

Raffi Yaakobi

A Friendly Change

Raffi Yaakobi

A Friendly Change

Senior Editors & Producers: Contento

Illustrations: Yigal Vardi

Portrait: Mosha Yozefpalsey

Translator: Keren Druyak

Editor: Yosef Bloch

Cover and Book Design: Liliya Lev Ari

Copyright © 2015 by Raffi Yaakobi and Contento

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be translated, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the author and publisher.

ISBN: 978-965-550-417-0

International sole distributor: Contento
22 Isserles Street, 6701457 Tel Aviv, Israel

www.ContentoNow.com

Semrik10@gmail.com

Raffi Yaakobi

A Friendly Change

 CONTENTONOW

Table of Contents:

Friendship School: The Gist of the Method	7
Introduction: Everyone Can Change	35
<i>Part 1</i>	41
Chapter 1: Towards Change – The Friendly Change	43
Chapter 2: Your Brain as Your Friend	48
Chapter 3: Canonical Psychology and the Treadmill Culture	68
Chapter 4: Doing Things Differently: The Learning Culture	78
Chapter 5: Yes We Can	97
Chapter 6: Identity Changes – Navigating the Sea of Opportunities ...	110
<i>Part 2</i>	131
Chapter 7: Shaping and Changing our Daily Lives	133
Chapter 8: Changing Our Relationship Ability – From a Single to a Spouse	153
Chapter 9: Changing the Relationship – Learning to Be Friends	174
Chapter 10: Change in Sex Life – From a Kitten to a Tiger	202
Chapter 11: Change with Children – Growing with the Child	211
Chapter 12: Change with Adolescents – Busting the Myth	234
Chapter 13: Never Stop Changing	250
Chapter 14: The First Meeting is the Most Important	264
Chapter 15: The Second Meeting	281
Chapter 16: The Next Meetings	287
Chapter 17: The Partner Gets Involved	296
Chapter 18: Some Parting Words	305
Glossary	309

Friendship School: The Gist of the Method

I have been a psychologist for many years. I was educated and introduced into the profession as a clinical, psycho-dynamic psychologist. In my continuing efforts to assist my clients, I gradually became aware that the common therapy procedure which is based on diagnosing and then treating problems and symptoms usually turned into a hothouse of frustrating fixations and repetition. Unfortunately, as time passed, I came to the conclusion that, even if people **did** change during the treatment period, they did it despite the treatment and not as a result of it. In other words, those who started off with fierce, irresistible urges to grow and evolve, continued to develop, even if they continued to obey the principles of therapeutic culture, that is to bring up memories, discuss matters they were concerned with and describe their feelings and emotions in minute detail. However, those who started therapy with a certain developmental difficulty and started discussing their weaknesses and frustration with an attentive, sympathetic therapist, recycled their inhibitions. They tended to define themselves as people who have problems and came up with a variety of insights and reasons that explain and justify their numerous problems and therapy became the center of their world. Moreover, they used the same tools and

the same landscape to diagnose their friends, their spouses and their children – this was a cultural blow.

Thus, most treatment methods serve the common characteristics in human nature, contribute to the fixation and diminution of people's worlds and sabotage the prospect of change. Some methods manage to create an illusion of change.

For the sake of those of you who resent my attacks on their beliefs, I must say that I do not make do with attacks, but I have created a much more efficient method which I must share with you. The method is about acquiring tools for realizing human potential, and tools that enable people to expose themselves to a diversified, ever-changing world, to find their way within it and even influence it.

It is possible that I was one of the first coaches in the world to have created a new, totally original method, which I called "Friendship School." The term 'school' offers learning, instead of treating, as a means of producing change, while 'friendship' is an art which one should learn as soon as possible. The art of friendship is the basis of success in relationships between spouses, parents and children, businesses, and even between countries. In other words, the method is a world view; it also contributes to a way of thinking which enables us to use our brain in the most effective way.

So far I have published five best sellers: : "*How to Learn Friendship*," "*The Friendly Psychologist*," "*Be Friends with your Children*," "*To Make a Couple*" and "*Friendly Change*." All of my books are about learning how to think.

