



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

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By Rob Fletcher

founder of Quixote Consulting, the nation's
premier provider of corporate team building,
training and professional development

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40 Days to Change for Good was written to help you make a change for good in your life. You'll be guided through the process of creating a ritual that you follow for 40 days to change for good. It is packed with wisdom, research and inspiration from the positive psychology field, personal experience, poets, musicians, religious traditions, workshop participants and readers just like you. You'll learn what makes change stick and why it usually doesn't, why ritual trumps self-discipline, key ways to support your change for good, why forty is the magic number and more.

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Thanks,
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About the Author



Rob Fletcher, founder of Quixote Consulting (www.quixoteconsulting.com), the nation's premier team building and professional development company, is an award-winning author, speaker and consultant. His work incorporates positive psychology and fun modalities such as harmonicas, music, philanthropy, chocolate and beer into team building and professional development training sessions such as resiliency, influence and MBTI. In the last 20 years, Rob has worked with more than 200 companies, colleges and universities, helping more than half a million people with his dynamic and positive strengths-based message.

He has spoken at Meeting Planners International (NEMICE), the North East Human Resource Association (NEHRA), and the Boston Facilitator Roundtable (BFR). Also an accomplished musician, he has performed with Trey Anastasio of Phish and performed at Woodstock 94 on the same bill as Peter Gabriel, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Green Day and Bob Dylan. He was recently named the Scottish-American Man of the Year. Featured on National Public Radio, he is the author of several books, including Blues Harmonica for Beginners and the forthcoming At Your Best.

Rob's comprehensive portfolio includes everything from sustained work (multi-day training, on-going coaching) with intact teams to designing and delivering large group teambuilding events for 1000 + participants. His work has taken him to almost every state in the U.S. as well as Spain, Australia, Bahamas, Mexico and the Cayman Islands. He has received training in the "emotional intelligence" model and is certified to administer the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Rob's dynamic and friendly approach has provided both memorable experiences and tangible results for organizations as diverse as the NFL to Giorgio Armani to New Balance. He lives in Erving, Massachusetts where he is the chairman of the library trustees.

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Foreword

Have you wanted to make a change in your life? Have you made New Year's resolutions? About half of all American adults create New Year's resolutions. How successful are they?

77 percent are successful for one week.

55 percent are successful for one month.

40 percent are successful for six months.

19 percent are successful after two years.

[Source: Changing for Good by James O. Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente]

Why can't we keep our resolutions? There are several classic reasons why change initiatives fail – we make too many of them, there is no follow-through (no opportunities for action), the resolutions are made on an “I should change this” basis rather than an excitement that the change will be wonderful. The most important thing to realize is that, even with the best of intentions, almost half of all New Year's resolutions are forgotten a month into the year.

Creating New Year's resolutions is the one major change initiative opportunity that more than half of adult Americans take. Yet, the success rate is abysmal. Corporate America has an even poorer track record. 70 percent of all corporate change initiatives don't achieve what was originally envisioned. If standard New Year's resolutions and classic change initiatives are not successful, what can make change work?



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Introducing the '40 Days to Change for Good' Ritual

Have you been frustrated in the past that you've broken your New Year's resolutions? Do you want to make a change in your life that will really last? The 40 Days to Change for Good ritual is designed to help you make the change you want. What follows focuses on personal transformation, but can be applied to groups wanting to change (group change is addressed towards the end). However, as Gandhi said, "you must be the change you wish to see." Change, any change, begins with you. So, that's where we're starting.

What's a ritual?

There are many definitions of ritual, but for our purposes, think of ritual as a pre-decided repetitive action that combines practical and symbolic value. You decide what your ritual is about before you begin, you do it repeatedly (in this case for 40 days). You get practical value from doing it (otherwise why do it?) but it symbolically shows your commitment to your change, re-wiring the synapses in your brain.

This 'personal retreat' practice was recommended to me by [Joseph Jastrab](#), a senior teacher at the [Hero's Journey Foundation](#). It gives you an opportunity to go on your own quest, an important word at my company Quixote Consulting! 40 Days to Change for Good gets you going on your own change quest and gives you an opportunity to practice persistence, one of four keys to being at your best.



40 Days to Change For Good

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Change is as simple as 1-2-3...4

1 – Choose something you want to change. Choose something you want to bring more of into your life or a pattern that you want to change or redirect. Joseph recommends “love” and “faith” as two worthy topics. More on this below.

2 – Select a ritual to visit your change initiative every day. Your ritual (short and portable is recommended) should be something that you can do (and will want to do) every day for 40 days. Choose a time and a method to remind yourself to visit what you want to change each day.

3 – Mark your calendar 40 days from today.

4 – Spend time with your change ritual every day for 40 days. Just do it. Every day. 40 days, 40 nights.

Let today be Day One of 40 days to make a change in your life and make it stick. Today is the day to call to mind and heart what change for the better you’d like in your life and to visit that longing for change with a ritual. Mark your calendar on the day you are embarking on your 40 days to change for good and on the day 40 days later when you are landing.

This eBook guides you through every step of your change quest. The book is organized in seven sections.

1. Getting Ready
2. Deciding What You Want to Change
3. Crafting Your Change Ritual
4. Support For Your Change Ritual
5. Completion of Your Change Ritual
6. Resources For Your Change Ritual
7. Part Seven – Bring 40 Days of Change For Good to your Team



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Part One: Getting Ready

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40 is the Magic Number

Why 40 days? The short answer is that it's a number of historical, religious and cultural significance. It's a number that's larger than just you on your own, which means you have the power of purpose helping you along, blowing big winds into your sails.

And, it's 10 days over the minimum (30) that Positive Psychology research says is needed to make a personal change by putting a ritual into place. Quixote Consulting's [Change Quest](#) change management training and [Resiliency: Five Keys to Success](#) training both use the 30-day benchmark to help people make good changes in their lives.

We're imperfect – we're human. 40 instead of 30 allows for us to miss a day or two here or there. But the biggest reason has to do with purpose – connecting what you do with something outside of yourself.

The number 40 shows up again and again in most major religions, along with other disciplines and in nature as well. For centuries people have been using the number 40 for their quests. When you also use the number, you tap into the big energy that has supported so many for centuries as they try to be at their best.

Here are a few places the number 40 shows up. Do you know of others?

First, we have astronomy, and specifically the planet Venus. This may be where so many religions began using the number 40 for their quests. Venus forms a pentagram in the night sky over a 40-year span, with each point happening every eight years. After 40 years, Venus starts all over again from its original point.

In **Judaism**, rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights during the flood. The Hebrews lived in the desert for 40 years, which is the amount of time for a new generation to rise. Moses spent three consecutive periods of 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai. In fact, Moses' life is seen as three 40-year segments.

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In **Christianity**, Jesus was presented at the Temple of Jerusalem 40 days after he was born. Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights before his temptation. Lent consists of the 40 days before Easter.

In **Islam**, Muhammad was 40 when he first received the archangel Gabriel's revelation. He also had a 40-day retreat. The Quran says that a person is fully grown once he or she turns 40. Masih ad-Dajjal roams around the Earth in 40 days.

In the ancient **Egyptian** religion, during the time of the pharaohs, it was believed that the soul came back to the corpse after 40 days. This perhaps led to the custom of leaving food, clothing and ornaments with the body.

In **Hinduism**, many popular prayers have 40 stanzas.

In **Buddhism**, the Buddha spent 40 days meditating beneath the Bodhi tree before attaining his enlightenment.

It takes 40 weeks of pregnancy for a woman to give birth to a child. When you get 40 winks, you're getting a short sleep. Ali Baba had 40 thieves to deal with. There are (or used to be) 40 hours in a work week. Most distilled liquor is 40 percent alcohol. And many alcoholic beverages can be purchased in 40 ounce increments. Negative 40 is the temperature where Fahrenheit and Celsius meet.

The number 40 is referenced often in popular culture and it's fun to find it where you can to make this number yours. I've been listening to Muddy Waters song 40 Days and 40 Nights often for this reason. And Michael Jackson sings, "for 40 days and 40 nights the law was on her side" in Billie Jean. That's a lot of 40!

Where do you find 40 in your life? Does it help you to link your efforts with the efforts of something larger?



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The Story of the Chocolate Chip Cookies and the Beets: Why You Have Less Self-Discipline Than You Thought

Research subjects were brought into a waiting room with a chair to sit on and a plate piled high with hot, freshly-baked cookies. They were told that the experiment was running a little late, to sit down and wait and not to touch the cookies because they were for a different experiment. Ten minutes later, they were brought into another room and given a series of challenging mental puzzles to complete.

Another group of subjects were brought into the same room, with the same instructions and sat there for ten minutes as well. The difference? A plate piled high with hot, freshly baked...beets. Ten minutes later, they were also brought into another room and given challenging mental puzzles to complete. Pause for a moment and take a guess. Which group did better at the puzzles? The cookie or the beet group?

I'll give you a hint. This study is about self-discipline.

What did you guess?

If you guessed the cookie group did better at the puzzles (like I did), sorry. If you guessed the beets, congratulations!

Here's why. It takes self-discipline to complete challenging mental puzzles. It takes self-discipline to not eat amazing smelling, hot cookies so close to you. Unless you are incredibly passionate about beets (and I know there are some people who are), it doesn't take any self-discipline to resist eating beets.

The cookie group used up their self-discipline...in only ten minutes.

What does that tell you about self-discipline? It tells me it's highly over-rated. Ten minutes is nothing in a day. If you want to be at your best in your work, improve at something, or make a change in your life in 40 days, you need something sturdier than something that folds under pressure in ten minutes. You need a ritual.

(Thanks to Tal Ben-Shahar for leading me to this study!)



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Ritual Trumps Self-Discipline – Here's Why

Have you ever made any New Year's resolutions?

Have you kept all of your resolutions?

I didn't think so.

Okay, new question.

Have you brushed your teeth today?

I'll bet you have!

There is one big reason why I haven't mentioned self-discipline. It's not going to help you in the long term. Rituals help you. Rituals are just what you do. We all have rituals – we all (hopefully) brush our teeth in the morning. We put clothes on before going out into the world. We make coffee (or tea). We don't struggle with self-discipline to do any of these things. We don't say, "Today's the day! Today's the day I finally brush my teeth!" "It's a big day, I'm going to actually put clothes on today before I drive to work!" They are rituals in place.

