

# Understanding and Developing Employee Resilience

Strategies for Strengthening Employee  
Capacities for Surviving  
Stress, Trauma, and Change



Presented by Jeffrey L. Russell  
Co-Director

**Nelson  
Mandela**

**Antwone  
Fisher**

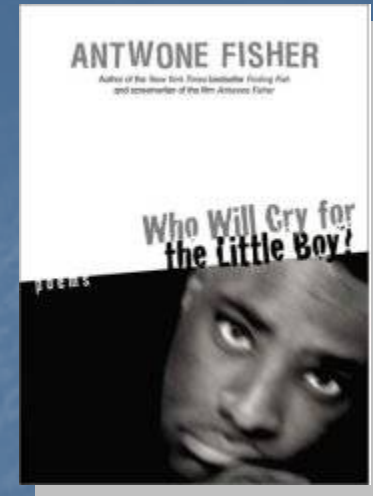
**Harriet  
Tubman**

**Viktor  
Frankl**

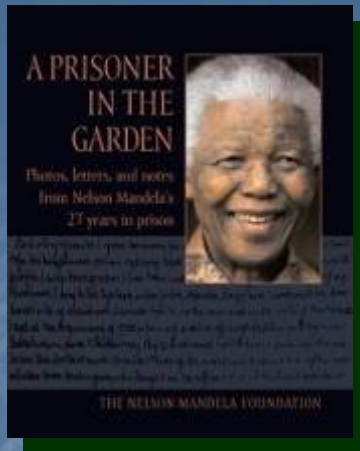
**Hurricane Katrina  
Survivors**

# Antwone Fisher

- His father was killed by a gunshot blast shortly before he was born in 1959.
- His 17-year-old mother gave him up for foster care.
- 14 years in foster family – where he was physically and psychological abused and where he was sexually abused by a neighbor. Withdraws into himself.
- Foster parents dump him . . . Sent to reform school – although he had no criminal record.
- Becomes homeless at 18 when the State gives up its “hold” on him
- Joins the Navy – after episodes of explosive anger, begins an 11 year healing journey.
- Leaves the Navy. Works as a security guard at Sony Pictures while enrolling in a screenwriting class. Is “discovered” by a producer on the Sony set.
- 2001 publishes his memoirs Finding Fish – becomes a NYT bestseller.
- Writes screenplay of this life. This becomes the bestselling movie Antwone Fisher, directed by Denzel Washington.



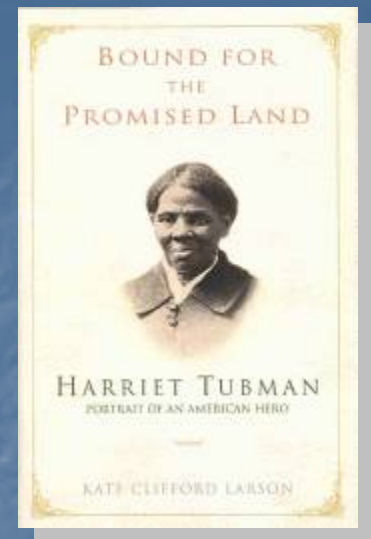
# Nelson Mandela



- 1918, born in a rural black homeland of South Africa.
- Father's death lands him in the care of a powerful relative.
- Runs away from his guardian to avoid an arranged marriage, he apprentices to a law firm — where he is exposed to the injustices of apartheid. Studies law and becomes an attorney.
- He shuns a comfortable life to take up the cause of democratic nonviolent revolution against apartheid.
- Government brutally crushes democratic efforts, bans ANC, and arrests Mandela.
- Incarcerated for 27 years in Robben Island Prison.
- Declares: “**Any man or institution who tries to rob me of my dignity will lose.**”
- Organizes an “Island University” where work details and recreational breaks become classrooms in philosophy, history, economics, politics, literature, etc.
- 1989 begins secret negotiations with government for his release and the peaceful transition to democracy.
- 1990 first democratically elected President of South Africa.

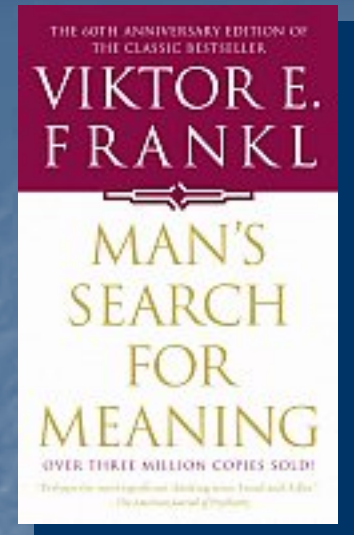
# Harriet Tubman

- Harriet Ross was born into slavery in 1819 or 1820, in Dorchester County, Maryland.
- Raised under brutal conditions, subjected to whippings as a small child. At the age of 12 she was seriously injured by a blow to the head, inflicted by a white overseer when she refused to assist in tying up a man who had attempted escape.
- Marries John Tubman at 25. Five years later leaves her husband and escapes slavery when she feared she would be sold South.
- Given a piece of paper by a white neighbor with two names, and told how to find the first house on her path to freedom. Travels the Underground Rail Road to Philadelphia where she meets William Still.
- Begins relocating members of her family to St. Catherines, Ontario.
- Personally guides more than 300 person to freedom as a Conductor on the Underground Rail Road.
- During the Civil War, Tubman served as a soldier, spy, and a nurse.
- After the Civil War, moves to Auburn, New York . . . Where she began her work for the rights of women.



