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THE IRRATIONAL ENTREPRENEUR

**The Real Reason 9 of 10 Small Firms
Fail & How Yours Can Flourish**

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CHAPTER 11

MODIFY BEHAVIOR FIRST – ACTIONS DEFINE US

*It is easier to behave your way into a new way to
thinking than to think your way in to
a new way of behaving.*

- Kegley's Principle of Change

I've known Erik for about two years. He's smart, funny, and a former heroin addict. He recently left San Francisco's Delancey Street which may be the most successful rehab facility in the world. (About five hundred convicted felons, mostly former drug addicts, reside at Delancey at any point, and the typical stay is three and a half years.) Erik was there almost four years. He writes, "Change? Nobody likes change. Change is hard work, unpleasant, painful, and scary. In order for people to change, to truly change, they first have to desperately want to. They say they want to change, but they don't mean it. Once they find out how f---ing hard it is, *how long it takes*, and what kind of commitment is required, they will say F--- it. How we see ourselves and how we are perceived by others are two totally different things. We must be prepared to hear and endure things said about us that are ugly, hurtful, gross, shocking, and very painful. (From people trying to help us.) No one wants that." Erik is in his late thirties and had been through rehab several times prior to Delancey Street. Erik could have left Delancey Street much earlier, but knew he wasn't ready. He feels he is now.

Mimi Silbert is the founder and director of the Delancey Street Foundation. She has shown through thousands of individual success stories over thirty years that permanent change is only possible when the new appropriate behavior is constantly repeated – generally for years. Shortcuts don't exist. Dr. Silbert completely ignores her "client's" history – it's not relevant. Her program simply rewires their brains by seeing that they constantly repeat the "right" behavior daily for as long as it takes.

One more time: psychiatrist Allen Wheelis, author of *How People Change*, on the rarity of change:

Personality change follows change in behavior – not vice versa. Since we are what we do, *if we want to change we must begin by changing what we do*, must undertake a new mode of action. Since the import of such action is change, it will run afoul of existing entrenched forces, which will protest and resist. The new mode will be experienced as difficult, unpleasant, forced, unnatural, and anxiety-provoking. Personality is a complex balance of many conflicting claims, forces, tensions, compunctions, distractions, which yet manage somehow to be a functioning entity. However it may come to be what it is, it resists becoming anything else and tends to

maintain and convey itself onward to the future unaltered. It may change only with great difficulty.

Dr. Wheelis sounds like Erik – maybe vice versa.