

The Pettibon System™

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What Six-Letter Word Can Drive Fear into a Grown-up's Heart?

The answer is: Change.

It's basic human nature for the vast majority of people to resist change. Typing 'resisting change' into Google brought up 1,900,000 results for the topic. Many reasons can be found. The one that resonates most with us when we consider the chiropractic profession is:

Concern about future competence.

Dr. Burl has been challenging the prevailing 'status quo' approach of conventional chiropractic for more than half a century. As a result, accepting and embracing change is in The Pettibon System's DNA! Dr. Burl is a 'change agent.'

According to Wikipedia, a change agent "is someone who intentionally or indirectly causes or accelerates social, cultural, or behavioral change. An agent who is constantly adapting to new practices is often motivated to find better ways to do things." The definition certainly fits Dr. Burl. He intentionally causes change for the end result of wanting the profession to deliver on its promise. While that suits us, we still have to deal with others' resistance.

Change and learning are synonymous. Because The Pettibon System is so different from conventional chiropractic, there can be resistance to learning it. What can overcome that? We believe people change as a result of one of three causes: 1) External forces give us no choice. 2) The pain of staying the same becomes greater than the fear of the unknown. 3) There are doubts and discontent with the current reality.

Our picks for what can bring about change range from dramatic to subtle. Tapping into the subtle causes is how we're handling overcoming resistance. That's what the piece that follows is about.

Resistance to change is like being trapped in a dark tunnel. You can hunker down or go out the end and find an amazing new world to explore. Start the journey!

Unlearning: The First Step to Change

[Excerpts from *Maximizing Your Learning*]

By Carol Remz, Ph.D.

First, let's start with a story: Sweden's hunt for Soviet submarines.

From the mid-1970s until 1992, Sweden was convinced that Soviet submarines were lurking off the Swedish coast. The Soviets always denied that their submarines had been anywhere near Sweden. But the Swedes kept mounting large-scale hunts, dropping grenades and depth charges, and detonating remote-control mines.

Newsletter

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From Sharon Freese-Pettibon,
President of Pettibon System, Inc.

**Instructor Conclave for The
Pettibon Institute Is Coming UP!**

The dates are August 3–5. The location is Las Vegas.

As we said in the April newsletter: What happens in Las Vegas will not stay in Las Vegas!

We'll start getting the results out in our August newsletter.

Expect some exciting changes!

To exist is to change, to change is to mature; to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

–Henri Bergson

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Here's an example of the intensity of Sweden's search: In May and June of 1988, the Swedish Anti-Submarine Warfare unit had nine live-fire attacks aimed at the suspected foreign submarines. The Swedes were sure that one had been detected and trapped. "But contact was lost," according to a Swedish Defense Ministry spokesperson, "because of the noise from exploding depth charges and underwater grenades, and the submarine apparently slipped away in the turbulence."

The spokesperson continued, "When we played back the tapes, we saw that the submarine was exactly where we thought it was. It's probable that we hit and damaged it although a search had failed to produce evidence of damage."

In October 1981, the Swedes captured a Soviet submarine. It hadn't been hunted but had made a navigational error and grounded on rocks along Sweden's southern coast. Of course, that reinforced the Swedes' suspicions.

In July, 1987, Tero Harkonen, a Swedish seal expert, speculated that what appeared to be submarines may have been seals at play, gushing through the water and even creating foam on the surface.

Swedish navy officials didn't change their minds. They declared their sightings of submarines reliable and claimed to have seen air bubbles from a diver.

In February 1995, Sweden's defense chief Owe Wiktorin told a news conference that the Swedish navy had acquired new hydrophonic instruments in 1992, and these had shown that minks (mink whales) give off sounds similar to submarines. So if, since 1992, the supposed intruding submarines were sea mammals, what about before 1992?

Those were checked and eventually Wiktorin reported: "There is overwhelming evidence (technical, acoustical, and visual) that there have been five foreign submarine operations on Swedish territory since 1981, including the Soviet submarine that ran aground in 1981."

In 1995, four years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian anti-submarine experts continued to deny that the supposed foreign submarines sighted by the Swedish navy were Soviet ones.

We See What We Believe To Be True

The story's source is the article, "Unlearning Ineffective or Obsolete Technologies," by Dr. William H. Starbuck, a professor at University of Oregon. Dr. Starbuck's article was published in the *International Journal of Technology Management*, 1996, 11: 725-737.

Dr. Starbuck used the story to show how our beliefs and what we understand to be true filter our perceptions. The Swedish sailors were trained to hear and see things as evidence of a submarine. Within that learning, there wasn't a way to accommodate Tero Harkonen's information.

