



Coping with a Fast Changing World

A column by Circle Pines Mayor Dave Bartholomay for the Quad Community Press Newspaper (10/30/2018)

The pace of change in our country continues to accelerate as never before, a pace that is now faster than we are able to adapt to. Whether it is rapid technology innovation, the impacts of a global economy on American jobs or worries about our environment, change will keep happening much too fast, leaving many to worry about how it will turn out. For some, the sense of what is right and what is wrong isn't clearly agreed upon anymore. There is concern about whether family connections are strong enough to provide needed support, and others worry that the hope for a better world for our children seems to be slipping away. And it often feels like the focus on the differences among people has overtaken the many ways we are all similar (especially during election season)!

In times like these one can easily be discouraged about the future and feel overwhelmed. When continuous and unrelenting change is all around us, what are some important groundings to help us cope and perhaps even thrive? What are some steps each of us can take to get back in control of our life, to have more hope for our futures?

1) Be Optimistic. As I've said before, being an 'optimist' with a positive attitude on life is not about being happy when things are going well and viewed as 'out of touch' when things are going rough. I'm an optimist that understands there will indeed be failures -- we don't live in a fantasy land. But we can learn from our failures, and optimists believe that success will inevitably follow those failures. Being optimistic helps you notice the good and not get focused and dragged down by the bad.

2) Focus on your neighborhood and community. I personally try not to watch or read too much national news anymore. People on 'both sides' are using fear to drive wedges between us . . . don't let them do it! Instead, look for places where you really can make a difference -- in your community! Volunteering to help at the food shelf, a nonprofit, a church, or at a school will make you feel valued and connected to your community.

3) Invest in the children of your community. They need our help and love more than ever! Consider volunteering at your area elementary school. Attend a school play or concert or sporting event (find activities at www.isd12.org). Look for ways to show kids that the adults in their community care for them and want to help them grow and prosper.

4) Take some quiet time alone to reflect on your life. Whether you are young or old, consider how you can personally improve and how you can better practice the lost art of Gratitude. Start a habit of saying 'Thank You' more often to the good people in your life.

5) Protect yourself by avoiding negative people. Reject fear and refuse to view life as all about 'scarcity' ('you don't have enough'). Appreciate the blessings you have and be less focused on what others tell you that you are missing. And always remember the important difference between 'wants' and 'needs'.

6) Become more gritty and resilient. Books like 'Grit' by Angela Duckworth teach us how to bounce back from bad things, become more resilient and build a stronger and grittier 'you'. Yes, you can make yourself better able to handle change. Learn how and put it into practice, starting today!

I believe improving your attitude, helping your community, and supporting kids remain the keys to coping in a fast-changing world.