The method has proved itself to be remarkably effective and in most cases has resulted in changes within short periods of time. It evolved from the rich and varied experiences acquired during many years of work. as well as accumulated documented successes.

Indeed, a person who has lived for many years in a non-scholastic culture finds it difficult, at first, to acquire the tools of friendly thinking, just as adults usually find it difficult to start learning a new language.

In the traditional therapeutic approach physicians tend to seek all sorts of symptoms that indicate problems and then make a diagnosis. They also seek to understand the reason for the formation of the problem and then treat it. According to the traditional approach, we must, first of all, define the problem, then understand its sources, and finally solve it – only then can we move on. But, there is always the danger of wasting tremendous effort or causing damage to a person who perceives himself as one who has problems and needs therapy. This diagnostic, analytic thinking is effective when examining electrical appliances or car engines. Identifying the problem and its sources provide the solution. On the other hand, people require a different type of thinking. They require creative and friendly thinking. In “Friendship School” we are aware of the fact that reality is extremely diversified and varied, so that more creative channels of solutions can be found within it. We bypass the symptom or the so-called problem and determinately move towards a friendly goal. A person who does that soon discovers that the new experience, which develops his ability, replaces the symptom. The things that were difficult become easy and the things that were frightening become enjoyable, and so forth.

My Alternative to Diagnosis

I suggest scanning the human scenery and the field of opportunities. First, we refer to the reservoir of abilities which every person has. That is, we will examine all of the things the person does: starting with work – and ending with hobbies and other daily activities. In addition, we will refer to the things that we have accomplished. In other words, we will refer to his reservoir of abilities.

Frequently, existing elements overshadow desirable and potential elements. So it is necessary to view the scope of opportunities the

person is exposed to. Obviously, the world is made up from much more opportunities than we can possibly seize. Thus we will deal with fascinating questions such as: What is in the best interest of that person? Which elements are friendly and worthwhile as far as he is concerned? In order to answer these questions we should learn how to filter the opportunities and choose the ones that will enable him maximal expression of his abilities. It is not a choice between good and bad, but a choice between good and better.

The idea behind promoting abilities as an alternative to dealing with problems. It is a means of channeling our energy towards the goal through change. This is done in an efficient, economical manner which is based on recruiting all human strengths for learning and practical experiences and by not dwelling on problems.

Learning as a Means

Change is produced through learning. Learning means not sticking with the things we are used to doing and like to do, but to develop new abilities despite the challenges involved. A person who only does the things he likes and is used to tends to get stuck in the same place. Sometimes such a person moves sideways instead of forwards; i.e. starts developing an ability, and then neglects it, starts something new, neglects it too and so forth. Every now and then he feels tired of something he has, and desires something new. On the other hand, a person who is a diligent student shapes his own identity and produces desirable changes. It is not enough to learn how to drive; a person must also get used to driving a car. It is not enough to learn how to play a musical instrument; a person must be persistent in playing. It is not enough to lose weight; a person must keep in shape and maintain his/her body.

Symptoms

Psychology copied medical thinking, which focuses on symptoms of diseases as a means to cure patients. In the therapeutic culture people are defined in terms of pathology and illnesses: they are anxious, neurotic, dyslexic and so forth.

In “Friendship School” we do not focus on the symptoms but on the person’s abilities. We define people according to their profession, their marital status and hobbies. In this method we refer to symptoms as side effects which are similar to new beginnings.

In other words, starting to learn a new ability sometimes involves difficulties and symptoms, but down the road, when the ability is established and joins the other components of identity – the symptoms vanish and are replaced with enjoyment and a sense of fulfillment.

Many people rush into diagnosing themselves according to their immediate, initial sensational response: “It is not for me” – and give up on the change. On the other hand, in the scholastic culture we bypass the symptoms and do the things we can do until change is achieved.

