

Top Ten Things to Think About If You Want to Change the World

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Mahatma Gandhi believed that we must be the change we want to see in the world. This was well demonstrated when he helped India gain its independence. Gandhi was a revolutionary man, but he accomplished India's emergence as a nation without starting a revolution. In fact, he advocated no violence. One of the most powerful countries in the world yielded to the commitment of one man and the dream of millions.

What change can we effect? What's the difference we want to make in the world?

Gandhi said, "In a gentle way you can shake the world." Here are some things to think about how to do just that

1. Know that all significant change throughout history has occurred not because of nations, armies, governments and certainly not committees. They happened as a result of the courage and commitment of individuals. People like Joan of Ark, Albert Einstein, Clara Barton, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison and Rosa Parks. They might not have done it alone, but they were, without question, the change makers.
2. Believe that you have a unique purpose and potential in the world. It's not so much something to create as to be discovered. And it's up to you to discover it. Believe that you can and will make a difference.
3. Recognize that everything you do, every step you take, every sentence you write, every word you speak-or DON'T speak--counts. Nothing is trivial. The world may be big, but there are no small things. Everything matters.
4. To be the change you want to see in the world, you don't have to be loud. You don't have to be eloquent. You don't have to be elected. You don't even have to be particularly smart or well educated. You do, however, have to be committed.
5. Take personal responsibility. Never think "it's not my job". It's a cop-out to say, "What can I do, I'm only one person." You don't need everyone's cooperation or anyone's permission to make changes. Remember this little gem, "If it's to be, it's up to me."
6. Don't get caught up in the how of things. If you're clear on what you want to change and why you want to change it, the how will come. Many significant things have been left undone because someone let the problem solving interfere with the decision-making.
7. Don't wait for things to be right in order to begin. Change is messy. Things will never be just right. Follow Teddy Roosevelt's timeless advice, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

8. The genesis for change is awareness. We cannot change what we don't acknowledge. Most of the time, we aren't aware of what's wrong or what's not working. We don't see what could be. By becoming more aware, we begin the process of change.

9. Take to heart these words from Albert Einstein--arguably one of the smartest change masters who ever lived: "All meaningful and lasting change starts first in your imagination and then works its way out. Imagination is more important than knowledge."

10. In order for things to change, YOU have to change. We can't change others; we can only change ourselves. However, when WE change, it changes everything. And in doing so, we truly can be the change we want to see in the world.

The following is inscribed on the tomb of an Anglican Bishop in Westminster Abby (1100 A.D.)

When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country.

But it, too, seemed immovable.

As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it.

And now, as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize: If I had only changed myself first, then by example I would have changed my family.

From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country, and who knows, I may have even changed the world.

Since my 10-point list above was inspired by Gandhi's belief, it seems appropriate to end with another of his quotes: "Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger and we will make not only our own happiness, but that of the world at large."

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