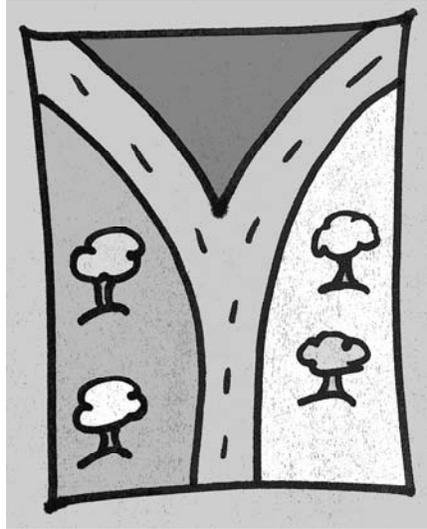


STEP SIX



DECISION TIME

LEAVING TINY TOWN

DECISION TIME

So here you are, you have choice. Either from infancy or as a newly discovered adult, from your own life or from a stranger that walked into your Tiny Town, now you know you have choices. Now what? Now you must decide.

This can be one of the most difficult things in life to do. For if you are able to see all the possibilities and able to see the potentials, (or at least know they are there) you must choose. Each and every moment of each and every day we must decide which potentials, which realities and what options to choose.

Each potential leads to more choices. Choices then lead to more potentials. And with more potentials, you end up making more decisions! Life is just this long line of making decisions out of millions of potentials each and every day. Making decisions takes time, energy, and emotional and mental focus. It can be exhausting, all these choices.

Just look at the modern supermarket options for cereal or ketchup or bread. It can be overwhelming there are so many choices! It is enough to drive someone to a meltdown! It is enough to drive them to make decisions that equal less potentials, less choices, and less options. It can lead to Possibility Paralysis, unable to make a decision at all. It is so overwhelming that many crawl back into Tiny Town and stay there forever. For most people it is just too much.

To a certain extent, consistency is needed to survive. Where you will live, what you will eat, what ketchup you will buy, and who you will see on a daily basis are survival areas. Too many differentials in these areas leads to stress, fear, and possible non-survival. If everyday you woke up and had to choose a new place to live, a new job, new clothes, new food, and new friends, it would be so overwhelming it would be difficult to feed, clothe, house and keep yourself safe!

Having some consistency in the world, from the color of the sky, to driving on the same roads to work, to working at the same job, to going to the same school, to seeing the same people each day, makes us as humans feel safe. Predictability helps to ground us and keep us centered, balanced, and psychologically sound. It is the reason we eat the same foods we ate when we grew up, wear similar clothing, and even live by or with similar people, even if we have all the choices in the world.

Change is difficult for the human mind and body. Keeping the choices aligned in large part to the ones that previously helped keep us alive can help keep us safe and sane.

But, let's say those choices are set. You know where you will live. You know what you will eat. You have enough money to eat and live. Your job is solid and consistent. You pretty much have all the basics covered. Then what? Then what do you do with your day? What do you do with your life?

Some people have many, many options. They have no kids, no jobs, no schedule. They might be retired or very young. What they do with their day becomes their own choice. Many people find retirement horribly difficult. For them life has been structured for so long, their choices have been based on just a few simple options. They were told what to do, what to eat, what to wear (uniforms anybody?) by their bosses, their husbands or wives, their parents, or society.

If you have always lived the same life, in the same town, with the same people, and the same job, it becomes pretty regular and predictable. Those who spent a long time in prison, in longtime military service, or even those with overbearing families or religions, often have the same predictability. Life has been dictated to them in a very succinct, precise way and they had very little choices to make.

But what happens when that changes? They retire. Their domineering mother dies. They get out of prison. They age out of the military. They leave their strict religion. They are free. They are free! Suddenly the whole world is wide open to them. They are free to choose. What happens to them when the choices increase?