Culture of Diagnosis and Judgment

One can discuss the culture of diagnosis and judgment which accompanies almost all human references endlessly. This phenomenon is so common that most people cannot distinguish the facts from the interpretation. Interpretation is perceived as an irrefutable fact. When people repeat the same judgment time and time again, it is perceived in their brain as a solid fact so that there is almost no chance that additional information will sink in and change their perception.

I see this as brain damage. It is caused as a result of the way our parents and teachers educated us and fed us, instead of providing us with the tools to think independently and prepare our brains to contain diversified scenery without locking each piece of information into a preconditioned and limited box of prejudice.

This culture causes many obstacles. Below I will discuss the main ones:

Inability

People who perform diagnosis tend to focus on a person's inabilities. So many people focus on the negatives (I do not know mathematics, I do not like children, I do not know how to sing etc.) and miss the positive things that they do (I do like to read, I do know how to cook, I do enjoy nature). People always look for the weaknesses and failures in themselves and in others. If you look hard enough, you will find an endless number of weaknesses in any person. This does not mean you have managed to diagnose this person's problems nor define his identity. It is as if you have looked everywhere but at the person himself. Some people mistakenly consider it a negative observation or criticism. It is not necessarily a negative observation but rather a lack thereof.

The Deterministic Element

Another obstacle could be when we refer to a single element of a person's ability separately from all his other abilities. In other words, we make a crude generalization – for better or for worse – based on a single element. For instance, a person who excels in one domain perceives himself as excellent in all domains and other people also perceive him as a person whose opinion matters in all other areas as well. Another could be, a singer who is interviewed regarding his political beliefs or a footballer who advertises a dairy product, or

actors who express their opinions on relationships and parenthood and so forth.

Diagnosis based on symptoms is related to this subject as well. “Dyslexic,” or “hyper-active” define a child’s identity according to a specific symptom. The therapeutic culture urges us to pay special attention to symptoms. This phenomenon of defining according to symptoms is so rooted in our culture that we do not even doubt the processes of diagnostic thinking. Parents, teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists and so forth – they all make diagnoses. Most people focus on diagnosis and therefore readily accept the diagnostic verdict given to them, thus identifying with it. So many people introduce themselves to me by saying: “I am dyslexic,” “I am asthmatic” as if these characteristics are written on their I.D. cards.

Structure of Personality

Crude diagnosis is the reason that most people perceive human beings as unchangeable. “A character does not change,” “This is who I am,” “It’s genetic,” “Parents determine our character,” “We have a certain structure of personality” – these are examples of popular, common declarations. If we think of the term “Structure of Personality,” it is a psychologist’s concept which convinces us that we have a fixed personality, like buildings.

It’s true that some things are unchangeable and we should not waste our time and energy on them; but we should not miss the things that **can** be changed. Similarly, a person who believes that parents have a great impact on the development of a child is like a person who repeats the first grade over and over again. Indeed, a person who keeps growing and developing is influenced by his parents to a certain extent, but he also learns from other people along the way and it is these interactions that can change his impressions

of previous experiences. It would be a pity to give up the chance to shape your own identity and therefore your own life because of common educational and psychological ignorance. A person who experiences the same things over and over again is not part of the scholastic culture but rather resembles a goat that grazes in the same pasture time and time again.

Diagnosis based on Sensations

Sensational diagnoses can be compared to shortsightedness. A person knows how he feels and believes that it reflects reality but he has no clue about the actual reality. The difference is that a shortsighted person knows that he does not see well. He finds ways to improve his sight, using glasses, a microscope, or a telescope. The sensational diagnostician does not attempt to improve his sight and understanding. On the contrary; he determinedly rejects whatever does not fit into his understanding or sensations.

We learn to sense and to feel, and if you wish, to think, in the same way we acquire our mother tongue language. Just like we cannot choose where to be born or what is fed into our brain. Thus, a person who diagnoses reality based on how he feels at a certain moment **only** reflects the elements he has accumulated so far and misses the opportunity to learn new things. People who say: "It feels right," or "It feels wrong," remain with the same old experiences, reaching the same conclusions and making the same judges over and over again. Therefore, therapy based on discussions of feelings, emotions, "what does it do to you" and the like only encourages people to remain in the same grade and to recycle themselves instead of growing and developing. In my opinion, if a person is disgusted by a certain food, it does not mean that the food is not tasty. In most cases, it is an expression of the person's previous experiences and his/her

unwillingness to learn and to develop his/her ability to enjoy new types of foods.

