Navigating Change: A Field Guide to Personal Growth
W. Gary Gore
230 pages
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Gary Gore opens *Navigating Change* with a description of "the Crucible," a military metaphor for that place in the soul where a person's experiences press against his fundamental will to survive.

So begins a succinct narrative in which Gore takes the reader on an internal journey from that crucible to the outside world. There, a person has to apply the crucible's contents to deal with change that can be cruel, unfair and never under his or her control.

What is the chief among the crucible's contents? Attitude, Gore argues. "Attitude" is, for many people, the first word in innumerable coaching clichés. But Gore studiously avoids a pedantic or preaching tone, opting instead for an empathetic voice with which he recognizes the fear that many feel at the prospect of change.

Don't mistake Gore's empathy for mushiness. The crucible is the first of many military parallels that lend the book a pervasive sense of discipline. That sense of discipline becomes more palpable through Gore's ideas than his images.

At its root, *Navigating Change* advocates taking responsibility for our actions and reactions, while it distills the fundamentals from which we can plot a course through careers, adverse circumstances and life in general.

"The proposition of this book is that attitude is not determined by circumstances, but rather revealed by circumstances," Gore writes.

That's where it strikes a chord among executives, who have made ample use of Gore's teachings at Team Trek. The back cover includes a litany of testimonials from various corporate leaders who have sought to put Gore's philosophy in place in their organizations.

*Navigating Change* is full of heady, emotional stuff that, instead of firing up readers with the narrative equivalent of a halftime speech, demands deep introspection.

The book would be infuriatingly abstract as well, were it not for Gore's willingness to take a page from one of the all-time great personal development guides, the Bible, by advancing his theories through short parables and stories.

*Navigating Change* may be a short book, but it's not a quick read. While Gore keeps his sentences short and advances his concepts logically and incrementally, it's hard to breeze through a book when, between paragraphs, you're asking yourself questions like "What are my core values?" and "What's my core purpose?"

But that's where the book's value lies. While most summer reading is designed to transport readers to a fictional realm, Gore keeps the focus planted squarely within, forcing the reader to ask himself hard questions and develop a sense of self-determination.

Moving from the crucible, Gore identifies, in an orderly progression, a series of concepts among which that of "100% responsibility" is central. The phrase "Most people do not change until the pain of not changing is greater than the pain of changing" is one of Gore's chief mantras.

The idea is to free yourself from "prison thinking." Here, Gore turns to the story of Charlie Plumb, which will be familiar to anyone who has attended one of Gore's Team
Trek courses, which teach individuals how to lead and groups how to share information and work together.

Plumb, a six-year prisoner of war in the infamous Hanoi Hilton, describes "prison thinking" as being consumed by intense fear, followed by shame, anger, bitterness and blame — by anything except the fierce survival instinct needed to overcome POW life.

The antidote is a positive mental attitude borne of introspection: basing your outlook on your core values, core purpose and vision, Gore says. These are the components of the "personal compass" in Gore's field guide.

Growth, like change, hurts. Growing demands continual departures from our comfort zones, a prospect that can be terrifying. Hence, Gore's metaphor for his book as a field guide.

Gore looks to a variety of motivational sources for insights on how to approach a realm where how we react tells us more about ourselves than we're prepared to know. Don't be surprised to find quotes Confucius, Lou Holtz, Lewis Carroll and Abraham Lincoln within pages of each other.

While he draws on a diverse array of voices, the primary voice here is clearly Gore's and the message is just as clearly his. It's one of optimism, discipline, fearlessness and empathy, but, mostly, it's one of contemplation.