the air, looming over me like ominous clouds. I also knew that there was hope for my situation, like I knew the sun was somewhere up there, but not being able to connect with it was unsettling.

The smell of impending rain enveloped me. I sat by a haystack at the top of a small hill, an apple orchard to my right, bushes downhill, and a little flock of sheep grazing in the clearing to my left. High above, a few needlelike rays of sunshine pierced the pewter clouds. The mountains in the distance were a palette of muted colors in the gathering gloom—greens, grays, blues, purples. Between them and me, a light rain hung like a filmy curtain. I had to admit that even without the sun and the usual bright colors, the view was beautiful.

Exactly like today, I thought. Like this week, like the last few months. So much uncertainty, like these clouds hanging over me. So many challenges, like these mountains before me. But there is still beauty to be found, even in these trying circumstances.

Just then the clouds passed, the sun came out, and it suddenly became warmer. A tiny lilac butterfly alighted on my shoe, and a woodpecker tapped out his message in Morse code.

Hope had shown her face, and she was beautiful! ◀▶

5 Steps to Make Starting Over Easy

By Leon Wallace, adapted

Everyone has to start over at some point. We all come to a place in life that we can't continue. We come to a dead-end road. We come to a wall we can't scale. We come to a hurt we can't handle. We come to a problem we can't solve, and so we must start over.

How to start over is always the difficulty. What steps to take? What do we do first?

Using the acronym ▶ **START**, here are five small steps that can help us take a giant leap forward.

▶ **S-top living in the past.** We have to quit blaming, quit pointing fingers, and quit making excuses. We have to start taking responsibility for where we are and where we have been. We have to quit looking for a scapegoat and start looking for a new road. Until we stop living in the past we can't start over.

▶ **T-ake an honest look at life.** We have to realize that we are in control and we have the power that is needed. We were created with resilience and a great capacity to problem solve. We have a will and we will need to use it to move ahead. We must be honest about what is right in our life and what is wrong.

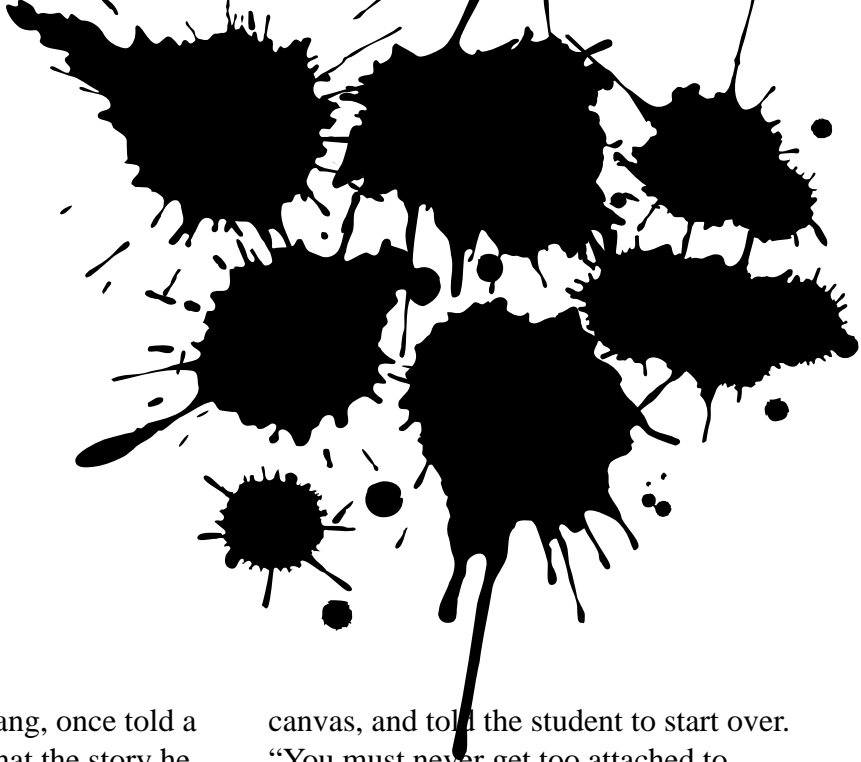
▶ **A-llow others to lend a hand.** We can do a lot on our own in starting over, but to truly succeed we will need the support and help of other people. We will have to let our guard down, be willing to share our problems, and listen to the good advice we receive. Without others, we will continue to smother any possibility of starting over and getting ahead.

▶ **R-ecognize that starting over is not the only option, but the wisest option.** We have to realize that if we continue to do what we are doing we will continue to struggle in the quicksand of life. Once we realize this is the best way, we are on our way to success.

▶ **T-rust that God will help with the impossibilities we face in starting over.** Our extremity is God's opportunity. With faith, enthusiasm, and excitement, we can turn around, start over, and make the best life possible. We will be glad we did. ◀▶



Don't Be Afraid of Black Paint



Author Leonard Chang, once told a graduate student that the story he had written wasn't working on many levels, and that he should shelve it and start something new.

Unlike many others who heard such harsh criticism and panicked, this student just nodded thoughtfully, asked a few more questions, and then said, "Okay."

Chang was surprised by his poise, and asked him why he wasn't more upset.

He told Chang that before he came to fiction he was a painter, and one of his favorite teachers used to walk around the studio and ask the students what they thought of the painting they were working on. One day a student said, "This is the best thing I've ever done."

The teacher looked at the painting, nodded, then asked how attached he was to the painting.

The student said he was very attached.

The teacher took out a can of black paint and splattered it all over the

canvas, and told the student to start over. "You must never get too attached to your work," the teacher said.

Chang's student said that incident had taught him the need for detachment, the importance of objectivity for his work. By telling him to shelve the story and start over, Chang had done the equivalent of throwing black paint over his painting, and he had to start with a fresh canvas. He processed this, accepted it, and moved forward.

Chang then knew that this student would do well. He did indeed throw out his story and wrote another one, an intense story that would become the seed for a novel.

The point of this anecdote is that we should not overly attach ourselves to anything. By throwing out something that isn't working and starting over, we allow ourselves the opportunity to find something better.

Don't be afraid of black paint. ◀▶

Adapted from a blog post by Leonard Chang



Starting FRESH

The darkest night is often the bridge to the brightest tomorrow.

—Jonathan Lockwood Huie

You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream.

—C. S. Lewis

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

—Mary Anne Radmacher

Courage is the power to let go of the familiar. —Raymond Lindquist

The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall. —Nelson Mandela

Fall seven times, stand up eight. —Japanese Proverb

The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking complex, overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.

—Mark Twain

We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us.

—Joseph Campbell

Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. —Lao Tzu

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. —Anonymous