



My attempts at kicking a soda habit taught me some important spiritual lessons about gradual change.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM ACCIDENTALLY TURNING MYSELF ORANGE

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Bit by bit, and blissfully unaware, I was poisoning myself. OK, I use the term “poisoning” a bit loosely here, but to a teenage guy in high school, the word seemed appropriate. I had turned my skin orange. Without realizing it. You see, I was trying to kick a soda habit and did so by rather unconventional means. I started drinking freshly-made carrot juice. My dad had bought a juicer that extracted nothing but juice—which means you cruise through plenty more carrots that way (and consume a lot of beta-carotene).

Fun fact: beta-carotene, at those levels, enters the bloodstream and starts painting you from the inside out. It’s harmless to your overall health but becomes oh-so-visible over time. Somehow, though, I still hadn’t noticed the effects unfolding until a friend squinted at me in the sunlight one afternoon. “Um, Dave, is your skin . . . orange?” she asked. “No!” I laughed. What an absurd question. Then she held her forearm next to mine for comparison. I glanced down in shock. My skin looked like it was slathered in pumpkin puree compared to hers. From that moment on, I cut way back on the carrot juice.

SLOW BUT SURE

It’s not always easy to tell when changes are taking place within us. Sometimes changes happen so slowly that it’s hard to notice them. Yet even small, steady changes can add up in a big way over time. Do you remember that long-anticipated day when you were *finally* tall enough to go on the best rides at the fair or amusement park?

Spiritual changes, of course, are more important than physical ones. Yet even those can be hard to detect on a day-to-day basis. President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, once taught,

“We become taller in testimony like we grow taller in physical stature; we hardly know it happens because it comes by growth.”
We can and should be on the watch for what’s happening to—and, importantly, what’s affecting—our spiritual strength and testimony. That’s true whether things are changing for the better or for the worse. Here are three areas worth watching closely.

1. MEDIA

Our spirits are heavily affected by the media we absorb. In *For the Strength of Youth* we read, “Choose wisely when using media, because whatever you read, listen to, or look at has an effect on you.”²

If we accept as entertainment the types of videos, music, novels and other media that glorify worldly attitudes and appetites, we can harm our spirits. Such media begin to shape the way we think and feel. The great news is, the reverse is also true. Uplifting media can strengthen our spirits.