Now, you do need some self-discipline to get a ritual started. If you do something every day for 40 days, you're creating a ritual out of nothing. But after that, it's in place.

I don't know how it happened exactly, but about 15 years ago I created a ritual where I do yoga in the morning before breakfast. It's been a daily ritual now for 15 years, and although sometimes it's a case of self-discipline, it's more that it's just what I do. I don't feel right if I don't start a day that way. It's a ritual. In the last 15 years, I've gone for a week straight at the most without doing yoga, and when that happens, I feel pretty badly.

My yoga ritual helps me, feeds me. And there isn't a question about whether I'm going to do yoga or not. The questions instead are, "What kind of yoga? For how long? What part of my body do I want to focus on?" You know it's made into ritual status if it's no longer a question of whether you'll do it that day.

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A good ritual is like a gyroscope, like a perpetual motion machine, like the Energizer bunny – it just keeps going and going on its own. Talk about renewable energy!

Positive psychology research tells us very clearly that if we want to make a change, rituals work and self-discipline doesn't. The chocolate cookie and beet experiment showed that our self-discipline is worn out after ten minutes.

Self-discipline does have a place though – it's needed to get the ritual ball rolling. You do need to rely on self-discipline for your 40 Days of Change, because whatever you're working on isn't a ritual yet. It will be after 40 days, but not yet.



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Forty Early Mornings – A Pocket Poem

The following is a pocket poem to inspire your next 40 days from Persian poet Rumi. A pocket poem is small enough to carry with you in your pocket but big enough to help you make a change. You may wish to carry this with you on your 40-day voyage.

*A new moon
teaches gradualness and deliberation
and how one gives birth to oneself slowly.*

*Patience with small details
makes perfect a large work,
like the universe.*

*What nine months of attention
does for an embryo,
40 early mornings will do
for your gradually growing wholeness.*

-Rumi



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Five 40 Days to Change for Good Change Quest Topic Suggestions

Here are five suggestions to help guide you as you decide what it is exactly you want to change.

1. Go with longings over shoulds – Make sure to choose a subject or theme that you care about, one that is important to you and you DO want in your life. For example, Americans are eating fewer vegetables than ever and they won't eat more until they like the taste better. Just because something is good for you doesn't mean it's right for you yet
2. No more than two things you'd like to change – two is good, one is great!
3. Stay clear of open-ended big-ticket items like, "I'd like to be nice to every person I meet for the rest of my life"
4. Choose something you can take action on: "I'd like to start an exercise program" is an actionable change. "I want people to be nicer to me" isn't.
5. Ask yourself, "Do I get honestly excited (and maybe a little scared) about the possibility of this change?" If the answer is "yes", you have a winner!



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What You Can Change and What Can't You Change?

“Optimism, the conviction that you can change, is a necessary first step in the process of all change. But unwarranted optimism, the conviction you can change what in fact you cannot, is a tragic diversion.”

-Martin Seligman (from What You Can Change and What You Can't)

Martin Seligman, father of the Positive Psychology movement, wrote a wonderful book on change titled *What You Can Change and What You Can't*. It's especially recommended for those of you who like to know what the research has to say. There's no self-help 'Seven steps to lose those pounds, be loved by everyone and transform your life in just 20 seconds a day!' silliness here, just what science has found can be changed and what can't.

Below are some of the interesting findings he compiled. I advise you also to take all of this with a grain of salt – personal experience trumps the folks in lab coats – there are exceptions for everything. But, if you were wondering...this research may help you decide whether to move one of these topics in or out of consideration for your change quest.

Five Things You Can Change

1. Panic can be easily unlearned, but cannot be cured by medication.
2. The sexual “dysfunctions” – frigidity, impotence, premature ejaculation – are easily unlearned.
3. Our moods, which can wreak havoc with our physical health, are readily controlled.
4. Depression can be cured by straightforward changes in conscious thinking or helped by medication, but it cannot be cured by insight into childhood.
5. Optimism is a learned skill. Once learned, it increases achievement at work and improves physical health.



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Five Things You Can't Change

1. Dieting, in the long run, almost never works.
2. Kids do not become androgynous easily.
3. No treatment is known to improve on the natural course of recovery from alcoholism.
4. Homosexuality does not become heterosexuality.
5. Reliving childhood trauma does not undo adult personality problems.

What You Can Change And What You Can't (In order of easiest to change to those that are most difficult)

Panic	Curable
Specific Phobias	Almost curable
Sexual Dysfunctions	Marked Relief
Social Phobia	Moderate Relief
Agoraphobia	Moderate Relief
Depression	Moderate Relief
Sex Role	Moderate Change
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	Moderate/Mild Relief
Sexual Preferences	Moderate/Mild Change
Anger	Mild/Moderate Relief
Everyday Anxiety	Mild/Moderate Relief
Alcoholism	Mild Relief
Overweight	Temporary Change
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	Marginal Relief
Sexual Orientation	Probably Unchangeable
Sexual Identity	Unchangeable



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Twelve Reasons Why Change Fails

Change is a very popular subject. Everyone wants to change something. Every team, every department, every company wants to change. Yet most change initiatives fail. Here are twelve reasons why they do. These apply across the board to individuals, teams, departments, companies and to your 40 Days to Change for Good ritual.

1. **Too much change – i.e., change fatigue.** If you want less change, you've got change fatigue. May be your next change initiative should be no change for 40 days!
2. **Trying to change too many things at once.** Trying to change one thing? You've got a chance. Two things? Still a chance, but less of one. Three? No chance. Twelve? Someone has either a sadistic or masochistic streak in them.
3. **Too complex/too much gobbledegook.** Want to advance the fetronic levels of bifurcation on advanced client server status through the complex usage of the IDONATR (version 10.4) on non-linear weekdays? Me neither!
4. **No ritual.** If change isn't worked on every day for at least 30 days, it doesn't have a chance.
5. **No support team.** Trying to create change by yourself without getting others to support, help, cajole, remind you.
6. **Keep it under wraps.** No public declaration that you want to change something specific.
7. **Keep it Negative.** Wanting to stop doing something without identifying a positive end result.
8. **No buy-in.** "Why should I care?" question isn't addressed.



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9. **Failure is not an option.** This statement is so over-used and so dumb, it's not an option, sorry. No failure, no progress.
10. **No way to take action.** "We want this to change. Let's hope it does, or that someone else changes."
11. **No celebration.** "That change you were working on was successful. Here's the next one to work on. Okay, back to work."
12. **Changing what you want to change.** Switching horses in midstream, mid-ritual, mid-change initiative.

Depressed yet? Don't worry! Now we'll look at twelve ways to make change work.



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Twelve Ways to Make Change Work for You

1. **Change one or two things, no more.** Less is more, (or as jazz saxophonist Les McCann once called one of his albums, Les is More). One thing, two things, yes. More, no.
2. **Keep it Simple Smarty.** This is my version of KISS. If you're smart, you'll keep it simple. Nobody, not you, not me, remembers anything complex. Still can sing that cereal jingle from when you were a kid? You wouldn't if it were an 84 minute atonal symphony. Plus it's really hard to care about something that's complex.
3. **Care About the Change.** Make sure the change is something that you/your team/company wants, feels excitement about the possibility of, and would love to see it grow. Change needs a positive feeling component. Hint: the word "should" doesn't ever generate positive feeling.
4. **Make It Positive.** Aim for the target you want, not away from the target you don't want.
5. **Paint a Beautiful Future Picture.** Create a vivid story of the benefits, what it could look like, why it'll be worth it to persist for 40 days, 40 months, 40 years. Revisit the picture throughout.
6. **Ritual.** Change needs to be visited at least once a day every day for 40 days to have a chance. If you can't commit to that, don't try a change unless you would like to fail.
7. **Who's on Your Support Team?** Gather the people who care about you, others on your team, reminders you can put up in your home or office, whoever and whatever will remind you and support you as you make your change.
8. **Make It Public.** Nothing lights a fire under someone like being publicly accountable for something. Tell people what you want to change and what you're doing about it.



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9. **Take Action.** You can't just want to, (although that's important), have to do something about it... daily.
10. **Allow for imperfection.** We're imperfect beings. We fall down and get up. We fail, we learn, we try again. The moon wobbles, butterflies don't fly straight to Mexico. Everything follows its own path. Dumb statements like "failure is not an option" sink change possibilities. All great things in your life came from failure. Let it be part of your change initiative.
11. **Stick with It.** Persist in the change you started with, even when you don't see progress and another change initiative looks way more interesting. Give it 40 days.
12. **Celebrate success.** Take time to pause at the end of a change initiative and take pride in what you've done. Whatever the result, if you stuck with something for at least 40 days, it is guaranteed that things are better than when you began. Congratulate everyone involved. Rest, recuperate. You earned it and it supports the right rhythm to make long-term changes.



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Changing Vs. Escaping – Loving Your Life While You Change It

There is a paradox in any change effort. If change isn't grounded in a calm acceptance of what your daily life is like now, unchanged, then the change is less likely to happen, and definitely less likely to happen with happiness. Where there's fear, there's tension. Where there's tension, there's clenching and a change ritual that could be joyful has too much weight of expectations. Escape movies are fun to watch but not fun to live.

I worry about change quests that begin with the sentence, "Once this change happens, only then will I be happy/loved/svelte/fill in the blank." Happiness and fulfillment are only possible now, in this imperfect setting. You take action here and now in a less than perfect situation.

Yet loving your life as it is now does not mean that you should be complacent and not try to change anything. There's the paradox! It's a challenging and potentially expansive place – loving your life and changing it in the same moment.



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Part Three: Crafting Your Change Ritual

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Six Suggestions for Your 40 Days to Change for Good Ritual

Once you've decided what you want to change, the next step is to craft a ritual that works for you. Here are six suggestions to help guide you.

