

How to Make Real Change in Your Life

Adapted from Dr. Ronald Alexander's new book, *Wise Mind, Open Mind: Finding Purpose and Meaning in Times of Crisis, Loss, and Change* (New Harbinger Publications, 2009).

Want to make a change in your life? Whether it's losing weight, a career change, or remaking a relationship if you want to make any real and lasting changes then you can't do it alone. I work with hundreds of patients and workshop attendees who desire to transform their lives and one of the first points I tell them is that for real success they initially need to build a Wisdom Council of Support. Like an owner assembling a start-up baseball team you begin with those players who are already available to you, being mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

In the council of support you bring people you respect around you, and who are not afraid to exercise what I call a strong dialogue with you in a way that a guru or teacher is not afraid to crush your ego. It is like creating a family of supporters who are willing to bring you along on your path, whether it's an idea or a project you are developing, and are willing to confront you when you're in your ego or your nonsensical stuff. They will also help you move through any resistances that arise and overcome your procrastination or hindrances to the changes you want to make.

The core players to consider for your team are a peer, an educator, an entrepreneur or someone who can inspire you, some type of leader such as a minister or a role model, a coach who can help you clarify your goals and get organized. If you are looking for work you may also want to include a headhunter, employment agency or an out placement source. I would also suggest someone who has more experience than you and a therapist who can honestly confront you and wisely guide you. If you are on a limited budget you could ask someone at your church or synagogue, look into Toastmasters International or check out SCORE.org, a national association of retired business people dedicated to mentoring anyone who is sincere about developing a project.

Selecting wisdom council members requires that you be sensitive to others' needs, boundaries, and time. You want them to be available to you, but some members of your council won't be able to be on call, or respond quickly or at length to your requests for guidance, insight, and help in working through problems and some may require payment for their services. The key is not to become *needy* but to stay *needful*. Needy is not honoring people's limitations or respecting their time. A needful person is someone who is aware of their needs but simultaneously is considerate and sensitive to other people's situations.

The key to success is to be alive, open and present in order to receive what is unfolding. Check your ego at the door and listen to the possibilities not the limitations. Every change is possible if you are truly sincere, committed and willing to persevere.

Ronald Alexander, Ph.D. is the author of the widely acclaimed book, *Wise Mind, Open Mind: Finding Purpose and Meaning in Times of Crisis, Loss, and Change*. He is the Executive Director of the OpenMind Training® Institute, practices mindfulness-based mind-body psychotherapy and leadership coaching in Santa Monica, CA, for individuals and corporate clients. He has taught personal and clinical training groups for professionals in Integral Psychotherapy, Ericksonian mind-body healing therapies, mindfulness meditation, and Buddhist psychology nationally and internationally since 1970. (www.openmindtraining.com)

Watch Alexander's YouTube Video on How to Build A Council of Support: Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYuknKKS2A>