

We all hear a million clichés, especially now with the impact of social media. Some of my personal favourites which I have at one time either manically chanted or, at times, huffed at include: “better to regret trying something than regret never having tried”, “You have to paddle your own canoe”, “no one can make you feel inferior without your consent” and my personal favourite “Be the change you wish to see”. I’ve paid them lip service. I’m sure you have too.

Then things got a bit difficult. No one died, I didn’t lose my job, nothing really horrible happened, but I was miserable. I was single and felt all my friends pulling away from me, on a new path with husbands, babies, families of their own or incredible careers. So gradually that it was almost imperceptible, I found myself what you might describe as ‘maudlin’ over not having people to party with anymore, missing the interaction with people in a similar situation to me. Having at one time been a happy, sociable and outgoing girl, I now started to avoid going to events where my friends would be in groups talking about their new voyages of discovery, and when I did attend baby’s first birthdays, or worse still – baby showers, I would be horribly grumpy or weepy and spend my time wherever the wine was (the two things not being mutually exclusive!)

Until a tipping point came. Welcome to the old favourite stage “you never change until the pain of not changing outweighs the pain of facing up to the fact you need to change”. A close friend, one who is always really good about not making a big deal of any difference in life situations and is always down to earth, invited me around for a very chilled first birthday for her little one. There was a small crowd of some friends, some family and a couple of babies. Despite the relaxed, non-pressured situation it took me no time at all to go from chatty, to tipsy, to weepy and snappy to eventually leaving in a depressed state and going out to a pub with a single pal. The next day my best friend who had also been at the party asked to meet for breakfast. She didn’t even have to speak, I burst into tears as soon as I saw her. After a conversation she talked about a friend of hers who had been through a life coaching programme and her life had been transformed from being stuck in a dead-end relationship, not going for the career she wanted and generally feeling pretty blue about things to now in a secure happy relationship, succeeding in promotion at work and being just a much happier human.

The pain of feeling constantly crap, upsetting myself and my friends as they couldn’t help me out of the place I had wedged myself, was finally greater than the time, effort and financial cost (pain) of doing something about it. It was definitely time to ‘paddle my own canoe’.

I contacted Sam and she started me on her **‘breakthrough’ programme**. Today I can positively say a breakthrough is exactly the right word. A lot of the opening of eyes and dawning of positivity, gradually lifting of barriers, feeling better and better every day. But there was definitely a ‘click’ moment where the path of progress, change and positivity started feeling like the obvious choice every day. And it is ‘choice’ – it came down to me choosing each day to feel happy, positive and ready to move on. I chose to do well in work, I chose to go places where I meet interesting people, I chose to spend time with my friends and celebrate their journeys, however different they may be from my own. The difference is that choice is now the obvious one, the easy one to make, the Positive One that serves me best in my own path! Before the positive choice was just the small print on the bottom of a menu that started with sadness and resentment, served up mains including self-loathing and anger and offered pudding options including bitter tart and sourness.

Some people would call me cynical and have been surprised by my total transformation through what could be seen as a ‘non measurable’ process. Indeed, I like facts and logic myself so as a little benchmark at work I did a psychometric test. The first one noted elements of my personality that were ‘defensive’, ‘follower not leader’ and ‘people person’. Four weeks later, following the completion

of my work with Sam I did the test again. The results were astonishing: 'strong leadership potential', 'drives for success', 'confident and outgoing', 'able to accept constructive criticism' (hang on..did you mix up the tests with someone else?). The line in my chart that previously had my drive and dominance in negative figures had increased up to high positives. The Head of HR told me she had never seen such a shift on the test results of one person.

So if you need cold hard facts: this works! I am 'reprogrammed'! But frankly I am going to finish on the cliché I used to have on my wall but never truly lived until now: "It is far better to regret trying something than regret never having tried" – if you don't try this how will you ever know just how much you can truly achieve?!

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