Chapter 4

Who Chooses, Plans, and Implements the Changes

With most intentional changes, it is largely the person himself or herself who chooses, plans, and implements the change. Intentional changes are largely "do-it-yourself" changes. The person often obtains significant help from acquaintances, but only rarely from professionals or books.

These insights emerged from our intensive probing interviews with women and men concerning their largest, most significant change during the two years before the interview. Their change had to be definitely, consciously, and voluntarily chosen and intended, though it could be fairly broad rather than foreseen precisely and in great detail.

They were asked who performed each of three major tasks: (1) choosing, (2) planning, and (3) achieving the change. The first task was described in more detail as "deciding to go ahead with this particular change. As part of making this decision, you or someone else or a book might have examined various aspects of your life, obtained information, identified a tentative possible change, estimated the costs and benefits of this change, and so on." The second task was "planning the strategy and deciding the steps for achieving the change." The third was "actually taking the steps for achieving the change."

A handout sheet (sheet #4 in the Appendix) gave the person those descriptions of the three tasks and a list of six possibilities for who might have performed each task. For each task in turn, the person was asked, "How would you divide the credit or responsibility for performing this task? That is, what percentage of the task was performed by you, and what percentage by each of the others in the list?"

The word *steps* is almost as suitable as the word *tasks*. But I rejected *steps* because this word could suggest a simple neat linear path: first the person chooses the change, then plans the strategy, and finally implements the change. The actual picture is quite different: each task may have to be performed many times at various stages of the change effort.

The findings shown in table 4 point up the central position of the person in his or her intentional changes. On the average, the person assumes about 70% of the responsibility for all the subtasks involved in choosing the change, planning the strategy, and implementing the change.

A significant but smaller role is played by friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and other nonprofessionals during one-to-one interaction. On the average, interviewees gave such persons 23% of the credit for the various steps involved in choosing the particular change, 19% for planning the strategy, and 16% for implementation. In choosing the change, for example, the interviewee may have performed most of the effort of gathering information, weighing alternatives, and making a decision but may have relied on a spouse or friend to add some useful information, suggest other alternatives, and confirm the tentative decision. An interviewee would be considered as performing 100% of the task only if he or she performed the entire task without any help, information, useful advice, or encouragement from anyone else.

The other types of resources in table 4 were used infrequently and contributed relatively little in performing the three tasks. My predictions before the interviews were too high for these categories, and far too low for the person himself or herself. I was especially surprised by the finding that "books, booklets, magazines, television, films, tapes, phonograph records" contributed only about 3%.

The Central Importance of the Person

We have seen in table 4 that the person herself or himself received a large portion (about 70%) of the credit for choosing, planning, and implementing the changes.

**Extent to Which Various Resources Contributed to
Choosing, Planning, and Implementing the Changes**

Resource	Choosing	Planning	Implementing
The person himself or herself	68	69	73
Nonprofessionals			
In individual one-to-one interaction	23	19	16
In a group	2	2	1
Professionals			
In individual one-to-one interaction	3	7	6
In a group	0.3	1	2
Books and other nonhuman resources	4	4	2

Note: For each of the three tasks in turn, each interviewee distributed 100 percentage points among the various resources. This table presents the means of those percentages.

Table 4

This percentage is remarkably similar to the percentage of intentional adult *learning* that is planned by the learner himself or herself, rather than by a group, friend, teacher, and so on. A review of research on learning projects found that 73% were self-planned (Tough, 1979, postscript). The closeness of these two percentages is all the more remarkable when one considers that intentional changes are much broader than learning projects, and that the two percentages were derived in quite different ways. For each intentional change, the person reported the percentage of responsibility or credit for each of the categories (self, nonprofessionals, etc.) for each of three tasks; for each learning project, however, the person simply chose the one category into which the planning fitted best.

Parallel findings have also been reported by several other researchers and practitioners. Bolles (1980), for instance, has pointed

out that the majority of job changes occur through the person's own efforts and networks rather than through personnel officers, job placement professionals, or newspaper advertisements.

In Veroff's opinion (1978), the data from a 1976 national survey suggest that people now (compared to a similar 1957 survey) have an increased sense of being able to take their life into their own hands and are becoming more confident about their capacities to handle their lives.

Albert Ellis (1977, pp. 6–8) has pointed out that various self-help methods, used without professional supervision, have been very widely used for thousands of years. This may be especially true in the field of religious values or religious therapy. Here are his words:

> In almost all parts of the world, in fact, more people have probably profoundly affected their own lives by do-it-yourself religious therapy than by all other forms of supervised psychotherapy combined. . . . The history of religious therapy almost certainly shows that large numbers of people can bring about profound personality and behavioral changes in themselves by resorting to unsupervised self-help procedures.
>
> In other fields, too, people have read, taken courses, listened to lectures, used films and slides, and utilized many other kinds of self-help devices to aid their lives. . . . I would dare to guess that for every living person who has been helped by formal supervised psychotherapy, ten or more have significantly changed their lives by informal, unsupervised therapeutic modalities. . . .
>
> Innumerable people have testified that, as a result of reading a book, hearing a sermon, viewing a film, or attending a course or a revival-type meeting they have given up alcohol or drugs, stopped smoking, put an end to their feelings of depression, started to forgive rather than to hate their enemies, radically altered their lifestyle, and otherwise made profound changes in their thinking, emoting, and behaving. I have personally talked with or received long letters from literally hundreds of people who have achieved a much less guilty and more enjoying sex life from reading my books . . . and I have spoken with or received written communications from well over a thousand individuals, including many who had been diagnosed by a

psychiatrist as being psychotic, who felt that they had immeasurably improved, and in many instances changed almost the entire tenor of their lives, by reading one of my books on emotional health.

