

15

EGOS AND PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

“Yesterday, I went to visit a support center for mentally challenged children and adults sponsored by the insurance company. I was really impressed! I’d never been aware of the conditions in which these very special individuals lived. Some were learning to read and write, others were rehearsing a play, several were making arts and crafts to sell at fairs, and one group was practicing sports. But there were also a few who were unable to sit unassisted or feed themselves. And the person who impressed me the most wasn’t even there: I was told that a girl had to stay at home to take care of her father because he had a stroke some months ago and was very incapacitated, while her mother went alone to the hospital to undergo chemotherapy...”¹ The tears rolled down Michael’s face. “I’m so lucky! My family and I are healthy, and we have such a good life. Sometimes I complain about what we don’t have, and I don’t value enough what we already have. I want to be a much better person; I want to give more and demand less! I’m going to start by speaking with Christine and my kids about joining the program to sponsor a special needs child for a few weekends. This way, we can give this child some well-deserved love and enrich our lives with his or her presence!” Now Michael was feeling better again...

You, too, can **transform** your personal life if you are open to the world around you and to your own inner world. In fact, every day you deal with situations that can contribute to altering the way you **feel and think** about yourself, thereby helping you change your **behavior** in a sustainable manner. But if you close yourself off to your outer and inner worlds, you run the risk of being tied down to a rigid pattern and wasting all opportunities to have a better life. Your future depends on the choices you make now. If you want, today can be the **first day of the rest of your life!**

For example, a visit to the support center for mentally challenged children and adults allowed Michael to more fully acknowledge and value his own well-being, and made him aware of a reality far different from his own. Except that, while others would have quickly forgotten this experience, Michael took advantage of it so that, together with his family, he could provide a special needs child with better living conditions. And by doing so, he ended up transforming his own life!

Every day, people deal with situations that can contribute to altering the way they **feel and think** about themselves, thereby helping them change their **behavior** in a sustainable manner

PERSONAL CHANGE: ADAPTATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Nobody has a perfect life. Thus, it is normal that you **benefit** from a few resources and skills of your own, such as intelligence, good friends or a sense of humor, but that you are also **harmed** by some personal or professional difficulties, such as health issues, relationship problems or a lack of money. And what influences the course of your life is precisely how you deal with these positive and negative factors.

The perception of the **internal or external control** of their lives determines whether people change...or are changed

If you think that your life is mostly controlled by **external elements**, such as destiny, stress, circumstances or other people, you will tend to **passively** accept your situation and will only make the changes that are imposed on you. For instance, you may consider it inevitable to gain weight as you get older, and so you continue to eat too much until you have health problems and the doctor forces you to go on a diet. If, instead, you believe that your life is mainly controlled by **you**, you will **actively** try to make the changes required for improving your situation. In this case, as the years go by, you will regularly check your weight and will gradually adapt your food intake and physical exercise to preserve your health. Therefore, your perception of the **internal or external control** over your own life thus determines whether you change...or are changed!

Whether voluntarily or forcibly, your change always implies a modification of your **feelings, thoughts and/or behaviors** for you to assume personality characteristics that are more suitable to the different circumstances in your life. For example, in order to avoid feeling hurt by your teenage children's rebelliousness, you may decide to emotionally detach from them a little (new feeling), acknowledge that their need for greater autonomy is an important step towards their future emancipation (new thought) and develop more open communication so you can negotiate "acceptable limits" for family coexistence with them (new behavior). By altering your own attitude in the interaction with your teenage children, you will thus be creating better conditions to reinforce your mutual relationship.

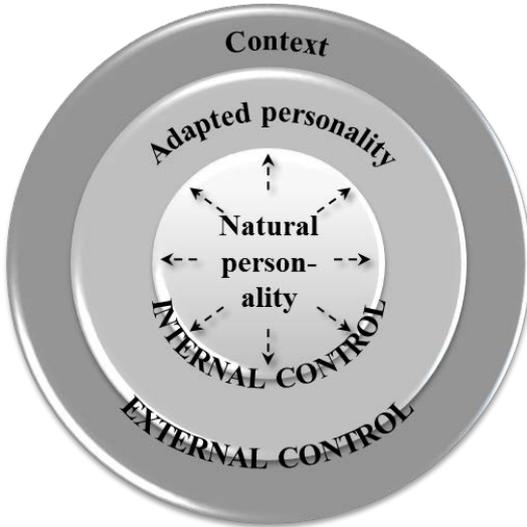
Of course, your change may be merely **contextual**, involving the **adaptation** of some personality characteristics to the specific circumstances in which you find yourself. For instance, due to pressure from your friends, you overcome your shyness, invite a nice coworker from your company for dinner and force yourself to have an interesting and pleasant conversation. However, upon returning to work, you go back to your usually reserved approach and the relationship with your colleague ends up fading away... So, in an adaptation, you modify your feelings, thoughts and/or behaviors only for a **limited time period**.

While **adaptation** impacts individuals' **adapted personality**, **transformation** impacts their **natural personality**

On the other hand, your change can be **structural**, involving the **transformation** of some personality characteristics independently of the circumstances in which you find yourself. For example, if you have successfully overcome your drinking addiction to restore family relationships, you may continue to resist the temptation to drink alcohol whether you are at home or out with friends at a social event. In a transformation, you thus alter your feelings, thoughts and/or behaviors in a **sustained manner over time**.

And while **adaptation** can occur of your own volition (internal control) or due to others' impositions (external control), impacting your **adapted personality**, **transformation** can only take place if you truly want to change yourself (internal control), directly impacting your **natural personality** (Table 15.1).

Table 15.1 Adaptation versus transformation

Adaptation	Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual adjustment of feelings, thoughts and/or behaviors to the circumstances in which people find themselves through the alteration of their adapted personalities, either of their own volition or due to others' imposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural modification of feelings, thoughts and/or behaviors typical of people's natural personality, independently of the circumstances in which they find themselves, of their own volition 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually results from people's need to temporarily adjust better to their settings (improve relationships with neighbors, decrease debt level, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually results from people's need to enduringly resolve critical problems rooted in fixations in their natural personality (destructive marital relations, addiction to gambling, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier for people to manage because the change effort is undertaken for a limited time period and it can capitalize on some of their strengths or mitigate some of their weaknesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harder for people to manage because the change effort is continuously undertaken over time and it aims at eliminating some of the fixations of their natural personality

Source: Author's analysis.

