



Making a New Start, by Patty De Llosa

Making a new start isn't starting 'again.' There's no 'again' about it. New is new. But by now I've learned how quickly I slip back into the old, so making a new start needs constant renewing. That means I have to work at the 'new' part when everything calls me back to old ways. As F. M. Alexander said, "Change involves carrying out an activity against the habits of life."

I'm hard put to find words to describe this active work of renewal, so I'll try to recount the experience itself. First, there's the moment of truth: I've connected with my life on a deeper level than before. Then there's the vision awakened by the experience. I've understood something and been given a new opportunity to live by it, to base my life on that vision.

However, clarity fades away like a receding tide as old habits of thought and feeling come flooding back in. How to withstand their undertow? Is direct combat a viable solution? I've tried it, of course, but it's like doing battle with a big wave rather than diving through it and I've been swept away many a time.

I call my new way to work with it "planting seeds of change." Every time I wake up to the Old, I find some way to plant a seed of New, even if there's little else I can do against the force of habit. For example, this morning I noticed my demandingness, the Autocrat in action, and tried to take a step back, an inner withdrawal of belief in him. I'm not trying to shoot him down. He's too powerful for that! But I'm separating out from him - into him and me - as I take notes on what he wants. When his aims become clear, I ask myself, "Do I want what he wants?" Perhaps not. A seed has been planted.

Or let's say my old nemesis, Mrs. Rigid, appears, clutching her rulebook and telling me just how things ought to be done. I take a step away before she has a chance to swallow me up, and remind myself how terrified she is of change. That's what makes her rigid. But I don't have to be stuck in her narrow-minded world, or follow the same laws she does. Another seed.

When will these new seeds sprout? How big will the fruit or flower be? No idea. Perhaps it's not for me to know at my level of engagement. But I decide to trust that planting new seeds into the old way of doing things will say 'yes' to the deep wish to live differently. The wish touched me as lightly as the brush of a butterfly's wing, or the swish of my cat's tail to let me know he's gone by.

A new beginning needs food. You have to nourish it each day. Easier said than done, of course! My head can make lists with Meditation and Walks in the Park in capital letters, but making lists is easy. So the question is, how to awaken that new vision right in the middle of the action?

--Patty De Llosa

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