1. Think of your ritual as your support team. It's there to help you along, remind you, goad you a little, keep front and center what's important to you, and most importantly to help you to take action on what you want to change.
2. Make your ritual simple (and portable if you travel). For example, if you want to start an exercise program, this would be the time you actually exercise.
3. Make your ritual short (but expandable if you are able to give it more time on different days). Can your ritual be done in five minutes or less or does it take more time? It's okay to make it long if that's what is needed (an exercise regimen for example), but you'll experience more success if it can be kept short. Some people's rituals (you'll see examples later) take no longer than three breaths.
4. Set a time of day to visit your ritual (could be more than one time of day). Again, using the exercise analogy it might be, "I'm going to walk or do yoga for at least ten minutes every day before I eat breakfast."
5. What are ways to remind yourself to 'just do it'? Perhaps an alarm on your calendar, a support partner, a string tied to your finger, whatever you'll notice.
6. Start with something, anything. It's fine for your ritual to change over the 40 days, but you need to actually do something today for it to start.



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Six Questions to Ask About Your 40 Days to Change for Good Ritual

1. Is my ritual simple and friendly enough for me?
2. How will I know if I haven't done it yet today?
3. How will I know I did it today?
4. How can this important thing not get buried in a busy life?
5. How will I support my ritual? What helpers do I need?
6. Is my ritual doable? Is it too ambitious?



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When You Say No, What Are You Saying Yes To?

When I close a book I open life.

Pablo Neruda

I found this quote from Nobel prize winning poet Pablo Neruda's poem Ode to the Book during a recent morning ritual (see below if you're curious about what my ritual was). I love it! 40 Days to Change For Good rituals work much better when you steer them towards something rather than away from something. "I'm going to think about purple antelope" works better than "I'm going to stop thinking about white elephants." Some nights after watching an enjoyable movie or basketball game I'll go outside and be stunned by how gorgeous the night sky is. Look what I missed while I was inside! Daily walks give me only a small slice of the beauty that I know is there every moment of every day. To say yes to that beauty feels better to me than just saying no to watching another basketball game. The action is the same (stopping one thing and doing another) but the framing and direction are very different.

Neruda's quote is simple and striking enough for me to apply just about everywhere in paraphrase form – "when I close the laptop, I open life; when I close Google News, I open life" and on and on. It's important to note that this quote isn't an oppositional quote from Pablo that's saying, "books are bad." Neruda is clearly wise enough to heartily hug paradox – how loving books and closing them contributes to life. It's taken from a poem called Ode to the Book after all! Ten or 20 years ago I would have thought for a little while that "books are bad" (or at least not as good) upon reading this quote, not now. I love my laptop (even though I hate it sometimes too), I loooove reading novels, and a great movie or a great basketball game is a delight I savor.

It's important to note that this quote isn't an oppositional quote from Pablo that's saying, "books are bad." Neruda is clearly wise enough to heartily hug paradox – how loving books and closing them contributes to life. It's taken from a poem called Ode to the Book after all! Ten or 20 years ago I would have thought for a little while that "books are bad" (or at least not as good) upon reading this quote,



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not now. I love my laptop (even though I hate it sometimes too), I loooove reading novels, and a great movie or a great basketball game is a delight I savor.

But I'm thankful that he put the idea of stopping an activity that is no longer feeding me in such a positive light – "instead I get to open life!" Who wouldn't want to do that? This is exactly why I suggest you name whatever change you want to make a ritual in your life in a positive way. "I want to stop smoking" may be succinct but doesn't touch on why you'd stop smoking. "I want to breathe easily and fully, for my children to have healthy air to breathe and I want to live a long and healthy life to enjoy my grandchildren" aims the same action at a positive target.

If you find it hard to close your laptop, shut down your computer, hit the 'off' button on the remote, put down the newspaper, put away the blackberry, turn off email, stop doing anything that makes your life less than wonderful, remember what you open when you do those actions – you open life, and you open up time to change for good by doing your ritual.



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ATF - The Three Keys to Successful Change

1. Action
2. Thinking
3. Feeling

Take Action – Fake It Until You Make It (Just Do It)

“Energy follows action...you act first and the inner reality follows. Your action is the call.” David Spangler (from his book *The Call*)

If you want to support your change ritual, think ATF. No, that’s not the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. ATF stands for three key ingredients for your ritual to work: action, thinking and feeling. Let’s consider the first ingredient – action.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “fake it until you make it”? This means that even if you don’t believe you can do something, if you act like you can and proceed in that way, you eventually will be able to. Interestingly enough, the research points to this both being very true and very powerful. This phrase is found in dealing with depression and in the Alcoholics Anonymous canon as well.

“The end of man is an action, not a thought.” Thomas Carlyle

If you want to change, but don’t yet believe that you can, act the way you want, be the change you want to see. Action is the first step. To take part in a change ritual, you have to actually do it, and then continue doing it.

The Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart

You must start wherever you are, whether you like where you are or not. The poet Yeats says this is “where all ladders start, in the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.” Seeds start in darkness and grow with time, attention and persistence. Get moving, and let your inner reality catch up with your actions. It will.

*“It is a time not just for compassionate words, but compassionate action.”
Marian Wright Edelman, president and founder of the Children’s Defense Fund.*



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Your Brain on Change – Why You Need Thinking as Part of Your Ritual

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”*

Robert Frost

Thinking is the second key on the ATF key chain that when used together unlocks the door of change. Psychologists call using your brain “cognition”, but let’s keep it simple – let’s call it thinking. If you’re familiar with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) the last two of the ATF acronym will be easy to remember – thinking and feeling are the two different preferences for how we make decisions according to the MBTI (although the usage of the words here doesn’t have anything to do with the MBTI – just a helpful hint).

Our synapses connect and create neural pathways. These grooves in our brain deepen every time we use them. Our habits can thus be viewed as super-highways. These ten lane expressways guide our actions. They’re easy to follow. We know where the light switch is on our bathroom wall at night. There’s a super-highway there. Stay overnight at a friend’s house and you’ll have to make a guess. No highway there. You may have a super-highway that knows where the ice cream is kept and easily find yourself there when you’re home at night.

When you want to change something, you’re asking a lot of your brain. You’re asking it to first of all stop while speeding along on the super-highway of habit and look around. Then you’re asking it to instead make a left and head into the wilderness – no path, let alone a road. You have to sweat your way through creating a small trail through the unknown forest.

This is not easy. Change, quite frankly is hard. But the beauty of the ritual is that every time you walk the path, it gets easier. The new neural pathway gets wider and deeper every time. The technical term for this is neuroplasticity. Every time you consciously stop what is easy but not helpful for you



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(your bad habit superhighway) and instead take the less traveled one, you build the one you want to travel on.

There is no way you can stop on the superhighway of the 'same old way things have always been done' unconsciously. Habits are by their definition unconscious patterns. When you use your conscious brain, you break that pattern and sow the seeds for the new habit. Every time you do your ritual over 40 days, you widen the road less traveled, you make it easier for the next time you do it. And that, like Robert Frost, will make all the difference.



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How Do You Feel About Your Change Ritual? (Want > Should)

Now we will explore feeling, the third and final key in the ATF (Action Thinking Feeling) keychain that unlocks the door of change.

Do you actually want to change whatever it is your ritual is focused on changing? Or do you just think you should change? This important distinction must be made. If you eat your vegetables because you think you should instead of because you like them, you're not going to do it long-term. Americans are eating fewer vegetables now than they were just ten years ago. This is a clue that they don't like how they taste right now – they don't want vegetables.

Positive emotions build on each other. The cornerstone of your 'change house' is feeling good about the self you see in the future if you change what it is you want to change. The next bricks you can build with come from noticing how good you feel when you do your ritual and you stick with it. Each positive feeling is a new brick.

If, on the other hand, you consistently don't feel good after doing your ritual, you've gotten a clue that you need to change your ritual. And the way to change it, to move it out of the realm of 'should' into the realm of desire and passion is to let your feeling guide the contents of both your change and your change ritual.

If you do feel good about your ritual, let that positive emotion in as deeply as you dare. Breathe in each moment of happiness, of personal pride and let it feed the fire that cures the bricks. Build your change house with happiness.



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Rituals of People Just Like You

Below are 15 examples of rituals of people who have taken part in the 40 Days to Change for Good ritual. The first two are mine. Each ritual and how it's expressed is unique. Some are extensively and vividly described; some are one sentence. Friends, colleagues and program participants have allowed me to use these to support your ritual. Besides realizing that we're all in this together, I love letting other people's rituals inform mine, getting good ideas or just simply being inspired by being part of something larger than just me. How can these ritual examples help shape and inspire yours? Feel free to take any ideas or forms you like for your ritual.

My Morning Ritual – 40 Mornings to Change

For my most recent 40 Days of Change, I practiced both a morning and an evening ritual. Here's my morning ritual, that I call What I Love's In Need of Love Today.

I've noticed lately that some simple things I love don't get the attention they're ready to get. Hence the title above, a take-off on Stevie Wonder's 'Love's In Need of Love Today' song.

I want to connect with something I love being a part of, some beauty that was born outside me and internalize it as an image or feeling to guide my day.

I look in three areas:

1. Music
2. Nature
3. Poetry

First thing in the morning, just after I wake up I connect in some way with a song, or something living in nature. I might play the song or listen to it. I might go for a walk, or look out the window, or bring the idea of nature to mind. It's important to me to really feel (not just intellectually appreciate) the beauty of that one thing, how I love it. I let this guide my day so that it's more in line with doing what I love, what I was born to do and love. I'm doing this before yoga, before breakfast.

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Here are three members of my support team for my morning ritual:

(It's helpful to have a support team for your ritual – aids, helpers, reminders, delights, etc. that can carry you along)

1. Poems and Songs. For example, Rumi's 'Let the Beauty You Love' poem and his '40 Days of Early Mornings' poems specifically help me.
2. Happiness and Positive Psychology research (for example – to make a change takes 30 days)
3. Write about the process and my experience with it in my blog.



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My Evening Ritual for 40 Nights to Change – A Gratitude Exercise

Here's my evening ritual. I don't share this to put pressure on you to also have an evening ritual, but for me it works well to have bookends to my day that are intentional and aim me back to my happiness and things I care about.

The last thing I do before I go to sleep I note approximately five things I'm grateful for from that day. I note and appreciate the small things I love that happened to me in a day. This helps reset my brain and heart for sleep after a (usually) challenging day.

Five Members of the support team for my evening ritual:

1. Happiness and positive psychology research – ritual and gratitude research – for example, studies show that this gratitude exercise increases happiness levels.
2. Write them down when I'm called to. (So far it's been nice to just have them come up as my mind drifts towards sleep.)
3. Share with those I love and care about.
4. Some physical reminder on the nightstand.
5. Write about my process in my blog

What about you? Are you trying out an evening ritual too?