Nevertheless, almost everyone can, with a certain amount of effort, identify within his reservoir of experiences, certain feelings that have changed completely. For instance, a person who once did not like a certain type of music can learn, in time, to enjoy it, once he is afforded the opportunity to enjoy it and change his attitude. In “Friendship School” we do not sit idly by and wait for the mere chance to ignite the process of change.

The fact that our emotions and feelings are not necessarily untrue complicates things even further. In fact, there is no limit to our learning efforts. We must consistently sharpen our learning tools, catch-up, learn our lessons, better the things that need to be improved and ask ourselves – What should we add to our life so that we will have a relatively reliable tool to find our way in the world? In short, in “Friendship School” we do not focus on the things a person feels like doing, but rather on the things that are worthwhile doing.

Shaping Identity, Change

Dealing with the question – ‘what is in the best interest of a person?’ – is fascinating. It involves getting to know each person and referring to him personally and accurately. Since the things that are important for one person might be completely irrelevant as far as another person is concerned.

The experience and overall viewpoint of scholastic people does not allow for crude diagnosis. A scholastic person knows that he can never see all the elements of the situation. He is constantly on the move and sees all shades of the circumstances, according to his personal point of view. He knows his limits and does not assume his judgments are definitively correct. So, instead of restricting himself

and his environment within a predetermined pattern, he maintains a sense of curiosity and a desire for learning that enables him to consistently acquire new information. Each additional piece of information changes his previous understanding and interpretation while at the same time, changes him.

Change is produced by adding a new ability to a person's existing reservoir of abilities. It is the additional ability that changes the person's identity. Learning to drive, for example, changes a person's identity from a pedestrian to a driver. Producing the friendly change is created through production and management. Metaphorically speaking, we plant the actions and deeds we consider necessary for producing change in our garden-beds. The question – What should we invest in? – is a personal one. Each person is supposed to realize what is in his best interest and then invest in promoting it. So, instead of philosophizing about change, we promote it from day to day. As said before, in “Friendship School” we bypass the symptom and concentrate all our efforts on promoting the desired ability, which does not necessarily have to be related to the symptom. For instance, the homework given to spouses who fight endlessly is to learn Salsa and to try new positions during sex. However, even if the homework is directly related to the symptom we do not deal with appeasement but rather on promoting ability. When dealing with examination anxiety, for example, we add mini-situations which contain all sorts of constraints to the ability of answering questions, at home, under optimal conditions. The constraints might range from the need to provide quick answers to the presence of an audience – until the examinee acquires the ability to express his knowledge during high-pressure and stressful situations. We would deal with a singer who suffers from stage-fright in a similar manner. Such a person should add to his singing ability the ability to entertain people. He/she should sing occasionally for a small audience whilst gradually gaining confidence and developing his entertainment ability, which

would have previously caused him/her must stress. The performer should continue doing this until accustomed to performing in front of a bigger audience. A similar thing happens when we move from an individual sexual expression such as masturbation, to a sexual expression which involves another person.

If someone feels the same things over and over again, and they deal with similar experiences in the same manner, it means that true learning has not taken place. True learning really changes the way we feel.

An Island of Ability

Learning is not all about homework. The most important element of learning and producing change is not merely about doing – but involves a certain type of **concentration** on what we do. Just as holding a book and looking at the lines is not exactly reading. What turns it into reading is the concentration and the subsequent effort to understand the written words.

A comment about concentration: students at the “Friendship School” do a great deal of homework in order to improve their ability to concentrate and develop thinking skills. We can compare it to the ability to control the movement of our head and the look in our eyes. A person whose sight and neck muscles are functioning is capable of turning his head freely and staring at whatever he chooses. One can acquire freedom of thinking, which enables a person to concentrate on whatever he chooses, in a similar way. This ability can be assimilated through practice.

