

How people change

Right now you're probably asking, "So, how do people change?" Consider these possibilities, each with some trappings of brain science attached:

Fear: Fear not only motivates, but alters brain chemicals and structures, sometimes in addictive ways. Once it becomes habitual, fear changes behaviors long after the reason for fearfulness is gone. (See any fear in the musical?)

Example: One of our at-birth skills is face recognition, followed closely by mimicry. We change in response to what we see in the faces and lives of others. In a sense, we read minds.

Identity: The bonding and bridging mechanisms of our social brain equip us to respond consistently to our perception of ourselves inside of groups. We change when the group changes; we resist change when the group doesn't change. (Who determines Dave's identity in the musical?)

Imagination: "What you can imagine, you can do" describes the function of "mirror neurons" and the capacity of the brain to combine present observation with short-term memory so that a neuronal construct gets translated into corresponding actions.

Actions: Our brains are also superbly equipped for "acting our way into thinking." Thus our attitudes change because we engage in activities that we later process, integrate and improve.

Mindfulness: Lasting change comes when more parts of the brain are engaged. Emotions, intellect, practiced actions and attention are focused on a way of being or doing, and thus the change is cemented into the brain's interwoven workings.

Love: You'll read about it anywhere you read about simple living: When love is received and shared, its power in our lives may be stronger than any of the other processes listed here. In some ways, love is overwhelming. Especially the love of God in Christ Jesus.

So now do you know enough to be a leader in lifestyle change?