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Thirteen Change Ritual Examples

Here's one from Quixote Consulting's music team building specialist, and everybody's favorite nice guy, Lou Manzi:

"I'm working on memorizing and creating nice arrangements for songs that I can perform solo. I'm mixing in re-learning old ones I forgot with new ones I've wanted to learn. I'm keeping track of them in a loose leaf binder and trying to add at least one song (new or old) a day into the book. It really feels good to look at the index each day to see the list, and my ability, growing.

I generally try to devote at least an hour to it and work on it during the late evening/early morning, between 11 PM and 1 AM (musician hours)."

Here's a brave response – this is one I treasure greatly because it fearlessly gives resistance a place at the table.

"I ain't got nuthin' that looks or feels like any intentional practice. Reading through the beautiful and dedicated plans and forms that others have dedicated themselves to have brought out both respect and also resistance in me...I am not ready to honestly and harmoniously commit to such ways right now. Maybe the future will be different. I give thanks for having learned to trust my internal weather patterns. Staying connected to them through storms, squalls, and halcyon days allows me to live the life that is inside me to live the life that is here, even if I still have ideas about the life that was supposed to show up!"

When we allow resistance in, it often leads to peak moments. Here's what he experienced shortly after letting the resistance be known.



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“My dogs woke me at 3 this morning, and the energy of everyone’s effort beckoned me to get up with them. The air was cold and clear and the moon was so bright, even as it ebbed from full, that we threw shadows as we walked. I came back to my little office in the woods, where I listened to recorded meditations. For a few hours, I just relaxed into the guidance of breath-following and heart opening, sometimes fading in attention and other times vividly alert. Just before dawn, I walked back outside to see a dark orange-red strip of sky nestled between the mountain tops and the top of the tree line. I came back and napped on my office floor with my pups. Feeling lots of gratitude for all the support and the help of traveling with others. Now to make the pancakes...”

“My ritual for early mornings includes reading, listening to a meditation or just sitting in silence. I’m turning a goblet up and open each morning with thanks for another day. I like candles in the house and decided to have one burn for 40 days, but find they only last a few hours. So now I’m thinking about building a small altar with refillable oil candles somewhere in the house. I’d like my home to be a temple of the universe rather than just a house.

Everything is changing and I’m not in a routine yet. My wife’s participation in all the exercises and rituals brings us much closer together and amplifies the whole experience. I feel very grateful for that.”

I particularly love the last part of the next ritual – to faithfully recognize the part in us that is imperfectly faithful to any enterprise we care about.

“Every morning at the moment I open my eyes and my body understands that I have done that, I will take three intentional full breaths – the first one to be grateful that I AM ALIVE, the second one that I have all my bodily functions and the third one because at least I have one more day in this physical existence.



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I will proceed with three yoga “sun salutations” (my version) with the intention to do them real slow to feel my body, my vessel this time around.

I will resume my journaling practice but this time around I will focus my INTENTION and ATTENTION to write about what it is that I have to offer to MY LIFE, to the ones I LOVE and the WORLD.

Every night when I take this body to bed I will take three intentional full breaths to be grateful of the opportunity to experience the joy, the challenges, the aliveness in me.

I have the intention to be compassionate to myself in this practice, I know I have the tendency to berate myself if I don't do it “perfectly” so I will to read every day Rumi's poem...”

*Come, come, whoever you are,
wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving!
Ours is not a caravan of despair!
Come, even if you have broken your vows to yourself
a hundred times – it doesn't matter!
Just come, and come, again.
-Rumi*

“My ritual consists of getting on the phone (a bridge/conference line) at 5 A.M. with my friend and colleague, Mark. We use the time five days a week, Monday through Friday, to check in on yesterday's successes and regrets, to set intentions for today, and finally to be there for each other as needed. We know that there will be someone waiting for us every weekday morning.

My latest ritual consists of getting up at 4:30 A.M., and taking 30 minutes before connecting with Mark, in order to review and reflect on my long-term vision and my current goals. This helps me to wake up, get present, and get energized/enlivened. It also gives me a chance to think about what's



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working or not and what else I may want to pay attention to or reflect on. Finally, it provides a space for things in general to emerge or be refreshed in my memory.

I then either work out/exercise or I plan my day's goals and to-dos and update my calendar accordingly.

I connect with my family for breakfast and then I'm off and running to soak up the day and make progress on my goals."

"Meditation for 15 minutes every day"

"Yoga every day either in the morning or evening"

"Add humor to everyday office communication at least once a day."

"Go and talk to different people within and outside of my team at least once a day."

"I sit every morning right after I wake up...sit for 10-15 minutes or however long I can and be with nothing more than my breath and my body. I wake up (God willing), take a couple sips of cool water and then warm whatever it is I choose to sit on. This is what I have longed to do on a regular basis and this is now the perfect opportunity to commit myself."



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“Some of the features of my 40 day observance include:

- Being present to the pre-dawn darkness and the transition of first light. Sitting with a cup of tea, meditation and vocal toning.
- A focus on the extended exhale and first moments of in-breath as shared in the audio meditation. I want to learn more from that.
- Being present to the light of sunset and the transition into darkness.
- A practice of extended inhale and first moments of out-breath as the sun sets. I want to learn more from that.
- Remembrance of, and prayers of support, to our collective presence.
- “Cup Turning Meditation” upon awakening and before sleep.

Not only does this retreat promise to enhance my daily life now, but also promises to be a great practice for my dying out of this incarnation and into the next adventure. I am not finished with this incarnation anytime soon, but I am ready to give this year away fully. And I am ready to become more deliberate in what and how I choose to manifest while here. I was born for this!”

I have died and been reborn in this manner every night and morning since the autumn equinox and I must say that it carries a poignancy for me that resonates deeply with what I feel is sounding within the autumnal symphony around me. I offer this fleeting world a gesture of my appreciation for its taste, tone and color; for its silence and stillness; and for all of the ups and downs that go to compose a fully lived life. And I offer myself a place to stand where I’m no longer taking sides. A place of equanimity and balance that summons me to a self that is part of a great wholeness.”

“I will get up before daybreak to spend an hour to set the day. I’ll begin by reading a short verse, and then meditating for 15 minutes or so. Then I’ll write in my journal about what’s on my mind – be it a dream I just had or something that is stirring inside about identifying and answering the call. If I’m not moved to write, I’ll read something inspirational or confronting regarding becoming a more loving



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person. My intention is to go as deep as I can and develop a thought each day that will stay with me to contemplate throughout that day. If my timing is right, I'll finish just as the sun lightens the morning sky and gives me the signal to say THANKS for being alive.”

“Walk the earth each day. Plumb my gratitude, and express it in prayer, song or ritual. Bring ceremony to my waking and sleeping. Carry the intention of returning to my body and the body of the earth for wisdom. Record my experience in writing.”



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Now's the Time – Decide On Your Ritual and Mark Your Calendar

It's decision time. What do you want your ritual to be? Take what works for you from the above writing and ritual examples, leave what doesn't. Remember, your ritual may change over the 40 days and that's okay. The most important thing is to have something in place when you begin.

Now mark your calendar 40 days from the day you'll begin your ritual. You don't have to, but it's kind of fun to do a countdown. This means that the first day you do your ritual is Day 40 and you tick off the days as you go.



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Part Four: Support For Your Change Ritual

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This section is here to support you on the most challenging (and rewarding) part of the process – your persistent daily attention to your change ritual. I recommend you refer to this section again and again throughout your 40 days.

Who's on Your Support Team? (Top Ten Suggestions to Keep Your Ritual Going)

Your ritual is a support team for something you care about and want more of in your life. But who's on the support team for your support team? Here are my top ten suggestions to keep your ritual going:

1. Get support from others.

Partner with someone to check in with you to see how you're doing with your ritual. Find others who want to do their own ritual at the same time. Share your ritual with your loved ones. You may want to form coaching pairs and schedule short coaching calls. Schedule daily or multiple times a week check-ins. Five minutes is all you need for a check in.

2. Make it public.

As the poet Robert Frost says in his poem Revelation, "all who hide too well away must speak and tell us where they are." You're more likely to do something if you publicly declare it. Don't keep your ritual and your intent a secret. Let people know about it. Schedule a presentation, report, mural, song and dance routine at the end of your ritual. Invite everyone you know.

3. Connect it with a specific time.

I have a morning and evening ritual. The more specific I make the time the more likely I am to do it – it becomes a good habit. Dawn, dusk, twilight, lunch time or just before going to bed – when is good for you? Choose a time and stick with it.



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4. Technology is your friend.

Try email reminders to yourself. Schedule your ritual in Outlook or iCal. I even bet “there’s an app for that.”

5. Connect it with something you do already.

I do my morning ritual before yoga – I do that already. I do my evening ritual just before I turn out the light and go to sleep – I do that already. How about your morning coffee, brushing your teeth, turning your car on, turning your computer on? What do you do already that can remind you to do your ritual?

6. Connect it with purpose.

How does doing your ritual help something larger than you – your loved ones, your community, the world? How can something outside of you support you? The number 40 is found throughout most major religions, astronomy, and nature – if your ritual is for 40 days, you’re connecting your ritual with purpose.

7. Celebrate your persistence every time you do it.

Gold stars, smiley faces, a pat on the back, a “good for you”, a piece of chocolate, whatever it takes. Celebrate your success – it breeds more success.

8. Get inspired by nature and art.

I’m getting a lot of support from music, poetry and nature for my ritual. There’s a wealth of inspiration to draw from these and a thousand other sources. There is a long history of questers to draw from as well as the natural world.



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9. Journaling

Note what you've discovered, write down your experience with your ritual for better or worse, describe your hopes, dreams, fears about what you want to change, record how your ritual changes. Research has shown that journaling is an incredibly powerful tool in many ways. We'll explore journaling more closely in a future chapter.

10. Welcome imperfection.

Rumi says, "Come, even if you've broken your vow a thousand times, come and yet again come." A friend who is also taking part in this 40 day ritual actually uses that quote as his ritual, which is ingenious to me. Don't let the fact that you missed a day/week/month/year of your ritual dissuade you from returning again and again with a light heart to what you care about every day.



