

## ARE YOU READY TO CHANGE

It is said that when the pain of who you are or what you are doing becomes unbearable you will change. Until then as we look out onto the world and all its seeming problems, comfort is often found in unhealthy behaviors, food, or relationships. Even though an inner voice is nudging you to change it is not so easy. We are very attached to who we are or who we think we are and what we have become after years of conditioning and learning.

In a world of war, terrorism, and inner conflict true happiness seems an illusion. Although in reality we and everything around us is constantly changing with the potential to be in harmony we hold onto what we know, and feel powerless to go deeper and experience the joy of life and health.

Smokers, knowing full well that each day they wake up with heavier lungs and less ability to exercise, still value the smoking because it gives them a brief period of stress relief. While enjoying the cigarette one is not considering the longer period of stress and illness as a consequence of the smoking. It is that momentary relief that feeds the addiction, making the habit hard to break.

I can remember a woman who smoked one cigarette after another. She later got emphysema and found herself on oxygen and had to quit smoking. She said "When I die look for the smoke rings in the air." She could not wait to smoke again and enjoy the habit that killed her.

I knew a man who seemed happy when he drank. He had martinis and highballs after work and I remember him either with a drink in his hand, or a cigarette or both. One day his wife kicked him out of the house, confronted his "alcoholism" and would not let him back home unless he quit drinking. He did quit drinking and with that he quit living. He never seemed happy again. He stayed in a back room and sipped coffee and continued to smoke like a fiend. He continued destructive behaviors and eventually died of esophageal cancer. When he took his last breath, he had a smile, "finally a smile, and such a peaceful smile." Perhaps he thought someone would greet him at Heaven's door with a cocktail.

Many people talk about stress in their lives, but few are willing to stop and change the pace of their life to manage the stress. Although it makes sense that our bodies need exercise, for many it is difficult to find time for a minimal fitness program.

Change begins with a decision to want to be and feel something different. The inner motivation has to be strong. Change does not happen because of an outside "you should and here's how" It comes from an inside "I must and I will."

Research has shown change is a staged process beginning with not even thinking about it, to thinking about it, to learning about it and preparing for it, to setting goals and taking action, and finally to maintaining and becoming the change. Are you ready for change?