When faced with a given situation you may, in practice, either change through adaptation or through transformation. For instance, if you usually drive very fast, you may have already received various speeding tickets and perhaps even had a few minor accidents. Consequently, you may now start driving a little slower in the city and still speed up on the highway (adaptation), or you may start always driving at a slower pace because you realized that your reckless driving was endangering your own life (transformation). The type of modification of your feelings, thoughts and behaviors thus defines the **nature of your change**.

However, even if you **frequently** adjust your adapted personality to deal with various settings in your life (adaptation), only very **rarely** are you able to eliminate fixations from your natural personality (transformation). In fact, overcoming unconscious blocks rooted in your childhood requires that you make a much more **profound and long** change effort, based on the sustained reinforcement of **internal control** of your life. But if you can transform yourself, you start deciding your own **future!**

Transformation requires a very **profound and long** change effort, based on the sustained reinforcement of the **internal control** of an individual's life

RESISTANCE TO PERSONAL CHANGE

Resistance to change may **hinder or block** the modification of the individual's feelings, thoughts or behaviors

Resistance is rooted in the **perception** that change will bring more **pain** than **pleasure**

Resistance to change is **triggered** by different aspects, in line with people's **personalities**

Even if you know that change can bring you potential **advantages**, you cannot help also consider its potential **disadvantages**. After all, in order to improve your personal life, you may need to leave your **comfort zone** and face unpleasant situations. For example, if your relation with your girlfriend or boyfriend is nice, but does not quite live up to your expectations, you may be torn between resigning yourself and simply accepting an unsatisfying love relationship, or end it and look for a new, better partner to start dating again. **Change generates uncertainty** and sometimes you are not willing to **take risks...**

In fact, **resistance to change** may **hinder or block** the modification of your feelings, thoughts or behaviors, thus keeping you rigidly stuck to the patterns you would like to change. For instance, if your natural personality is mainly Social and you are unhappy with your grades, you may even decide to dedicate more time to your school work, but it will be very difficult for you to stay at home studying and not go out with your friends.

Actually, your **resistance** is rooted in the **perception** that change will bring you more **pain** (negative energetic stimuli) than **pleasure** (positive energetic stimuli).² For example, as expected from a Social, perpetuating the inappropriate approach to studying reveals that your pain from missing out on your usual contact with friends outweighs the pleasure you may feel from getting better grades. And as long as you continue to perceive the situation in this way, your academic performance will not improve!

This explains why it is so difficult to **overcome** resistance to change: since your perceptions are based on partially **unconscious** feelings, thoughts and behaviors, even if you **consciously** wish to alter your patterns, there may be **unconscious factors** keeping you from changing. For instance, to improve your grades you decided (conscious thought) to devote more time to studying (conscious behavior), but did not realize you would be very sad (unconscious feeling) about not going out with your friends. And because you are Social, this sadness generated such a painful perception that it surpassed the anticipated pleasure from your own decision and caused resistance to changing your study habits.

Hence, for **effective change** to occur, your feelings, thoughts and behaviors must be well **aligned**.³ But since this alignment is usually promoted consciously, your unconscious side may always resist change without you even realizing it...

Obviously, resistance to change is **triggered** by different aspects, in line with your own **personality** (Table 15.2). Insofar as resistance to change essentially constitutes a **defense mechanism** against the pain caused by your childhood fixations, you try, unconsciously or consciously, to avoid the recurrence of traumatic experiences from your past.⁴

Table 15.2 Triggers of resistance to change by EGOS profile

	Examples of resistance to change triggers⁵	Perception of pain
Entrepreneur	Risk of losing power, independence or worth	Limitation
Governor	Risk of losing honor, status or stability	Punishment
Operational	Risk of losing freedom, leisure or routine	Pressure
Social	Risk of losing social contact, identity or recognition	Rejection

Source: Author's analysis.

Resistance to change is usually more **intense** in the following circumstances:

a) **Primacy of the short term:** Pain perceived in the **short term** almost always prevails over pleasure anticipated in the **medium–long term**. For example, diets are often abandoned after a brief period because it is too difficult to give up favorite foods on a daily basis (perception of short-term pain) in the hope of losing several pounds a few months later (perception of medium-term pleasure).

This explains why an **adaptation** normally generates less resistance to change than a **transformation**. While an adaptation aims at achieving improvements in a short amount of time (perception of short-term pleasure) and with little effort (perception of less short-term pain), a transformation requires much greater effort over a considerably longer period of time (perception of great short-medium-term pain) before the desired results are finally attained (perception of medium-long-term pleasure).

b) **Primacy of feelings:** Due in part to your predominantly unconscious temperament, a **negative feeling** (sadness, fear, guilt, shame, etc.) causes a perception of pain that almost always prevails over a rationalized perception of pleasure. For instance, often, the shame of revealing a sexual dysfunction (negative feeling) generates a perception of pain that is much greater than the rationalized pleasure associated with its resolution (positive thought) and, consequently, many patients avoid going to a medical specialist.

Moreover, unconscious negative feelings can have such a strong impact that they may even force your mind to think **negatively and irrationally** in order to ensure that the perception of emotional pain surpasses the perception of rational pleasure, leading you to resist change (Table 5.3).

Resistance to change is usually more **intense** in the face of **short-term** pain and pain rooted in **feelings**

Unconscious negative feelings can force the mind to think **negatively and irrationally**

Table 15.3 Examples of negative irrational thoughts

Type	Definition	Examples of irrational negative thoughts
Generalization	Simplifying a perception by extending a specific negative experience to all similar situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No one likes me, I don’t have any friends” • “All men cheat on their wives” • “Children will only obey if they’re punished” • “It’s impossible to be a good mother and work at the same time”
Distortion	Biasing a perception by incorrectly and negatively interpreting a situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m almost sure the plane is going to crash” • “If I don’t get into college, I have no future” • “I’m not good with computers” • “My man doesn’t bring me flowers because he doesn’t love me”
Deletion	Filtering a perception by focusing exclusively on the negative aspects of a situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The trip was awful because the food wasn’t good” • “I don’t know how to vacuum well; there’s always dirt left” • “Despite the good grade, I looked bad because I made a mistake” • “Going to the gym makes me hungry and I may gain weight”

Sources: Author’s analysis, Bandler, Richard and Grinder, John (1975). *The Structure of Magic I: A Book About Language and Therapy*, Science and Behavior Books and Burns, David D. (1980). *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, Morrow.

