

Lost in 'Transition'

By Edna McKelvey

In essence, from the minute we're born we're in *transition*, between life and death, and then we move in and out of a lot of other transitions along the way!

The meaning of that word is to "undergo a change of status or condition, or to cause somebody or something to undergo a change" ¹.

Transitions can mark movement from one way of life to another, whether or not its initiated by ourselves, bringing with it uncertainty and feeling a little or a lot out of control, even excitement and fear, and sometimes very lost.

Experiencing transitions start young. When you began to walk, when you started school, that first sports team or dancing class you joined.

As you get older, leaving school, going to Uni, starting your first 'real' job, your first serious relationship, and then ending it.

Older still - getting married, moving house, kids arriving then years later they leave home, a circle really.

Apart from the above, there are other transitions that bring major change to our foundations such as moving country, divorce, being made redundant are significant transitional periods in life.

Many individuals and families are in major transitions now initiated by a global financial crisis and resulting career redundancies. Yet many of us expect to be able to stumble into and out of these scenarios somehow assuming we 'should' be able to manage them well. Crazy thinking maybe?

Learning to manage uncertainty that comes with transitional change is as much about *"easing the pain in our brain that comes from trying to control the uncontrollable...about making life more of an enriching adventure than a continuous worry"*. ²

I use the analogy of a journey to somewhere different. Typically we plan some of it. We research the location a bit, get our medical shots if required, ensure our passport/visa status in place, work with a travel agent who may alert us to things we don't know about the journey/location, help us get the best out of the trip

Life transitions are journeys of a different kind, also an immensely personal experience, yet often we do very little to get the best out of, or to support ourselves in, these journeys. And often they challenge the core of our very mindset in life.

Transitions impact our emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual states – our 'whole' being. They can challenge our very foundation, our core, linked to our identity.

In reflecting on transitional times, John Symond,³ founder of Aussie Home Loans, pre his Aussie Home Loan start-up, talks about a period in his life (he calls it the blunder!).

“My world fell apart, I was staring emotional and financial bankruptcy in the face, confronted with losing everything, including my two young kids. The creditors were knocking at the door, and eventually we sold the family home. It was heartbreaking.”

He also states:

“I was fortunate to be exposed to ‘the blunder’. It was a wonderful journey, I can tell you that”.

Learning to manage transition as a journey in life can be useful. So if you're

- leaving from, or heading toward
- being left behind or just arriving
- opening up or closing down, or
- maybe just in 'no man's land' where you've left the 'old behind and not yet discovered the new

Here are 8 key points that may assist you to build your own personal support scaffolding making any transitional experience a little easier to manage:

Order in Chaos: Maintain some in your life, transitions feel shaky; simple daily routine can assist us to feel more solid

Get Physical: the endorphins released physiologically from regular, not too stressful, exercise, helps us maintain a positive attitude and manage stress

I've always wanted to....: Consider doing something creative, a short course, something you've always wanted to try but never had time to

Up skill for a different future: Learn new skills - improve your skill base or look at skills you will need to get to where you want to go – go learn them

Your body is your temple: Monitor sleep patterns, physical and nutritional well-being. Care for you, use techniques to regulate holistically. Nurture you.

Relationships can cop it: Pay attention to how you relate to those close to you. Beware of blaming others; take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings.

Be present: Focus on the present, moving through one day at a time, looking too much into the future, can have you become more easily overwhelmed.

Medicating the journey: With care, around alcohol and drugs, prescription or otherwise. If you're struggling, get help, rather than medicate.

¹ Macquarie University (2000). *The Macquarie Dictionary*. Australia: The Macquarie Library

² Jeffers, Susan, PhD., (2002). *Embracing Uncertainty*. Sydney: Hodder Headline Group

³ Symond, John (2003). *Aussie John*. Australia: Penguin Books

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