

# ACCEPT CHANGE, MOVE ON

When the word 'creativity' is used, we generally understand it as the ability to create something physical and unique. Creativity is often taken in the context of art and literature. An artist expresses his creativity through the colours he uses, a writer through words, an architect through his buildings and a musician with his instrument and musical notes. But there is more to creativity than that. It can also mean recreating one's life.

In any life, the only constant is change. Everyone faces different phases of life. Our ability to deal with those changes dexterously is called creativity. It requires that one be willing to step away from easy answers and quick solutions. It needs one to look beyond the familiar and into uncharted territory. Ultimately, creativity is about risk and courage.

American film director Alan Alda once said, "The creative is the place where no one else has ever been. You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover is yourself."

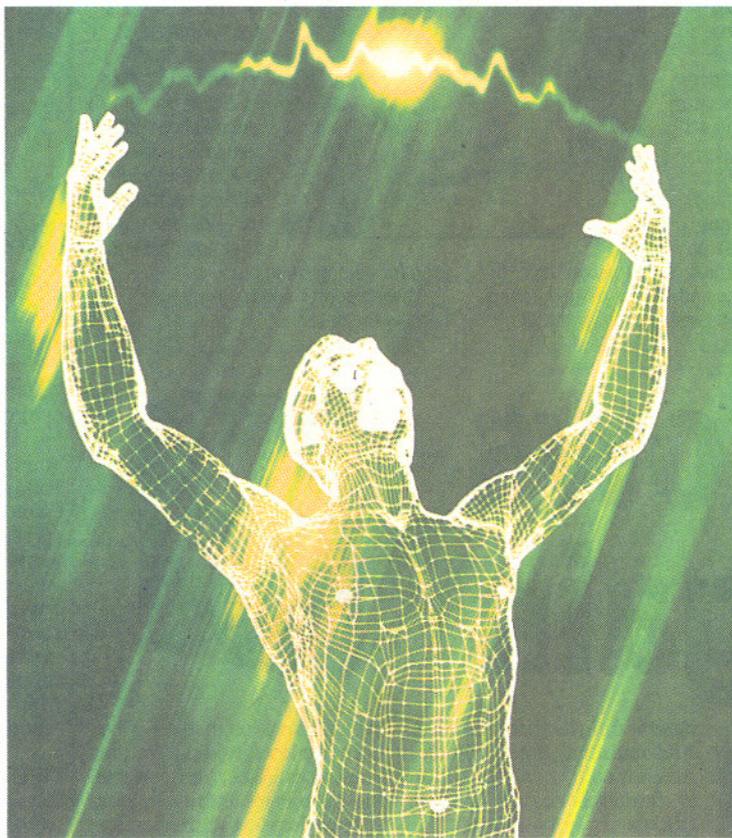
As a toddler, we find life gloriously free from responsibility. As we grow older, social norms require us to adapt our behavior to the external world. Gradually, we get programmed to behave in a certain way.

Anyone who begins life at a girls' convent school can attest to its insistence on social etiquette. Not so, in a co-ed public school, where the word 'etiquette' hardly seemed to figure in the students' vocabulary. If a child transfers, as I did, from one to the other, it is a huge change. But one can bounce back with a dramatic change in language and interaction skills.

It is almost a metaphor for life, which forces us to adapt to realtime change. For example, life changes once we get married and have children. The carefree life changes into a life of responsibility. It is possible to feel stifled by the link between one's behavior and the way others feel.

Every aspect of life requires us to be creative. As circumstances change,

*Creativity means the ability to adapt and rebuild your life, says Anshu Khanna*



we should be able to dance in the moment. Many people find themselves unable to accept changed circumstances, making for great frustration. For instance, a strategy shift in an organization in the form of either a merger or an acquisition will affect many employees.

Some get more responsibility and some may lose jobs. Just months ago, recession forced change on reputable organizations, some of which filed for bankruptcy. Many faced management changes, retrenchment and relocation of employees. Many found employees resentful and confused.

These reactions indicate a collec-

tive and destructive emotion even though every individual should instead, take ownership of his/her reaction. The downturn was an irreversible process. But how does one handle such a devastating situation?

## MIND SET

We need to understand that once an event has occurred, it is entirely up to us to choose the way we accept and move forward. When we resist change, we stagnate.

Psychoanalyst Eric Fromm said it all: "Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties. Conditions for creativity are to be puzzled; to concentrate; to accept conflict and tension; to be born everyday; to feel a

sense of self."

Creativity in our interaction with people is one of the most crucial skills a human being can have. It is also the one that people focus on least, choosing instead to concentrate on developing our academic skills or general knowledge.

There are numerous instances of people who successfully 're-created' their lives just when their world had written them off, not least Sunil Mittal, Azim Premji, Steve Jobs, Subroto Bagchi and Amitabh Bachchan.

Mittal's entrepreneurial journey began in 1976 with a bicycle parts business in Punjab. When telecommunications was opened for private participation, he boldly bid for cellular licences in the metro markets. His successful entrepreneurial journey is an inspiration for many. Premji is credited with transforming Wipro, his family's vegetable oil business, into one of the world's leading software companies. Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computers is a remarkable example of creativity. He left Apple, came back and resurrected the company in a virtually text book example of the creative instinct at work.

So, what is it that prevents us from accepting change? Our fear of failure because we underestimate our capacity to learn new things. It appears unthinkable because the mind says "I am best at what I do". But how will you ever know if you are good or bad at something else unless you try it. There are also the social pressures of being at a particular level in our job and egotistic anger about being passed over, say, for promotion. The right question for those who wait for the perfect job, perfect boss, perfect organization and perfect colleagues, is: "How perfect am I?"

Change by definition is temporary. The pace at which a person accepts the change and moves on truly shows his creativity. Re-creating one's own life is the highest form of creativity because "the future doesn't just happen, it's shaped by decisions."

*(Anshu Khanna is an executive coach and leadership development consultant)*