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What Nelson Mandela Wants You To Never Forget

“Never forget that a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying.” -Nelson Mandela

Keep trying. That’s all you need to do, keep trying. Persistence = your passion applied over time. Keep trying.

Here’s a larger fragment that this quote is from. Mandela also encourages you to meditate 15 minutes a day. Perhaps that is something you’d like to try in your 40 days to change. Thank you to poet Michael Quattrone for drawing my attention to this.

“. . . The cell is an ideal place to learn to know yourself, to search realistically and regularly the process of your own mind and feelings.

In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one’s social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education. These are, of course, important in measuring one’s success in material matters, and it is perfectly understandable if many people exert themselves mainly to achieve all these. But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one’s development as a human being.

Honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, pure generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve others – qualities which are within easy reach of every soul – are the foundation of one’s spiritual life. Development in matters of this nature is inconceivable without serious introspection, without knowing yourself, your weaknesses and mistakes.

At least, if for nothing else, the cell gives you the opportunity to look daily into your entire conduct, to overcome the bad and develop whatever is good in you. Regular meditation, say about 15 minutes a day before you turn in, can be very fruitful in this regard. You may find it difficult at first to pinpoint the negative features in your life, but the 10th attempt may yield rich rewards. Never forget that a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying.”

Nelson Mandela, from a letter to Winnie Mandela in Kroonstad Prison, dated 1 February 1975.



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What Happens When a Seed Doesn't Get Nourishment?

A: Nothing.

A seed needs the proper attention, soil, time, water, warmth and eventually light to sprout and grow.

You need to actually visit your ritual in order for something to change. The poet Rumi spoke to the value of this persistence when he wrote these words, "A new moon teaches gradualness and deliberation and how one gives birth to oneself slowly. Patience with small details makes perfect a large work, like the universe."

When I get interested in something I can fall into the trap of over-preparing for it – gathering resources, information, etc. and I don't get to actually doing what I was excited about.

Imagine your ritual is a seed. You need to visit it daily for at least 40 times for your ritual to take hold, to sprout and grow and eventually bear fruit.



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Everything Wavers

“There is something useful in our wavering that needs to be honored. It gives us an experience of contrast: how we feel about our involvement with life when we are conscious and deliberate about what we are doing, compared with how we feel when we are just going through the motions. It is important to feel the difference and that is all we need do in order to grow into fulfillment. That is – and this is the great leap of faith required – once we begin to trust life. The more we trust life, the more fluid our practice becomes. The more fluid our practice becomes, the more enjoyable and natural it is.” Joseph Jastrab, senior teacher at the Hero’s Journey Foundation

Everything wavers. We’re imperfect beings. We fall down and get up. We fail, we learn, we try again. We remember, we forget, then we remember again, then we forget again.

I remember reading somewhere that if you watch the moon’s ascent in the sky against something vertical, like a tree, you’ll see that it moves left to right and back again on its ascent. What a pleasure to notice that little detail the night on my parents’ farm I looked and saw it in action. This is not the only way the moon wavers – as it gets closer to full the moon is pulled closer to the earth. You can see time lapse photography [here](#) of the moon’s phases where it becomes clear just how much the moon moves towards and away from the earth.

If you’ve spent any time watching butterflies, you’ll know that they’re not the peregrine falcons of flying insects. They are incredibly unpredictable (Maybe that’s why Nicole Kidman is afraid of them) and don’t seem to cover any major distance. Yet every year they migrate all the way to Mexico and back. Neither you nor I can do that!

The moon wobbles, butterflies don’t fly straight to Mexico. Everything follows its own path. Dumb statements like “failure is not an option” sink change possibilities. All great things in your life came from failure to do something perfectly, from wavering. Wavering, wobbling, forgetting. They’re going to



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There is a paradox here of course – you need to be faithful to your ritual otherwise nothing will grow. Yet if you try to do it perfectly with a fearful, clenched attitude, you’ll lose the pleasure and benefits waiting for you in the ritual. As a song by southern rock band 38 Special goes, “hold on loosely but don’t let go.” Everything wavers. Let your ritual be faithful, wavering, enjoyable and natural.

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What Robert Frost Has To Say About Devotion

*“The heart can think of no devotion
Greater than being shore to the ocean—
Holding the curve of one position,
Counting an endless repetition.”
- Robert Frost*

Somehow Frost nails the essence of passion, persistence and ritual in only four lines.

Counting an endless repetition

Our days can be seen in a poor light of endless repetition. Yet somehow comparing them to the ocean changes the view of that repetition. Perhaps you and I both can think of our day today of endless repetition as being as renewing as the ocean.

No matter what you do, your day is full of endless repetition. You get up, brush your teeth, put on clothes, eat something. These are just some of the things that happen in the first hour or so. Repetition, repetition, repetition. This is a major thing that grates me about air travel – the number of repetitive steps involved to get somewhere or return home. If repetition is our daily companion, it's a good idea to befriend it.

Holding the curve of one position

To me, holding the curve of one position is what we do when we engage in our daily ritual, when we persist in something and when we apply our passion and our strengths to our days. In a sea of change, these things can be unchanging. Our core passions remain constant throughout our lives. The subjects may change, but the way we best like to approach things, think about things, interact and learn are eternal – they hold the curve of one position. When we persist, we repeat and repeat something. We try and try again. Learning a piece of music, engaging our passion in our work, being a better mate or friend, speaking truth with love, these all come from daily persistent practice.

Here's to your daily ritual, your persistence and your passion continuing. Here's to your devotion to what you care about being as beautiful, elegant and eternal as the place where the ocean meets the shore.



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A Feeling Connection with the World and the Day

That's the simplest way I can describe the benefit of my morning ritual. Even if it lasts no longer than five minutes, I've started the day off at my strongest. We each have our area of strengths. One of mine is to have this feeling connection, where it feels as if my heart is engaged, not just my mind. One of my Myers Briggs (MBTI) preferences is for Feeling. So, I'm at my best when I use my feeling function. My morning ritual helps me to start my day at my best.

How about you? Is your change ritual helping you to be at your best or would you like to tweak it a little? It's there to serve you and the content can change and morph as what you need and desire changes. The most important thing is to continue the ritual.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Some Encouragement on Your Change Quest from Rumi

If you're feeling discouraged that you're missing days in your ritual, that you can't find a rhythm yet, if life and work keep getting in the way of what you care about most, here's some encouragement from Persian poet Rumi.

*“Come, come, whoever you are,
wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving!
Ours is not a caravan of despair!
Come, even if you have broken your vows to yourself
a hundred times – it doesn't matter!
Just come, and come, again.”*

Come and come again, life is not a caravan of despair, no matter how imperfect you are, how many times you forgot about your ritual or how often you hear what is on the news. Just keep coming, keep showing, keep persisting, right now. Just come, and come, again.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Let the Beauty You Love Be Part of Your Change Quest

My morning ritual is about beauty – seeking it out in nature, poetry or music and letting that beauty in. It's comforting to realize it's that simple. Beauty. Here's another poem by Rumi that has helped me over the years and I've returned to for this morning ritual of beauty.

*“Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.”*

Let the beauty you love be what you do. I'm often taking this poem literally and playing a musical instrument – a harmonica or guitar. But that's me. As Rumi says, there are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground. What's yours? Where in your change ritual can the beauty you love be what you do?



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Gratitude and Change, Happiness and Success

"We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."
Thornton Wilder

Gratitude is one of the key ingredients for happiness according to positive psychology research. I can back that research up with anecdotal evidence. My evening ritual in my 40 Days of Change is a gratitude ritual. I've noticed a theme of more peaceful sleep and calmer nights falling asleep with a smile on my face from simply noticing five things I'm grateful for from that day. Happiness leads to success, which leads to more happiness, and on and on. Progress is the primary motivator in the workplace. Gratitude is a simple way to generate a feeling of happiness, success and progress to support your change ritual.

If you would like a little more positive energy around your change ritual and your day, I recommend you consider having a gratitude moment to generate a nugget of happiness. Here are two ways you could have a gratitude moment:

Simply tell someone five things you're grateful for that happened this day/week/month. Ask them to tell you five things. Laura and I do this every day now and I look forward to it.

If you're grateful for the positive effect someone you're going to see today has had on your life, take a few moments out of the day to tell them one-on-one. It could be your spouse, child, pet, cashier, co-worker, anyone. If you have time, you can make some notes before.

Notice how you feel after doing these two things. Think of this William Faulkner quote to help you: "Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: it must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all."

Consider giving your happiness and your change ritual a strong, new current with a gratitude moment today.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

When Are the Three Twilights for You and How Can They Help Your Ritual?

*“What nine months of attention
does for an embryo,
40 early mornings will do
for your gradually growing wholeness.”
- Rumi*

Three things have led me to notice twilight – the ‘40 early mornings’ concept, occasional sleeplessness and the lessening of the amount of daylight each day when we approach the winter solstice. The less you have of something, the more precious it becomes. And, as I write this, it reminds me also how I’ve been fascinated with this time that happens twice each day (yes, morning and evening), to the point of becoming enamored with the word ‘gloaming’, and the hit song from 1877 (that’s not a typing error) “In the Gloaming”.

So, as I often do when something grabs my interest, I investigated. It turns out that there are three different kinds of twilight and here in New England where I live that means that there’s almost a two hour spread between the first twilight and actual sunrise. Here are the three different kinds explained:

First there is astronomical twilight. The center of the sun is between 12 and 18 degrees below the horizon. This brings light into the atmosphere. Not enough for you or I to notice, but it washes out the dimmest stars and nebulae.

Next there is nautical twilight. The center of the sun is now between 6 and 12 degrees below the horizon. This is the last time until the evening that sailors can navigate using stars.

Finally there is the twilight we all are most familiar with – civil twilight. The center of the sun is now fewer than 6 degrees below the horizon but not up yet. Although there is no direct light yet, it’s light



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enough to do things outside without using artificial light. Civil twilight is the one you and I can most easily notice.

In the evening, this whole process happens in reverse. This time between the two worlds is precious time. Photographers love the quality of light during this 'blue hour'. Hindus believe twilight is sacred and many rituals are performed during this time. When I'm lucky enough to be awake and/or quiet enough to savor this time I'm richly rewarded. Having a ritual of '40 early mornings' helps.