Sometimes, resistance to change may also be promoted by your **reference group** or by **society**. For example, you may want to play in a jazz band, but your friends or family criticize you. A potential negative reaction from people around you commonly starts as **depreciation** and tends to evolve into **critical opposition** if you do not give up. But, if your change is successful, you end up being accepted by everyone...

Resistance to change may also be promoted by the individual’s **reference group** or by **society**

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

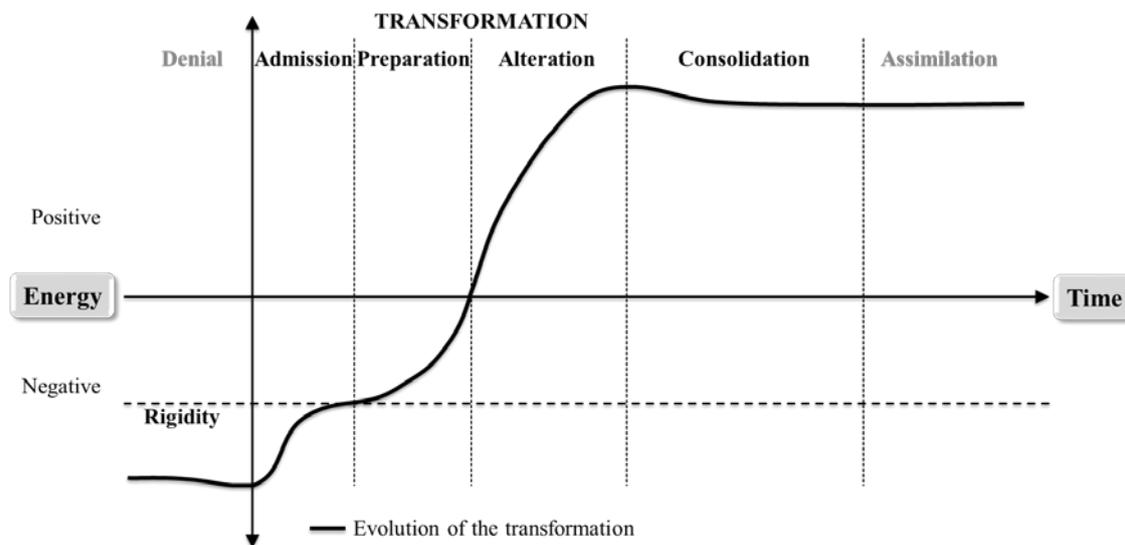
Either by your own volition or due to an imposition from others, you have already made various **adaptations** to better adjust to different settings in your life. For instance, you grew to be more disciplined to satisfy your parents' demands; studied more assiduously to get higher grades; practiced harder at sports to get in shape; became more romantic to please your partner; and were more careful crossing the street to protect your children. At times, you adapted in an organized manner, while on other occasions you adapted by trial and error, but all of these **adjustment efforts** translated into a limited set of actions undertaken during a given time period.

In comparison, because it is far more complex, a **transformation** generally requires you to carry out a greater number and variety of activities over a much longer time. For example, to stop smoking, you may have to go through several stages before you completely give up cigarettes for the rest of your life.⁶ Transformation consists, then, in a **structured, sustained process** of actions that aims to eliminate specific fixations from your natural personality in a lasting way.

The personal transformation process evolves over the course of four sequential stages: **admission, preparation, alteration and consolidation**

Starting from a **denial state**, the personal transformation process evolves over the course of four sequential stages – **admission, preparation, alteration and consolidation** – finally arriving at the **assimilation state** (Figure 15.1). And although you tend to unconsciously assume the denial and assimilation states, it is essential that you **consciously** approach the four stages of the transformation process in order to attain the desired results. After all, it is **your life** that you want to transform!

Figure 15.1 Personal transformation process



Sources: Author's analysis and adapted from Prochaska, James O.; Norcross, John and DiClemente, Carlo (1974). *Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward*, William Morrow.

Transformation requires the person to expend **considerable energy** for a **long time**

Your transformation will require you to expend **considerable energy** for a **long time**. Therefore, it is best to rely on the **help of other people** throughout the process. Having the support of your family, friends, colleagues or even qualified professionals will better prepare you for overcoming the specific difficulties of each stage, successfully transforming yourself into the person you want to be.

- **Denial state:** Like most people, you are not aware of the full **impact** of your own fixations. For instance, constant fear of abandonment or anger at failing may be unconscious negative feelings rooted in your childhood that make you extremely **rigid** throughout your life. And, consequently, you may have irrational thoughts and destructive behaviors resulting, for example, in low self-esteem, an obsessive relationship with your children or even serious physical and mental illnesses.

But the worst part is that you **refuse to acknowledge** these troublesome feelings, thoughts and behaviors, even if you have been alerted by people around you or been confronted with irrefutable proof. For instance, you insist that you do not drink too much, yet you have received several penalties for driving under the influence; you continue to spoil your kids, ignoring the school's recommendations and your family's advice; you make unnecessary purchases even after maxing out your credit card; or you insist on eating inadequately although you have been diagnosed with diabetes.

This constant **denial** of your frailties and mistakes reflects, in essence, your **resistance to change** to avoid dealing with the fixations that have always tormented you. Indeed, the prospect of facing childhood traumas generates such a **strong perception of pain** that, in comparison, perpetuating the denial state does not seem that bad... For instance, if you fear that all your girlfriends will eventually stop loving you, you may take the initiative and end the relationships early, before they have the chance to leave you.⁷ Thus, you prevent potential rejections from triggering the intense pain of the fixation you developed by being rejected as a child, even though you suffer because you cannot have a long-lasting relationship and start a family. Unconsciously or consciously, you choose the **lesser pain**, but you do not attain the **pleasure** you desire!