# Viktor Frankl — 1905-1997

- Born in Vienna. At age 4 wanted to become a doctor.
- 1928 organizes free counseling centers for youth in Vienna.
- 1930 earns his doctorate in medicine. Continues training in neurology and runs psychiatric unit.
- 1938 Nazis invade Austria. He applies for a VISA to the U.S. — but decides to stay to care for his elderly parents.
- 1942 appointed director of neurological unit at the only Jewish hospital in Vienna. He begins writing The Doctor and the Soul.
- 1942: He marries, but soon his entire extended family is arrested and deported to the camps. His wife, parents, and brother all perish in the camps.
- His manuscript is destroyed upon arriving in Auschwitz.
- Helps organize a camp lecture series and concert performances.
- Succumbs to Typhoid fever. Stays alive by focusing on reconstructing his manuscripts on stolen pieces of paper.
- 1945 Auschwitz liberated.
- Publishes his reconstructed book and then writes Man's Search for Meaning in only nine days — selling over 5 million copies in U.S. alone.



# Katrina Survivors

As Hurricane Rita approached the Louisiana coastline . . . 500,000 people in southwestern Louisiana, many of them already displaced by the devastating **Hurricane Katrina**, were told to evacuate again and many jammed roads north to escape.

In New Iberia, **Glynn Stevenson**, who swam out of his New Orleans house with his belongings taped to his body, had just gotten settled into a trailer provided by FEMA when the call came for him to uproot again.

**"It's nothing to get mad about,"** he said. **"Just keep a cool attitude and help your brothers."**



# Resilience: re-sil-ience, *n*

From Latin: *resile* – *to leap back*

. . . the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

. . . the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape – to bounce back – after being subjected to adversity or stress.



A photograph of a misty lake with a forested island in the background and reeds in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

**It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change.**

**— Charles Darwin**

**British naturalist  
c. 1809-1882**

# What Resilience Looks Like . . .

Resilient people . . .

- View problems and challenges as opportunities.
- Learn from their mistakes/failures.
- Succeed despite their hardships.
- Seek out new and challenging experiences.
- Don't let anxiety and doubts overwhelm them.
- Have a sense of humor and realistic optimism under stress.
- Don't feel shame or depression in the face of failure.
- Transform helplessness into power.
- Move from being a victim to being a survivor.

# Why We Need Resilience @ Work

- Rapid changes in our industries.
- Multiple changes occurring simultaneously
- Pressures to do more with less.
- The need to play multiple roles, wear multiple hats, and satisfy multiple customers in our jobs.
- Work/life balance OUT of balance.
- Greater workplace diversity—with diversity comes differences . . . which can lead to conflict
- Changing job descriptions.

# Why We Need Resilience @ Work

- Increasing pressure to achieve higher levels of performance.
- Outsourcing, downsizing, and the fear of job loss.
- Project overload.
- Loss of control over our work.
- Mergers and acquisitions – blending (and the clash) of organizational cultures.
- Uncertainty about the future . . .
- **Because *change* is constant . . . It's how we respond to it that makes the difference**

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water, with mountains visible in the distance. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, and the water reflects the light. The text is overlaid on the image.

Do people  
resist change?

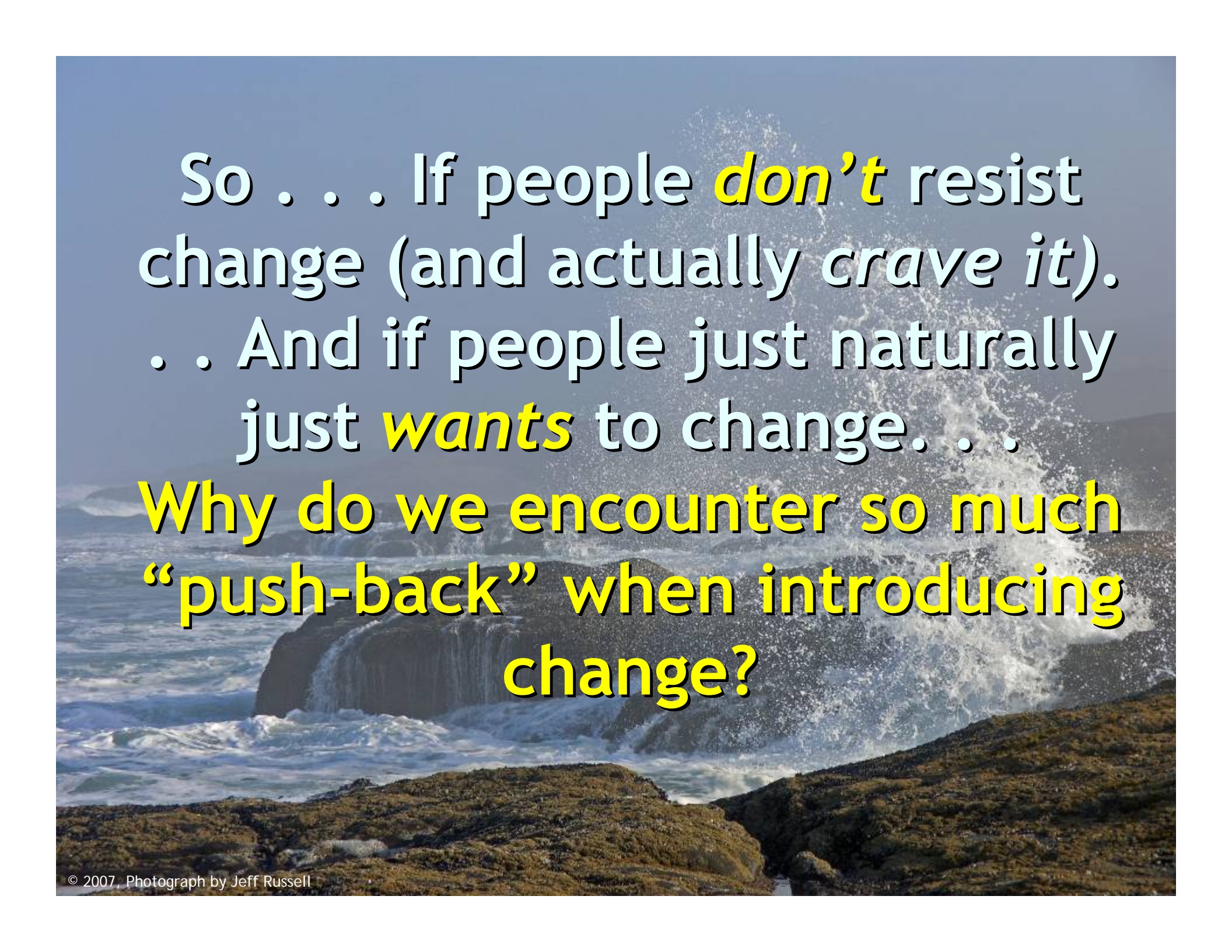
People don't resist  
change, they resist  
BEING changed!

