



**By Silver Rose**

# CHANGE YOUR FOCUS CHANGE YOUR LIFE

## Step Seven *Dancing with Change*

### The steps of learning to dance with change:

- One:** Accept that which cannot be changed.
- Two:** Choose—will you dance or sit this one out?
- Three:** Determine how much of this new dance you already know.
- Four:** Determine your role—Lead or Follower?
- Five:** Focus on learning the *new* dance.
- Six:** Start with the frame—it's *everything*.

### **Step Seven of *Dancing with Change*: If you step on your partner's toes, apologize and *keep dancing*.**

There are many reasons I chose the metaphor of *Dancing with Change*. One of the most important is that, when we first learn to dance, we *expect* to make mistakes. We know what we don't know and therefore refrain from putting a load of pressure on ourselves to be experts from the start.

It seems to be a different story when it comes to work or tasks at home. It is always amazing to me how many of us (myself included) get frustrated to the point of anger (dare I say rage?) when we cannot quickly master something new. If you've ever wanted to throw your computer out the window then you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Somehow, we think there is something wrong with us if it takes awhile to learn anything new. When it comes to computers, for example, we say things like, "My 8 year-old nephew can do this; how difficult can it be?"

Here is where small children (say age 10 or under) have a major advantage over adults. Most of them have not yet been convinced that struggling to learn is a sign they are stupid. Most of them want to learn because it's fun and a challenge.

In order to learn anything, it is necessary to make mistakes. Mistakes trigger a feeling of vulnerability, an extremely uncomfortable emotion and one we tend to avoid at all costs. The problem with this tactic is that avoidance costs us dearly. It keeps us from growing our skills, talent and knowledge. It keeps us from the level of mastery.

In order to master something you need to be willing to experience the vulnerability that comes with being in new territory. Ask anyone who is truly a Master how they became so and you will hear a litany of mistakes they

made along the path to mastery. They will also tell you that they make new ones all the time.

New ones—that's a clue. When I was a senior in High School I worked evenings and weekends at a department store. My boss was Mr. Keenan. I thought he was an incredibly smart man. One day I went to "confess" to Mr. Keenan that I had made a mistake. (I was raised Catholic; confession is in my DNA.) I proceeded to tell him how stupid my mistake was and how I couldn't believe I had done such a dumb thing. I babbled on and on and on until he finally raised his hand in the universal signal for "Stop." He said, "Silver, I don't care if you make mistakes. That's how you learn and it shows me you're trying. Just don't make the same mistake twice!"

I was flabbergasted. What? No punishment? No acts of contrition? Not even a single Hail Mary?!? This was the first time anyone had ever given me permission to make mistakes.

I thought Mr. Keenan was the wisest man in the world. (Side note: he was 25 years old at the time!)

Mr. Keenan, young though he was, knew what all good leaders do—that mistakes are a sign that your team members are trying. He was smart enough to tell me the boundaries—don't make the same mistake twice—and to praise instead of shame. He also made it safe for me to come to him whenever I DID make a mistake.

One of the most important attributes you can have is a rare commodity—the courage to admit when you've erred, apologize and keep moving. Continuing to move is critical—can you imagine watching TV's *Dancing With the Stars* and seeing each couple stop dancing every time they make a mistake? That would make the show at least six hours long! What every good dancer knows is: if you step on your partner's toes, apologize and ***keep dancing***. Most of the time, your partner is the only one who even notices the mistake. The same is true at work or at home. It's appropriate to apologize to your partner(s) when you err; it's not necessary to announce it to the world. Chances are, no one else even noticed.

The courage to keep dancing despite mistakes and obstacles and in the face of setbacks is a mark of greatness. Whether it's Michael Jackson practicing over and over as he invented and then perfected the Moon Walk or you at work struggling to learn a new process, persistence is key. Take it from wise "old" Mr. Keenan—mistakes are inevitable. What's important is to learn from them, apologize to anyone whose toes got stepped on, and ***keep moving***.

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