And to defend yourself, you argue that other people are the ones who should change so they can accept you as you are. Instead of assuming internal control of your life, you attribute your problems to the external control of the world around you. It is no wonder, then, that around 80% of people are in this state of denial and only 20% are able to start the transformation process...⁸

- a) **Admission stage:** In order to leave the denial state, you must begin by receiving a strong **negative energetic stimulus** that immediately associates **very painful feelings** to your fixation! In effect, when you experience a **great emotional shock**, you are not only forced to **become aware** of the intense pain generated by your problem, but you are also compelled to seek a **rational explanation** to justify and prevent its future recurrence.

For example, a heart attack can make you confront the possibility of your own death (great emotional shock), leading you to finally understand that hypertension can threaten your life (rational explanation) and that you must adopt a less stressful lifestyle if you want to live longer. Likewise, getting fired from a job because you are chronically absent may lead to foreclosure on your house (great emotional shock), forcing you to admit, for the first time, that your lack of maturity and discipline are affecting your family's well-being (rational explanation) and that you have to be more compliant and responsible if you want to find a new job and keep your house.

People's constant **denial** of their frailties and mistakes reflects their **resistance to change** to avoid dealing with childhood fixations

In order to leave the denial state, people must begin by receiving a strong **negative energetic stimulus** that immediately associates **very painful feelings** to their fixations

A great emotional shock can be induced by **individuals themselves**, by **family and friends**, or by **society**

A great emotional shock can also be induced by **you, family and friends**, or even by **society**.⁹ For instance, you may be taken to visit a rehabilitation center for drug addicts and become so dismayed that you decide to give up your occasional use of recreational drugs. Or maybe you decide to watch a television documentary about traffic accidents, and when you realize how severe the victims' injuries are (loss of limbs, paralysis, etc.), you feel a strong urge to immediately change your aggressive driving style. The Australian government even began imposing the placement of shocking images of tobacco-related diseases on cigarette boxes to provoke a strong emotional reaction to the harmful effects of smoking (Figure 15.2).

Figure 15.2 Examples of cigarette packs in Australia



Source: http://www.google.pt/imgres?imgurl=http://www.tuttasalute.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/cigarette-packaging-australia-428x358.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.tuttasalute.net/25531/sigarette-anche-in-italia-i-pacchetti-shock.html&h=358&w=428&sz=60&tbnid=kq2rwLLco4ApMM&tbnh=205&tbnw=246&zoom=1&usg=__MThoun6XZqgb7CRANS_pKvkjfEc=

The emotional shock is a powerful negative energetic stimulus, but **individuals** are the ones **responsible** for their own transformation

The **admission stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Social aspects** of an individual's personality

In practical terms, a shock drastically and immediately increases the perception of pain associated with a fixation, bringing it to the forefront of consciousness and making change seem already provide pleasure just through the pain relief. The emotional shock is therefore a powerful negative energetic stimulus, but **you** are the one who is **responsible** for your own transformation!

Indeed, faced with the same shock, other people may remain indifferent or despair, while you assume **internal control** of your life and forge the conditions to **free** yourself from your childhood fixation. Emotional pain, then, stops being the problem and becomes **part of the solution!**

This explains why the **admission stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Social aspects** of your personality. By first changing your deepest **feelings**, you eliminate your unconscious defenses, which makes it possible to later also change your thoughts and behaviors. But since the energetic stimulus of the emotional pain has a **short-term** impact, it must be quickly availed in order to channel your change efforts in the **right direction...**

- b) **Preparation stage:** This is the moment when you can convert your emotional wishes into a solid **rational commitment** to make your transformation truly consistent. By clarifying your **personal goals** and structuring a **concrete plan** to attain them, you will increasingly assume **internal control** of your life.

It is important, then, that you start by defining a **limited set of goals** that fully reflects the **purpose of the transformation** that you intend to carry out. However, it is not always easy to decide what you really want... For example, your choice of goals may be to lose many pounds in a year or maintain a healthy weight throughout your life; marry a nice, pretty spouse within the next two years or develop a stable love relationship; stop drinking until the end of the year or only drink moderately on special occasions; or even earn a considerable amount of money within the span of 3 years or provide your family with financial stability.

If you establish **very specific short-medium-term** personal goals, you can more adequately direct your transformation, but you also risk becoming disappointed and quitting if you are not able to attain them. Conversely, if you define personal goals that are **broader and medium-long-term**, your transformation may be more sustainable, but you also risk losing the necessary emotional momentum to start acting quickly.

It is therefore preferable that you recognize, right from the start, that you should define **distinct and complementary goals** for the last two stages of the transformation process:

- For the **alteration stage**, establish specific short-medium-term goals that motivate you to immediately make a significant change effort.¹⁰
- For the **consolidation stage**, adopt broader medium-long-term directions that help you sustain the change for many years.

Naturally, short-medium-term and medium-long-term objectives should be **aligned** to ensure a **smooth transition** between the two stages. This way, if your specific goals for the alteration stage are not completely achieved, you will be comforted to know that you are still advancing in the direction of the consolidation stage's comprehensive guidelines. **Correctly defining your objectives** thus contributes to significantly increasing the **probability of succeeding** at your transformation!

After clarifying the personal goals to achieve, you should **share them** with family and friends to ask for their **support** and receive potential **improvement suggestions**. And if they are not very receptive, or even display some resistance to your change, do not be discouraged. After all, **you** are the one who has to deal with your emotional pain...

Furthermore, you can also consult **specialists**, read **books** or visit **websites** related to the goals and directions that you defined in order to verify whether you are on the right path or need to make some final adjustments. As you gain **confidence** in the objectives you delineated for yourself, the transformation will seem increasingly accessible and easy.

Nevertheless, it is essential that this sharing and these consultations occur **after**, and not before, you have at least established your initial goals. Otherwise, you may be unconsciously induced to satisfy other people's interests or copy their examples, thereby losing the **sense** of your transformation. If you are not the one to decide your objectives, sooner or later you will **stop feeling responsible** for them and will return to the denial state!