# People CRAVE Change!

- Change is an *extraordinarily* natural and normal practice that people routinely embrace . . . on their own terms!
- When people are in the *driver's seat* of change, seeking out learning, opportunity, and growth, they usually view change as their *ally* to and a *wellspring* of their personal success.

# Imagine a world without change

- You live in the same house with the same family next to the same annoying neighbors
- You never read another book
- Your children *never* grow up – or (worse) they *never* leave home!
- You eat the same meal at the same restaurant with the same rude waiter for the rest of your life
- You do the same work every day at a job that is forever the same for a boss who is always cross
- You never visit a foreign country
- You never marry . . . or never divorce
- You never see a blazing scarlet sunset
- You never experience awe, wonder, or joy!



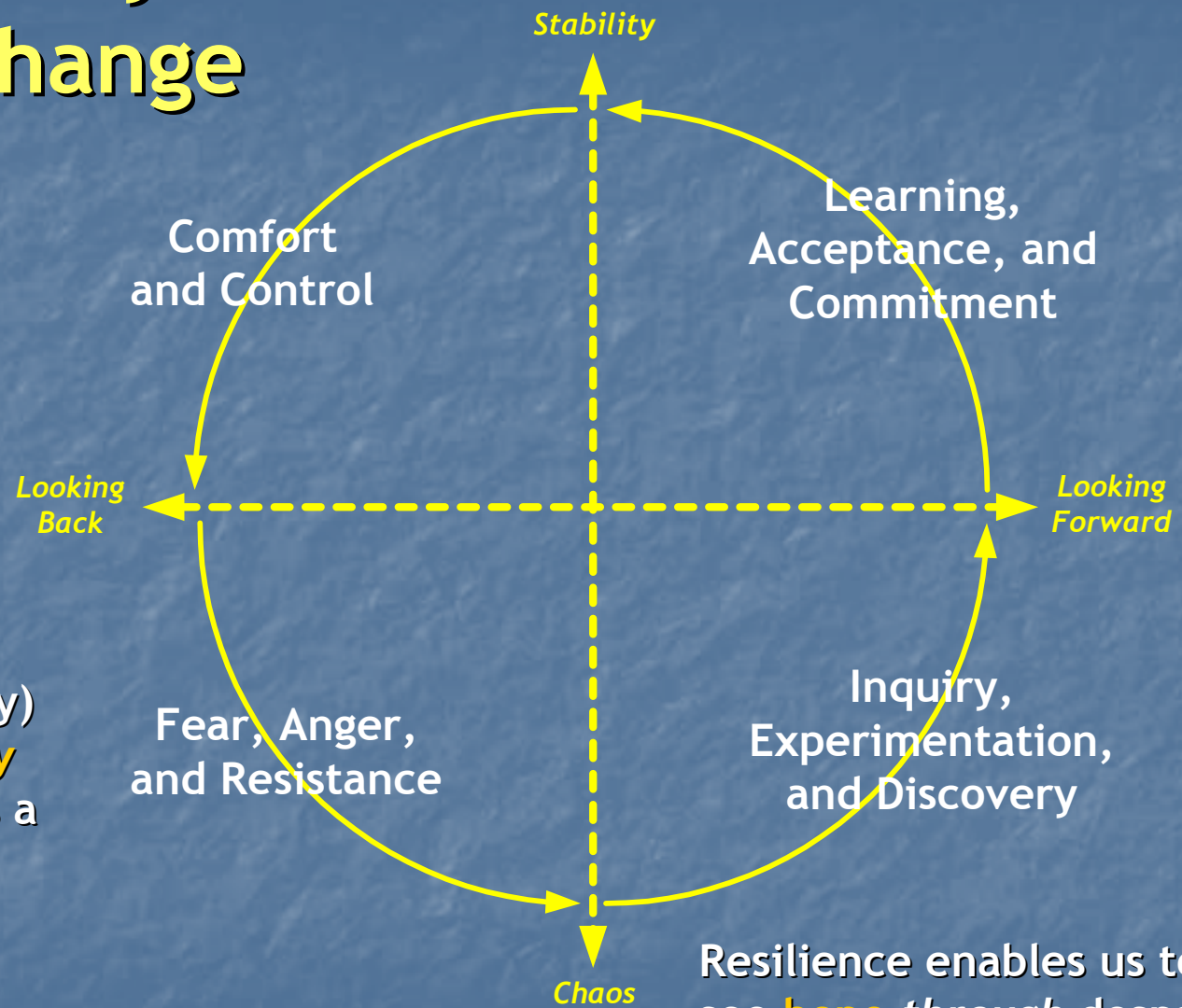
So . . . If people **don't** resist change (and actually *crave it*).  
. . . And if people just naturally just **wants** to change. . .