Richard DeCharms (1976, p. 206) has described the behavior of the person who is well able to achieve his or her desired changes. Such behavior seemed characteristic of many, probably most, of our interviewees. DeCharms contrasts such a person (an Origin) with a Pawn, as follows: "The Pawn feels pushed around by external forces because he has not chosen his own path and charted his course through those forces. The Origin may be no more objectively free of the external forces, but he does not allow them to determine his ultimate goals. *He* determines the goals and within the meaningful context of *his* goals he constantly strives to mold the external forces to help him attain his goals. The difference between an Origin and a Pawn does not lie in a personal feeling of freedom vs. constraint. True, the Pawn feels constrained and complains about it. When asked, the Origin may report equal feelings of constraint, but he is not obsessed with them. What is most important in his life is responsible commitment. He strives to visualize his path through the external constraints to the goals that result from his commitment."

As the interviews progressed for this book, the central importance of the person in his or her own change process became very clear. People usually serve as the manager or navigator of their own intentional changes. They may receive advice, encouragement, and information from other people and books, but they fit this help into their own ongoing self-managed process. The person considers various needs and options and strategies, chooses the most appropriate ones, and carries out the steps necessary for achieving the change. The person is an active agent in managing and guiding the process of major change. Like a cross-country runner who encounters various obstacles or a helmsman encountering shoals and storms, the person steers an appropriate course around or through the obstacles. Like the director of a play or the composer and conductor of a symphony, the person seeks an appropriate balance among various components. There are also parallels at the societal level: futurists and policymakers study various options for the future, assess the consequences of each, and then make an informed choice.

The picture that I have just presented emerges clearly by the end of most intensive, probing, leisurely interviews. The stereotype at the beginning of the interview, however, is often quite different.

That, for me, is one of the most fascinating observations to emerge from our interviews. People *believe* that they and others change without much thought, planning, purpose, choice-making, time, and effort. One man said, "Change just happens by accident or else it's caused by others. There's not much *I* can do about it." People are remarkably self-deprecating about their efforts, power, competence, and success at choosing and bringing about major changes in themselves and their lives. Many people feel their pattern is strange or unique, and therefore do not consider it normal and effective and do not discuss it with others.

By the end of a careful thought-provoking interview, however, a quite different picture emerges. People realize they proceeded far more thoughtfully and purposefully than they had initially believed, with carefully chosen, well-organized steps for achieving the change. People are surprised to discover their own planning process, competence, power, and success.

Helping people see their own power and efforts more accurately may be highly beneficial for them. Rodin (1978), for example, has seen definite medical benefits result from simply helping older people see their actual and potential control and effects in their old-age home. The experiment improved their health, not by changing their environment but simply by changing their awareness of their own power and control.

I have been emphasizing the person's conscious, active, initiating, aware, competent part in bringing about changes. It is also true that many external events and forces and changes are beyond the person's control: social norms, government actions, mass media, and other stimuli from the social and physical environment. These external pressures simply happen or exist, regardless of any decision or effort by the person. It is also true that the person's subconscious stream of events rushes onwards as though it had a direction or path of its own. For certain research and practice, it is quite appropriate to focus on the power and control exerted by these external and subconscious forces. In other research and practice, though, it is appropriate to focus on the person's conscious, active, deliberate efforts to choose and change. It is not a case of which view or focus is correct and which is wrong: each of the three is right for some individuals or situations. However, my observation is that too many social scientists and professional helpers have neglected or scoffed at the person's own power and competence in bringing about major changes. They simply have not realized how thoughtful, initiating, and successful people are in their changes.

There are also social scientists who discount the person's power, control, and initiative in another way. They write as though the person's change behavior simply follows a standard pattern that we can study, describe, and predict. Everyone (or at least everyone in a particular category or type) follows the same sequence or the same standard cognitive or information-processing pattern. My own observation is that the person's intentional change process is more idiosyncratic and unpredictable than such writers suggest.

Many policymakers, planners, administrators, economists, historians, and futurists are blind to the person's natural process of change. They are simply not in touch with the total reality. They focus their attention on the highly visible: large-scale institutional and governmental programs, bureaucracies, professional helping enterprises, laws and regulations, public funding. They neglect the underside, the invisible submerged portion of the iceberg, the way things really happen. This underside is often far larger and more pervasive than the highly visible overside.

Elise Boulding (1976, 1979b) has pointed out that this is true in the fields of health care, welfare, education, and food production. These phenomena occur largely at home during our daily lives. Health care delivery systems are involved in only a small fraction of our total effort to maintain our own health and that of our family members. Welfare agencies are usually not part of the process that people go through in solving their problems and obtaining help from peers. Boulding (1979b, p. 12) estimates that, until the end of the fourth grade, mothers give their children considerably more instruction time than teachers do.