By clarifying their **personal goals** and structuring a **concrete plan** to attain them, individuals increasingly assume **internal control** of their lives

It is preferable that people acknowledge, from the start, that they should define **distinct and complementary goals** for the last two stages of the transformation process: **alteration and consolidation**

If people themselves do not decide their objectives, sooner or later, they will **stop feeling responsible** and will return to the denial state

After defining their goals, people need to **plan the main actions** to be undertaken over time

After defining your personal goals, you need to **plan the main actions** to undertaken over time. But since it is likely that you cannot yet identify **by yourself** the most appropriate activities for your own change, it is best to first collect detailed information from **qualified individuals or organizations** so that you can then select the concrete measures you should adopt. For instance, if you aim to lose 30 pounds within a year (alteration) and then remain at a healthy weight (consolidation), you may speak with one or more nutritionists so they can present you alternative weight-loss plans, and visit gyms near your house or workplace to see what types of activities are available to you. Once you have been informed, you will be prepared to make the choices that best suit your needs and to plan their implementation.

Possibly the simplest and most practical way to structure an action plan is to create **a single table** with all the main guidelines (Table 15.4). And to strengthen your resolve, you may **put it up** where you can see it, either at home or at work, or even give copies to your family, friends and close colleagues. This way, you can count on their **support** to succeed in your transformation!

Table 15.4 Example of a personal action plan

Goal	What	When	Where	With whom	Comments
Recover from depression by year's end (alteration) and start enjoying life more (consolidation)	Spend more time with friends	At least twice a month	At restaurants and bars or at home	With Jim and Tom	They have agreed!
	Participate in social activities (theater, yoga, etc.)	Each one, at least once a week	At the community center and at the gym	Instructors and other people	I really have to stick to the schedule
	Take medication and go to the doctor	Until the end of the year	Medication at home and doctor at the clinic	Dr. Arthur Smith	I think it's already working...
	Begin dating again	Starting next year	At get-togethers and at the community center	I don't know...	I know I'll be happy!

Source: Author's analysis.

The plan should include various complementary measures, in order to give the individual's life a **new pattern**

The **preparation stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Governor aspects** of an individual's personality

This plan should include various measures that complement each other, in order to give your life a **new pattern**. Otherwise, your change may not be sustainable and may even cause the transition to other, equally destructive habits. For example, if you want to quit smoking but do not first establish a healthy way to cope with stress, you may end up substituting nicotine with alcohol or food. By properly **integrating** the various new behaviors that you want to adopt, your plan of action becomes more solid and effective.

Hence, the **preparation stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Governor aspects** of your personality. After changing your feelings about your past fixation, you change your **thoughts** about the present and future. Now there is **consistency** between your emotional wish and your rational ability to transform your life. Therefore, it is essential that you make the most of these double positive energetic stimuli and start acting quickly!

- c) **Alteration stage:** You usually start this **critical period** of the transformation very committed to accomplishing your plan. However, because you have not yet assimilated well the **new pattern**, each time the emotional pain of the fixation is revived, you are tempted to **return to your old habits**. For instance, despite having decided to give up gambling and no longer go to the casino, sometimes when you leave work exhausted, you just feel like relaxing with your friends...by playing cards!

In effect, when you start changing, your effort to **gain internal control** of your life is tested when you face **external control elements** that were at the root of your fixation. For example, if you are a very shy Governor and assumed the goal of socializing more to make some friends, when you approach people to start a conversation, you will feel very vulnerable to the pain of the punishment that so traumatized you in childhood. Therefore, you may unconsciously speak in a voice that is too low, or you may even stutter, thus frustrating your attempts. And after failing several times, you may start thinking that you do not need friends after all...

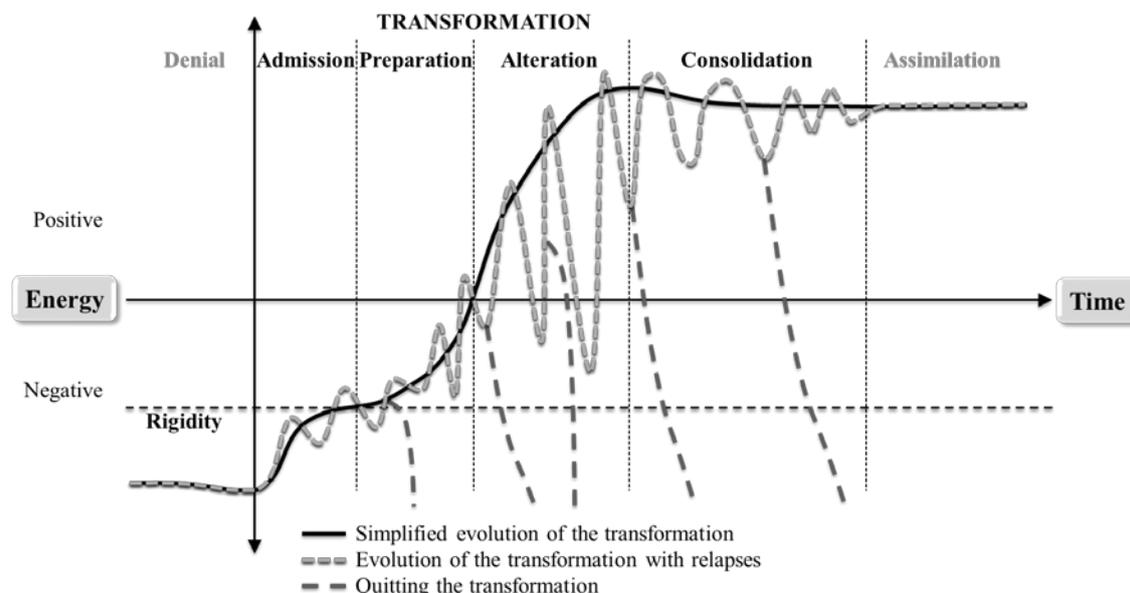
It is no wonder, then, that in the alteration stage your **relapses** are more common and pronounced, and may even lead to **temporary or definitive quitting** (Figure 15.3).¹¹ But it is precisely at those difficult moments that you must bear in mind that a transformation process goes on **for many years** and that there are always **new opportunities** to get it right...and to fail again. Hence, by putting your successes and failures in perspective, you avoid extreme emotional reactions and preserve your confidence in your abilities.