**Why do we encounter so much “push-back” when introducing change?**

A photograph of a sunset over a beach. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and casting long shadows. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds. In the foreground, there are tall, dark grasses that are silhouetted against the bright light of the sunset. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

It's not change that people resist, but **how** organizations manage it!

# The Journey Through Change



As we (individually and organizationally) move from **stability** into **chaos**, there is a greater need for resilience . . .

Resilience enables us to see **hope** through despair

# Characteristics of Comfort and Control

- Comfortable
- Safe
- Everything's fine
- Happy
- Satisfied
- No problems
- Positive
- Rewarding
- In control
- I'm okay, you're okay!

*People feel comfortable, safe, and in control. They are working hard – but often on the wrong things.*

# Characteristics of Fear, Anger, and Resistance

- Frustration
- Anger
- Fearful
- Betrayed
- Upset
- Confused
- Challenged
- Hostility
- Anxiety
- Self-doubt
- Lost
- Dazed

*People feel frustrated, angry, and fearful about the change. Performance deteriorates.*

# Characteristics of Inquiry, Experimentation, and Discovery

- Confused
- Questioning
- Hopeful
- Opportunity
- Frustrated
- Disappointed
- Challenged
- Half-way there!
- Making progress
- Going in all directions at once!
- Searching for solutions
- Exciting!
- Innovation/creativity

*People want to make the change work – on their terms as well as those of the organization – but they don't have clear answers.*

# Characteristics of Learning, Acceptance, and Commitment

- Now I know!
- Energized
- Success!
- We made it!
- Relief
- Wow!
- Self-confidence
- Satisfied
- Comfortable
- What's next?



*People are focused upon and excited about the future. They begin working together to accomplish the change vision.*

# Actions for Comfort and Control

- Acknowledge their successful past.
- Get people's attention!
- Sell the need for change . . . sell the pain and the consequences of not changing.
- Immerse people in information about the change . . . **customer complaints, budget data, increasing costs, competitive pressures.**
- Let people know it will happen – one way or another!
- Give people time to let the ideas sink in.
- Don't sell the solutions . . . sell the problem!

# Actions for Fear, Anger, and Resistance

- Co-create the vision.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Acknowledge people's pain, perceived losses, and anger.
- Strive to address their perceived losses.
- Tell people what you know – and what you don't know.
- Don't try to talk people out of their feelings.
- Discuss ways to solve the problems people see with the change.
- Encourage discussion, dissent, disagreement, debate . . . keep people talking.

# Actions for *Inquiry*, *Experimentation*, and *Discovery*

- Give people freedom and direction.
- Give people permission to find their own solutions.
- Encourage people to take risks.
- Affirm and refine the vision – make room for others' ideas.
- Tell people as much as you know.
- Encourage teamwork and collaboration.
- Encourage personal reflection and learning.
- Provide people training and support.
- Set short-term goals.

# Actions for Learning, Acceptance, and Commitment

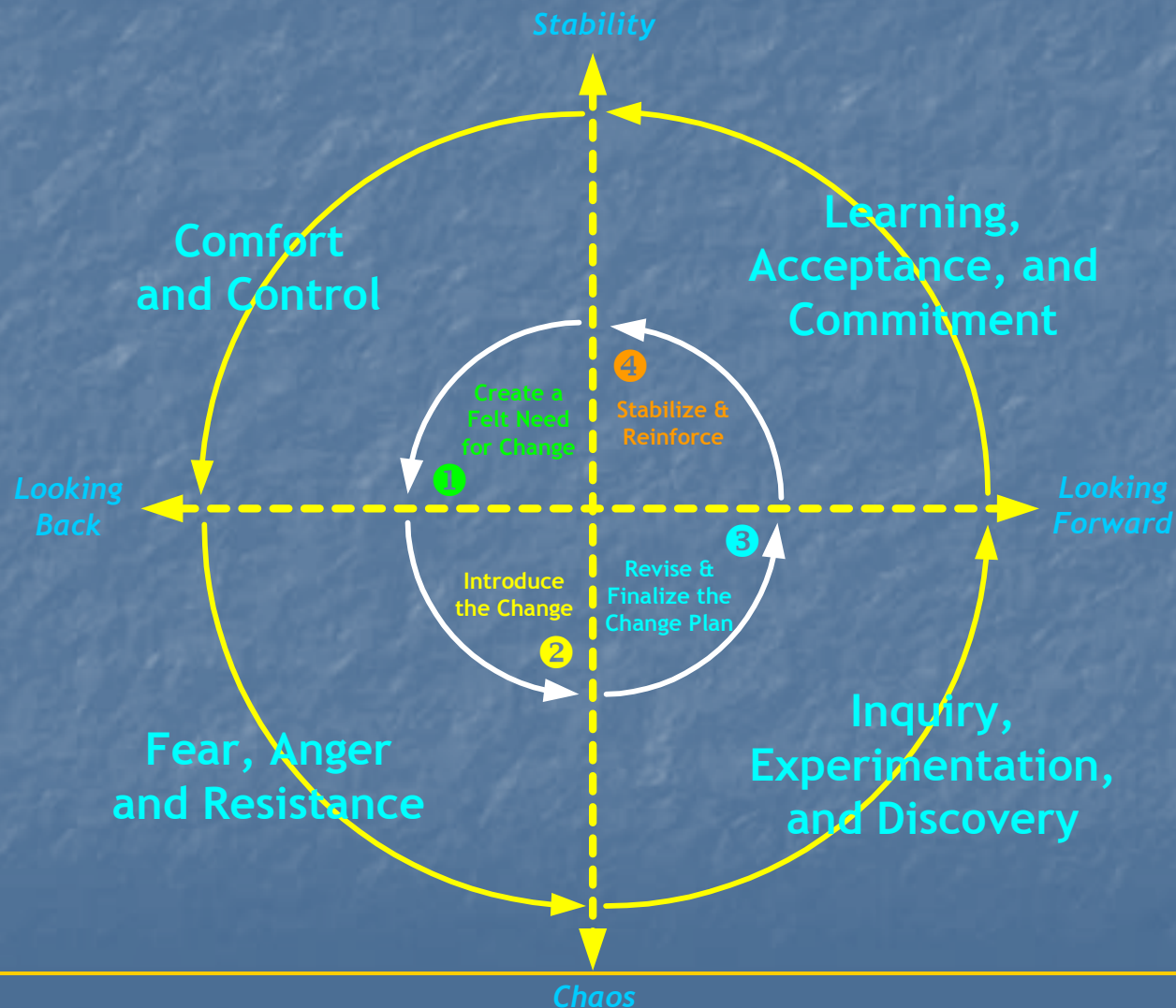
- Acknowledge their hard work.
- Celebrate successes and accomplishments.
- Reaffirm the vision.
- Bring people together toward the vision.
- Acknowledge what people have left behind.
- Develop long-term goals and plans.
- Provide tools and training to reinforce new behaviors.
- Reinforce and reward the new behaviors.
- Create systems and structures that reinforce new behaviors.
- Prepare people for the next change.