In the field of religion, we often think only of the work of the institutional church or synagogue instead of paying attention to the person's own spiritual practices, religious development, ministry, and witnessing. When thinking of research and development, we sometimes think only of officially funded projects and institutions, and forget about the discoveries and inventions made by advanced amateurs in their garages and basements. With couples, we are sometimes more interested in whether the couple is legally married than in the commitment and emotional tone of their relationship. In adult learning we think only of the learning that occurs in courses and classes, which turns out to be only 10% of all intentional adult learning (Tough, 1979). I once had a student loudly proclaim in class that only external things, such as mortgages and traffic jams, are real, and that those of us discussing meditation and spiritual experiences were not in touch with reality. In the 1970s, we some-

times fell for the legal and newspaper view of marijuana and forgot about its remarkably widespread use by a variety of people as a pleasant social activity.

In his chapter on the rise of the prosumer, Toffler (1980) has documented a dramatic shift toward handling our own projects and problems instead of paying someone else to do so. This shift is demonstrated by a sharp increase in the number of medical instruments and kits sold for home use, in the percentage of self-serve service stations, and in the proportion of electric power tools and building materials sold to do-it-yourselfers rather than to carpenters and other professionals. Toffler has also pointed out that most economists ignore all the unpaid work done directly by people for themselves, their families, and their communities; they contemptuously dismiss such work because it is outside of the highly visible market economy. As long as politicians and experts continue to ignore the less visible economic productivity, "they will never be able to manage our economic affairs" (p. 284).

Not only with intentional changes, but with all fields, it is important to look beneath the highly visible surface and to see the total broad phenomenon through the eyes and daily life of the person. Only by understanding the natural process of intentional change, health care, learning, and producing can professionals and governments provide effective help. It is necessary for all of us to escape from the great social lie pointed out by Roszak (1977, p. 30): "The lie insists the tribe, the state, the law, the king, the pharaoh, the party, the general will, the nation is *everything,* while each of us in the privacy of our personal vocation is a wholly dispensable nothing." Planners, decision-makers, administrators, and professionals are often oblivious to the underside, unfortunately, or take it for granted and attach no significance to it.

Let's pause for a moment, at this stage, to try to avoid certain misconceptions. I am simply saying that many adults do, in fact, choose and plan much of their intentional change on their own, with some help from friends and neighbors. This is a natural process, a normal way to handle certain problems, goals, aspects of life, and situations. I am not saying it is the only way: it is just as natural (though not nearly as common) for a person to get help from a professional. There is nothing particularly praiseworthy about one path compared with the other. I am not saying that people necessarily handle their own changes better than a professional would; sometimes they do, but sometimes they do not. What I am saying strongly is this: professionals, researchers, and people them-

selves have unduly neglected and ignored the thoughtfulness, competence, and success with which many people choose and change. We should shift the balance, and give increased attention and money to research and practice focused on the person as a conscious active agent in change.

How the Person Chooses the Change

The central importance of the person in his or her own changes is now clear. As we saw in table 4, the person is responsible for about 70% of the various subtasks required for (1) choosing the change, (2) planning the strategy, and (3) implementing or achieving the change. In this section and the next two sections, we turn to the details of those three tasks. What does the person *do* while performing each of the three tasks? What is the person's natural process for making intentional changes?

One major task that the person faces is deciding whether to go ahead with the particular change being considered. That task is examined in this section.

The person is often very thoughtful and active in considering and tentatively choosing some major change, and then in deciding definitely to proceed with it. It is common, for example, for people to examine, reflect on, and assess various facets of themselves and their lives. These facets include their values, goals, hopes, needs, characteristics, lifestyles, knowledge, skill, performance, success, time or money budget, psychological and emotional functioning, physical functioning, and spiritual level. Such an examination can uncover a latent interest, a readiness for change, a deep dissatisfaction, a large gap between the actual and the ideal, a general problem or issue, or a desire to change.

An opportunity, a triggering stimulus, or a change in the external world will often play a part in fostering this self-examination. A situation may deteriorate, for instance: a job, one's weight, an aging parent's health, or the amount of nighttime noise. (In our interviews, these four examples led respectively to a new job, a dieting program, arranging for the interviewee's father to move from the interviewee's household to a nursing home, and moving from an apartment to a daughter's house.) A biography, movie, emotional situation, or conversation may trigger consideration of a particular change, such as having a child or changing jobs. Alternatively, an opportunity may suddenly present itself. A British woman told us that "fate decreed that I buy the BBC magazine the very week a

teachers' course was advertised: as a result I enrolled and earned my teaching certificate." Bicycling past a four-plex one morning, a Canadian woman noticed a "for sale" sign in the front yard. Already interested in buying one of the scarce four-plexes in her neighborhood, the woman promptly proceeded to buy this one.

The amount of time and thought and effort that goes into a decision to change varies from a few minutes to a few years. Some changes *could* be decided quickly and without thought, but instead the person explores carefully in order to make a good decision. You could take just a few moments, for instance, to decide to quit your job, move, separate from your spouse, or apply for a degree program—or to do all four simultaneously! To increase your chances of future happiness and health, however, you might well spend many hours reflecting on these possible choices.

Reasoning, thinking, and writing are often an important part of that process. The person may gather information and opinions, list fears and risks, predict the consequences of the potential change, estimate the costs and benefits of the various options, assign weights to the various factors, and set priorities. Before deciding to become pregnant, for example, one woman made a list with two columns for the advantages and disadvantages of having a child. Another woman, describing her decision to switch from being a journalist to becoming a radio producer, said, "I used a balance sheet to figure out the pros and cons of changing jobs."

