



## The Wisdom of Change

What does a psychologist mean when he or she says, "We cannot change another person in thought or action unless that person first agrees to that change"?

Wasting time promoting our values and opinions on someone else just because we think they are right is folly and unwise. Yet we see this happening in all of society; in religion, in government, in schools, and in a whole host of other venues.

### Examples:

A weight-loss counselor devises a lifestyle plan for a client without first finding out what the client is ready for.

We send people to rehabilitation for addictions when they are not wanting to be rehabilitated.

A spouse needles his/her mate to stop smoking when they have no desire to quit.

A parent pressures a child to attend college when the child doesn't even like school.

A sales clerk in a clothing store wastes time pushing his/her favorites without first finding out what the customer wants.

I had an experience I will never forget. Our city, Oklahoma City, was making an effort to help get the homeless off the streets and into shelters. At that time, I was helping in a kitchen serving breakfast to the homeless. As these hardy souls came through the line, I would visit with them. When one came by with an apparent head cold, I asked him about it. He responded, "When I was living on the street, I never got sick or had a cold, but when they put me in the shelter, I have constantly had a cold. Living so close with people is not healthy. I'm going to move back out on the street where I belong."

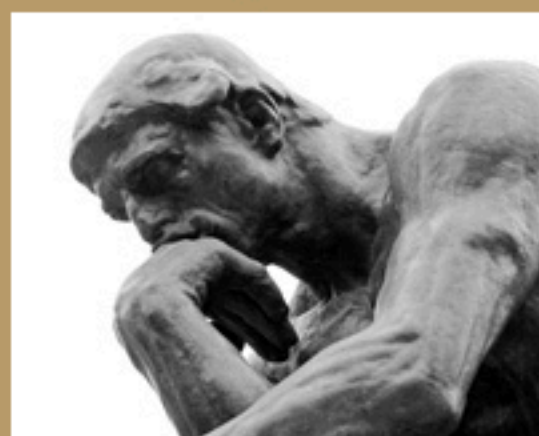
I thought, wow, when we assume what is best for others without asking, we are really being stupid, and on top of that, we are not showing respect for another person's values and opinions.

Respecting another person's opinions, especially when they come in conflict with ours, takes a high degree of character and wisdom. Accepting people with different opinions, and including them in our family and our circle of friends, is even more difficult. It has been said that one of the biggest assets we have in life is the power of diversity. Maybe the Indian proverb has even greater meaning, "Never pass judgment on another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins."

The Serenity Prayer of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) has really caught my attention. It says, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

I know that in my life, I have not always shown the greatest amount of wisdom, but because of the people I have known and stories I have read, I am continuing to grow. Wisdom is a work in progress!

*Doug*



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