The art of progress is to  
preserve change amid order and  
preserve order amid change.

- Alfred North Whitehead,  
British mathematician and  
philosopher (1861 - 1947)

# Leader Actions . . .



# Introducing and Sustaining a Change





**There is nothing permanent  
except change.**

**— Heraclitus**

# Without Resilience . . .

Our anxiety, self-doubt, confusion, frustration can . . .

- erode our personal effectiveness and job performance
- create higher levels of mistrust and resistance
- negatively affect our personal health and well-being
- decrease our ability to find the “hidden opportunity” that is essential if we are to make the change work for ourselves and the organization
- stifle our creativity, innovation, and problem solving capacities
- make the “next change” that much harder . . .

# With Resilience . . .

## We will be more able to . . .

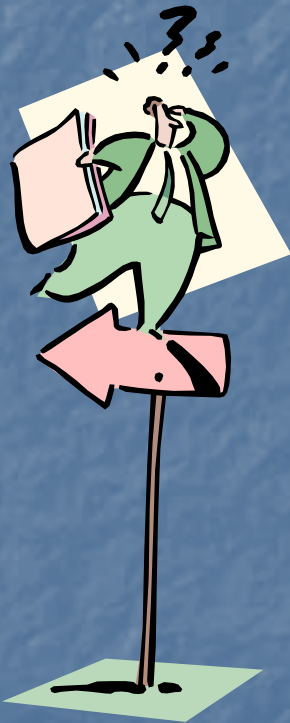
- view change as an opportunity for learning and growth
- discover the “upside” of every change – no matter how difficult or traumatic
- shape or influence the change such that it works *with* and *for* us
- handle multiple changes simultaneously
- help others through a change
- view setbacks not as fatal personal flaws or failures – but as temporary states
- have the capacity to see beyond the stress, anxiety, confusion, and frustration of the moment
- view the larger picture and grander vision of the present and emerging future

# Resilience is a Mindset . . .

- Resilience is less about who we are than about how we **think**.
- Our mindsets or “**mental models**” directly influence and shape how we view the world and how we view ourselves in the world.
- This view of self, in turn, influences how we **respond** (our behaviors) to adversity and stress — with a healthy/productive response or an unhealthy/unproductive response
- The strength of our resilience mindset and the force of our behaviors enable us to, in turn, influence or **shape our environment**.

# Human Nature . . .

1. People want to maintain control over their lives.
2. People develop self-confidence and psychological health by building stable and effective relationships with others.
3. Our sense of control, comfort, and well-being results from the degree of certainty we have about our life.
4. Change disrupts our ability to predict what's in store for us.
5. The more a change disrupts our ability to envision our future, the greater our confusion, fear, anxiety, and self-doubt.
6. Resilience enables us to survive, even thrive, on the challenges posed by a changing environment

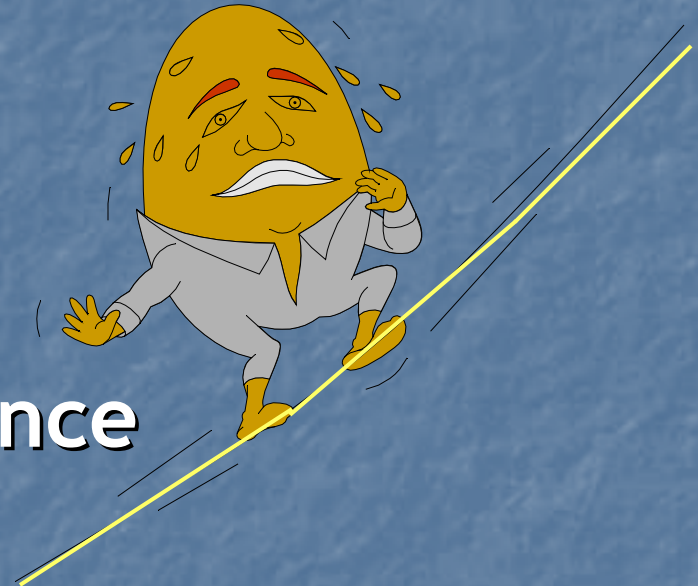


# Original Resilience Research

- In 1955, Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith began a study of 698 **at risk** Hawaiian children from their prenatal months to beyond their 30's
- One in every three children born with odds against them (poverty, divorce, mental illness, learning disabilities, alcoholism, etc.)
- Two out of three of these vulnerable children experienced significant behavioral problems as adults (arrests, pregnancies, mental illness, drug use, etc.)
- **But one out of three developed into confident, accomplished adults**
- Werner and Smith explored the characteristics that enabled these more resilient people to survive the stresses of their environment