At suppertime on the day I drafted this section, I discussed it with my daughter. She had recently completed an intentional change that was unusually large for a 14-year-old. She had decided to move from living with one parent to living with her other parent, at least for a few months. I discovered that she had, while considering this change, made a careful list of the pros and cons with the help of her girl friend. My daughter pointed out that the list contained more disadvantages to moving than advantages, but the advantages won out because some of them were particularly strong or large.

Many of us have a mental list of desirable changes in ourselves and our lives. Because we cannot possibly find the time and money to implement all of these desired changes, we must somehow set priorities to choose only two or three at a time. For myself, I have adopted a rather unusual strategy. On the first day of each month, I select a maximum of one change that I will begin that month. I try to avoid any other intentional changes costing more than five hours or $300. This arrangement forces me to choose thoughtfully from

among the various possibilities. The large number of possible change paths facing each of us is captured in the movie called *The Man Who Skied Down Everest*. After depicting Yuichiro Miura's heroic feat, the film closes with these lines from his journal: "The end of one thing is the beginning of another. I am a pilgrim again."

In addition to lists and other rational thought, the process of considering and choosing change can include other forms of thought such as fantasy or reflection. The person may vividly imagine one or more alternatives to the present reality and to its normal future extrapolation. Several people whom I know fairly well go even further. For days they will talk and act as though they are almost certain to make a particular change in the near future. But then it turns out that living as though the change is really going to occur is simply their way of testing its fit, and they often drop the idea with no difficulty or regret.

Sometimes a specific method of tapping inner wisdom is used. These methods help people discover their own deepest or highest insights and intuition and knowledge, sometimes illuminating the decision with great clarity. Some changes are first considered or tentatively "chosen" by the subconscious mind: then the task of the person's conscious awareness is to discover these subconscious events and to decide whether to act on them. People use various methods to make contact with their subconscious stream of events or their creative inner wisdom. They work with their dreams, let their thoughts roam freely when awakening in the morning, keep a journal or experiment with free-flowing writing, pray, note unusual behavior (saving money, for example, for no apparent reason, and then realizing their subconscious mind wants a new car or house), use guided fantasies and mind games for discovering an archetypal guide or advisor such as one's wise old man (Masters and Houston, 1972), interpret the *I Ching*, or consult their imaginary doctor (Samuels and Bennett, 1973).

The first time we discussed this topic in my graduate course on personal change paths, two students described how they rely heavily on their subconscious. For a major decision such as getting married or choosing surgery for his child, one man collected the needed data first, but then he waited until meditation and prayer confirmed his decision. Another person, facing a major choice, goes deep into her subconscious and there meets God and finds the needed wisdom.

Sometimes a dream, or series of dreams, can lead to or significantly influence a major personal change. P.F. Thomas (1978) inter-

viewed 40 men and women who were able to describe such an experience. Three-quarters of them found that more than 20 hours of waking time elapsed before the meaning and personal implications of the dream became clear. In order to understand the personal meaning of their dream, the interviewees took such steps as writing down the dream, gestalting it, reflecting on it alone or with other people, writing poetry, reliving the dream, and recalling what they had read earlier about dreams.

Now that we have examined some of the detailed steps involved in choosing the goal, we are better prepared to answer a common question about intentional changes. Some people ask, "Wouldn't you say that the person *always* chooses the change goal himself or herself? The person should always get 100% of the credit for this task." It is true that the person ultimately makes the final decision about whether to proceed with the change. In fact, my definition of intentional changes emphasizes that they must be voluntary to be considered intentional. During the process of making that ultimate decision, however, various resources may be very important with certain subtasks or detailed steps. A person, group, or book could suggest the change in the first place, give the person a fresh perspective on his or her life and characteristics, help the person clarify needs and options. Such a resource could contribute a large amount to the overall task by aiding several of its component subtasks. We emphasized this point in the interview schedule (question #7 in the Appendix): "How would you divide the credit or responsibility for performing this task? That is, what percentage of the task was performed by you, and what percentage by each of the others in the list? I'm not just thinking of who actually made the final decision. No, what I'm thinking of is who or what played some part in the process of assessing the possible change, weighing its consequences, and so on. For instance, a *magazine* might have been very helpful by getting you to see that such a change really would be possible for you."

How the Person Plans the Strategy

In addition to choosing the change and deciding definitely to proceed with it, the person also has to plan an effective strategy for achieving the change. These two tasks may be intertwined: before deciding to proceed with the change, the person may tentatively choose the strategy and estimate its costs and risks.

Although both tasks must be performed near the beginning of

the entire change effort, they may also be performed several additional times as the effort proceeds. For instance, the person may have to decide whether continuing with this change is worth the costs, or whether or not this particular strategy is turning out to be effective.

Let us turn now to the detailed steps involved in planning the strategy. While planning the initial broad strategy, the person may gather information and advice on various possibilities. This stage could involve weeks of exploration or simply ten minutes of thought. The result will be an initial tentative choice of broad strategies, paths, or resources.

