

Root-bound? Re-pot Yourself!

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WITHOUT CHANGE, we don't grow. We all know that. But having some stable routine is so *comfortable* that often we don't want to change. After all, the world we live in imposes so much change on us—some of it really traumatic—that it feels crazy to voluntarily initiate additional change in our own lives.

As a result, many of us are really quite good at settling into a routine and doing our best to perpetuate it for as long as we can. It's our comfort zone. It's our little bubble of sameness -- same community, same house, same social contacts, same pastimes -- that insulates us from the madness in the world around us. And why not? There's really nothing that wrong with it. We all need some continuity in our lives. Unfortunately, continuity can turn into inertia.

BUT LIVING ORGANISMS DO NOT STAGNATE--THEY GROW. That's their nature. It's true for humans as well as plants. If we take a lesson from gardening, we know that the roots of a house plant, over time, will totally fill up the plant's pot, making it ready to burst at the seams and strangle the life out of the plant they are meant to nurture if not repotted in a larger vessel. Wouldn't there be a parallel with people? If any of us just traces the same path of routine day after day, won't we somehow languish?

We like to heed the advice of wise acquaintance, Eleanor Wood*, who enthusiastically counseled those she cared about: "You should re-pot yourself every 5 or 10 years! Do it deliberately if it hasn't happened to you from outside sources!"

ELEANOR'S THINKING was that it *is* worthwhile – even essential -- to living a vibrant, growth-full life to regularly make a truly major change in some important aspect of one's life, to expand one's range of activity and experience, *or* to add some new source of stimulation.

In order to be done effectively, this change would have to be premeditated, and in keeping with one's life values and aspirations. One wouldn't necessarily benefit from impulsively moving to a new home or community, getting a new job or a new life partner just for the sake of change. Just as ripping a plant out of a pot by the roots will probably kill it, drastic, ill-considered change would be very stressful and harmful.

A MORE MODEST ALTERNATIVE TO MAJOR "RE-POTTING", however, might be more appropriate for you, given your life circumstances. Some little initiative to make your life more lively. Instead of going to the extreme of transplanting yourself to a new

* Eleanor Wood, now deceased, was the greatly loved and respected matriarch of a family residing in Cedar Falls, IA and Dillon, CO. Throughout her life, Eleanor acted on her own advice and lived an active and challenging life, along with her husband, Blair, and their family.

environment, you could maintain your current life circumstances, you could add a new personal “plant management” task, to nourish your roots and grow your outreach. You could choose whatever might attract you. It could mean, for example, such things as:

- Cultivating a new friend or two.
- Nurturing a new skill or activity.
- Branching out by traveling to a new place.
- Planting seeds of a new interest in your mind.
- Weeding out some undesired habits.
- Pruning away some undesirable relationships.

Any of these activities could quite easily be grafted into your existing life, adding a new dimension and vitality.

ANOTHER SITUATION in which the recommended “re-potting” strategy can apply is when an involuntary significant change in your life situation--such as an unexpected illness or an unforeseen divorce--imposes itself on you. We all know these things happen. Add to them the job losses, foreclosures, and other economy-driven changes that are all too common these days. If you find yourself being forcibly transplanted due to circumstances beyond your control, try to see it as an opportunity to learn something new. Applying some of the ideas above might help, making it possible for you to plant some positive shoots into that unchosen and unfamiliar ground.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK YOURSELF when was the last time you took the initiative to nudge yourself a bit into an area somewhat outside of your “comfort zone” to help you grow. Maybe now is the time to do some creative gardening with your life!

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