# Develop Your *Resilience*

- Self-Assurance
- Personal Vision
- Flexible
- Organized
- Problem Solver
- Interpersonal Competence
- Socially Connected
- Proactive



# First Dimension: Self-Assurance

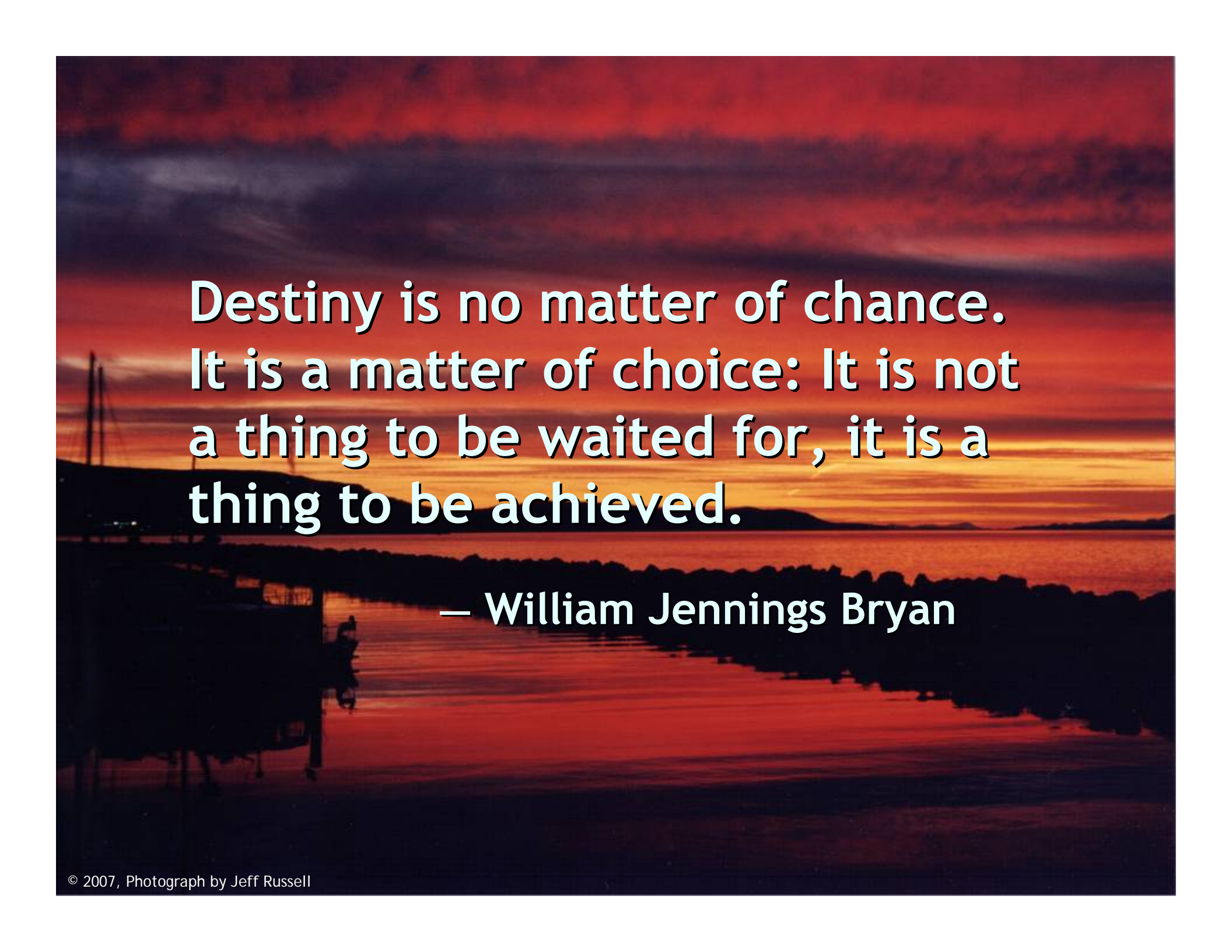
- Viewing the world as complex and challenging . . . But filled with opportunity.
- Holding a positive self-perception.
- Confident in one's ability to meet any challenge with hope and realistic optimism.

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You *must* do the thing you think you cannot do.

— Eleanor Roosevelt

## Second Dimension: Personal Vision/Purpose

- Knowing what you believe in.
- Having a clear vision of what you want to accomplish/achieve.
- Approaching adversity and stress with a sense of hope.
- Belief and purpose carries you forward into life.

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and purple hues. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of a pier or dock structure. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**Destiny is no matter of chance.  
It is a matter of choice: It is not  
a thing to be waited for, it is a  
thing to be achieved.**

**— William Jennings Bryan**

# Third Dimension: **Flexible/Adaptable**

- Aware of and sensitive to changes in the environment.
- Able to shift gears in response to what is happening.
- Remaining true to your purpose/vision while making room for other's ideas and opportunities . . .

**Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.**


**— Dr. Michael McGriffy**

# Fourth Dimension: **Organized**

- Creating structures and methods to bring order and stability on your own terms.
- Setting realistic goals for yourself.
- Managing the moments with calm and clarity of purpose . . .

# Fifth Dimension: Problem Solver

- Thinking critically and reflectively.
- Viewing impossible problems as challenges and opportunities for learning and growth.
- Collaborating with others.
- Anticipating setbacks and missteps.
- Solving problems for the long-term.
- Viewing failures and opportunities for inspiration



**Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that makes the difference.**

**— Winston Churchill**

# Sixth Dimension: Interpersonal Competence


- Demonstrating empathy and understanding for others.
- Displaying emotional intelligence – *self-awareness, self-control, and social awareness.*
- Laughing at yourself.
- Seeking out others' perspectives.