I am struck by the wide variety of techniques, approaches, psychologies, learning principles, and learning styles that the same person will use from one change to another. One key to successful changes may be the person's wide repertoire of strategies from which to choose in particular situations. When a man is trying to change his smoking or eating habits, for instance, he may use a behavior graph, positive and negative reinforcement, control of his environment, and other components of behavior modification. Then when the same man decides to expand his consciousness, he may turn to techniques more typical of humanistic or transpersonal psychology, such as meditation, exercises during trance or hypnosis (Masters and Houston, 1972), or even a psychedelic chemical. When he wants to buy a new house or car, he may gather a great deal of factual information about it in order to make the best choice. When he wants to improve his relationship with his spouse, additional techniques and principles will be useful.

Once the broad initial strategy has been chosen and the change effort is well under way, the need for further strategy decisions may arise. At various times the person may evaluate the current strategy and assess progress and then decide whether to continue, switch to another strategy, drop the change effort prematurely, or stop the effort because it has achieved the desired change. The strategy may be producing certain unanticipated side effects, and the person must decide whether these are beneficial, barely acceptable, or overwhelmingly undesirable. The person may also have to decide how to deal with the various difficulties and problems that arise.

At various points in the process, the person may consider temporarily turning over the planning to someone or something else. The person may decide to follow, for an hour or a year, the strategy decisions of a particular instructor, therapist, medical doctor, consultant, lawyer, group, organization, book, program, or setting.

Usually the person will continue to monitor the effectiveness of that choice and will change to another strategy or resource if necessary. At present, for example, I literally put myself in the hands of a shiatsu masseur for an hour each week. At this stage I do not really know whether the treatments are effective, but after the sixth session, I will assess progress and decide whether to continue.

How the Person Implements the Change

In order to obtain the desired change, one must not only plan, but also successfully implement, the chosen strategies. One must actually take certain steps in order to achieve the change. Doing this is the third major task.

For some chosen changes, planning and implementing the strategy are quick and easy tasks. Suppose someone decides to drop bowling and spend more time at photography, to accept an attractive unsolicited job offer, to become legally married in a standard civil ceremony, or to have a child. The strategy is simple to plan, and the change is probably easy to achieve.

Other changes require a great deal of insightful planning and difficult implementation. Most notorious of all, for difficulty of implementation, is the effort to break a habit such as smoking, drinking, eating too much, picking one's nose, putting down one's spouse or child, or driving a car too fast. It is easy enough to choose such a change, but hard to achieve it. As many smokers say, "I'm an expert at quitting smoking; I've done it often!" Successfully breaking a habit may require an assortment of self-administered rewards and punishments, along with certain environmental changes such as not allowing cigarettes or beer or sweet foods to enter the house.

Some efforts to break a habit, and many other types of changes, require a series of highly deliberate learning episodes (Tough, 1979). In fact, I estimate that about 30% of all intentional changes involve such a learning effort. For example, the person may want to gain certain skills or knowledge, learn new job responsibilities, change within a close relationship, gain self-insight, perform adequately in a new sport or hobby, play a musical instrument, become physically fit through jogging, increase reading or speaking ability, or gain in understanding the world. The implementation stage for each of these examples would probably involve a series of episodes in which the person's major intention was to gain and retain certain knowledge, skill, or other mental and physical

changes. The methods could include reading, listening, practicing, observing, and reflecting.

Other sorts of implementation efforts, too, may be required for certain changes. The person may spend a great many hours trying to find an appropriate job and applying for it. The person may have to persuade other people to allow the desired change or to cooperate with it. Some effort might be required to find a suitable home, car, equipment, support group, partner, club, or doctor.

Finding the time and energy needed for the change can be one step toward implementation. Interviewing 100 persons who had requested an early version of my *Expand Your Life*, Vida Stanius and I asked them, "What interferes with making changes, with controlling your life as much as you'd like to?" Many of the interviewees stated that the demands of their job, their spouse's job, or their children limited their freedom to change.

Gathering up one's courage is necessary for some changes. After interviewing 12 persons for an unpublished study, James Leonidas selected this as one major element in all 12 changes. He said, "People were bold or dramatic; they stepped out; they took a leap for themselves. People in their different ways gathered up their courage to do something new for themselves. In ordinary and everyday ways, all the people I interviewed were quite brave. They all broke new ground for themselves, and were experimenters or pioneers in their own living."

Nonprofessional Helpers

In the previous section we discussed how the person chooses, plans, and implements the change. We turn now to the major resources used by the person in performing these three tasks. We begin with the most common resource of all: most people give credit to at least one nonprofessional helper. Table 4 showed that nonprofessional helpers contribute far more than the combined total for professionals and nonhuman resources. In fact, they contribute 68% of all external help.

The person gains most nonprofessional help in one-to-one interaction with the helper, and only a small amount (approximately 2% compared to 19%) in groups that meet without a professional helper. Peer groups, mutual support groups, self-help groups, and autonomous learning groups are unquestionably important, but they form only the highly visible tip of the iceberg. Most nonprofessional help is much more casual or hidden below the surface, not

structured into weekly meetings of a specific group. As a result, some researchers and practitioners are now focusing on mutual support networks and natural helpers in the community ("socially indigenous help" or "natural helpers") rather than exclusively on groups.

Most of the nonprofessional helpers are family members and friends. Some are coworkers, acquaintances, bartenders, hairdressers, or even strangers.