They can become very rigid. They aren't used to all these choices. It is very unfamiliar. They build a daily structure that fits them and they stick to it. The choices are too overwhelming and the possibilities too many. It is too much to handle. They shut down and shut away. They stay in Tiny Town and shun all other possibilities.

Ever wonder why retirees eat at 4:30pm precisely each day when they could eat at anytime of the day? One reason? Structure.

STUCK IN TINY TOWN

The longer we get set in a pattern the harder it is to change. Change then feels very difficult. It is why people stay in jobs they complain about constantly for 20 years but don't quit. It's why people stay in marriages they hate, but don't leave. It is why some people never move out of the house they have lived in forever, even as they relentlessly talk about moving someplace else. They don't move. They don't quit. They don't change.

The longer you do something the harder it is to change. That is where the phrase "He's stuck in his ways" comes from. They get Stuck in Tiny Town. It is okay to stay in Tiny Town, understanding it is a choice to stay there. Choosing to stay in Tiny Town is very different from feeling stuck. It is when we feel forced or are forced to stay that it can smother and harm our chances for survival. We then cannot handle change at all. It can destroy us to even do simple changes. And since, as Heraclitus the Greek philosopher is credited as saying, "The only constant in life is change," we have to learn to adjust.

The younger ones who have been born into a world of new possibilities have a different viewpoint. To some of them the choices are awesome! They thrive with the idea that they can be anything! The world is open to them. They are free to go, be, and do whatever they choose. And the world embraces it! Colleges offer study aboard programs. Elementary schools offer several languages and support a well rounded education. The favorite question we ask of kindergartners is, "What are you going to be when you grow up?"

The world is open to them and the world supports their dreaming of potential. They frolic in a World of Possibilities, delight in its conception, and let adventure lead the way. They find the possible in all probables and go for it.

As we grow older the possibilities get more limited. If you have told everyone you wanted to be a firefighter since you were two years old and you decide to become an artist or

an accountant, you might get backlash from your family, your friends, or your community. They have now become very invested in you as a firefighter, in your possibilities, in your Story Personality. Your mother might now have her identity wrapped up in your possibilities. She might call herself the mother of a firefighter to her friends and colleagues even if you have not yet become one! You might have a nickname like Firefighter Ben or Belle. It is a constant to them. The older you are, the harder it is not just for you to change and decide differently, but for others around you to accept your changes.

Sometimes we are forced to change. There was a Ben who did have a dream of becoming a firefighter. From his earliest days as a child he played with fire trucks and ladders. He trained to be strong, running up stairs and lifting heavy hoses. His parents would tell their neighbors and friends how their little child Ben had such a big heart all he wanted to do was help and what a great first responder he was! He was a hero already, living his life out as little Firefighter Ben. It was his whole focus, his whole world.

He was studying the test to become what he had always dreamed when a semi-truck slide sideways in the snow on the highway in front of him. He hit the truck. He broke his leg in four places leaving him with a limp for the rest of his life. His dream shattered along with his bones on that icy road. Here he was, Fireman Ben, never to be a firefighter. He no longer could physically do the job.

CRISIS CREATES CHOICES.

Events happen in our lives and our whole world is changed, upside down. The possibilities we had once so focused on no longer exist. We have to start over with new possibilities, new choices, and new decisions on what to do with our lives. Crisis is permission to change our possibilities. It happens naturally and we have no control over it. It is an opportunity presented to us to live life differently, to choose differently.

Often times we have no choice in the changes. It can be very painful to be forced to change. The grief can be intense. But it opens our eyes to possible realities we may not have ever known before. It can even open our hearts. We can then make the decision that it is time to change. We can make the decision to choose differently. Sometimes this decision is as simple as changing our attitudes towards the events that happen to us. Sometimes it is as great as changing the dreams we had for our whole lives. Ben now has decisions to make on how to move forward in life without the life he dreamt as a fireman. His parents do too and everyone around him who had become invested in who he was and who he was to become.