# Seventh Dimension: Socially Connected

- Reaching out to others.
- Building bridges, sharing solutions, exploring opportunities together.
- Discovering common ground.
- Contributing to other's welfare – giving of yourself.
- Touching others' hearts . . .

# Eighth Dimension: **Proactive**

- Engaging change directly.
- Focusing on – and expanding – your sphere of influence.
- Focusing on actions that you can take vs. waiting for others to act.
- Experiencing small victories . . .
- Leading others through change by setting the example . . .



The greatest glory of living lies  
not in never falling, but in *rising*  
every time you fall.

— Nelson Mandela

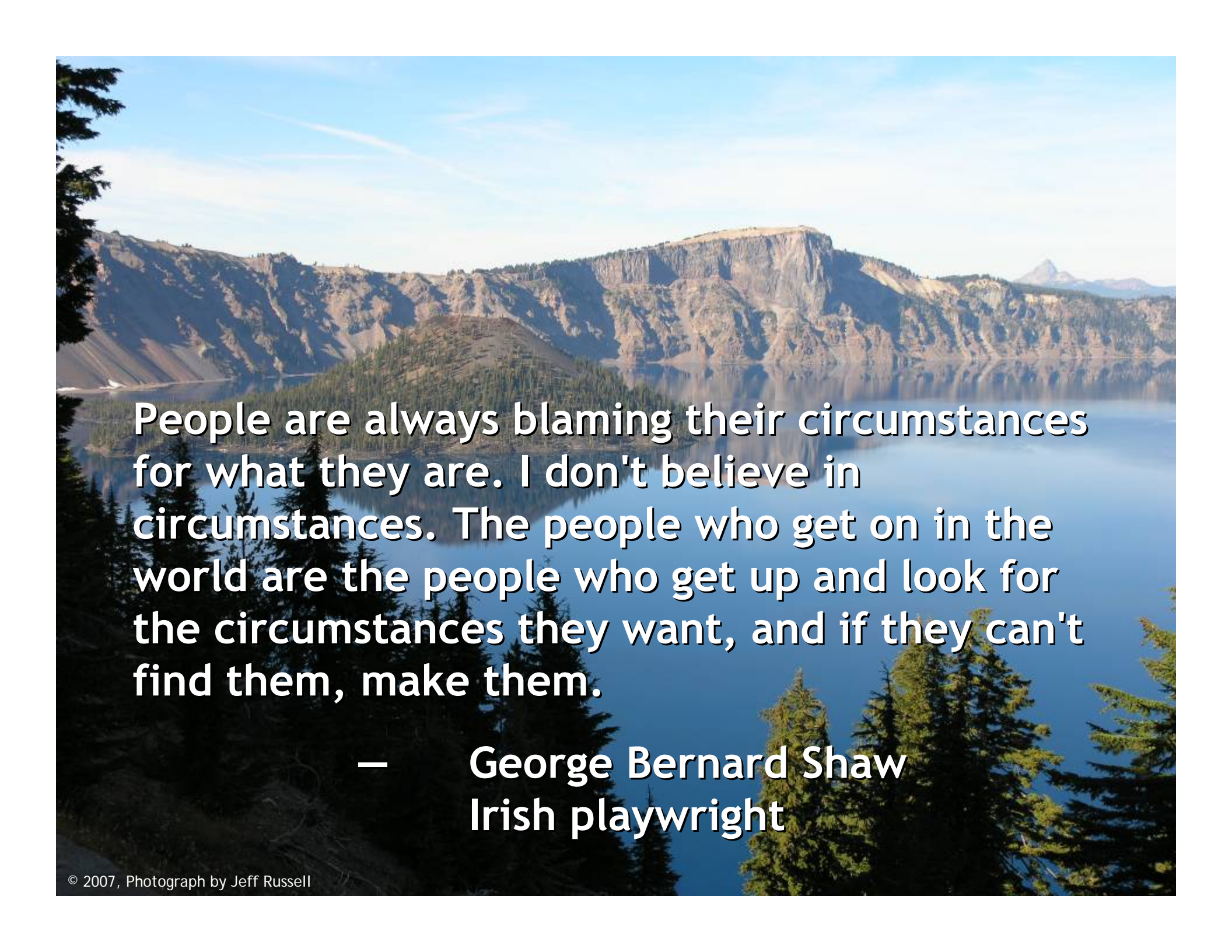
The image shows the Main Gate of Auschwitz, a large brick building with a central archway. In the foreground, there are railway tracks leading towards the gate. The sky is overcast.

## Main Gate of Auschwitz

We who lived in the concentration camps can remember those who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread.

They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a person but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's *attitude* in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

– Victor Frankl  
Auschwitz survivor and author  
“Man’s Search for Meaning”



People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in the world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

