

Creating a Motivational Atmosphere

We could have named this chapter “Promoting Change.” We could not have named it “Motivating People.” We cannot motivate other people. Motivation is from within. We work with many who are fresh out of motivation and we wish we could inspire them. What we can do and must do is create an atmosphere that encourages change.

We could use a number of techniques that would cause a person to make temporary changes. Anyone can change for a short time. Anyone can coerce or bully others into change as long as they are around. How do we best facilitate change for the long-term?

Other Needed Changes in Perspective

Before you will become proficient at helping others become motivated to change, I suggest there are some other perspectives about change that we need to discuss.

You have clients who can't make up their mind if they want to change. Some of them go back and forth on major decisions until you are tempted to be exasperated. It's called being ambivalent. Ambivalence is normal - get used to it. It is not wrong. It is actually part of good decision-making. You do it all the time as you work though direction. You probably even talk to yourself as you are arguing your position. The problem comes if you cannot get past it. That is where the skill of providing a motivational atmosphere comes in.

A second perspective check we need to make is to investigate how you view resistance. Are you put off when someone resists your advice or your instruction? Wait until you get to the chapter on compliance! Resistance can actually give us great insight. When you permit resistance to surface in the conversation, you begin to identify what the issues are that are influencing the problem, and you have a greater sense of what needs work. See chapter 24 for more on this.

What Is the Stuck Point?

Every client is different and comes with a different background. The reason for a lack of motivation to change is also varied. You would help yourself if you spent some time determining if there are special situational pressures that have left this person unmotivated. Here are some possibilities:

- Fatigue – lack of physical energy
- No hope – lack of spiritual energy
- Grief – dealing with loss
- Control issues
- Recent experiences of defeat and the risk of failure
- Lack of education in option development
- Disorganization
- Barriers of shame and guilt



Each of these represents areas for which we are uniquely resourced to give assistance. We are privileged in ministry to have the wisdom of the ages in the Word of God. Some years back we established a morning class for clients entitled “Stuck Points,” and took one area a week to talk about how to identify the Stuck Point and what to do to get beyond it.

Don't get caught in a Stuck Point!

Criteria for Change

For most people, the benefit of change must outweigh the consequences of no change. This is how I help a person get past ambivalence. I ask five questions in this order:

1. What is the change you are considering?
2. What are the benefits of not changing?
3. What are the benefits of changing?
4. What is the cost of changing?
5. What is the cost of not changing?

As I ask these questions, I do not give my own answers. I am letting the person talk themselves into making the change. If I begin to give my answers, then I am encouraging an argument with me. I want instead to lead people in their arguments with their own thinking. I have been most successful in these conversations when I have been comfortable with humor and absurdity. Somehow letting people laugh at their own answers helps them to move to thinking that is more serious.

Dr. Phil has popularized a great question to ask people when they are stuck in their faulty decision-making with the now-famous, “How's that working for you?” He broadened his question to, “Are you getting what you really want and need?”

Creating the Atmosphere for Change

People are most likely to move toward change if they:

- ❖ See that their action gets them something they really want
- ❖ See that their inaction will bring them something they dread
- ❖ Find a source for replacing doubt with confidence
- ❖ Hurt enough to move away from procrastination and complacency
- ❖ Find a sense of purpose for their lives

What Role Do I Have?

Since motivation is dependent on the intrinsic, how do we influence the person? Think about what motivates you. Think about what steals your motivation. In your own humanness, you get a picture of

how the rest of the world lives. Your own testimony of motivation or lack thereof is often a helpful starting point with the client.

In looking at the issues raised above, seriously consider what you have in your biblical pouch that can give hope to clients dealing with their fear of change. Motivation is closely connected with hope, and you know the Good News of where a person finds hope. You also know that, for most of your clients, their hope bucket has been depleted because they have used up all the false hope the world provided.

One Method that Works Best

Since lasting change begins from the inside out, we need to stop applying Band-Aids on the outside. Dale Carnegie quotes an old proverb, “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” We need to learn the skill of engaging and connecting. We start with a commitment to come alongside of the client, not pushing, pulling, or jerking, but being willing to walk alongside.

We need to help people talk themselves into changing. When people wrestle with a decision and come to their own conclusion, they are much more likely to retain this belief as a conviction and act on it. If they only give lip service to change because they believe that is what you want them to do, they will change only as long as you are around.

As we engage with clients, we must partner with them in their change process. Their feeling alone in the process promotes discouragement. Their feeling secondary in the process kills determination. Partnering means walking side-by-side. Clients must decide what the goal is, but I am able to help make that a realistic and godly decision. Change is possible when clients experience acceptance, confidence, and self-responsibility. I have a role in facilitating all three.

For this to work, I don’t argue or play guru. I seek to clarify where needed and reinforce where appropriate. I confront by asking questions. I offer new perspectives as choices and options.

There will be no motivation if there is no hope. Be strong on hope, making sure to base that hope in reality. You may have to lend clients your hope until they learn where to get their own fresh supply.

“May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace
as you trust in Him
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
Romans 15:13 (NIV)

“
And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and
good deeds.”
Hebrews 10:24(NIV)