Furthermore, understand that no action plan can cover all possible contingencies. So be **flexible and learn** from all of your own and others' experiences. And whenever you have doubts, remember once more the **intense emotional pain** that led you to wish to change your life!

When people start changing, their effort to **gain internal control** of their lives is tested when faced with **external control elements** that were at the root of their fixation

During the alteration stage, **relapses** are more common and pronounced, and may even lead to **temporary or definitive quitting**

Figure 15.3 Personal transformation process with relapses and quitting



Source: Author's analysis and adapted from Prochaska, James O.; Norcross, John and DiClemente, Carlo (1974). *Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward*, William Morrow.

To be more **resilient** during their transformation process, people should also establish **rewards** and **penalties**

To be more **resilient** during the transformation process, you should also establish **rewards** (positive energetic stimuli) to congratulate yourself for performing the new activities, as well as **penalties** (negative energetic stimuli) to reprimand yourself when you do not change. For instance, for every five pounds you lose, you may gift yourself a nice article of clothing; but if you go two weeks without losing at least one pound, you may force yourself to stare at yourself in the mirror for five minutes just wearing underwear. The reward and the penalty thereby strengthen your **determination** to meet your goal of losing weight. And to make them more effective, rewards and penalties may be given out by **family or close friends!**

In addition, you can also **deliberately associate** positive feelings and thoughts to the actions you have planned, and negative feelings and thoughts to inaction.¹² For example, if you decided to control your temper through daily relaxation exercises, you might visualize calm as a peaceful countryside in the spring, and imagine anger as an over-packed subway station at rush hour. Naturally, the impact of these **positive and negative associations** is greater, the more aligned they are with your **preferred sensitivity** (Table 15.5).¹³

Table 15.5 Positive and negative associations by EGOS profile

	Preferred sensitivity	Examples of positive associations	Examples of negative associations
Entrepreneur	Visual	Associate action with a large, warm image with vivid colors Ex: A big, colorful photograph of a couple walking on the beach	Associate inaction with a small, cold image in black and white Ex: Small, dark photograph of a person alone, doing nothing
Governor	Balanced	Associate action with rational, simple arguments Ex: Main benefits of spending more time with the family	Associate inaction with irrational, complex arguments Ex: Hypothetical (irrational) benefits of working without taking a vacation
Operational	Somatosensory (includes touch, taste and smell)	Associate action with a soft, nice-smelling object Ex: Smooth, perfumed crystal ball	Associate inaction with a coarse, unpleasant-smelling object Ex: Rough rock with impurities and dirt
Social	Auditory	Associate action with melodic, upbeat, rhythmic music Ex: Favorite song to dance to at a party	Associate inaction with unpleasant, somber, slow music Ex: A funeral march by an obscure composer

Sources: Author's analysis and adapted from Robbins, Anthony (1991). *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical & Financial Destiny!*, Free Press.

The **alteration stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Entrepreneur aspects** of an individual's personality

The **alteration stage** of the transformation process thus mainly focuses on the **Entrepreneur aspects** of your personality. Now is when you have to **tackle** old habits so you can undertake the new actions and achieve your goals. Many times, it will be difficult for you to face your childhood fixations and you will certainly have several relapses. But each time you do not quit and resume your change effort, you gain more **determination** to continue transforming your life. Until one day, you start feeling more comfortable with your new pattern...

- d) **Consolidation stage:** After you worked so hard to change your habits, it is normal to want to **ease up** on your efforts. Since your objectives have already, to a greater or lesser extent, been met, you may think that you no longer have to worry about your past traumas. And that is precisely why you **run the risk** of having a new relapse soon or even quitting your transformation!

For instance, if you have resisted the temptation to drink for a whole year, and adopted healthier habits for dealing with life's difficulties, you may believe you are "cured" of the fixation that led to your alcohol abuse. Thus, soon after you will start going to bars with friends again, confident that you will be able to control your drinking. At first you will be very disciplined but, before you know it, you may be drinking more, not only with your friends, but also at home and at work, until you once again become an alcoholic...

Hence, it is fundamental that you do not forget to **gradually** assume the **medium-long-term goals** you previously defined in the preparation stage. By continuing to perform several of the new activities while decreasing the frequency of only one at a time, you guarantee a smoother, easier transition and preserve the good results that you have already attained.

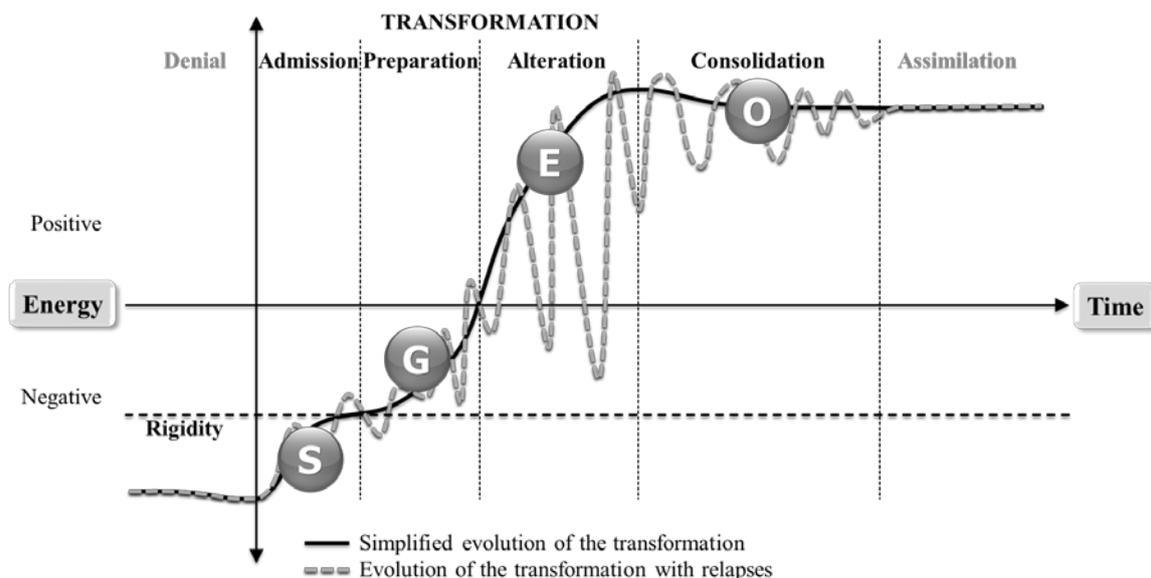
So, the **consolidation stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Operational aspects** of your personality. Your priority is to develop routines that sustain the new pattern and thereby minimize the recurrence of the fixations for the **rest of your life**. You may never be completely "recovered", but you can nonetheless be very happy while always being "**in recovery**"!

