

The Fluid Movement of Change

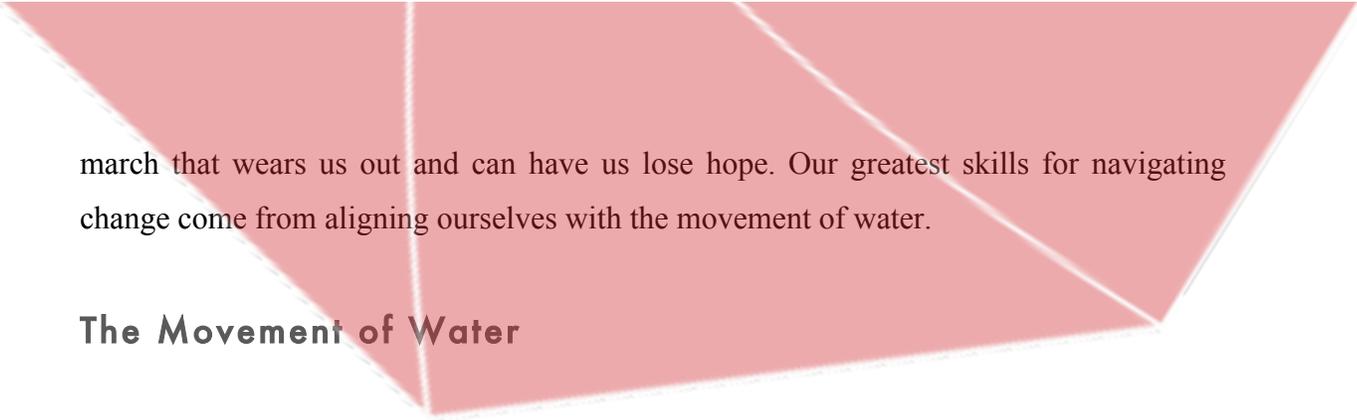
By Sharon Weil

Change, whether internal or external, personal or public, could be said to move like a river: sometimes churning like surging rapids, sometimes flowing or meandering, and at other times, damned up in a stagnant pool. Change is moving all the time, expressing itself in our health, aging, relationships, lifestyles, environment, and how we relate to the natural world. When we look at a particular change, we can ask, “What is the nature of the movement of this change?” Even more specifically, we can ask, “What is the fluid nature of this change?” The answer will come through somatic inquiry.

As a teacher of fluid movement and fluid awareness, I view all change as the -movement of change. Because change is ongoing and evolving, this movement perspective is extremely helpful in navigating not just the changes in the breath and tissues of our bodies, but in navigating all the changes that arrive in daily life. By understanding the nature, directionality, speed, and intensity of each life change from a movement perspective, it allows us to better align with the existing movement of change for the support that “going with the flow” might offer. Having a fluid movement perspective will provide a greater understanding of just how to arrive at that flow, and cultivate the skill of riding its current.

I cherish the expansive and wondrous engagement that Continuum provides to guide us into the open inquiry of possibility, and yet, I’m quite practical. I want us to be able to experience the exquisite sensations of fluid movement and resonance that connect us to all life forms and energy fields, but I also want us to be able to consciously find the applications, through those sensations, in order to become ever more adaptable to the life-change circumstances we want to initiate or to the ones that are thrust upon us.

As humans, we are an elegant and intricate interaction of mental, emotional, and biological processes. Add to that, we also live in a fast moving world of complex change that affects us at every turn. Often, this complexity has us feeling overwhelmed, stuck, or both in meeting this change. I want us to have tools that build skills to respond appropriately to the sudden, sometimes shocking, turns of life, as well as to the long slow



march that wears us out and can have us lose hope. Our greatest skills for navigating change come from aligning ourselves with the movement of water.

The Movement of Water

What do we know about water? Water is a primary element and has its own nature. Water can move around any obstacle. Over time, it can dissolve most solids that it comes in contact with. It takes on the shape of its container. It can change states from solid, to liquid, to gas. It is essential to all life forms. It covers roughly seventy percent of the planet, and comprises approximately that same percentage of the human body, depending upon your age. Water moves in spirals, undulations, and waves.

Continuum founder, Emilie Conrad said, “We move in our lives as we move in our bodies.” The pattern of how we hold ourselves, and the quality of how we move within our bodies, are directly reflected in the movement of our lives. If your body is holding strain and constraint, so is your life. If your body moves with curiosity and inquiry; your life is open to creativity and new adventure. Therefore, when we embody the movement of fluids, we become more fluid, and we are able to manage the transitions of our days with more continuity and continuous flow, and less stop-start fragmentation and panic. When we move like water—when we move in those same motifs of spirals, undulations, and waves—we amplify our own fluid nature.

Moving as water, moving with your waters, places you in the larger current of the movement of all of life. In that fluid undulation, feelings of freedom replace constraints, and emotions can become unplugged, purged, softened, and soothed. New ideas emerge from your depth of being. The felt sense of increased fluidity in the body resonates so that we can tangibly feel our connections to other people and life-forms in the biosphere. This sensation of the interconnected oneness from your cells to the cosmos is what many people seek to experience through mediation, spiritual pursuits, and mind-altering drugs. We find it through amplifying fluid movement.

One of the greatest gifts of fluid movement is that it increases our adaptability to any and all circumstances. Like water, we learn to move around any obstacle and to change our state of mind or being in resilient response to what changes around us. Our resilience,

or what I call our ChangeAbility, is a direct result of cultivating a fluid response to changing events: internal or external.

