

EMBRACING CHANGE BY BEING FLEXIBLE IN YOUR THINKING

People are typically inflexible in their thinking and therefore struggle when asked to change. It is interesting to note that the struggle is more about ignorance than ability. Everyone is very capable of being flexible (to some degree or another). What holds them back is typically one of the following obstacles:

1. They do not recognise that they are inflexible.
2. They do not know how to be more flexible.
3. They are not prepared to make the effort and go through the process required to be more flexible.

Tom Sawyer said “Sometimes I just have to take out my brain and jump on it cos it gets all caked up”

People do not choose to be inflexible. It happens at a subconscious level in the brain. The phrase “neurons that fire together wire together” says it all. The more time we spend thinking about a certain idea or course of action the more time the brain has to lay down pathways to process information on that idea and/or course of action. Our brain simply gets “wired up” to work with an idea and it is then much easier to stick with this idea or follow the same course of action again and again.

Mentally a type of infrastructure develops in the brain and it is therefore logical and practical to use and reuse the same “patterns of thought” than to create new ones. Entertaining new ideas means having to create new pathways or neuro networks in the brain. This takes time and effort. Also, the pathways are not always effective in the beginning. They develop and lead to complex thinking over time. People do not understand this brain activity. All they know is that it feels much better to “stick with what they know”. They don’t know why. This ignorance robs people of the chance to explore new ideas. They don’t even think about it consciously. They respond subconsciously and sometimes miss out on the very best alternatives in life. Flexible people become more flexible because they know how to change gears mentally and the more they do it, the easier it becomes. Inflexible people often become more rigid over time. They

never learn to change gears mentally and so get left behind more and more as the world changes faster and faster.

It is essential to strive for greater levels of flexibility/resilience because the world is changing rapidly and the changes are bigger, faster and less predictable.

Our survival will depend on our ability to change by being flexible in our thinking.

Charles Darwin: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change"