



The Edge Where Change Happens

By Boris Matthews, PhD

Change happens in a narrow zone between chaos and rigid structure. In psychotherapy and analysis, the good therapist or analyst unsettles us enough to move us out of our stuck places (the inflexible status quo), but doesn't plunge us into intolerable confusion (structure-less chaos). When we are able to stay long enough in that uncomfortable, disorganized emotional zone between inflexible form and panicked anarchy, some better way of dealing with our problems begins to emerge.

Human consciousness is psychologically conservative: whatever our emotional and behavioral habits may be, a part of us wants to preserve them. Whether wild or tame, whether our habits serve us well or ill, the prospect of change – even the vision of change “for the better” – means altering our patterns. The pious “I'd like it to be different,” means very little if we cannot face the short-term discomfort that comes with entering the zone of change.

What signals the need for change in our lives? Obviously, when we have “hit bottom” and are unhappy with who we are, we may be ready to face what we have been trying to avoid, medicate away, or blame on others. Of course, there are lesser signals that all is not well. The body does not tell lies about itself. We can suffer physically for no medically identifiable cause and when that happens we should consider that we may have been missing or misreading other signals, for example: unfulfilling situations and/or relationships; activities that leave us feeling dissatisfied, depleted, or exploited; repeated unsettling dreams.

In earlier editions of the *Ommani Jewel* I wrote about adaptation. (See the December, 2015, and the January, 2016, issues.) Adaptation, involves finding both the inner and out “fit”. As we search for adaptation we are at the threshold of that narrow zone between chaos and rigid structure. There we find ourselves doing a balancing act between our physical and psychological needs: our body systems need to be rhythmically working together and our psyche needs to be at peace and cohesive in its development of our many gifts, talents, and interests.

How vigorously do we press on? Where do we call a halt? To whom do we defer, and for how long? How much can we tolerate to be at odds with the world around us (in terms of our outer adaptation) and how much of what's urging and pressing from inside do we stifle (our inner adaptation)? What balance works for us, and what is the price?

Here we stand at the edge where change happens. Here we make our choices and we live with the consequences until we feel or are pushed to that edge where change can happen. Every innate potential in us can be a gift to the world, if we have the courage to develop it. With every step in development we challenge our status quo and timidly or boldly step into that zone between rigid structure and structure-less chaos - where change happens. This is best done with the help of a professional who can guide you through the labyrinth beyond the edge. Take the leap!

Boris Matthews, PhD, LCSW practices Analytical Psychology (a.k.a. Jungian Analysis) at the Ommani Center for Integrative Medicine in Pewaukee, WI. To schedule an appointment, contact him at 608.217.5184. Learn more at www.ommanicenter.com

