

## **Do you want the feather or the 2 x 4?**

Every minute of every day, from the day you were conceived, you have been changing. Cells are born to replace the ones that age and die. Your senses are constantly bombarded with stimuli, providing new experiences that change our minds and our muscles. Thoughts arise in our minds, changing the way our neurons connect.

So why do so many of us fight change?

Change can be scary. It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks, our minds are set and our bodies want to do things the easy way. Change means something will be different, and whatever that is may be worse than what was before. But change can be exciting, too. Learning something new makes our minds expand, setting off those fireworks of ideas that get us charged up. Change means something will be different, and whatever that is may be better than what was before.

Sometimes change is frightening because it is unexpected. And while sometimes there is no way to plan, there are many times when there are subtle clues that something is going to happen. The trick is to pick up on the clues and prepare. This is difficult, because we're all rushing about living our supercharged lives; we miss the clues because we are moving too fast to see them. Some people use the phrase, "Tapped with a feather or hit with a 2 x 4" to describe how the concept works.

AJ is an incredible high school student and athlete. Playing multiple sports at varsity level, he has had coaches and recruiters watching him since his sophomore year. This year, AJ has been plagued with low-level illness: a cold here, a sore throat there, a pulled muscle or two. A trip to the doc, some antibiotics and a good night's sleep usually made him feel well enough to continue with his college-prep studies, sports practices and events. These little illnesses were the taps with the feather, but AJ and his parents didn't pick up on it. They were so involved in the day-to-day, they couldn't see the overall pattern. Last week the 2 x 4 hit him: AJ was diagnosed with Mono. Thoroughly exhausted, AJ has had to make special arrangements to take his finals. Sports are off limits for at least a month, and he can't attend the three prestigious sports camps that he was signed up for; missing camp means he misses the college coaches and recruiters.

Pushing, pushing, pushing, it was inevitable that change would be coming to AJ. One hopes it would be good change like a college scholarship. And that will probably still come, but first an unwelcome lesson. Had AJ and his folks been living a little slower and made different choices when his body showed signs of fatigue, perhaps AJ wouldn't be so sick right now. Change is inevitable, but sometimes we can soften the blow. Listen for the little clues and avoid being hit with the big stick.

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