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# Swim Jump Fly: A Way To Navigate Change

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(5-minute read)

by [Charlotte Housden \(Sheridan\)](#)

In 1789 the American statesman Benjamin Franklin wrote, *“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes”*, except he'd left out another certainty... change. Change is a great leveller which moulds our existence, whatever we do, wherever we live, whoever we are... so we need to be ready to deal with it.

How we equip ourselves to do this was the question I investigated during 2019-2020 when I interviewed 108 people from 27 countries. From Australia to Saudi Arabia and USA to Brazil, participants shared stories of how they successfully navigated change, from small pivots to full-on transformations. You can read three participant narratives at the end of this article\*.

Once I'd gathered data from 75 hours of interviews, I undertook a Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006\*\*) and discovered clear themes, such as the resources participants relied on during times of change. These resources included:

- Mindset – how participants viewed change/belief in their ability to work through it;
- Health – via sport/exercise, food/hydration, rest and mental health;
- Other resources such as skills, money, and reality checks (e.g. asking “was this the right time to take on a change project?”);
- People who helped the participants on their journey; as well as
- Inspirations that kept them going.

Focusing on resources seemed to help these participants so I thought it would be useful to share them with others; I did this via my [coaching blog](#) as well as a book I wrote, called *Swim, Jump, Fly: A Guide to Changing Your Life*. In the book I describe the preparation process as getting 'match-fit' for change, which includes an audit of current resources, as well as actions to address any gaps.

If you find yourself contemplating a change in life – looking for a job or moving house, getting married, getting divorced, or getting fit – then running an audit of your resources might be useful. Here are some questions to help you check what you have in place.

### Mindset:

How we feel about change is a good starting place for dealing with change. Why not ask yourself:

- 1) What messages am I telling myself about this change project? Do I believe I can do this?
- 2) How do I generally deal with setbacks? Do I tend to flex as things shift, or do I often feel dependant and give up over time?

### Health:

Sustainable change can be more of a marathon, than a sprint. Being the healthiest version of ourselves will give us an advantage. Why not ask:

- 1) How is my physical health? What exercise am I doing? What is my diet like? Do I rest enough/how are my sleep patterns? Where could I place greater focus?
- 2) How is my mental health? What might improve it e.g. interventions like meditation, rest, exercise, working with professionals. What else could I do?

### Other People:

No (wo)man is an island, so who can support us in our change project? Ask yourself:

- 1) What kind of people do I have in my network? Who can I turn to for help? Do I have cheerleaders, critical friends, accountability buddies, or shoulders to cry on etc.?
- 2) Who can support me by sharing contacts from their network? Who might supervise, coach or mentor me through this shift?

### Scaffolding:

During renovation a building needs scaffolding... it's the same when we're shifting things around. Ask yourself:

- 1) What skills do I need to manage this project? Do I need to outsource anything which I'm not skilled or confident at doing?
- 2) Do I have the finances in place that I need to resource this change? Why not check out *Make Money Work for You* questions on the book's website, [swimjumpfly.com](#).
- 3) Do I need a reality check? Am I being honest about how much time and energy I have available? Would it be more realistic if I put this off for a while?

### Inspirations:

This is a 'whatever floats your boat' moment. It could be quotes, books, TED talks, podcasts, websites, blogs, articles, training courses... anything that inspires you. Ask yourself:

- 1) What keeps me going when I'm feeling down/lack motivation/feel tired? What would give me a nudge/a helping hand/a bit more confidence?
- 2) Who do I know who would be inspiring? Who has positive stories they can share?

Below I've included three narratives of change from the book, but if you'd like to read more you can visit the [Swim Jump Fly](#) website and download the first three chapters for free. You can also find exercises such as *Am I Ready for Change* or Russ Harris's *Demons on the Boat* (from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) which are on the site. If you'd like to buy *Swim Jump Fly* you can do that on [Amazon](#) or the [Swim Jump Fly](#) website.

I hope this has offered a useful way for you to think about your own resources. Wishing you a successful navigation of changes in your life.

\*Excerpt from Swim Jump Fly (participant names have been changed):

Misha found her life wasn't going the way she'd hoped. “I was stressed and working long hours and my health was so bad. My mental health wasn't great either.” She found herself searching for quick fixes and remedies to stop her thinking about the stresses in her life. “To get comfort I'd go shopping and buy jewellery or drink alcohol.” But she got through to the other side and now she says, “I have found a completely different definition for my life, a humble, simple way of looking at things.”

Mary wanted to change a lot of things. Her relationship, where she lived and her work... all at once. She didn't want to do things by halves! The challenge for her was that she kept it all to herself. “I was really good at playing the part. I didn't tell anyone else.” So, she had to work through many changes on her own. We'll cover how to help ourselves by sharing plans with friends or family and having the right resources to support us through our shift.

Others have had change thrust on them, they had to ride the wave when it crashed over their heads. Jitesh went through significant and sudden change. “We've got to do it very quickly, otherwise you'll lose the use of your right leg.” Urgent advice from his surgeon and a momentous event that had small beginnings, picking up a box. You can find out more about what he went through later.

\*\* Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101, DOI: [10.1191/147808706qp0630a](#)



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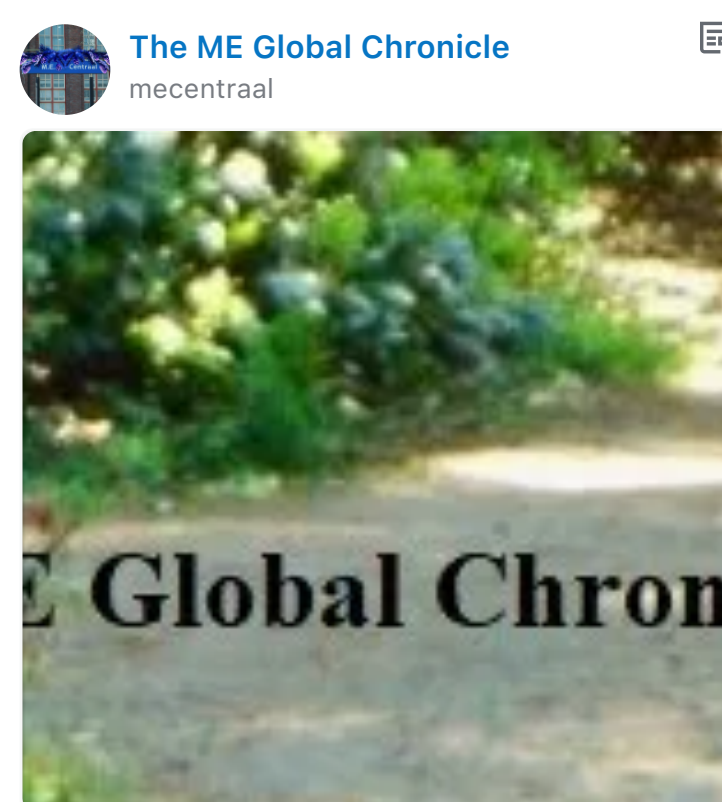
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