Therefore, the transformation process makes use of all the EGOS profiles in a **well-defined sequence** (Figure 15.4): first, Socials' emotions; next, Governors' structure; then, Entrepreneurs' struggle; and finally, Operationals' steadiness.

It is fundamental that people do not forget to **gradually** assume the **medium-long-term goals** previously defined in the preparation stage

The **consolidation stage** of the transformation process mainly focuses on the **Operational aspects** of an individual's personality

Figure 15.4 Predominant EGOS profiles throughout the transformation process



Sources: Author's analysis and adapted from Prochaska, James O.; Norcross, John and DiClemente, Carlo (1974). *Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward*, William Morrow.

- **Assimilation state:** As you continue to perform your new activities, relapses become fewer and less intense, until you **naturally** assume your new pattern. At this point, you no longer think of returning to your old habits and your fixation only rarely affects you. For example, after taking up swimming to lose weight and improve your health, your body may become so accustomed to the pleasant release of endorphins during exercise that you feel uncomfortable if you do not swim regularly. Thus, with time, the pleasure and relaxation brought on by swimming become part of your life and you no longer feel the need to relieve stress by eating too much...

People assume the assimilation state in an **unconscious manner**, but now they have **internal control** of their lives

Similarly to the denial state, you assume the state of assimilation in an **unconscious manner**, so you are not aware that you have successfully completed the transformation process. But, in contrast to the denial state, you now have **internal control** of your life. Therefore, you take your life into your own hands and no longer blame the world around you for your problems. Eliminating the blocks of your natural personality **depends solely on you!**

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION AND PERSONALITY

Since the process of personal transformation requires aspects of the four EGOS profiles, it is understandable that you feel more **comfortable** in some stages and have **difficulties** progressing in others. Thus, your natural personality **conditions**, but does not limit, your own change. For instance, if your natural personality is predominantly Governor, you will probably leave the admission stage quickly to avoid the discomfort of the emotional shock; you will likely spend considerable time in the preparation stage to rigorously define your goals and plan; and you will then implement your initiatives slowly but surely during both the alteration and consolidation stages. So, each individual undertakes the transformation process in a **different way**, but everyone can be **successful** (Map 15.1)!

Each profile's propensity to favor **internal or external control** helps explain the distinctive characteristics of its own change

At the outset, each profile's propensity to favor **internal or external control** helps explain the distinctive characteristics of its own change. In fact, given **Entrepreneurs and Governors'** innate tendency to have a high internal control of their lives, it is relatively easy for them to accomplish **profound transformations**. However, since these profiles are also less responsive to emotional shocks, they may unconsciously resist leaving the denial state to begin the transformation process. On the other hand, **Operationals and Socials** are usually less capable of assuming internal control of their lives, which is why they start but rarely finish their initiatives, and mostly undergo **contingency transformations** that demand fewer change efforts.

It is important for individuals to have the support of **family members, friends, colleagues or qualified professionals** who **complement** their personality characteristics

That is why it is so important, throughout the course of your personal transformation, to count on the support of **family members, friends, colleagues or qualified professionals** who **complement** your personality characteristics and help you overcome potential difficulties, so that you can successfully complete all the stages of the process. For example, if your natural personality is SO, you might ask a Governor friend for assistance to correctly structure your goals and plans during the preparation stage, and an Entrepreneur relative to help you stay motivated to keep undertaking the new activities during the alteration stage. But remember that it is **you who drives** the transformation of your own life!

Map 15.1 Personal transformation by EGOS profile

<p style="text-align: center;">Entrepreneurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly like to undertake transformations of their own volition to satisfy their own interests and personal needs • Are not easily influenced by other people and resist imposed changes • During the admission stage, they only respond to an incidental emotional shock or one provoked by them or someone they greatly respect • During the preparation stage, they speed through the definition of the goals and plan, risking not completing them • During the alteration stage, they undertake many relevant initiatives in a short time so they can attain their goals faster • During the consolidation stage, they are already geared towards other changes, and may therefore relapse or even quit the transformation • Have a proactive attitude throughout the whole transformation process, trying to advance to the following stages quicker • May be inconsequential because they do not sustain the transformation over time 	<p style="text-align: center;">Governors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to undertake transformations and adaptations that reconcile the satisfaction of others' interests as well as their own • Are easily influenced by people they consider more competent but resist imposed changes • During the admission stage, they respond to but devalue an incidental emotional shock or one provoked by other people • During the preparation stage, they spend much time defining and revising their goals and plans to minimize uncertainty • During the alteration stage, they are cautious, progress slowly in the few initiatives they undertake and verify whether they are doing well • During the consolidation stage, they maintain their new habits without difficulty, do not relapse or quit the transformation • Have a secure attitude during the whole transformation process, avoiding exposing themselves too much so they do not fail • May take too much time leaving the denial state and preparing the transformation activities
<p style="text-align: center;">Socials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly like to undertake transformations that reconcile the satisfaction of others' interests with their own • Are easily influenced by other people and do not resist imposed changes • During the admission stage, they respond greatly to an incidental shock, or one provoked by other people or themselves • During the preparation stage, they avoid assuming goals and making plans, and may have relapses or quit the transformation early on • During the alteration stage, they undertake piecemeal initiatives depending on their mood and have relapses or quit the transformation • During the consolidation stage, if they were able to actually change their habits, they do not maintain them for very long • Have a precarious attitude throughout the whole transformation process and are not very committed to their own personal change • May be inconsistent because they deal very emotionally with the transformation 	<p style="text-align: center;">Operational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to undertake adaptations but can also promote transformations when necessary to satisfy others' interests • Are not easily influenced by other people but do not resist imposed changes • During the admission stage, they react positively to an incidental emotional shock or one provoked by other people • During the preparation stage, they seek practical solutions to achieve their goals and do not structure their action plan well • During the alteration stage, they have difficulty advancing with their initiatives and have several relapses or quit the transformation • During the consolidation stage, if they were able to actually change their habits, they maintain them for a long time • Have a reactive attitude throughout the whole transformation process, limiting themselves to only responding to external pressure • May fall short of their goals because they do not engage deeply with the transformation

Note: The personal transformation characteristics apply only to the main EGOS profiles, but naturally there may be some variations if the secondary EGOS profiles are also considered.