The helper may contribute to an intentional change in various ways. He or she may suggest or affirm or encourage a particular change, help the person discover a blind spot, agree to cooperate with the change effort and the outcome, warmly encourage the person through the roughest times, suggest strategies and resources for achieving the change or for dealing with obstacles, provide reinforcement for the person according to a behavioral change contract, give the person more time for the change by taking over certain responsibilities, drive the person somewhere, help move furniture, or give the person money. Patterson (1978) reported that natural helpers provide humor, help the person relax, verbalize sympathy and concern, touch and hold, tell about their own experiences and problems, refer to religion and the Bible, and provide companionship. For implementing the change of having a child, two different interviewers on two sides of the Atlantic Ocean put an exclamation mark after "50%: husband."

Not everyone is helpful, of course. Some family members may be threatened by the impending change and may try to sabotage or squelch it. A few acquaintances, even those who are motivated to help, may, in fact, do more harm than good. The question of whether most amateur help is useful, neutral, mixed, or damaging is a major controversy today in several professional fields, such as mental health and social work. One leader (Pancoast, 1978) in the field of natural helping replied to this question as follows: "At this point, I can only report that every professional I have talked with who has become involved with natural helpers, even if initially skeptical, has become convinced of the worth and importance of the natural helpers' services." Some professionals are also quick to assume that giving amateurs some professional training would improve their help, but other professionals believe the opposite. Some types of professional training programs would be more likely to destroy effectiveness than to improve it. Patterson (1978) has also pointed out that a person who is already important and helpful in a friend's life would not necessarily be helpful with a stranger.

Although obtaining help is remarkably common, it may also be difficult, at least for some persons and some changes. If the change involves a basic feeling of inadequacy, or involves the "heavy" emotions of separation, the person may find it hard to approach someone for help. Some people also feel one down after seeking help and believe they can never repay the helper. Most of us, when we want help, will choose a person with whom we feel comfortable, a person whom we can trust, a person who is warm and empathic.

In one field after another, researchers have found that people often gain from someone similar to themselves, rather than from a professional change agent or the mass media (though these are sometimes important).

One such field is the diffusion of innovation. Many studies of people learning about and adopting innovations have demonstrated the significance of nonprofessionals (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971).

Let us turn next to the field of mental health and personal problems. In a 1976 national survey reported by Antonucci, Kulka, and Douvan (1978), people were asked, "If something is on your mind that is bothering you or worrying you and you do not know what to do about it, what do you usually do?" Compared to 25% in a similar 1957 survey, 35% of the interviewees sought informal social support. The authors described this increase as "dramatic, especially in light of the fact that there is no concomitant change in the degree to which formal support was sought." Of all the first-mentioned helpers, 65% were spouse and other family members, 24% were friends and neighbors, 2% were other acquaintances, and 8% were professionals and specialists. The survey 19 years earlier had found a similar pattern: the respective percentages were 71, 12, 4, and 8, with 5% not ascertained (Gurin, Veroff, and Feld, 1960, p. 368). Of all the studies of how people handle problems and mental health matters, this was one of the earliest to proceed by asking them directly, instead of viewing the phenomenon exclusively through the eyes of professionals. The 1978 authors noted that "despite an apparent increase in the visibility and availability of formal social supports over the last 20 years, there seems to be no overall change in the number or types of formal social supports consulted in response to the kinds of worries and unhappiness tapped by these questions."

Also in the field of mental health, Pancoast (1978) has stated:

> Currently there seems to be a good deal of interest in
> the mobilization of informal community supports as part
> of a broad strategy of prevention and treatment in

community mental health. The recommendations of the President's Commission on Mental Health, which include a heavy emphasis on identifying and strengthening community support systems and natural helping networks, will undoubtedly increase the exposure of mental health professionals and politicians to these ideas. While community support systems should not be viewed as a panacea, and should not be seen as a substitute for professional services, they do have the potential for meeting needs which the formal systems are unable to address.

It seems to me that The Commission Report signals the acceptance of the importance of community supports and that we need no longer be advocates. What is needed now is to pool what we already know about informal community support systems and networks in order to decide on issues which deserve further research and to develop ways of interacting productively with them.

The women's movement to reduce sex-role stereotypes in attitudes and behavior has proceeded largely through nonprofessionals. Home (1978) studied women's changes through consciousness-raising groups. At her doctoral oral exam, she pointed out that much of the relevant activity and change occurred between meetings and after the group had disbanded, largely through peer relationships and reading. The women interviewed by Posluns (1981) used nonprofessionals more than other resources.

Although he did not include women's consciousness-raising groups, Farquharson (1975) discovered a remarkable range of self-help groups. They were effective not only in helping the person deal with the initial problem (such as drinking, gambling, weight, physical handicap, bereavement, child-raising), but also in improving self-confidence in the ability to relate to other people effectively and helpfully. Conversations with Andy Farquharson brought the phenomenon of mutual support in helping networks to my attention and raised the possibility that these networks often wither or collapse when a professional moves in.

The importance of nonprofessionals is also demonstrated by D. Armstrong (1971, p. 110). He found that the conversion from a person uninterested in learning to a highly motivated and active learner was the result of (1) a chance meeting with a stranger who

introduced the person to a new skill or body of knowledge, (2) a friend who invited the person to a concert, lent the person a book, or introduced the person to a fascinating idea, or (3) a relative or friend who encouraged or aided the person's learning, or expressed faith in the person's ability to learn.