I invite you to use twilight as a support for your ritual – 40 early mornings or 40 evening twilights. They're there and available as part of your support team for your change. And in the winter the more you can connect with the movement of the light in your day, the less chance you'll get Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and the more likely that you can savor not only the precious twilight time but your whole day.

Would you like to track the twilight times as they change where you live? This [free custom sunrise sunset calendar](#) is wonderful! It turns out that the gentleman who wrote this 'labor of love' program was inspired to after moving to Massachusetts from Florida and he noticed how different the light was.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Are You Crepuscular? Are Your Pets? Is Your Ritual?

I first learned the word crepuscular when I taught environmental education. A lovely word in meaning if not in sound, it describes the activity that happens between dawn and dusk – in short, twilight. In fact, twilight itself is classified as crepuscular. My favorite sight in the sky to photograph is a phenomenon called ‘crepuscular rays.’ I used to call these visible rays of sunlight casting out from an illuminated cloud ‘God rays’ as they look positively biblical to me. They are called crepuscular rays because of how often they happen around sunrise and sunset, but I also notice them often on the edges (before and after) of storms.

I used to think of crepuscular animals as only the ones that are so small that they want to get out there, get their food and get back home before the really big (mainly nocturnal) creatures are out and about. If you’ve ever noticed how mosquitoes are particularly voracious around sunset or sunrise, now you know why – they’re crepuscular. Fireflies, summer’s delight, are crepuscular. At 3 AM they’re mainly tucked in.

But it turns out that some surprising animals are crepuscular – cats, dogs, guinea pigs, mice, rats, skunks, deer, even moose. This helps explain why your cat or dog may want to get outside when you want to continue sleeping in bed.

Everyone has their own rhythm. Perhaps your ritual’s rhythm is crepuscular.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Can Journaling Make You Happier and Help You Change?

The short answer to that question is....yes! I invite you to consider adding journaling into some aspect of your change ritual. Writing down your highs and lows, joys and frustrations is a powerful tool for a variety of reasons. Let's look first at some of the research, then at personal experience.

What the research says

As of 2009, there have been more than 200 psychological studies of the effects of expressive writing (the psychologists' term for journaling) on physical and psychological health. One of those psychologists doing many of the studies is James W. Pennebaker, the Chair of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin. Pennebaker is fascinated with words and how we use them to shape our emotional life. He has discovered some amazing things about journaling and is the source I most highly recommend if you're interested in learning more. Here are three categories of his findings:

Three Benefits of Journaling

1. Physical benefits. For example, journaling strengthens immune cells, called T-lymphocytes, decreases the symptoms of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.
2. Psychological benefits. Pennebaker found that writing about stressful events helps you to come to terms with them, thus reducing the impact of these stressors on your physical health. For example, unemployed professionals who wrote about the emotions surrounding their job loss were re-employed more quickly. And, journaling doesn't just alleviate bad experiences – it helps you to enjoy and maintain good ones. For example, people who write about their relationships are more likely to remain in those relationships.
3. Enhanced creativity. Journaling accesses your left brain, your analytical and rational side. While your left brain is occupied, your right brain is freed up to explore, create, intuit and innovate.



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My Personal Experience

I've kept a journal off and on for decades. I've never regretted the time and attention I've devoted to it. It has been a steady friend especially in hard times. Oddly enough, I've rarely looked back over what I've written. The act of writing is the benefit for me, which is what the research says as well. I'm calmer if I feel upset, happier in general, and the act of pausing and evaluating my experiences accesses a different part of my brain. The structure changes things in ways I can't fully explain, but can fully appreciate.

These days, I journal more formally on my blog, but still have a good old fashioned black and white \$1 notebook that I write in as well. The following are some of my journal entries that came from doing my change ritual. I notice now that the more powerful days of my change ritual were the ones that included these journal entries. They first appeared in my blog as I wrote them. You'll notice a theme of autumn turning into winter as this was the time of year I did this particular change ritual.

Your Journaling Experience

I hope the following journal entries help to inspire you to include journaling in supporting your change ritual. If you do, find your own way to it. Make your journal work for you. You may want a beautiful leather book, you may want a simple one like I use. You may want a special pen, bookmark, time and place to write. Or you may want a Bic pen or whatever's around and scrawl a word or two any old time of the day. Let it support you and your change ritual. It's a powerful tool but it's up to you to decide whether it's a tool you want to use and how you want to use it.



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by Rob Fletcher

Entries From My Journal

Here are some of the journal entries I wrote during my last 40 Days to Change For Good ritual, which went from early November to December 21, winter solstice. You'll notice that much of what is written was influenced by nature at that time of year. I include them here with an aim to help you invigorate, re-energize your change ritual both by inspiring you perhaps to journal as well but also with the content of the writing.

Rilke, Nature and Faith (Journal – Day 40)

Here's what came to me on the first of my 40 days of change.

A walk in the woods on a cold, sunny morning brought out the same word I noticed twice while reading my favorite autumn poet, Rainer Maria Rilke's poems. That word is faith.

Rilke trusted the falling that autumn brings out. In his poem Autumn, he says, "The leaves are falling...we're all falling." He said it calmly. How do I know? The last line of the poem is, "And yet there is Someone, whose hands infinitely calm, hold up all this falling."

Now on to his two quotes on faith. He says, "I have faith in all those things that are not yet said." And he says, "I have faith in nights." How beautiful! And perfect for the late autumn, the darkest days still ahead and nearing.

On my short walk, I saw how most of the leaves had left the trees. Only some of the red and white oaks held their leaves near the top. Even the large beech tree I love has let go of most of its leaves. Yet, there was no panic in the woods that morning. Nothing seemed concerned at all about this falling of the leaves. A bird fluttered in a bush and a chipmunk rooted among the leaves, finding and eating an acorn it found.



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Everything in nature seemed to be silently highlighting faith. It was saying to me – patience. This is exactly how it should be. This is the rhythm of true growth, this quiet, this darkness, this cold, this emptiness. Without it, nature could not do what it does.

If you don't think you have a lot of faith (and there were times recently, in the middle of bronchitis, that I lost faith that the pressure in my chest would ease), nature is calmly there to help. We humans love the idea of the upward spiral, that things will continually get better. Nature can help us with the idea of the full circle spiral, that things circle.

Nature, Rilke, faith. Faith in nights, in things not yet said, in falling, in darkness, in sickness, in cold. Here's to your growing faith in change not yet visible.



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This Morning, in All Its Fleeting, Eternal Glory (Journal – Day 32)

This morning, just after dawn, as I was bringing wood in for the stove, I noticed a thin skin of ice in the standing water in the tomato planter on the porch. The sunlight hitting it revealed a large crystal webbed design, as if a snowflake had been magnified a thousand times – beautiful!

An hour later I returned and it was all gone, warmed by the November sun. All day I carried two realizations with me from this encounter – how everything changes and how much hidden beauty there is all around us that we will never know.

This sense of everything changing was reinforced by raking leaves later in the afternoon. These leaves had been alive and vital on the tree all spring and summer, now fallen. They didn't have a visible form a mere eight months ago. Now, back to the earth. Just like us, just like everything in nature, to begin some other cycle. This poignant blend of transience and immortality is happening every moment. Beauty comes and goes, and comes and goes again.

It's a lucky moment to be able to pause and note at least one instance of this ridiculous abundance of beauty, in all its fleeting, eternal glory.



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by Rob Fletcher

Flowers in November (Journal – Day 28)

On my morning walk, the air grey and moist, the woods grey and bare, yellow pompoms of confetti on the witch hazel shrubs among the pine trees caught my eye. What's going on? This is November! Is something seriously wrong with the woods? Is this global warming? Why is this bush blooming now while everything else I see is tucked in for a long winter's nap?

It turns out that all is well, which is one of the many messages nature broadcasts every day. American Witch Hazel (there are more than 250 international varieties of witch hazel ...who knew?) blooms in October and November. This is the one distilled to make witch hazel extract. Most of the other witch hazel varieties blossom in the winter. And regardless of when they blossom, these petals often stay on and open throughout the winter. They may curl up a bit, but there they are to bravely decorate the January and February cold.

In fact, they need that cold. The dry, freezing weather opens the seed pods under the flower. Apparently these seed pods (that have been ripening for a full year!) open with a snap and shoot out their seeds up to 20 feet away. I've never seen or heard this, but I'm ready to pay closer attention now.

This surprising flowering reminded me of projects that I'm passionate about – how they can often appear to be yielding no positive results and then out of the blue...fruition! It's helpful to remember that what you care about has its own time to blossom that is usually wiser than your hopes and fears.

Everything has its own time to bloom. You have your own time to bloom, to blossom, for your passion to reach its fulfillment. Some of us blossom in the spring, some in the summer, some in the fall of our lives, and some...even open in the winter.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

How Can Pine Needles Help You Persist? (Journal – Day 22)

Every morning walk I let one particular thing be noticed. This morning it was pine needles.

I live in an area full of white pine. Our property is mostly white pine and red oak. I enjoy the white pines – to me the softest and brightest of the pines – and their soft needles that shine in the sunlight. But I also see them with a woodcutter's eye – no good for the wood stove, too much resin. And after the initial beauty of the needles falling in the air on windy October days, I often view the needles with vague annoyance – something else to be raked.

I've often noticed that if you don't appreciate or notice something enough, you can probably be helped by getting closer. Pine needles are no exception. Everywhere I looked down – a rich brown mat, intertwining and layering on the ground. Their color now is such a different one than the living green and in many ways no less beautiful. Each bundle a grouping of five needles. They fall attached together, and stay attached on the ground, held together still. Everywhere as far as the eye can see – five, five, five....A field of fives.

Unlike the deciduous trees that grow their leaves and release them in one year, pine needles let go after three to five years on the tree. Three to five years, that's their rhythm. Imagine if the forest had stockholders. "The maples are producing well, but these white pines! They're poor performers. We need to shake things up there, and get product up."

Thankfully, the trees have no shareholders, and wouldn't care if they did. They have a rhythm they trust. And the white pine releases its needles in a rhythm it trusts. Once a bundle of needles has lived on the tree for three years, it is ready to fall. The group of five needles grows up together and lets go together. They aren't seeds – they won't directly grow new pine trees. But on the ground they will probably block out competing plants, go back to the soil, and feed either the same tree again or one of its off-spring growing nearby.



