

# How to Go from Thinking to Life Change by Dr. John C. Maxwell

**Step No. 1:** When you change your thinking, you change your beliefs.

I am going to work you through a six-step process of how to change, and it begins with thinking. It begins with the mind. Beliefs are nothing more than a by-product of what you have thought long enough about that you have bought into—always remember that. What you believe is a collection of continual thoughts that have formed themselves into a conviction.

"Although not all change is the same, there is one common element to change, and that is thinking." That is a great truth. That is not mine, it's out of a book called, *The Seven Levels of Change*. When you break down the process of thinking into manageable number of steps, you reduce the perceived risk associated with change. Being creative is when you think about your thinking, being innovative is when you act on your ideas.

**Step No. 2:** When you change your beliefs, you change your expectations.

Belief is the knowledge that we can do something. It is the inner feeling that what we undertake, we can accomplish. For the most part, all of us have the ability to look at something and know whether we can do it. So, in belief there is power: our eyes are opened; our opportunities become plain; our visions become realities. Our beliefs control everything we do. If we believe we can or we believe we cannot, we are correct. Accomplishment is more than a matter of working harder; it is a matter of believing positively. It's called the "sure enough" factor. If you expect to succeed, "sure enough," you will; if you expect to fail, "sure enough," you will. We become outside what we believe inside.

**Step No. 3:** When you change your expectations, you change your attitude.

I love Ben Franklin's quote: "Blessed is the one who expects nothing, for he shall receive it." I heard a story the other day about a man who went to the fortuneteller who looked in the crystal ball and said, "Oh, my. This is not good. I look in this ball and see that you will be poor and unhappy until you're 45 years old." The guy said, "Oh, that's terrible. Well, then what's going to happen?" The fortuneteller said, "You'll get used to it."

Your expectations are going to determine your attitude. Most people get used to average; they get used to second best. Nelson Boswell said, "The first and most important step toward success is the expectation that we can succeed."

**Step No. 4:** When you change your attitude, you change your behavior.

William James was right when he said, "That which holds our attention determines our action." When our attitude begins to change, when we become involved with something, our behavior begins to change. The reason that we have to make personal changes is that we cannot take our people on a trip that we have not made. Too many leaders try to be travel agents instead of tour guides—they try to send people where they have never been. We give them a brochure and a "Bon Voyage!" And off they go and we wave to them, and we ask them to tell us how it was when they come back. A tour guide says, "Let me take you where I've been. Let me tell you what I have gone through. Let me tell you what I know. Let me show you what I've experienced in my life."

**Step No. 5:** When you change your behavior, you change your performance.

Leroy Eims said, "How can you know what is in your heart? Look at your behavior. There is no better sign of the heart than the life." The truest test of where a person is going is their behavior.

Unfortunately, most people would rather live with old problems than new solutions. We would rather be

comfortable than correct; we would rather stay in a routine than make changes. Even when we know that the changes are going to be better for us, we often don't make them because we feel uncomfortable or awkward about making that kind of a change.

Until we can get used to living with something that is not comfortable, we cannot get any better.

**Step No. 6:** When you change your performance, you change your life.

Change makes a person feel alone, even if others are going through it. You say, "Oh, man! Goodness! I know the others are changing, but I don't think they're having the difficulty I'm having." There is something about the awkwardness and the time that it takes to make proper changes that just seems to isolate you from everyone else, even when a group is going through it together. You just kind of feel, "But my situation's a little bit different, and I think I'm just not quite as fast as the other ones," and there's a tendency to feel isolated, lonely, and withdrawn when you're going through this change.

It is easier to turn failure into success than an excuse into a possibility. A person can fail and turn around and understand their failure, make it a success; but I want to tell you, a person who makes excuses for everything will never truly succeed. I promise you, when you excuse what you are doing and excuse where you are, and you allow the exceptions, you fail to reach your potential. Don't you know some people who just have an excuse for everything? Why they could not, should not, did not, would not, have not, will not. If "ifs" and "buts" were candies and nuts, we would all have a Merry Christmas. It is impossible to turn excuses into possibilities.

Hope is the foundational principle for all change. People change because they have hope. If people do not have hope, they will not change. You are responsible for the changes that you make in your life, but the good news is, you can make the changes you need to make in your life.