According to Dr. Starbuck, "Experts may be among the most resistant to new ideas and to evidence that contradicts their current beliefs and methods."

When what you've built your status and livelihood on is threatened, does such resistance really seem that surprising?

What about scientists? Are they more open to accepting findings that turn

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their 'world view' upside down?

Not always, according to Thomas Kuhn, professor of philosophy and history of science at MIT until his death in 1996, and his most renowned work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Paradigm Shifts

Kuhn popularized the term 'paradigm.' He described a paradigm as a collection of beliefs shared by scientists—a set of agreements about how problems are to be understood. When research findings can't be explained with the existing paradigm and trigger the development of a new and competing paradigm, battles can ensue. Some scientists will choose to ignore the threat, and others will reject it as spurious or fallacious.

In time, a new paradigm can replace in whole or in part an existing paradigm, but the process is one of 'intellectual violent revolution.'

[*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* generated a lot of controversy and critics. Dr. Pettibon obviously agrees with Kuhn's ideas about paradigm shifts. You can decide for yourself by reading Kuhn's work.]

A New Paradigm for the Chiropractic Profession

No, we're not asking you to join a revolution. Rather, we're inviting you to scrutinize the existing chiropractic paradigm and do some 'unlearning' so you can be open to what's different about The Pettibon System and why that matters to you and your patients.

So how can you unlearn?

Over the years, there have been doctors who let go of the conventional chiropractic paradigm in an instant. Others, feeling threatened, put up a protective guard. Some of those guards were impenetrable, and a few had cracks caused by doubts and dissatisfaction. Those doubts and dissatisfaction enable one way to unlearn.

How You Unlearn

Dr. Starbuck's article suggests ways to facilitate unlearning. A few of those follow.

"It isn't good enough." Dissatisfaction is the most common reason for doubting current beliefs and methods. Any doubt—no matter how small—can be the start of unlearning. Reflect on your practice. If you're not completely confident and satisfied, then let your doubts and discontent surface.

"It's only an experiment." Treat the new paradigm—The Pettibon System—as an experiment. When we see ourselves experimenting, we tend to be more willing to deviate from our standard practices. Run 'tests' and look at the results as feedback instead of measures of success or failure.

"Surprises should be question marks." Events that don't turn out the way we expect—whether positive or negative—are opportunities for unlearning. The pleasant surprise or the unpleasant disruption can be used to reveal weaknesses in our current beliefs and methods.

"All dissent and warnings have some validity." We really like this one! Dr. Pettibon has been a dissenter for a long time. But he backs up his dissent with evidence. So keep an open mind and, most importantly, consider what

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the benefits are to you, your patients, and the chiropractic profession if Dr. Pettibon is right!

“Collaborators who disagree are both right.” The operative word here is ‘collaborators.’ Collaborators have working relationships and mutual respect. When there’s disagreement, they don’t set out to prove who’s wrong or right but to reconcile “apparent contradictions,” with the result being “new conceptualizations” and sometimes “strange inversions.” This latter situation is where the collaborating experts each agree that the other is right—switching their beliefs.

Within the family of Pettibon practitioners, there’s disagreement and lots of back-and-forth discussion. It’s done in the spirit of mutual respect. And there have been a number of occasions when practitioners ‘flipped’ to each other’s argument, including Dr. Pettibon!

“What does a stranger think strange?” New people don’t have biases. Newcomers may be able to see ‘peculiarities’ that the indoctrinated cannot. Fresh perspectives are important. It’s one of the reasons why Dr. Pettibon continues to teach chiropractic students and cherishes working with new doctors.

Dr. Starbuck proposes two other ways to facilitate unlearning. They’re not easy to summarize, so for complete explanations, I’m going to refer you to Appendix II in the PDF, *Maximizing Your Learning*. You will find a link to the PDF on the home page of [The Pettibon Institute’s web site](#).

I’m also directing you to the full version of [Maximizing Your Learning](#) for another reason: To enable your attainment of what has been described as ‘the closest thing to heaven on earth.’ It’s a mental state where we’re completely involved, focused on challenging and worthwhile accomplishment. We are so absorbed that we lose our sense of time. Time flies. We’re using our skills to the utmost. We have feelings of peace and harmony and fulfillment.

The wondrous mental state of heightened focus, productivity, and happiness is called: Flow. It was introduced to the world in 1990 by Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced ‘Mee-high Chick-sent-me-high-ee’).

As you read more about unlearning, the state of flow, and another section which gives you techniques to make learning easier, I hope that you’ll come to agree with us that a six-letter-word synonym for change is *growth!*

When you are through changing, you are through.

— Bruce Barton, 1886–1967; founder of the advertising agency BBDO and creator of Betty Crocker.