

Change

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.”

This quote is from Maria Robinson an early childhood development expert.

My son said to me recently in anger “When will you people understand that I hate change”. I had proposed a change in school. My son at 13 was exhausted with change. He had had many in his life and wanted none of it. From living with both parents in a middle class suburb in the US to living with his grandmother in Nigeria, seeing his mother some weekends and father about once a year and then moving back to the US with his mother. His young life had been filled with change.

When he had calmed down from his outburst, he said to me “change makes me anxious”. I told him everyone gets anxious with change including me, but that change come sometimes whether we like it or not and that he would have to change schools at 12th grade and he agreed that at 12th grade he was ready to change schools but not before.

I have embraced change all my life, when one direction becomes too confusing or unsettling or just boring I have changed directions and I have gone through the anxiety my son described several times. It seems I am always yearning for something different from what I have.

Nature is filled with change, seasonal changes, our bodies are also constantly changing with our cells renewed. Beginnings are always somewhat difficult, filled with anxiety even the joy of a new life at childbirth, has pain and struggle.

My longing for change started as a child looking out of classroom windows daydreaming of being any where else than where I was. As the first child in an acrimonious marriage, I started out by praying for my parents to stay together, when that didn't work, I prayed for change to leave the situation somehow.

The bible says there is a time for everything In Ecclesiastes 3 vs 1 to 8

There is a time for everything,

And a season for every activity under the heavens:

A time to be born and a time to die,

A time to plant and a time to uproot

A time to kill and a time to heal,

A time to tear down and a time to build

A time to weep and a time to laugh,

A time to mourn and a time to dance

A time to scatter stones a time to gather them,

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing

A time to search and a time to give up

A time to keep and a time to throw away

A time to tear and a time to mend,

A time to be silent and a time to speak,

A time to love and a time to hate,

A time for war and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 2 vs 22 to 23

What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.

I have had many days as described by this verse, endless toiling, sleepless nights and anxiety. I take sleeping medication many nights. Last year at Star Island was the first time I didn't take sleep medication for a whole week. I had forgotten the medicine at home and I still slept like a baby every night. The sea breeze came through every evening and washed away the need for any sleep aid.

Change is good but there is a time to stop and rest, to take a deep breath and just enjoy this one's life.

Constant anxiety is not good for the human soul or body. Constantly stimulation of our adrenal system which controls our flight/fight reaction can make us more prone to disease and never stimulating the system can also lead to disease. Change and the anxiety that comes with it is good sometimes but not all the time. Knowing when to change and when to stay till and enjoy ones current state is something I can constantly struggling with. In the end I may be running more from myself with each change instead of facing the boring or difficult middle. To create a new ending one will have to stick through the boring or anxious middle. Everything is difficult in the middle even our lives. People are generally most displeased with their lives at middle age. At youth we have dreams and hopes, strive to learn and gain expertise in one field or another we are filled with hope for the future. It is in the middle, whether we achieve our dreams of youth or not that we question, Is this all? Now with longer lives we get to be in the middle for many, many years with the probability of stagnation ever present. People may have to do the same job for 40 to 50 years, or else find ways to define their life in ever changing and evolving ways. I am in a program at Harvard where people of a certain age who want to change direction into the social enterprise sector learn to do it. Programs like this will be more common in the future. People learning and transitioning throughout their lives so as not to stagnate in the boring difficult middle. We must learn to embrace change while also knowing when to stay still, doing it while not having any kind of template.

I don't have the staying power for messy middles. I end relationships when they are in the boring or crises ridden middle. The middle when you get to know each other in ways that make relationships last forever is when I quit them. I get agitated, I worry and it all ends. My relationship with my son is the only one in which I am having to face the messy middle. I have to be there for teenage temper tantrums as I was at his first footsteps and first day at school. This is a learning curve for me. A relationship I can't quit. I will see the worst of his behavior and he of mine and we will have to continue to stick out. I am learning so much from this role of mother. It has been a gift to me. As my son changed from baby, to toddler to boy and now to teenager, I have changed every step of the way with him. As he moves to young adult I hope to continue to change and transform.

His current gift to me is to stay where I am and grow roots.