Sources: Author's analysis, Keirse, David (1998). *Please Understand Me II*, Prometheus Nemesis Books and Straw, Julie (2002). *The 4-Dimensional Manager*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

So, if you manage your change **consciously and orderly**, you can minimize the risk of relapsing or quitting and complete your personal transformation process faster. But if you do not gradually progress throughout the four stages and instead make only occasional changes by **trial and error**, you will find it very hard to adopt a healthier pattern for your life. Indeed, it is likely that you have already learned at your own expense that isolated, erratic efforts do not permit attaining the desired results in a sustained manner. Therefore, concentrate on **following the whole process from beginning to end** and trust in yourself!

When people unite their will with their skill, they easily notice countless **opportunities** around them for changing their life

Your transformation is first activated by your strong **emotional desire** and is then grounded on your **rational ability** to structure and develop new habits. And when you unite your will with your skill, you easily notice countless **opportunities** around you for changing your life: new ideas and experiences, new resources and methods, new relationships and partnerships, etc. Your transformation is the **starting point** for rediscovering your inner and outer worlds!

For instance, if you decide to strike a better balance between your professional and personal life in order to save your marriage, you may end up restoring not only your intimate ties with your spouse, but also increasing your closeness with your children, giving up smoking to relieve stress, taking up sports again, recover the habit of reading and even controlling your stomach ulcer...

If, instead, you do not have the desire or the ability to change, you will remain closed off within yourself and continue to **waste** all opportunities that life gives you to transform your natural personality. Consequently, you will not free yourself from your childhood fixations and never be able to have a better life.

One day the **dream** will become **reality!**

Make your choice! Now that you are aware of your options, decide how you want to be. Your future does not have to be a continuation of your past, so start today rewriting the script of your own life. And one day your **dream** will become **reality!**

“Teresa is really very sweet! She loves to play with dolls with my daughter Laura, but also likes to play ball with my son John. Christine even started cooking her favorite food... And when she hugs me, I feel so happy!” Michael was very pleased with his family’s support in joining the sponsorship program for a mentally challenged child a few weekends a year. *“At first, we didn’t know how to deal with Teresa, but her joy is contagious and we quickly adapted to her special nature. I think she’s a pure S... Maybe that’s why she’s shown us that a good heart is much more important than a good mind. And this way, she’s strengthened the love between all of us!”* Michael smiled as he thought of the good times the family spent with Teresa. *“Meanwhile, we have already started following her progress at school, and Christine and I try to help her with her studies. And since she’s in theater, we have rehearsals at home and everyone collaborates. It’s a lot more fun than reading a book or watching a movie! Teresa has become part of our lives and now we miss her so much when we’re not together...”* Suddenly Michael became thoughtful. *“Since she’s an orphan, I wonder if we could adopt her. I know that these processes are very complex, but if Christine, John and Laura agree, it would be fantastic to welcome her into our family. After all, she transformed us into much better people! It would be wonderful to also help transform her life...”*

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- ¹ A true case reported to the author.
 - ² See more details on positive and negative energetic stimuli in Chapter 11.2 – EGOS and Energy.
 - ³ See more details on the alignment between feelings, thoughts and behaviors in Chapter 1 – Who Am I?
 - ⁴ See more details on the defense mechanisms of the natural personality in Chapter 10.1 – EGOS and Interaction.
 - ⁵ The triggers correspond to the sustained positive energetic stimuli of each EGOS profile. See more details on sustained energetic stimuli in Chapter 11.2 – EGOS and Energy.
 - ⁶ Various rehabilitation programs for tobacco, alcohol or drugs are based on a set of well-defined stages or steps.
 - ⁷ Behavioral pattern typically associated with the “seduction” psychological game. See more details on this and other psychological games in Chapter 10.1 – EGOS and Interaction.
 - ⁸ Estimate presented in Prochaska, James O.; Norcross, John and DiClemente, Carlo (1974). *Changing for Good: A Revolutionary Six-Stage Program for Overcoming Bad Habits and Moving Your Life Positively Forward*, William Morrow.
 - ⁹ Because it is psychologically very difficult for people to consciously identify and confront their own fixations, only in incidental circumstances can they cause themselves great emotional shock. On the other hand, it is important to verify whether the emotional shock caused by other people is not part of a psychological game to force a change: if people realize that they may benefit from the transformation, they should respond positively to the emotional shock; otherwise, they should not allow themselves to become involved in the manipulation attempt inherent to the other people’s psychological game. See more details on psychological games in Chapter 10.1 – EGOS and Interaction.
 - ¹⁰ Ideally, the goals of the alteration stage should be SMART (Simple, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely), but the objectives do not have to be as rigidly defined in the personal setting as they must be in the professional context. See more details on SMART goals and their relation to EGOS profiles in Chapter 14.1 – EGOS and Planning.
 - ¹¹ Although relapses and quitting can occur at any time during the personal transformation process, it is during the alteration stage, when people directly confront their fixations, that the most intense reactions occur, thereby increasing the frequency of relapses and quitting.
 - ¹² The deliberate association of feelings and thoughts with action or inaction to create positive or negative energetic stimuli is proposed, among other methodological approaches, by “neuro-linguistic programming” (also known as “NLP”). See more details on “neuro-linguistic programming” in Chapter 11.3 – EGOS and Money.
 - ¹³ See more details on each EGOS profile’s preferred sensitivity in Chapter 5 – EGOS Profiles.