

Reading Passage 2

You should spend about **20 minutes** on **Questions 14-26**, which are based on **Reading Passage 2**.

CAN PEOPLE CHANGE?

- A. Can people change?' The question may sound somewhat abstract and disinterested, as if one were asking for a friend or for the universe, but it is likely to be a good deal more personally – and painfully – motivated than that. We ask, typically and acutely, when we're in a relationship with someone who is inflicting a great deal of pain on us: someone who is refusing to open their hearts or can never stop lying, someone who is aggressive or detached, someone who is harming themselves or managing to devastate us. We ask too because the one immediately obvious response to frustration isn't in this case open to us: we're not able to simply get up and go, we are too emotionally or practically invested to give up, something roots us to the spot. And so, with the example of one troublesome human in mind, we start to wonder outwards about human nature in general, what it might be made of and how malleable it could turn out to be.
- B. One thing is likely already to be evident to us: even if people can change, they certainly don't change easily. Maybe they flare up every time we raise an issue and accuse us of being cruel or dogmatic; maybe they break down late at night and admit they have a problem but by morning, vehemently deny that there could ever be anything amiss. Maybe they say yes, they get it now, but then don't ever deploy understanding where it really matters. We can at best conclude that by the time we've had to raise the question of change in our minds, someone around us has managed not to change either very straightforwardly or very gracefully.
- C. We might ask a prior question: is it even OK to want someone to change? The implication from those who generate trouble for us is, most often, an indignant 'no'. 'Love me for who I am' is their mantra. But considered more imaginatively, only a perfect human would ever deny that they might need to grow a little in order more richly to deserve the love of another. For the rest of us, all moderately well-meaning decent requests for change should be heard with good will and in certain cases acted upon with immense seriousness. Those who bristle at the suggestion that they might need to change are – paradoxically – giving off the clearest evidence that they may be in grave need of inner evolution.

- D. Why might change be so hard? It isn't as if the change-resistant person is merely unsure what is amiss, and will manage to alter course once an issue is pointed out – as someone might if their attention were drawn to a strand of spinach in their teeth. The refusal to change is more tenacious than this, more “willed” than we thought. A person's entire character may be structured around an active aspiration not to know or feel particular things; the possibility of insight will be aggressively warded off through drink, compulsive work routines, or offended irritation with all those who attempt to spark it.
- E. In other words, the unchanging person doesn't only lack knowledge, they are vigorously committed to not acquiring it. And they resist it because they are fleeing from something extraordinarily painful in their past that they were originally too weak or helpless to face – and still haven't found the wherewithal to confront. One isn't so much dealing with an unchanging person as, first and foremost, with a traumatised one.
- F. Part of the problem, when one is on the outside, is realising what one is up against. The lack of change can seem so frustrating because one can't apprehend why it should be so hard. Couldn't they simply move an inch or two in the right direction? But if we considered, at that moment, the full scale of what this person once faced, and the conditions in which their mind was formed, we might be more realistic and more compassionate. 'Couldn't they just...' would no longer quite make sense.
- G. At the same time, very importantly, we might not stick around as long as we often do. We should at this juncture perhaps ask ourselves a question that may feel at once unfair and rather tough: given how clear the evidence is of a lack of change in a certain person, and hence of a lack of realistic hope that our needs are going to be met any time soon, why are we still here? Why are we trying to open a door that can't open and returning to a recurring frustration and hoping for a different result? What bit of our story is being re-enacted in a drama of continuously dashed hopes?
- H. And, if we are talking of change, might we one day change into characters who don't sit around waiting without end for other people to change? Might we become better at sifting through options and allowing through only those who can already meet the lion's share of our needs? In addition, might we become better at deploying a dash of life-sustaining ruthlessness in order to leave those who tirelessly rebuff us? We may need to rebuild our minds in order – with time – to change into people who don't wonder for too long if, and when, people might change.

Questions 14-18

Reading Passage 2 has eight paragraphs, **A-H**.

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter, **A-H**, in boxes **14-18** on your answer sheet.

- 14. the impact of past traumas on people who are stubborn to make a change
- 15. questions that we should ask ourselves to know why our relationships are going nowhere
- 16. overreactions of people to a situation where they are facing a problem raised by others
- 17. a phrase that expresses unchanging people's pride in themselves against the suggestion that they might need to change
- 18. the need to rebuild our minds by giving up on waiting other people to change

Questions 19-22

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, **A-F**, below.

Write the correct letter **A-F**, in boxes **19-22** on your answer sheet.

- A.** are not ready to alter course when change is needed.
- B.** lack both knowledge and willingness to gain more.
- C.** is actually more hardwired than we thought.
- D.** paradoxically admit that their need of inner progress is urgent.
- E.** would refuse to change more maturely to meet others' love and needs.

- 19. Perfect human beings
- 20. People who react angrily to requests for change
- 21. Resistance to change of people
- 22. Change-resistant people

Questions 23-26

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the Reading Passage 2?

In boxes **23-26** in your answer sheet, write:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| YES | if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer |
| NO | If the statement contradicts the claims of the writer |
| NOT GIVEN | if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this |

23. Being disappointed by another person would raise the question of change in our minds.

24. It is believe that human nature is easily influenced and controlled.

25. It is unlikely that people would stubbornly resist when we ask them to change.

26. Each of us should be attentive to, and often follow, halfway-intentioned suggestions for change.