

Your Natural Ability to Adapt

I've been thinking a lot about change, particularly as it relates to caregiving. It occurs to me that this, one of the least honored societal roles and professions, requires the ability to adapt on the run, often moment-by-moment. I would go so far as to say that, if one is talented in the art of caregiving, then that person is an extremely competent Change Agent.

The ability to adapt is a useful skill to have, no matter what life brings to you. What I challenge you to think about is where you have developed this ability in the course of your life. So often I hear people say things like, "I hate change," or "I'm not good at changing." And I usually think, "That's probably a belief about yourself that is not necessarily true." Sure, there are people who cling to the old ways; the Amish come to mind. That way of life works for them. But mostly, if you are part of the mainstream, then you are adapting every day, often in fun ways (think cool new apps on your smart phone or new TV shows you like) and sometimes in not-so-fun ways (like when you update your computer and it ALL LOOKS DIFFERENT!!!)

As I think back on the 28 months of caring for Bill, I see that the nurses and doctors we met along the way all required an ability to adapt to the ever-changing course of his cancer. Some were skilled at adaptation; others were not. The ones who were exceptional (and there were many) all share the same attributes: curiosity coupled with an open mind. Hmm. Maybe that's *one* attribute. Can one be curious with a *closed* mind?



I think we are all incredible at adapting to change within our domain of interest. I know people who are brilliant at figuring out creative solutions to construction problems but get bent out of shape if their favorite TV show changes time slots. I happen to be really good at innovation as it relates to caregiving but am pretty close-minded when it comes to trying new food, let alone cooking it.

Here's the problem with restricting an open mind to one domain: you miss out on so much! For my entire adult life, everyone who knew me well understood that I did not care for the outside world. Then Bill came along, introduced me to it and I FOUND OUT I LOVE IT!! Look at all the fun I missed because I had a closed mind and no curiosity.

I'd love to hear from you. Where are you really good at adapting to change and how could you apply that ability to an area of your life you have closed off without even trying it? What new thing are you *sure* you wouldn't like but are willing to try?