— George Bernard Shaw  
Irish playwright

# *The Crisis of Change . . .*

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***Danger!***

***Hidden Opportunity***

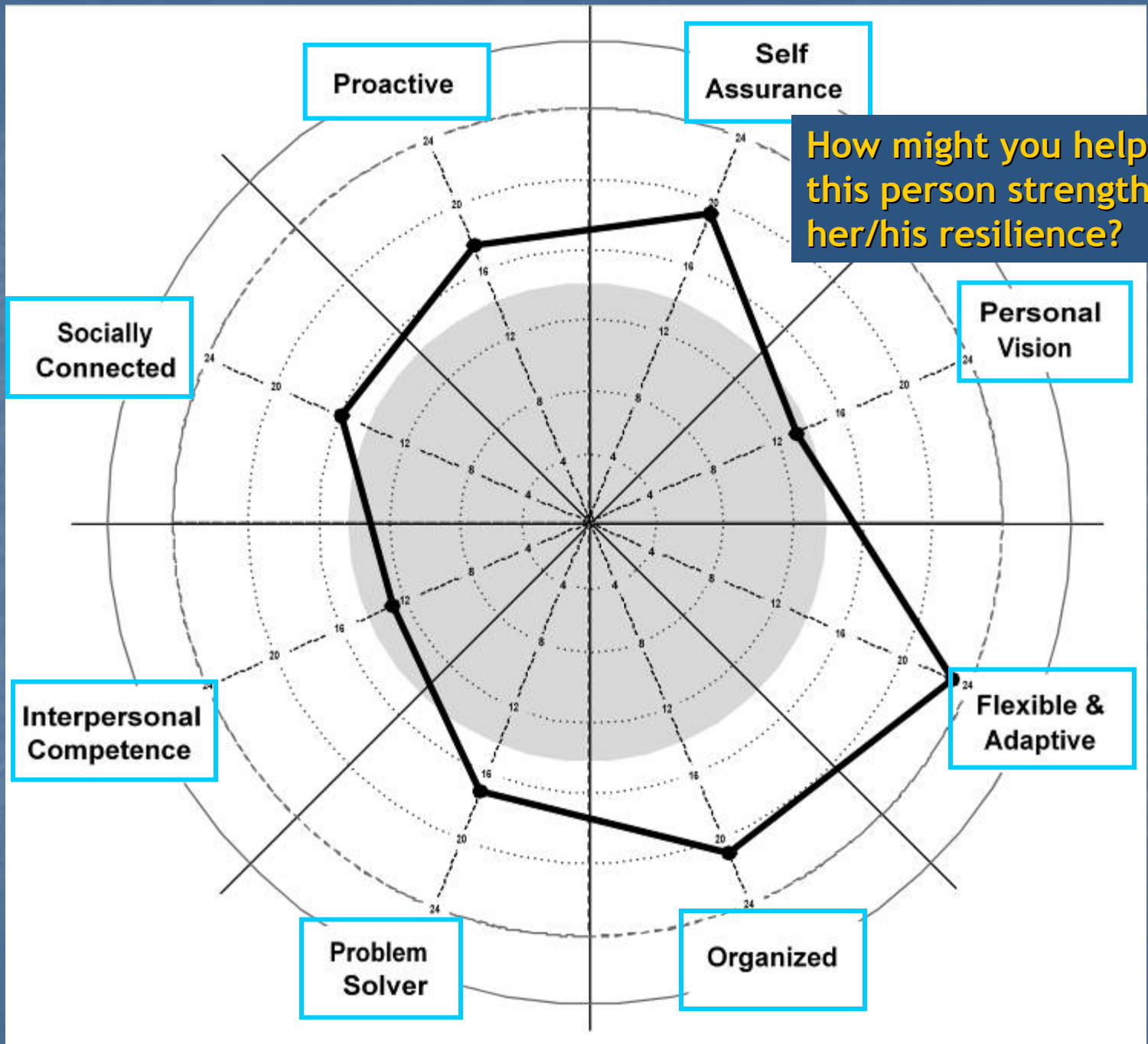
# Measuring Your Resilience

- RCI developed the RQ to assess the level of resilience on the eight resilience dimensions.
- The RQ asks you to indicate your level of agreement on 32 statements.
- The scoresheet guides you in calculating your RQ score for each of the eight dimensions and for your *overall* RQ score.
- The RQ is in use throughout the world and we are currently engaged in reliability and validation studies

# Interpreting Your RQ Scores

- 175 to 192**    *Very Resilient:* You are consistently able to deal effectively with and even thrive on change.
- 128 to 174**    *Resilient:* Most of the time you are able to deal with change in a positive manner. You have a number of mechanisms in place that help you deal with the uncertainty of change.
- 96 to 127**    *Somewhat Resilient:* Change has a tendency to knock you off your best performance. You have some difficulty regaining your footing.
- 32 to 95**    *Not Very Resilient:* Change creates major challenges for you. You are frequently unprepared for the uncertainty and lack of stability that change creates.

# RESILIENT



How might you help this person strengthen her/his resilience?

# Strengthening Your Resilience

- Know what's important to you – define your personal vision and your core values
- Reframe your mental models – challenge your assumptions about yourself and others
- Identify what you can change/influence and what you can't and focus on what you can influence

# Strengthening Your Resilience


- Assume a “can do,” proactive attitude
- Take care of yourself – mentally and physically
- Reach out to others – find new connections and strengthen existing ones
- Create/build a discipline that gives you the structure/stability/order you need

## Helping Others Strengthen Their Resilience . . .

- Remind people what ISN'T changing
- Increase opportunities for social connections
- Increase communication about the coming changes/challenges
- Shift grouching/whining toward problem solving
- Listen to their anxieties/fears
- Acknowledge their losses
- Engage staff in developing a shared vision of a realistically optimistic future

## Helping Others Strengthen Their Resilience . . .

- Encourage a healthy work/life balance
- Hold “brown bag” seminars on health, wellness, stress management, taking care of yourself, etc.
- Promote EAP (employee assistance program) services
- Explain the “whys” of the change/challenges
- Celebrate the little victories along the way
- Keep the team together
- Break problems/challenges into bite-size pieces



Change is inevitable,  
growth is optional . . .

(Resilient people  
choose *growth*)

# Recommended Reading

- **The Resilience Factor**, by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté (New York: Broadway Books, 2002) [includes background on Werner/Smith research]
- **The Power of Resilience**, by Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein (New York: McGraw-Hill Contemporary Books, 2004)

# We are Licensing the RQ

- We have just kicked off a licensing initiative for the RQ
- We are also looking for distributors of the RQ
- See me for details . . .

Thank you for the opportunity  
to guide you in this exploration  
of resilience!

Visit our website for a copy of the  
PowerPoint for today's presentation.

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