

Dealing with Transitions

“Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together.” -Marilyn Monroe

Transitions are a constant theme in our lives whether this is a change of home, work, career, travel plans, health, friends or personal and professional relationships. November sees a huge transition in nature with the rich autumn colours gently drifting away and the trees are left bare. There is less daylight and more darkness. All these transitions have an impact on our emotions and our coping abilities. Some transitions are full of joy and excitement, whilst others can feel disorientating, disruptive and painful.

The following areas tend to be disrupted when we go through transitions: Routines, Roles, Reactions, Relationships, and Reflections about ourselves. The September and October articles looked at strategies to cope with the first four areas. This article will look at the last area – reflections about ourselves and suggest some strategies that you could try in order embrace rather than fight transitions.

When the trees lose their leaves and look bare and barren, a different type of positivity arises as there is more visibility beyond the trees. Suddenly huge expanses of fields come back into view again, the gardens, cottages, houses and sky beyond the dense foliage appear again. So whilst nature is giving us more visibility, we can use this time to be introspective by reflecting about ourselves and gaining better insight into who we really are, how we really think, what strengths and resources we have and how we can behave when we rely on our inner resources.

Reflection about ourselves is a process that involves thinking and emotionally exploring our experiences in order to sort through them and make sense of them. It provides people with an opportunity to arrive at new interpretations of a situation or experience whilst allowing time to reinforce current thinking and emotions. It can be a challenging process, especially if we try to seek honesty within ourselves rather than fabricate a story that justifies our point of view, or seek to accuse or blame others for our own ways. If we really allow ourselves to engage with this process, it can help to make our values more pronounced as we discover what is important for our own wellbeing and for those that we care about including our family, friends, work colleagues and members of our community.

Reflecting on our own behaviours can lead to changes in the way we think and behave and this can lead to new habits, new gestures and new and constructive ways of dealing with transitions. Try some of the suggestions below and see what changes your notice within yourself and ask people you respect and admire, what changes they see in you.

- ◆ Reflect on past experiences that you have had where your surroundings, routines or daily patterns were disrupted. Can you recall how you got through that time and how your emotional equilibrium returned once you settled into your new situation?
 - What strengths did you use at that time?
 - What did you learn about yourself as a result of dealing with that transition?
 - Remind yourself that you have dealt with many transitions before and that you have the resources to deal with this one.

- ◆ If you decided to make a change, remind yourself why you made the decision. With any change, even if self-imposed, there can be mixed feelings and it is normal to doubt ourselves. If you experience this, ask yourself the reasons why you needed a change and make a list so that you can keep your reasons at the forefront of your mind.

- ◆ If you look at your list and can be honest with yourself, is there anything on the list which blames someone else or some other situation when you could have acted differently? If so, is there something you can change to improve the situation for you and / or others?

- ◆ If the change is imposed on you, sit down with someone you really value and appreciate in your life and make a list of all your strengths and how you are going to use these to deal with the transition. This can help to improve your confidence in dealing with the changes.

- ◆ Also, make a list of all the possible opportunities that may arise as a result of this change.

- ◆ Make sure you stay connected to trusted friends and family, however hard this might feel. Sharing your fears, concerns, and doubts with people you feel

close to and trust can be a huge source of strength and comfort while going through changes.

- ◆ Remind yourself that it is normal to feel some degree of uncertainty, fear, doubt, and discomfort while going through any change or even dealing with the lack of daylight. Eventually, equilibrium will be reached again to enable you to be in a better place.

*In the space between chaos and shape there was another chance – Jeanette Winterson, *The World and other Places*.*