

Section C

An Easier Kind of Change

Part One

An Easier Kind of Change

Making changes in our lives for the better isn't always easy. In fact sometimes it's downright difficult. Destructive habits of behavior, thinking, and intending can be uncomfortable to look at in ourselves, tricky to recognize for what they are, and even harder to own up to and make choices about. So it's not uncommon for people who discover the *BNL* process of life change and spiritual transformation to have a hard time either getting started on it or seeing it through.¹

If you've discovered the *BNL* process, and you're having a hard time getting started on it or seeing it through, there is something that can help. It's a kind of change that is *easier* than the full, four-step process, which can help you make positive changes in your life right away—before you ever engage in the deeper work of the full process. This easier kind of change is described in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg as follows:

When we are considering doing something evil, and are forming an intention to do it, we say to ourselves, "I am thinking about this, and I'm intending to do it, but because it's a sin, I'm not going to do it."^{2,3}

One of the interesting things about this easier kind of change is the immediate, significant impact it can have on your mental, emotional, and/or spiritual state. Swedenborg writes:

Doing this [the above] counteracts the enticement that hell is injecting into us, and keeps it from making further inroads.^{4,5}

People who utilize this easier kind of change are often surprised at the immediate, powerful effect it can have on their state of mind. Often it has the very effect Swedenborg describes: The enticement to do or say something harmful or destructive suddenly stops. In

¹ There are a number of reasons why making changes for the better can be difficult. For a discussion of some of these reasons, see *Part Two* of this article, titled, *Some Common Reasons Why Making Changes for the Better Can Be Difficult*.

² Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 535

³ The *BNL* program suggests that *evil* is anything in conflict with God's purpose, plan, and intention in creation. It's anything that is truly harmful or destructive and in that sense bad. *Sin* is evil specifically against your neighbor and God, as summarized in the biblical Ten Commandments, and also reflected in the broader Word of God/divine revelation. (For more on the concepts of evil and sin, see the Step 2.1 and Step 2.2 worksheets of the *BNL* process, footnotes 8, 9, and 10.)

⁴ Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christianity*, paragraph no. 535

⁵ As mentioned in Section B of the *BNL Sourcebook (Starting Assumptions)* the *BNL* process assumes that there is a life after death, a heaven and a hell, and that angels and hellish ("evil") spirits exist. It also assumes that we are regularly influenced by them.

fact, some people say the shift can be so sudden and complete that, moments later, they don't even remember what the enticement was about.

Regular practice of this easier kind of change can accomplish several things: First, it can help you see that harmful thoughts, inclinations, and impulses are normal parts of human experience. Second, it can help you see and acknowledge destructive thoughts and intentions early on—as they're just entering your mind and heart—and it can prevent them from making further inroads. Third, it can help you gain interest, courage, and momentum for going through the *full BNL* process later on.

In summary, this easier kind of change is a quick, easy, non-threatening way to begin making positive changes in your life right away. It also helps you get ready for the full, four-step process later on.

Part Two

Some Common Reasons Why Making Changes for the Better Can Be Difficult

There may be any number of reasons why making changes for the better can be hard to do. Here are some of them:

- Making changes in your life may be something you lack experience with, aren't practiced at, or aren't used to.
- You may feel unready, unable, or unwilling to make changes for the better.
- You may feel sad or depressed at the thought of searching out harmful habits in yourself, or at the thought of letting them go or giving them up.
- You may feel afraid of making changes that you'd like to make.⁶
- You may feel that you lack courage, confidence, or strength to follow through.
- You may wish that changes in your life could spontaneously happen, or that someone else could make them happen *for* you.
- You may feel lackadaisical or indifferent: You just don't *feel* like making changes, or you just don't *care* to.
- You may be "stuck" in harmful patterns of behavior, thinking, and intending.
- You may have your heart set on other, conflicting priorities that override interest in or motivation for life change and spiritual transformation.

Any of these reasons, or others, can make it difficult to get started on this process of life change or see it through. In addition, there may be plausible reasoning that presents it-

⁶ *Lack of practice* at making changes, *unwillingness* to change, *sadness* at the thought of changing, and *fear* of changing are some of the main reasons why it can be hard to get started on the *BNL* process or see it through. There can even be a *connection* between these reasons and *progression* among them—such that ongoing lack of practice breeds unwillingness to change, and unwillingness to change breeds sadness at the thought of it and/or fear of change itself, especially fear of taking the first step—self-examination.

self for not engaging in occasional, or regular, self-inspection and change. There may even be religious dogmas that you're aware of which downplay the need for self-examination and active repentance as part of an ongoing, dynamic walk with God.

Any of these things, or more, can leave you with an understandable disinterest in, distaste for, or even resistance to self-inspection and personal improvement.

These are just *some* of the reasons why making changes in your life for the better can be difficult. One effective way to get past them is to put the *BNL* process of life change and spiritual transformation to work in your life. *However*, if you have difficulty getting started on the process or seeing it through, the easier kind of change described in this section can help.

Good wishes in this spiritual practice.