



# Unglued

CO-CREATIVE  
WORKS

Subscribe now to “Unglued,” a monthly e-newsletter filled with tips and tactics for living and working creatively and collaboratively! [Send an email to sue@cocreativeworks.com](mailto:sue@cocreativeworks.com)

## Conversations about Change

Most people I know have a love-hate relationship with change. We love it as long as we feel like we're in control of the change, that it's going the way we want. We hate it when the change is imposed on us and leaves us feeling uncertain and unconfident about the future.

The not-so-simple solution, then, is to take charge, as much as possible, of the changes in our lives. This breaks down into the activities of research (What are all the possibilities I want to consider?), visioning (What do I want this change to look like/feel like?), planning (What are the steps I'll need to take and by when?), execution of those steps, and evaluation (How am I doing? Do I need some mid-course corrections? How did I do compared to my vision?).

Oh, if only it were that simple! Change gets complicated when there are other people involved – the boss who doesn't share information about changes being planned; the employees or other stakeholders who put obstacles in the path of the change we want; the spouse who may or may not go along with the risks we're contemplating; and even that internal nagging voice in our head that insists, “You can't do that!”

The timid among us will give up and settle into that uncomfortable inertia that appears to be the easy way out. We put off our dream until “the kids get out of college,” “I retire,” or “I save enough money.” We sit back and wait until change happens around us and then we react with annoyance, anger, or self-pity. Or we live passively-aggressively with those we imagine may oppose our desired change rather than chancing a dialogue.

Unless we're operating on some desert island, we can't afford to be timid if we want to take charge of change. We need to approach change collaboratively, anticipating who could affect, or be affected by, the change we want to make. Then we must start some conversations aimed at addressing the perceived and expressed concerns of the people whose support we need to make change happen. For example,

- To the boss who is not sharing information – “I understand some changes are planned; in what ways can I be helpful?”
- To employees or other stakeholders – “I understand you may have some concerns about [this change we're planning], so let's have a dialogue. I'll share some ideas we're considering, and I'd like to hear your ideas or concerns.”
- To the spouse – “I'm thinking about [pursuing this...quitting that...] and I'd like explore how [this change] would impact [our family]. Are you willing to be open to some ideas and give me some feedback?”
- To the voice inside your head – “Yes, change is scary, but look at the times I've been successful. With careful planning, I can reduce the risks and be successful.”

Sometimes the most difficult thing about a conversation is starting it. The longer we imagine how difficult it may be, the harder it is to start it. We must admit we can't control what the other person may do or say. But by anticipating how that person may filter and interpret what we're about to

say, we can choose to express ourselves in a way that is most likely to be understood the way we intend it.

I've had people tell me this sounds like manipulation. "I just tell it like it is," they say. While most of us like and respect directness, we also appreciate empathy and understanding. The more someone speaks "our language," the easier it is to hear and understand what they're saying. It's a lot like attempting to speak French when you're in France. The French people appreciate the effort even if you don't do it perfectly, and they tend to respond with more grace than if you stubbornly expect them to understand your English.

After you've started the conversation, you must prove, not only by words, but also by actions, that you're ready and willing to listen and collaborate. What did you hear that you agree with? What ideas were offered that could support the change you want? In what ways could you change your vision to incorporate others' ideas and win their cooperation, even enthusiasm?

Change is so much easier when the people around us are working with us rather than against us. It starts with conversation.

If I can help you plan the changes you want in your life or in your workplace, give me a call – 801-209-3062.

Sue Martin