Three studies of the major learning efforts of adults have found that self-planned learning (rather than learning in a group or through private instruction) is not a lonely or isolated activity. In fact, I would bet that there is more interaction with more people around the content and the process in self-planned learning than there is in the traditional classroom or course. In the majority of learning efforts, the person retains the overall day-to-day control over what and how to learn, but simultaneously receives plenty of help, encouragement, advice, and information from several other persons. In each self-planned learning project, the adult receives help from a mean of 10.6 individuals, a median of 9.5 (Tough, 1967). Every interviewee in that study used at least four helpers. They were largely acquaintances, friends, and family members. In a replication in the United Kingdom, Strong (1977) found a similar pattern, although her mean was only 7.4 and the median 8. I found that 75% of all helpers were approached on a personal rather than a business basis, and Strong's comparable figure was 79%. Luikart (1977) obtained an average number of helpers remarkably close to mine: 10.3 compared to 10.6. He found that the amount, source, and type of help received by the learners were significantly associated with differences in the size, density, and composition of their personal social networks.

Professional Helpers

Because I have always earned my living as a professional helper, I am particularly interested in knowing how much contribution professionals make to a person's intentional change. In table 4, then, I am especially interested in the data for people who are paid, employed, designated, or trained to help. In the interviews, we used these words: "a person who was paid to help, or was doing so as part of his or her job, or was designated by some organization to help, or was trained to help." In individual one-to-one interaction, these professional helpers contributed about 5% toward the total responsibility for choosing, planning, and implementing the change. As a leader or speaker or expert in a group situation, they contributed about 1%.

Professional help, then, is clearly not central in the process of most intentional changes. People do use professional help sometimes, and it can be very important and useful when it is used. Many other changes proceed successfully without professional help, however, or with an insignificant amount. In short, professional help is central in a few change projects, present but not central in some others, and not present at all in many.

Relatively little professional help was obtained while choosing the change (table 4). Although twice as much professional help was obtained with the other two tasks, it was still less than one-third of all the help received with those tasks. When one reads most of the literature on major changes, one gets the impression that the phenomenon revolves around a central core of professionally guided approaches, such as psychotherapy, counseling, human growth groups, Gestalt, *est*, encounter, rebirthing, social work, management development, staff training and development, and adult education. Matson (1977) presents an excellent panorama of these methods. But when we listen to the people themselves describe their largest intentional changes, we discover that they often proceed without using these professionally guided methods. Even when they do use a professional helper, they often retain some or much of the responsibility for planning and implementing the change.

The amount of professional help received may be increasing over the years. In the previous section, I referred to a 1976 survey across the United States that was similar to a 1957 survey. Looking at the data on what people do if something is bothering or worrying them, Antonucci and others (1978) found no increase in the number of people (8%) who consult a professional or specialist. However, another report (Kulka, 1978) at the same symposium focused on different data from the same two surveys. Referring to various personal problems, the interviewer said, "Sometimes when people have problems like this, they go someplace for help. Sometimes they go to a doctor or minister. Sometimes they go to a special place for handling personal problems—like a psychiatrist or a marriage counselor, or social agency, or clinic. How about you—have you ever gone anywhere like that for advice and help with any personal problem?" In 1957 only 14% said yes, but that had risen to 26% in 1976.

When one thinks of professional helpers with major changes, one naturally thinks of doctors, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, counselors, clergy, and social workers. There is no doubt these are all important and relatively common. For instance, most of these

professions show up in the data reported by Gurin and others (1960), Antonucci and others (1978), Kulka (1978), and the interviews for this book. Some other persons who are paid or designated to help with changes may surprise us, however, because they do not fit our stereotype of professional helpers. A woman credits the instructor of her diet workshop with a major contribution to her weight loss, for example. Another woman, in the midst of changing her style of interacting with her two teenagers, found one of their teachers very helpful. Two people whose changes were job related gained enormously from a supervisor and personnel manager respectively. My very first interview was with a woman whose largest change was moving to live with a friend: professional movers contributed to this change by moving her heavy furniture from her old apartment to the new one. Several interviewees have mentioned a lawyer or real estate agent as important but not central.

Books and Other Nonhuman Resources

Books, booklets, magazines, other printed materials, television, films, tapes, cassettes, and phonograph records receive only about 3% of the credit for helping with choosing, planning, and implementing intentional changes (table 4). Does this remarkably low figure fairly represent the actual contribution of books and other nonhuman resources? Surely the landscape and process of intentional change would be dramatically altered if all books, tapes, and television completely disappeared. Many graduate students in my course on personal change paths, after reading 15 books chosen from a 60-item bibliography, report to me that their choices of changes and paths are greatly affected. On the other hand, the low figure is supported by my review of research on intentional learning, which found that only 3% of all adult learning projects were planned or guided largely by books and other nonhuman resources (Tough, 1979, postscript). The low figure is also supported by P.F. Thomas (1978), who found that people gained virtually no help from books and other materials while choosing their change, though they did recall useful insights from their earlier reading. This may be the key: people don't turn to books at the time of the change, but do use ideas from earlier reading. The crowded bookstore shelves and the sales figures for various types of self-help books and cassettes indicate their widespread use.