In “Friendship School” we use this skill extensively. What should we concentrate on? This is a crucial element of learning. Most people focus on expected feelings such as anxiety, disgust and difficulty, and keep focusing on the negative aspects or expectations of oneself.

Scholastic people refer to this expectation as if it were a distracting noise and focus on actually growing and developing ability. They concentrate on the flavor of the food and not on the pre-programmed sense of disgust. They focus on the kiss and not on being stressed out by the presence of a woman. They concentrate on the new words being added to the language

Instead of looking at the sea of inabilities surrounding us we choose to focus on the island of abilities, which expands and enhances our identity, shaping it according to our own personal choice.

A person who focuses on the above knows that change is taking place. The scope of change will depend on the scope of his/her investment. This is the most optimistic and friendly fact and this is what I offer my students. This can also be considered the weak point of the method. It is based on a determined scholastic culture. A person who doesn't make an effort to learn and who isn't persistent in his efforts will remain the same. The therapist does not have any enforcement tools to enforce change. The high rate of success in "Friendship School" is mainly linked to the fact that I simply dismiss the learning decliners.

Most people prefer a supportive treatment that on the surface appears as if the person is really doing something in order to change, without really changing at all.

Method's Application

Friendship is an art that has to be acquired and nurtured. It is an essential ability which is at the basis of success in most areas of life; professional and social. This is an "obligatory" subject – since things that are related to individuals require learning and reference to people, whether it is about spouses, parents and children or business partners.

Some people acquire this art in their first learning environment; at home - if they were lucky enough to be raised by people who had learnt how to enjoy each other. People who were not that lucky must make the conscious decision to develop the 'friendly' ability. This method of acquiring the "friendship ability" applies to various life situations These include:

Singles

Most single people are egocentric. They do not know how to take another person into consideration and thus seek someone who is willing to adapt to their limitations or expectations and their search is often fruitless. They only give their date a chance when they sense a "click" or certain "chemistry on the first date. In most cases, the following dates greatly disappoint them. In "Friendship School" a match is the result of a lasting friendship between two individuals who have become experts on one another. Students conduct a set of guided dates; this is neither match-making nor a commitment for life. It is simply a commitment to hold a number of meetings in which each person is supposed to be at their best. They do their homework together: she is his homework and he is her homework. Following each meeting, each person writes a report in which they specify the things they have learnt about the other person and add recommendations in order to progress even further in the next meeting.

Both people bring with them a package of abilities that they have acquired prior to meeting each other. A person who knows how to seize an opportunity relates to the other's abilities. They each take even the smallest portion of what is offered by the other person, essentially killing two birds with one stone. His world is expanded and enriched by the things he has learnt from the other person. He also allows himself to enjoy the company of the other person and lets it enrich his development.

When two strangers come from the scholastic culture, their relationship develops constantly and becomes more interesting and rewarding.

This method is extremely efficient. Sometimes, people who started seeing each other as “homework” became a couple that continued to grow together. Dating, however, does not always necessarily have to lead to that result. It also happens that, after a while, people feel that they have nothing else to gain from the relationship and choose to develop further with other partners.

When two people decide to become a couple, it is not merely a matter of living together, but an identity change. A person who becomes a friend, a husband or a father, and believes he does not have to change in any way, is wrong. In order to become a spouse who is also a friend, one must change, because his identity now includes another person. The place the other person now occupies in his world does not allow him to maintain his previous identity just as one cannot go back to kindergarten after graduating from high school. Needless to say, this is not an isolated step; it is a process that is supposed to last. Once we stop learning how to be a couple, we are stuck; the same would have happened if we had stopped practicing the piano. Over some time, our previous ability fades away and if we wish to regain this ability, we must start practicing again.

Couples

It is not easy to maintain a long-term relationship, especially in a world where social contacts and media offer a great deal of temptation and opportunities. Nevertheless, many people manage to survive as a couple for many years. The main reason for this is that most spouses believe in the notion of belonging to each other. They exist side by side for many years, like pieces of furniture.

In other words, it is a connection between two committed people