

The Sway Factor

BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

"We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves, otherwise we harden."

-Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Imagine one of these scenarios:

It's Monday morning. You walk down the darkened hallway. Cubicles sit empty. You take a deep breath. Your coworkers were laid off on Friday.

You were pleased when negotiations were moving along so nicely. Then, without provocation, the property owner becomes agitated, rude and overbearing.

Your new boss struts into your office and glares down at you. Hired for her ability to downsize, rumors are running rampant, and everyone fears for their jobs.

We have all dealt with these kinds of uncomfortable unplanned situations. The wind is knocked out of our sails. We're not prepared. We're at a loss. In response, some of us look for the nearest exit, while others become momentarily paralyzed. But take hope. We can learn to deal with these challenges.

The common theme in these scenarios is adapting to roadblocks or unexpected change. As we face the awkward pathway of this unwelcomed foe, how do we cope? How can we succeed?

Fortunately, every challenge opens a door to a potential solution. That solution requires flexibility. It's what I call the Sway Factor. Great bridges and skyscrapers endure storms because they are able to sway with the direction of the wind. Trees, plants and even grass are known to bend and flow with the weather. Whether a man-made structure or the natural environment, things that survive change are able to do so because of their inherent sway factor. You are likely to possess this same ability. So let's take a closer look at how the Sway Factor works.

The key to achieving the Sway Factor requires a desire to be flexible. It means learning to adapt to those changes in life that cannot be controlled. It's the ability to make the most of every unforeseen situation. It's the capacity to bend without breaking. When we possess an attitude of flexibility, we are open to overcoming our natural tendency to resist change. Over time, we start to see change as an opportunity to make the most of every situation. We learn to adapt and adjust to the different conditions we face.

To help you master the Sway Factor, try some of these tried and true techniques:

Stretch Your Mind. Stretching before physical exercise helps us avoid injury. Stretching our minds and being receptive to new ideas actually broadens our frame of reference. When we expand our minds, we can absorb new information that lets us reshape our attitude. This enables us to accept the things we cannot change.

Out with the Old; In with the New. Holding on to old ideas, patterns and opinions simply because they are comfortable is a clear sign of inflexibility. This rigidity can keep you from achieving your goals. Rather than trying to control everything, try letting the process of life unfold in its own way and with its own timing. Being flexible involves learning to detach from strongly-held opinions, ideas and outcomes. If you can remain open to new possibilities and new ideas that can come from change, success is sure to follow.

Say Goodbye to Your Comfort Zone. Ouch! To become more flexible, you'll need to get used to regularly stepping out of your comfort zone. It helps to start with small things as you tackle unfamiliar territory by using flexibility and adaptability.

Use Self-Awareness. Part of being adaptable is being aware of your immediate reactions. Think before you react. A huge project may only require a few small tasks. Remember to focus on the big picture.

Relinquish Stubbornness. Those who refuse to bend often break. Eliminating stubbornness means putting the ego aside. If we allow ego to dominate, we lose any chance of adapting the Sway Factor.

Remove Resistance. Recognize that changes may not always be as bad as they initially seem. Put a little give into your sway. In other words, expect that change is certain to come, so when it comes, accept it.

Practice Being Flexible. Practice your Sway Factor. Go with the flow and enjoy the process. With a little practice, you can learn to be more flexible and adaptable. You *can* learn to bend like the palm tree!

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." – Viktor Frankl



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