

# Sandra's strategies for life and well-being



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It's that time of year again... Summer is coming sadly to an end, the letters from our kid's schools are arriving with lists and lists of things to buy and the reality of the change of seasons is upon us.

We have an interesting relationship with change. Most people dislike boredom and routine and yet we have a tendency to avoid change.

## Why?

We are creatures of habit and even sometimes when our habits or current status might not be good for us- we cling on to what we know. The problem with that is in order to grow we usually have to let go of an old habit or behavior that might be getting us into trouble and try a new strategy that might well feel unfamiliar. Most everything we cherish in our lives was once new and therefore once uncomfortable. Yet we avoid discomfort like the plague.

The most common strategy that we tend to grasp onto to deal with change, stress or challenges is "control" with the idea that we will avoid discomfort or pain.

The problem is that external control is an illusion. What we think we are controlling is usually controlling us. Example: We often think we can anticipate situations, people or things and therefore prepare ourselves for how we will deal with any situation. This doesn't work. Clients often try to prepare themselves for heartbreak by guarding their hearts, try to avoid stressful situations by staying home isolated and/or try to influence people into doing what

they want so that they can feel some control over that person or their behavior. Sadly in none of these situations does control work.

Heartbreak comes when it comes and guarding one's heart actually robs you of the best ingredients of love and does not immunize you against the pain of betrayal. Avoidance in general is the friend of anxiety so avoiding stressful situations increases anxiety across the board. You seek to avoid discomfort and ironically the discomfort will increase by avoiding it. This is the recipe for more anxiety.

Further, life sends stress even if you live in a bubble (and who wants to live in a bubble anyways?). Trying to control another person is probably the most devastating trap as it gives that person so much power over you and you slowly but surely will disappear. You might think you are controlling "the other" short term but ultimately there is no real control over anything outside of ourselves.

So what to do? Go back to yourself- reassure yourself that you will and can get through change, difficult situations and life. Sometimes it will be messy, sometimes it will be hard but you can do it. Fall is upon us- a change in season; stress might come your way- it is ok- without any stress we would be dead. Take a deep breath, acknowledge the challenges ahead and comfort yourself by reminding yourself that change is an inevitable part of life just like the change of seasons.

Please continue to write us and let us know how anxiety or stress impacts your life or how a strategy has helped you. Let us know what you would like to learn more about. We would love to help... In the meanwhile come say hi to us at one Montreal Center for Anxiety and Depression's upcoming talks.

**Sandra**

Submit your questions to Sandra by writing [suburban@thesuburban.com](mailto:suburban@thesuburban.com) or by fax 514-484-9616 Attn :Sandra Reich.