

SHE DESERVES IT

REBUILD HAVEN HOUSE

It All Starts With a Step

by John Goodwin

There are two types of change for a person, Involuntary and voluntary.

Involuntary change happens when a change is made for you by other forces or a change by someone else affects you. These can be things like losing your job to downsizing, a friend or family member passing, a restructuring at work, or your car breaking down and needing a new one. These are changes that have a finality to them. It is a change that does not allow you to revert or go back to the old way. You can try to walk into the president's office and say "I am not comfortable with the restructuring and I would like to go back to the old way", I am not sure that it would work! Involuntary change is an instantaneous thing, in most occasions, and dealing with it may be difficult. However, since there is no reversion back to the "old way", you do exactly that - you deal with it, find ways to cope, seek help, and try to move on because there is no "going back".

Voluntary Change is the most difficult as it is a choice that you require to make yourself. Whether it is going on a diet, changing a career, quitting smoking, and so on, it is very difficult. Why is it so difficult? It is because you are stepping into the unknown and your body and mind are very "comfortable" with the status quo, your mind knows what to expect with the current situation and does not like to be surprised.

Voluntary change can be like standing at the top of a set of stairs with a blindfold on. Your mind will tell you it is better to just stay on the top step as it knows what is happening on that top step. Taking a step down requires faith that there will be another step to land on, and then another, and another, and so on. At each step, your brain will try to convince you that no matter what your current situation is, the next step is risky and scary. Your brain is comfortable where it is with the known reality as opposed to the unknown potential or leap of faith that there will be another step to stand on.

Take being overweight for example. I am positive that in your mind you know that having extra weight on a body taxes your systems and can lead to health issues. Then why is it so hard for some to lose weight (present company included)? Our comfort zones con-



vince us that we are not really that overweight, or people enjoy the jolly fellow, or the many things our brains convince us to believe that our current state is where we should stay to not rock the boat and head into an unknown territory.

There are millions of self-help books out there as manuals to direct you through voluntary change; books on changing careers, love, dieting, making millions. This illustrates how hard voluntary change is. People spend millions possibly even billions of dollars on books to teach us how to change.

This brings me to the point of my article.

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Let's take the example of a mother with two kids at a home with an abusive spouse. As terrible and painful as her and her children's situation is, it is their "normal". She has, over time, learned what to expect and is trying her best to cope with the current situation. Like the person at the top of the stairs with the blindfold on, the next step to her is extremely terrifying. It is hard to have faith that there will even be a second step. It feels like she and her children are standing on the edge of a cliff with no parachute, not the top of a set of stairs. What if she takes that step and their situation gets worse as her abuser takes the abuse to a new level? There are no manuals and self-help books to help her navigate out of what they are experiencing every day. She feel there is no way out. The decision she needs to make affects everything in their life at that moment: the safety of her children, her own safety, finances, the roof over her head, and the list goes on. This situation makes my plight to lose weight seem trivial even as hard as my brain makes it out to complete that change. Now magnify it for the situation I just described, it seems insurmountable does it not?

That is where Women's Crisis Services and **Haven House** step in.

They **ARE** the manual, the first step on the staircase or the parachute, and the only service of its kind in Waterloo Region. They offer a secure and safe haven to get away from the abuse. They offer the follow up steps on the staircase as well; counseling, pet and music therapy, help with moving forward and the constant support to dramatically increase the chances of success of continuing to take steps down the staircase of change in a safe and comfortable environment. The benefits of the change undergone during her stay at Haven house will pay off for generations as the cycle of abuse can be broken with children learning that where they once were was not "normal" or something that you just "dealt with". When it comes time to raise their families, that change has already happened!

The current Haven House has done a great job utilizing resources to the best that they can. However, with only 12 bedrooms, the need of the community is far greater than what the current facility can accommodate as there are 30 or more women and children utilizing the facility on any given night. Last year over 200 children stayed in shelter with Women's Crisis Services. This limits the work that they can do to help survivors of abuse move beyond violence. A new Haven House will benefit through additional counselling space, dedicated children and youth spaces, better security, private bedrooms and bathrooms, an environment more conducive to the healing process, an allowance to serve a greater population, and help to build a stronger and safer community for us all.

It will allow them to build tangible, visible, steps in the stairs of change to help strengthen our community.

We all have causes that are near and dear to our hearts, we appreciate and respect that, all we ask is that when you are prepared to give, please think of Haven House.

As for the Re-build of Haven House, it is right in front of our eyes!

We have the land, we have the plans, we have the builder. Almost everything is in place to make the Steps of Change for Haven House, **we just need you!**

You can make a donation, an investment to provide those safe steps of security. Visit www.wcswr.org/donate or call us to talk about how you can donate to change lives. 519-741-9184

It all starts with a step... will you walk with us?



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