Many books are designed to help largely with the third task: implementing the change. Just follow the directions in this book or

tape and you will become more confident, have a better self-image, raise your children more competently, be a better spouse or lover, become healthier, or whatever. Such books have been available, and presumably useful, for centuries. "During the latter half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, printers in London were publishing guides to domestic life, religious handbooks, . . . handbooks on health and medicine, . . . how to cultivate one's memory, needlework, and navigation" (Newsom, 1977, p. 20).

Some books are designed to help people with the difficult tasks of choosing their changes and planning their strategy. A fascinating range of models, each one in its own unique way useful and powerful for certain persons, is provided by the following examples of such books: Bell and Coplans (1976), Bolles (1980), Browne (1973), Coyne and Hebert (1972), Faraday (1976), Grof (1975), R. Gross (1977), Lakein (1973), Matson (1977), G.P. Miller (1978), Naranjo (1972), O'Neill and O'Neill (1974), and Tough (1980). I often urge every institution and professional engaged in facilitating change to display and lend these books to their clients.

Recently I have been following the self-help book *How to Sleep Better* by Coates and Thoresen (1977). Like many other good self-help books, it is an effective mixture of control and freedom. It often takes the reader one step at a time, sometimes very exactly and narrowly. At the same time, the authors urge each of us to "become a personal scientist." Following the book, my first step was to observe and record my own behavior and to keep a sleep diary. This information gave me some hunches about which of their strategies would work best for me, and also suggested how to modify some of their strategies to meet my particular needs and problems. The rest of the book, too, provides an effective balance of detailed step-by-step instructions combined with invitations to select and modify the authors' strategies.

Variations in the Basic Pattern

In summary, the person himself or herself receives credit for a mean of 70% of the responsibility for choosing, planning, and implementing the change. Family, friends, and other nonprofessionals are responsible for 21%. Professionals account for 6%, and books and other nonhuman resources for 3%. This basic pattern was presented in table 4.

Do these four percentages vary significantly at the .05 level as we look at different demographic groups and other variables? In general the answer is no, using one-way analyses of variance, but a few interesting variations do occur.

Let us look first at the areas of change. The mean percentage for self did not vary significantly. The range was fairly wide, though: the amount of responsibility assumed by the person herself or himself ranged from 59% with religion to 86% with basic competence. Reliance on nonprofessionals varied significantly over the nine areas of change. The mean percentage ranged from 7% with physical health (basic competence and religion were also fairly low) to 23% with relationships, 27% with maintenance, and 32% with residence location. Reliance on professionals did not vary significantly, but it did range from a low of 0.2% with volunteer helping activities to a high of 12% with religion. The contribution of books and other nonhuman resources varied significantly over the nine areas of change. These resources contributed zero in the area of basic competence and 1% with volunteer helping activities contrasted with 7% for enjoyable activities, 9% for physical health, and 17% for religion. Although the mean percentages for both nonprofessionals and books varied significantly over the nine areas of change, no two areas were sufficiently different to be significant, according to the Sheffe statistical procedure for comparing particular groups of data.

Let us turn now to six demographic variables. None of the mean percentages (self, nonprofessionals, professionals, books) varied significantly at the .05 level with age, sex, educational level, social class, or race. Significant differences were found, though, among the three countries for each of self, professionals, and books, but not for nonprofessionals. The interviewees in Canada reported an average of 74% for self, 20% for nonprofessionals, 4% for professionals, and 2% for books and other nonhuman resources. The corresponding percentages for people in England were 69, 14, 8, and 8. In the U.S.A. the percentages were 56, 27, 11, and 6. Despite these significant differences, the basic pattern (rank order) did not vary from one country to another. Although the samples were not chosen to represent the entire nation, and the sample sizes are not large enough to warrant an extended discussion, it is interesting to note that the Americans were particularly low in the credit they gave to themselves, and particularly high in the use of nonprofessionals and professionals.

After the previous paragraph was written, I received additional data from England. Judith Calder, on leave from The Open Univer-

sity in the fall of 1981, interviewed people chosen from the local electoral register for one country town in Buckinghamshire and is writing a paper based on those interviews. She was able to send me the data from her first 25 interviews just before this book went to press. Several of her findings support the findings reported in this book, but two of her percentages differ markedly from the national patterns reported in my previous paragraph. Her mean percentage for self (51%) was even lower than the American percentage, and the figure for nonprofessionals (35%) was even higher than that for the Americans. I hope that nationwide sampling in many countries in the future will illuminate the differences among nations.

Did the contribution of self, nonprofessionals, professionals, or books vary significantly with the five variables described in the previous chapter? Those five variables were size, percentage achieved, extent to which the change was noticed by others, amount of benefit to self, and amount of benefit to others. Multiple regression analyses were used for percentage achieved, and one-way analyses of variance for the other variables. Of the 20 possible relationships, only 3 were significant at the .05 level. Each of these three will be discussed in turn. (1) The mean percentage for self varied significantly with the size of the change. The changing person contributed only 67% to the choosing, planning, and implementing of huge or enormous changes, 64% to fairly large and important changes, 79% to definite changes with some relevance and importance, and 87% to the few changes that were small, trivial, petty, unimportant. (2) The mean percentage for nonprofessionals, too, varied significantly with the size of the change. The four percentages were 24, 23, 14, and 7. (3) Books and other nonhuman resources contributed 5% in changes that were noticed by only 0–5 persons, 8% in changes noticed by 6–10 persons, and only 2% in changes noticed by more than 10 persons.