

ORGANIC LIVING

By

Robert Rodale

Man Must Change To Survive
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Everybody talks about the weather these days - and does something about it, too.

What do they do? They avoid the weather, that's what. In summer, people dash from air-conditioned cars into climate-controlled homes. And they spend their days inside window-less, fresh-airless work places where ambient air passes through energy-hungry refrigeration coils.

In wintertime, people have the same preoccupation with comfort. Americans shuddle in warm homes, dash for idling cars and drive to stuffy offices until it's time to

return to their sealed-up homes. The most affluent avoid the challenge of winter entirely by skipping off to the subtropics, so their bodies never have to adjust to the season's weather variations at all.

Believe it or not, there are benefits to change. In fact, there may be one extremely valuable reason why change in a person's life is good.

Change, say some scientists, enables the body to keep adapting to an environment that is constantly shifting, and that adaptation process is healthful.

Consider what happened to the dinosaur. When it roamed the earth millions of years ago, it's territory was tropical. But then, the portion of the earth the dinosaur called home changed to a more variable climate.

The dinosaur was unable to adapt to that change, and consequently, is nothing more than a pile of old bones in a

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dusty museum today.

I'm not suggesting that man will go the way of the dinosaur. I find it hard to believe some 25th century version of Walt Disney will be showing a bunch of non-humans how man really lived. But we shouldn't pamper ourselves too much.

Dr. Van Rensselaer Potter of the University of Wisconsin Medical School believes that man needs to keep his ability to adapt sharply tuned. Let it go to waste or go unused, and when the next change comes along, man might not be able to make it.

Potter outlined some of these theories in a book, "Bioethics, Bridge to the Future," which should give anyone reading it reason to pause. Instead of seeking some unchanging, constant way of life, he says, man should run for change, not from it, and welcome it.

I think we've lost sight of some very basic values by our fight to avoid change. How can a person even think of welcoming the first warm day of early spring if he hasn't experienced winter?

How can someone who's never known the pleasure of working outside under a hot sun appreciate the value of a cool drink of fresh spring water?

These are gut feelings about the seasons and about change. But there is a practical side. Imagine for a moment - and for some this isn't hard - that after several years of life in the artificial atmosphere of cooled air, the system breaks down. Without warning. Suddenly you're stuck in the real world.

At first, it's unbearable. But gradually, your body adjusts and you find yourself becoming more comfortable. You'll probably find that when the air conditioning is turned on again, you're actually cold.

The seasons are to be enjoyed. In wintertime, dress warmly and get outside. Enjoy the brisk cold outdoors. Let your lungs have a vacation from the stale, stagnant air of an apartment or a home that is too hot.

Summertime can be enjoyed, too. So can spring and fall.

If any environment is an ideal one, it's the one that happens to be onstage at any given time. Live the seasons. Live for the changes. Don't fight change. You'll survive easier that way.

(Editor's Note: The opinions appearing in "Organic Living" are those of its author, Robert Rodale, an independent columnist. Rodale's comments do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Lancaster Farming editor or anyone else on the Lancaster Farming staff.)

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