

Article Career change

0

Unexpected hazards that slow you down

Charlotte Housden is a Chartered Coaching and Occupational Psychologist with a consulting practice where she manages coaching and leadership development programmes for international organisations, as well as coaching senior executives and people at crossroads in their careers.

By Charlotte Housden



If you've been following my series on how to navigate change then thank you for staying the course. If you haven't read the posts yet, why not have a look at the links below? These will help you successfully (and sustainably) change things around in your life – whether it's making a few adjustments in your job, through to large-scale changes in career, relationships, or health.

- [The why and where of change](#)
- [Will you swim, jump or fly?](#)
- [Untangling your whats and your hows](#)
- [What's in your toolbox? Resourcing yourself for change](#)
- [Measuring progress](#)

This post is the last one in the series and it'll be all about trip hazards – what can get in the way of making successful change. I've identified the following 14 risks from my research interviewing 108 people in 27 countries. Someone once wrote this: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall" which contains two helpful ideas – 1) that change can be hard and 2) we need to watch out for unexpected trips along the way:



Own goal

If you find your project isn't going well maybe your goal was off. Perhaps you've had nagging feelings that the focus wasn't right. If you've been ignoring these doubts, then maybe it's time to review what you really want to achieve.

Running away vs. running towards

When people suddenly quit their jobs or jump too quickly into something new, they can end up in a place that's just as bad. In escaping they're creating a false start. Why not check whether you're running away from something you don't like, or running towards something that you do?

Overly ambitious

Have you bitten off more than you can chew for this change project? Ask yourself whether you have the time and energy to do this. Are you too busy? Will your life help or hinder you in making this change? Perhaps you're making the project too complicated?



The stories we Tell

We tell ourselves (and others) things that aren't helpful which define or limit our lives. Why not ask: "What's the difference between the stories I tell myself and the life I'm actually living?" It's important to distinguish between the two since what we focus on drives what we become. We create these stories so we can also change them.

Fear of

We often prefer unhappiness to uncertainty. It's not fear of what *will* happen, it's fear of what *might* happen. In anticipation, the potential is worse than the reality. Falling isn't the issue, it's inaction. If you're too afraid then you won't move forward. To change this we need to be open to experiences. Why not throw yourself in and try things out.

Cheerleaders on strike

Are people around you being downbeat about your ideas? Remember, no one can predict the future. At 10 years old Albert Einstein was told "You will never amount to very much." Your cheerleaders may not understand your plans because they fear change. Ask yourself if you've got the right people around you. Do you need to review your support network?

Normalitis

We're bombarded with messages telling us how we should behave, pressurising us to conform. Jeanette Winterson wrote a memoir called *Why be happy when you could be normal?* You can read more about it [here](#) or reflect on Maya Angelou's quote: "If you're always trying to be normal you will never know how amazing you can be."

Stuck in second gear

Are you driving too slowly, not dedicating enough time or energy to your project? If you're not sold on your goal then you'll need to adapt, pivot, or stop. Or do you tend to get excited at the start, full of ideas and energy, but find the *doing* a bit less engaging? You'll need to organise frequent incentives to encourage yourself to keep going.

Gripping too tightly

The *transtheoretical model of behavior change* says we go through stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The thing is we can loop back and forth – setbacks are inevitable. In fact, we can go through these up to three times before change sticks. Knowing this can help with your levels of motivation.

Green shoots

I've written about [impatience before](#) and here I said: "in our modern world we've lost the art of patience, we want the upper hand in life. We want to bend things to our needs, to will something into being with the power of our minds." During any change, we expect to see concrete shifts and observable changes but we're often unaware of what's shifting under the surface. Why not go back to this [post](#) about measuring progress?

Toolbox is empty

To work through change we need help. Does your toolbox of resources need replenishing? Are you telling yourself you can't do this? How is your health, physical fitness, or sleep going? What people do you have around you? Do you have enough time for this? You can read more about resources [here](#).

Mood music

Any change involves mourning – letting go of the past to give space for the future. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross studied bereavement and said that we need to say goodbye before we can say hello. Do you need to say *au revoir* to something before you move on?



Have an app for that

Here are two psychological ideas that might help. *Learned helplessness* is the feeling that we might as well just give up. *Locus of control* is the amount of influence we believe we have over our lives. Do you believe you can change things around? Or do you think someone else should sort your stuff out? Are you waiting for an app to do it for you? If you are, you might need to work on a mindset shift.

The crucible

Post-traumatic growth is a psychological term that means it's possible to grow through adversity. During difficult times there are opportunities to develop, change priorities, and create a new sense of purpose, meaning, and connection with others. Do you feel you're going through a fire? Perhaps you need to re-frame your situation, so it feels like it could be positive. Maybe you need this crucible, to rise from the ashes. Perhaps it's an opportunity to re-calibrate.

That's it on the seven blog posts to help you navigate change. If you'd like to read more please do take a look at the links below or get in touch with me. It would be good to hear from you.

Charlotte Housden is a Chartered Coaching and Occupational Psychologist. She runs a consulting practice focusing on coaching and leadership development programmes for international organisations, coaching senior executives in their roles, and helping others at crossroads in their careers. To find the book search for *Swim Jump Fly: A Guide to Changing Your Life* on Amazon or visit the [Swim Jump Fly](#) website. You can contact Charlotte via [LinkedIn](#) or ch@charlottehousden.com

Photo by [Content Pixie](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion

What would you like to say?