We do not walk our paths alone. Along with us are those people who have their own Tiny Towns and Story Personalities. Their feelings, thoughts, and wishes can be Strangers in our Tiny Town possibilities, for good or bad. Knowing we get to choose our stories, our dreams, and our worlds is what frees us from all that has come before, even as it stares at us in the face as we heal, grieving their own losses in who we would become.

Events like these can open the door for possibility. It can create an opening that changes our lives. But most of us get overwhelmed with the idea of opening up to complete possibility! It is too much to think that the world could be different from what we thought it would be. It is too much to push back on the family, friends, society, and blocks in our lives. It is too much to decide and create new all the time. We seek the sameness that feels comfortable, that feels familiar.

We grow a little and then shut down. We begin to make choices that might not be our own. We look around and see what others are doing and then do the same. We choose

spouses, children, work, home, or the area we live in, not out of a desire to explore something new but out of a desire to stay somewhat normal, stay in the same probabilities as our parents, or society, or what has been familiar to us. We grow just a little to move probabilities, but not enough to be ground breaking. We choose just enough to say we had and then shut down all other possible options for our lives.

This is the norm. This is the way typical growth occurs in generations. Each one takes a potential and makes a few more choices for change than their parents did, but not enough to rock the apple cart entirely. That would be too scary. That would be too much. That would lead to too many changes. Too many changes can feel dangerous. The human mind cannot handle too many changes at once. It can cause stress, anxiety, and overwhelm the most adventurous people.

It's the cycle of humanity. Keep it relative to what we know to be true as reality, but not too much to shake up the world completely. Our minds, our brains, our psyches, cannot handle that much at once. We stop, hold our breaths, and fight to stay in our new middle sized town.

It's a slippery slope that time and time again has fooled the ages. At the verge of ultimate total transformation, it stops. At the brink of the ultimate change, at the cusp of the ultimate possible, humans pull away. They pull back into the cave of Tiny Town like a rabbit spotting a hawk. The fear stops them dead in their tracks.

TO OPEN UP TO THE REALM OF ULTIMATE POSSIBILITIES REQUIRES MOVING BEYOND.

To open up to the realm of the ultimate possibilities requires moving beyond. To Leave Tiny Town requires great courage, strength, and perseverance. The people we admire in history, politicians, inventors, makers of gadgets and gizmos, revolutionaries, saints, and other leaders who changed the world, are all people who could see the possibilities and make the choices to bring them to our reality. They didn't think out of the box. They created a new box of possibilities so that we could choose new realities, new choices, and new lives for ourselves!

So when you ask, why can't we have peace on earth? This is why. Change is difficult. People fight change. To open up to a new possibility of a peaceful world from our historical urge and need to fight others outside of our own Tiny Towns takes the ultimate courage of change.

If you desire to open up to new possibilities look to those who are comfortable with change. They are the purveyors of possibilities. They hold the kind of courage needed to be able to Leave Tiny Town and into a World of Possibilities. It is a different state of mind. It is about taking the leap to change the belief system and the way in which you explain and experience the world around you. It is taking personal responsibility at a high enough level that you stop telling the stories you have been telling and begin to live life daily from a new vantage point.

If you think you are not one of those people, think again. Changing into new can happen in some drastic made for TV movie heroic tragic drama sort of crisis way, or not. Usually it happens a tiny little bit each and every day. Just like a toddler growing so fast, you do too. Each day you learn. Each day you grow. Each day you challenge yourself a little at a time to bust those blocks that no longer serve you. You assess your situations, try a little

harder, do something a little different. Each day you move toward possibility. You are doing it right here, right now, just by reading this!

It happens naturally as you continue to grow and open your mind to the possibilities presented in the world around you. It changes who you have been, but allows you to be more of who you really are than ever before. It walks you into the unknown and yet strips you of the fear of change. It starts with self-awareness and ends with self-acceptance. You become you. And in you, all is revealed.

It is the journey that you are on and it continues with every breath you take. Are you ready for more? There are always decision points on any journey. It's Decision Time. Are you ready? Set. Go!