Again, since the movement of our lives is a reflection of the movement within our bodies, we can begin to approach external change by building adaptability in the tissue, variation in the breath, and developing a range of movement possibilities and choices. Building this range can, and often will, give us practice exploring beyond what is familiar and habitual. As we elongate, as we expand and open up, we can find ourselves touching the inside edges of what we know of our bodies, our beliefs, our thoughts, and our emotions that may feel new, foreign, and perhaps unexplored. We watch those edges become more pliable and permeable to new information and new shapes as awareness and new engagement move our sense of self outward into expansion and inclusion.

Navigating Change is the New Stability

All change, even desired change, is a disruption of what we have known, and how it is we have known ourselves. It is always a trade-off; the novelty of the new vs. the safety of the familiar. When something new occurs, we are thrown off balance and must recover our equilibrium, even though our return will never be quite to the same place, because of the ongoing nature of change. If the disruption is unexpected, severe, or traumatic, that recovery may require more time, attention, and assistance. We can feel overwhelm, fear, and confusion. What can be most helpful is to develop a moving adaptation to the movement of change; meeting the movement of change with your own fluid movement and the internal resource that comes from having practiced moving with these emotions and sensations. When a disruptive change arrives in your life, standing still (if there actually was such a thing) no longer works in our fast moving lives of fast moving change. If you plant yourself, stiff and immovable, in the fast moving current, you will topple into the rushing water. So it's best to cultivate internal supports that can shift fluidly, in response to external supports that shift or completely disappear. Then, once you find the safety of new supports, you can utilize the movement of change and ride the current, much like you would do if you were river rafting and your boat got hung up on

the rocks. You have to shift your weight around in the boat to move it off the rocks before proceeding down the river, again.

Resistance

When it comes to change, we either experience the flow of the movement of change or our resistance to it. That is it. It is either one or the other. I am either aligned with the existing movement of change or I am in resistance to it. That resistance can show itself in so many ways.

Fear, anxiety, anticipation, procrastination, denial, attachment, even excitement, joy, and a myriad of other feelings, thoughts, and emotions can accompany the movement of change as we face the unknown with uncertainty. When we are resistant to these feelings, to the content of change, the speed of change, or simply the movement of change, itself, we often lock down, stop breathing, or clench muscles in order to try and find some sort of stability. Or, our hearts race, our thoughts run, and we “fall apart.” These outward expressions of resistance are reflections of our particular, habitual response to stressful change, and are exaggerated by our breathing patterns. Over time, these patterned responses limit our ability to be adaptive as we meet changes large and small.

We can shift how we meet change by changing how we breathe and move within our bodies. The body and breath become the tools for direct experience, beyond mere mental constructs and beliefs, for transforming states of frozen resistance into fluid alignment when meeting the movement of change. Just as water can dissolve the face of a rock cliff; fluid movement can dissolve fear.

Wave Motion

When something in me feels stuck—a tight muscle or an emotional logjam—I do, what we call in Continuum, the wave motion. Lying on my side or on my back, I initiate an undulation in my spine, or from my hand up my arm, or from my foot up my leg. I let that motion of a wave literally move through my tissue, or my thinking. It is like how a

gentle ocean wave might wash over me were I floating in a warm bay in Hawaii. Or, better yet, I imagine that warm wave is moving through me instead of over me. When the wave motion is allowed to move through whatever is resistant, stuck, or stagnant, an opening occurs.

I could talk about my resistance all day long; I could try to get to the bottom of my reasons for its persistence or the need for its removal. But, somehow, simply doing the wave motion will move through that blockage, eventually. With even just a little encouragement, the water moves. It is the nature of water.

One of the ways that I experience the movement of change is in incremental waves. To be able to sense when the wave of change begins, crests, and subsides requires refined attention to the nature of its movement. In large change, the waves can feel so enormous and so close together as to feel like a tidal wave or a barrage of waves that knock you down as soon as you try and stand, and never let you come up for air. By recognizing the increments of waves—or wave sets, as a surfer might observe—you know there will be a ride, and you know that ride will end. If you catch the wave of change, you can surf and feel how the movement propels you. Even if you get toppled by the wave, you know that eventually it will recede. A recognition of incremental movement helps mitigate a sense of overwhelm and anxiety. You can tell yourself, “This too shall pass.” Eventually it will.

To place yourself in the current of change is to align yourself with the larger current of life. Participating in somatic practice, and more specifically in the fluid practice of Continuum, allows you to be a change-artist, and even a quick-change artist, once you get good at it. You can find resiliency and resourcefulness from a spectrum of practiced possibilities that will equip you to be dexterous in meeting the unknown. The delicious bloom of sensation that comes from fluid movement, as well as the greater sense of health, coherence, and well-being, courts us to find ways to meet and make change in a more fluid, flexible, energized, and resourceful way. To align ourselves with the nature of water by moving like water supports us in all the ways water feeds life. In moving like water, we can smoothly navigate change with ease, and be resilient in the times when change does not come so easily.

Sharon Weil is an authorized Continuum teacher and the founder of The Ageless Body® a Continuum inspired practice for moving with the changes that accompany aging. She is the author of *ChangeAbility, How Artists, Activists and Awakeners Navigate Change* (Archer/Rare Bird Books 2016) a book designed to help readers navigate all the changes of their lives, drawing upon the collective wisdom of twenty-five change-innovators across many fields. *ChangeAbility Playbook, How to Navigate Your Own Change* (Archer/Rare Bird Books May 2017) is a journal workbook for navigating your own personal change. She is also the host of *Passing 4 Normal Podcast*, conversations about change. (iTunes) sharonweilauthor.com