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I'd like to take the white pine needle's persistence in living its own rhythm as inspiration for today. May I trust that all the important work I want to do with my life – the books I have yet to write, the music yet to play and record, the people I want to touch with my work – has its own rhythm, its own cycle of completion.

What in your life is important, but not yet come to fruition? Perhaps you too can apprentice with the persistence the needles of the white pine show and let the true rhythm of your work guide your day.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Memories of Twilights (Journal – Day 16)

“Heavenly shades of night are falling, it’s twilight time. Out of the mist your voice is calling, ‘tis twilight time. When purple colored curtains mark the end of day I’ll hear you my dear at twilight time.”

- from the song Twilight Time, sung by The Platters

While I was out in the cold grey twilight yesterday, I was reminded of a few twilight memories that are strong for me. Twilight is a potent time for memories and looking back.

Memory Number One – My grandmother Kittie Fletcher, then in the twilight of her life, sitting quietly in the dark in her home, with no lights on. She would wait until she could barely see anything before she put a light on. This wasn’t depression era thinking to save electricity. She had insomnia and her nights were long. She didn’t need them any longer and waited out the last minutes of the faded day before she let her long night begin.

Memory Number Two – Sitting on the top of the hill overlooking my parents’ farm after the sun has set, one of their dogs sitting next to me. Watching the post-sunset red, orange and gold leave the sky. Seeing the horses and cows move in the gathering dimness in the pasture below. Seeing lights flick in houses across the valley. Wondering what they were doing in each one of those little homes with their little square of light. Finally seeing the lights go on in the farmhouse below and walking down for dinner, breathing in the freshly-cold air.

These are just two of my memories. What are your twilight memories and can they help connect you more deeply with your change ritual if you’re doing your ritual during this time?



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Part Five: Completion of Your Change Ritual

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40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

The End of the Beginning – Solstice and Paradox

This is written for you after you have completed your 40 days of ritual.

I invite you to pause for a moment and look back on the last 40 days. What has changed for you regardless of how regular or irregular you were with your ritual or even if you never got around to having one? Notice what worked for you in your ritual and what didn't work so well.

The last day of my ritual was the Winter Solstice. On this auspicious day (after all I'd been looking at this day for the last 40 days), the word paradox was very useful. It was the longest night of the year up here in the northern hemisphere. And it's the most light-filled night – a full moon. And within that contrast of light and dark, there was a full lunar eclipse in the early morning hours. A light-filled night that went dark for hours, light returned, then the full light of the sun arriving as late as it's going to in a day. This was the first day of winter, the coldest season, yet the first day of winter brings the return of the increasing light. And that's just the northern hemisphere. Below the equator, this day is marked as the height of summer, the longest day – all on the same planet.

How about you in your personal life? My days are a paradox of excitement about writing and tired weariness, quiet peacefulness and raw feelings, contentment and melancholy, a longing to share my passions with others and a longing for solitude, and most importantly the end of this ritual and the beginning of the rest of life.

This is the end of the beginning – you've crossed the finish line that gets you to the starting line. What now? Continue your ritual? Change it? Take a break? See whether consciously doing your ritual has grooved enough pathways in your brain to enable it to continue unconsciously?

On the final day of your change ritual I invite you to sit with this paradox, to see all that has changed, to see what hasn't. To celebrate your hard work, and to celebrate the imperfect way you live your life and your commitments, and to listen – what your life wants to do next with your ritual.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

What Has Your Ritual Done for You?

Take some time to bring your dedication to completion by noting the benefits of your persistent effort. One reader wrote me, “I have become more productive and more at ease knowing that I am clear and on top of things.” I love that! Productivity and ease – a powerful combination. I’d like to share what my ritual has done for me. You may recognize elements of your quest in here as well.

What My Ritual Has Done For Me

Started the day off the way I want – By connecting with beauty and feeling through music, poetry or a walk (when I was able to), I was able to start the day at my best and it often spilled into wonderful little areas in the rest of the day. Even if I forgot all about it by lunchtime, I can see that it colored some of my approach below the surface and helped shift me in little ways toward the way I want to live my work and life.

Ending the day the way I want – By calling up things I was grateful for at the end of the day, it counteracted my sometimes tendency to fight against all the bad things that happened. It was a true shifting of the spotlight. I slept better because I was in a place of safety, not danger or some kind of war, which can definitely happen to me before I fall asleep.

Brought my different worlds together – My personal, work, spiritual, and relationship selves all were involved in some aspect of this ritual – a powerful combination.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

What Supported the Ritual and What Didn't?

What worked for your ritual? Who were the most valuable members of your support team? Here are mine.

Having some aspect of the ritual depend on another person – Doing my evening ritual with Laura really helped. Another reader of this blog shared the same thing – he has an early morning call with a friend that he has no trouble doing, but the solo aspects of his ritual are harder to get to.

Knowing there are others doing their own ritual right along with me was helpful.

The clearer the better – I was better able to do my evening ritual because it was so precise – list five things I'm grateful for. I didn't stick with the number five – that didn't work for me, but it helped to have it be that precise in the beginning. In the morning, I had music, poetry and nature to choose from and sometimes nothing got picked.

The shorter the better – Again, I was more successful with doing my evening ritual because it was so short – five minutes and I'm done. The morning ritual was more open-ended and I experienced more internal resistance because I thought it might take too long (and I had to choose among the three)

Sleeping in late didn't support the ritual. It was especially hard after a late night hockey game. I often felt pressure to get going with my day and not "waste time" with the ritual.

Connecting my ritual to many different aspects of my life helped. Using the same material in personal, work, spiritual, relationship and friendship areas helped to reinforce each area and bring those selves into the same room.

What has your ritual done for you?



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by Rob Fletcher

Celebration Time!

The end of anything is important to pause and celebrate. The end of your change ritual, the end of a work year, the end of a project, the end of a busy season of juggling work and family obligations, anything.

Today I invite you to pause and view all that has changed and what hasn't in this ritual cycle, in this year and beyond. It is time to celebrate your hard work, and to celebrate the imperfect way you live your life and your commitments.

Celebrate success – Take time to pause at the end of a change initiative and take pride in what you've done. Whatever the result, if you stuck with something for at least 30 days, it is guaranteed that things are better than when you began. Congratulate everyone involved. Rest, recuperate. You earned it! And it supports the right rhythm to make long-term changes successful.

In a war, you're not allowed to rest. When we're caught in a feeling of fear, it's as if we're at war. Fear says, "there's not time to rest, to pause. It's not safe." If fear is saying that to you, tell it to go for a walk without you.

If the phrase "peace on earth" appeals to you, this is your chance. Celebrating your successes is something that could only be done in a time of internal peace.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Reward – Three Steps To Collecting Your Real Bonus

The end of a ritual is a time to reward your self. Many people traditionally receive bonuses at the end of the year. While money is high on the list of priorities of people in terms of job satisfaction, it's nowhere near the top. I invite you instead to create your own reward and your own bonus. Here are three steps:

First, notice and celebrate what you've done, as mentioned above. But also notice and celebrate how you felt during your work, especially when you felt truly happy or simply lost in the activity – when you were in a state of flow. Time was neither short nor long, it was almost as if you were in a place that was timeless. That's to be celebrated!

Secondly, find the reward within the ritual, within your work day. Give yourself a reward by luxuriating in doing your ritual, taking as much time as you want to thoroughly enjoy it.

Thirdly, ask yourself why you do your work, your ritual. What's your motivation?

Why? One reason is that research has shown that extrinsic rewards (if I do X, I'll reward myself by buying myself Y) actually have a negative motivation for people to continue long-term. If your kids aren't able to understand the contribution they make to the family by bringing out the garbage, they're not going to want to. If you pay them to do it, or give some other extrinsic reward, it's guaranteed they're going to view taking out the garbage as an unpleasant task, not just now, but long after they leave your home.

Howard Gardner in his book *Changing Minds* says that giving resources or rewards to get a person/group/country only works as long as the rewards are given. The moment the reward stops, the behavior goes back to the original behavior before the reward was given. Not exactly a long-term solution!

If you want the hard work of your ritual to stick and continue to help your life, notice what it has given you, celebrate it and reward yourself with a luxuriant session with your ritual. It's the best path to long-term successful change and to happiness from your ritual.



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by Rob Fletcher

Part Six: Resources For Your Change Ritual

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40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Twenty Songs To Help You Change – A Change Playlist

I love playlists. I have playlists to help every mood – quiet, no words, medium tempo jazz, up-tempo workout, and on and on. I love creating specific soundtracks to help me in my work and life. Most of my computer's hard drive space is filled with music. It's one of my passions.

Here's a playlist I created to help you change. Select a few songs from the list to be your theme, your soundtrack for your 40 days of change.

What songs speak to you on this list? What ones am I missing? Let me know!

1	✓ Changes	3:35	David Bowie
2	✓ Man In The Mirror	3:50	Tuck Andress
3	✓ A Change Is Gonna Come	4:19	Aretha Franklin
4	✓ Change Of The Guard	3:37	Steely Dan
5	✓ Change Partners	3:14	Crosby, Stills & Nash
6	✓ Changed My Mind	2:46	k.d. lang
7	✓ Changes	6:09	Yes
8	✓ Chicago / We Can Change The World	3:58	Graham Nash
9	✓ Fast Changes	5:41	Seal
10	✓ See The Changes	2:59	Crosby, Stills & Nash
11	✓ Winds Of Change	4:02	Eric Burdon & The Animals
12	✓ Papa's Got a Brand New Bag	2:07	James Brown
13	✓ Brand New Day	6:20	Sting
14	✓ A Brand New Me	2:27	Dusty Springfield
15	✓ I Want A New Drug	3:32	Huey Lewis & The News
16	✓ New Attitude	4:09	Patti LaBelle
17	✓ New Position	2:20	Prince
18	✓ A New Shore	3:49	Steven Page
19	✓ There's A Brand New Day On The Horizon	2:02	Elvis Presley
20	✓ Tomorrow's Gonna Be A Bright New Day	2:54	Jim Croce



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Six Books to Support 40 Days To Change For Good

Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward by James O. Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente

[The most useful and easily applicable book on personal change I've found yet. Highly recommended.]

Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own And Other People's Minds (Leadership for the Common Good) by Howard Gardner

[Great research as to what makes people change their minds, and what doesn't work. This work is one of the cornerstones of Quixote Consulting]

Gandhi An Autobiography – The Story of My Experiments with the Truth by Mahatma Gandhi

[Surprisingly, it's a page-turner. A fascinating and inspiring account of a man dedicated to personal change and through that his country and beyond]

Three Recommended Books from the Positive Psychology field

What You Can Change . . . and What You Can't: The Complete Guide to Successful Self-Improvement by Martin E. Seligman

[Especially recommended for those of you who like to know what the research has to say. There's no self-help 'Seven steps to lose those pounds, be loved by everyone and transform your life in just 20 seconds a day!' silliness here, just what science has found can be changed and what can't.]

Authentic Happiness by Martin E. Seligman

[Again, authoritatively well researched.]

Happier by Tal Ben-Shahar



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Part Seven: Bring 40 Days of Change For Good to your Team

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40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

The Two Most Important Things To Do When Leading a Change

Q. What's the biggest difference between individual change and group change?

A. Group change is harder.

It's that simple. In fact, group change is much, much, much harder. This eBook is primarily devoted to individual change, but can be applied on a group level. Making any kind of change is hard, but change can happen, both on the individual and group level. If you're in a position to lead a change in your team/department/family/relationship/group of friends, I have two recommendations for you.

The Single Most Important Thing to Do Before Leading a Change

Are you leading a change? Start with yourself. Spend 40 days with a ritual to change something in your life. This is the best action you can take to be a successful change agent.

Everything you need to know about how change succeeds and fails can be learned in your own life experience during this time. Your pitfalls will be a group's pitfalls. Your successes can be a group's successes. The human side of change is really the only side that matters – changing behavior. And, your expectations and optimism about change will be tempered by your experience.

The Single Most Important Thing to Do While Leading a Change

"Be the change you wish to see." Gandhi

Actions always speak. Words only speak sometimes. Own the change, live it, care about it, champion it, show what it's like in action. People take their cue from others' actions, not their words.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Quixote Consulting is Ready to Help You Lead a Change For Good

There are four exciting ways you can bring Rob Fletcher and his team of Quixote Consulting consultants to you, your team and your company to help you lead your 40 Days to Change for Good movement.

1. [Speaking](#)
2. [Coaching](#)
3. [Training](#)
4. [Team Building](#)

Three topics incorporate this 40 Days of Change For Good eBook :

- 40 Days of Change For Good – This speaking and training topic exclusively focuses on the content you find in this eBook and goes in-depth with activities, research and hands-on material
- [Change Quest](#) (see the description on the following pages)
- [Resiliency](#) (see the description on the following pages)



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Change Quest: Change Management Team Building and Training

Change is inevitable. In a challenging global environment, companies and teams need to evolve or else. So if change is inevitable and truly needed, what are the ingredients for a successful change initiative? How do you navigate the tricky emotional waters when change happens, whether you're in the driver's seat or not?

Change Quest: Change Management Team Building & Training helps your people view change as a blessing and not a curse by exploring practical tools and techniques to transform your team into change agents. And your team will be able to practice changing immediately with Quixote Consulting's proprietary Forty Days of Change For Good activity.

Designed by Quixote Consulting founder Rob Fletcher, Change Quest: Change Management Team Building & Training helps you avoid the pitfalls that too many ineffective change initiatives fall into. We'll examine your unique change situation step-by-step as well as examine case studies of successful and unsuccessful change initiatives. And we'll look at the big picture by discovering how to both lead and manage change for maximum effectiveness.

Change Quest: Change Management Team Building & Training will provide you with tips to overcome 'change weariness' and inertia while instilling a sense of purpose in your team. You'll learn how to communicate most effectively about change, prepare for the unexpected and keep cool under pressure in rapidly changing environments.

You'll learn techniques to maximize your optimism and your faith that things can get better, a core ingredient in rallying others to a better, post-change future. You'll also be better equipped to universally address the universal fears and anxieties people have when faced with change.

If the 'same old way of doing things' isn't cutting it anymore, it's time to begin your Change Quest. Together we'll make the change you need happen faster than you ever dreamed possible.

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40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Results

- Practice changing immediately with Forty Days of Change For Good activity.
- Learn why some change initiatives fail while others are successful.
- Discover how to create a sense of urgency that energizes people.
- Find out how to empower your people to take ownership and be change agents.
- Discern what you have power to change and what you don't.
- Uncover ways to help people with the emotional side of change.
- Learn what kind of communication is key to successfully navigating change.
- Develop a change action plan that leaves room for unexpected change.
- Overcome 'change weariness' and spark excitement around change initiatives.
- Craft change initiatives that really work.
- Get people "on board" mentally and emotionally for change.
- Help everyone take ownership of change initiatives.



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Resiliency: Five Keys to Success

Resiliency is the answer when we are asked to do more with less, and the rate of change and complexity continues to accelerate. In this fun and interactive workshop, we will examine five key principles of resiliency:

1. Engagement
2. Efficiency
3. Endurance
4. Flexibility
5. Loving the Game

1. Engagement – Learn what gets you fully engaged in your work, when your skills match the challenge, you get lost in the project at hand and experience the optimal experience of ‘flow’.

“Flow has the potential to make life more rich, intense and meaningful...it increases the strength and complexity of the self.” Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

2. Efficiency – Identify your strengths and how to put them into action. Learn the principles of 80/20, ‘Slowing Up’, Unitasking, what to say ‘no’ to and a host of time management techniques to reduce wasted effort and increase your effectiveness.

“Efficiency is doing better what is already being done.” Peter F. Drucker

3. Endurance – Find out how to renew yourself, increase your overall energy and pace yourself for your strongest long-term performance.

“Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory.” William Barclay



40 Days to Change For Good

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4. Flexibility – Uncover your preferred techniques for dealing with change, and keeping calm and focused in an uncertain world.

“They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.” Confucius

5. Loving the game – Gather techniques to maximize your happiness and encourage the spirit of play and having fun in your workday.

“Adults and children who are put into a good mood select higher goals, perform better, and persist longer.” Dr. Martin Seligman

Together we’ll examine the latest findings that will arm you with the tools and techniques that will enable you to perform at your best. Here are some of the different disciplines we’ll learn from:

- Strengths-based Research
- Emotional Intelligence
- Positive Psychology
- Top Sports Performers
- Communication
- Time Management
- Buddhism and Yoga

Prepare yourself for a session unlike any you’ve experienced before. It will give you the tools to transform how you approach your job and your life.

Results

- Transform stress and/or boredom into a ‘sweet spot’ of total engagement.
- Discern what’s most important to complete in a project.



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Results Continued

- Learn your best path through challenging changes.
- Raise your level of happiness and work/life satisfaction.
- Help team members to value, work with and leverage the strengths of others.
- Keep cool in high-pressure situations.
- Be present and focused during high-impact situations such as presentations and client meetings.
- Work both more efficiently and more effectively.



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Part Eight: Workbook

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40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Deciding What You Want to Change

Change Wish List – List some changes you'd like to make in your life. Brainstorm as many as you'd like. What changes would make you happiest?

Funnel Time – Now funnel your change wish list through these suggestions. Which one holds up best?

1. Go with longings over shoulds – Make sure to choose a subject or theme that you care about, one that is important to you and you DO want in your life.
2. Choose only one change topic. Just one. What one would you most want to live with for 40 days
3. Stay clear of open-ended big-ticket items like, "I'd like to be nice to every person I meet for the rest of my life."
4. Choose something you can take action on: "I'd like to start an exercise program" is an actionable change. "I want people to be nicer to me" isn't.
5. Ask yourself, "Do I get honestly excited (and maybe a little scared) about the possibility of this change?" If the answer is "yes", you have a winner!

Decision time – What's the one change topic you want to build your ritual around?



40 Days to Change For Good

by Rob Fletcher

Crafting Your Change Ritual

Ritual Brainstorm – What daily rituals might help you to make that change? Read these suggestions and start brainstorming!

1. Think of your ritual as your support team. It's there to help you along, remind you, goad you a little, keep what's important to you front and center.
2. Make your ritual simple (and portable if you travel). For example, if you want to start an exercise program, this would be the time you actually exercise.
3. Make your ritual short (but expandable if you are able to give it more time on different days).
4. Set a time of day to visit your ritual (could be more than one time of day).
5. What are ways to remind yourself to 'just do it'?
6. Start with something, anything. It's fine for your ritual to change.

Funnel Time – Now funnel your ritual ideas through these questions. Which one holds up best?

1. Is my ritual simple and friendly enough for me?
2. How will I know if I haven't done it yet today?
3. How will I know I did it today?
4. How can this important thing not get buried in a busy life?
5. Is my ritual doable? Is it too ambitious?

One of these lucky rituals will win a dream date with you for the next 40 days. Which one will it be? And the winner is...



40 Days to Change For Good

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Support For Your Change Ritual – Who's On Your Support team?

1. Get support from others. Who can best support your change ritual and how can they best support your change ritual?
2. Make it public. How can you let people around you know about your change quest?
3. Connect it with a specific time. When are you going to do your ritual and how will you know if you haven't done it and how will you know you've completed it?
4. Technology is your friend. Email reminders? Outlook appointments?
5. Connect it with something you do already. What do you do already that can remind you to do your ritual?
6. Connect it with purpose. How might doing your ritual help something or someone outside you – your loved ones, your community, the world?
7. Celebrate your persistence every time you do it. Gold stars, smiley faces, a pat on the back, a “good for you”, a piece of chocolate, how would you like to celebrate?
8. Get inspired by nature and art. There's a wealth of inspiration to draw from these and a thousand other sources. Where can you get inspired?
9. Journaling What's the best way for you to note what you've discovered, write down your experience with your ritual for better or worse and record how your ritual changes?
10. Welcome imperfection. How can you let the fact that you missed a day of your ritual not dissuade you from returning with a light heart to what you care about every day?



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My Change Ritual In All Its Glory

The Change I Want To Make:

My Change Ritual:

Time of day I'll be doing my ritual:

How I'll know if I haven't yet done my ritual each day:

How I'll know that I have done my ritual each day:

My support team (how I'll be helped, reminded, energized, cajoled, inspired to persist)

1 –

2 –

3 –

4 –

5 –

The date today:

The date 40 days from tomorrow: