

The Hallway of Life, How to Navigate Transitional Times

A patient of mine likes to remind me of this story. On our first meeting, he shared an experience of feeling stuck in numerous areas of his life. He was unhappy with his romantic relationship, his work life was unsatisfying, and he generally felt stalled. I told him, 'you're in the hallway of life—and it might be time to move through it'. Difficult times of transition are often referred to as 'the hallway of life'. You're not exactly where you were and you're not yet where you want to be. You are somewhere in the middle. It might be that you know you are ready for a change but are too afraid to make one. Perhaps you're dissatisfied but not sure why. Maybe you know where you want to be but are unsure of how to get there.

I asked him a single question: "What do *you* want?" He revealed that he had never been asked that question before, and moreover, had never even asked himself that question. After a lifetime of focusing on everyone else needs, he was finally looking within to see what he needed.

Within a few weeks of our acupuncture treatments, he began noticing tangible shifts in his life and reported having new feelings of happiness and contentment.

When I tell my patients that their life will change for the better, it's not because I have a crystal ball. After years of practice, I have seen, first-hand, how Chinese medicine can powerfully move patients through even the most stubborn areas of stagnation. At our core we all want to live our most authentic life, but fear gets in the way and creates energetic blocks. When we're stuck in the hallway, we can become acclimated to our discomfort. Acupuncture works to release those blocks, align us with our true inner nature, and integrate our body, mind and spirit. Chinese medicine helps remove the blanket of denial and allows the light to shine through and lead us powerfully in the direction of our best self.

The Many Faces of Transition

The hallway can manifest itself in many different areas of our lives. Occupation, relationship, living situation, psychological or spiritual blocks, death, divorce, health crisis, empty nest, new baby, fertility issues—the list goes on and on. The form the hallway takes can be very material and obvious or internal and more ethereal.

How is The Hallway useful and productive?

Transitional times are built into our life cycles and our culture: nine months of pregnancy, a three month trial period at work, a year of engagement before marriage, your permit before drivers' license. These times are useful, even if they are sometimes uncomfortable. Our tendency can be to want to move through the discomfort. However, I believe we should all weigh the pros and cons before endeavoring toward the next thing—have presence and stillness, notice and tune into our current state. Pain can be a powerful teacher, so it's very important not to rush through these times. But all too often, we become paralyzed in the hallway, staying long after it is beneficial and healthy.

What Gets in Our Way?

The most common challenge to progressing beyond stagnation is acknowledging that it may be time for a change. You may not feel ready or prepared for what's next, but that still small voice inside of you is speaking, and you can no longer avoid the call.

Many things can come up to block the flow of movement during transition. Fear of the unknown is the main one. This fear can manifest in countless ways. 'What if I give this up and I can't find anything better?' 'The devil I know is better than the one I don't know, right?' I say wrong. When we know it's time to shift, usually it is. Change can be scary. For example, there are people who know they are in toxic, even dangerous situations, yet it can be painfully hard for them to move

on. Even fabulous changes can be scary. Fear of success, fear of failure. I get dizzy just thinking about the way our brains work. We already know the lay of our current terrain, but what if we can't figure out how to navigate the next destination?

The Science of Habit

Getting through a transition can also mean having to change some of our deeply ingrained habits. Most of us have experienced how hard it can be to alter our habitual behavior. Why is this so hard? The answer may lie within our own brains. MIT researchers have recently discovered powerful neurological loops that form in our brains as a result of our habits— and teaches that if we want to undo those patterns, we must do it consciously. In other words, ingrained habits are hard to break, but once you recognize them, there are tangible steps you can take to undo them. A recent buzz word present in the scientific and psychological communities is neuroplasticity . This term refers to the ability of your brain to reorganize itself. This occurs both physically and functionally. One's environment, behavior, thinking, and emotions can effect the neuroplasticity of the brain. This is not a new concept but with the relatively recent capability to see into the brain by utilizing magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), science has confirmed the brain's ability to change, beyond a doubt. So, no need to beat yourself up about the fact that it's hard to change, learning the facts about rewiring your brain can get you on the road to transformation.

Acupuncture Can Help Move Us Through

Increasing our energy, strengthening our intuition and moving through stagnation are all ways acupuncture can help. When we have the feeling of 'stuckness' our vital energy (known as "qi") isn't moving and becomes deficient. Acupuncture fortifies and supplements our vital energy and helps boost the spirit into action. After being stuck in the "hallway" for a while we lose touch with

our inner voice. We disconnect from our natural intuition. Acupuncture helps to improve the acuity of one's intuition. Specific acupuncture points, like one between the eyebrows, help strengthen and sharpen our intuition and refine our relationship to our instincts. When emotions are repressed, the energy flows in a less skillful direction—leading to an internal counterflow that can create emotional and physical disharmony. The acupuncture needles can coax the stuck energy and move the stagnant qi—allowing us to manifest our most authentic self, life and highest purpose.

Other Helpful Hints

1. Tell a trusted friend or family member of your decision to change, and commit to small, doable steps toward your goal. Chart your progress with them so you have accountability to someone else.
2. Journal. Get clear on what is working in your life and what is not.
3. Do research. Find out as much as you can about what your next steps should be in the direction of your desired goals. Get educated.
4. Make appointments with people who are already doing what you want to do or living where you want to live. Talk to people. Learn from them.
5. Find a good therapist or support group to help guide you through this time. Having a witness during these journeys is essential. A certified life coach can be helpful to identify your immediate and long term goals, create specific action steps in the direction of your intention.

Two of my favorite sayings are '**Nothing changes if nothing changes**' and '**You can't think your way into right action, but you can act your way into right thinking.**' With acupuncture

and these useful tools there's no doubt that you will embrace your time in the hallway as necessary and useful steps towards your own evolution. You will flow with grace and ease and you be able to powerfully embrace the next stage of your life.