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7 Tips on How to Navigate

Life Transitions with Confidence



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CONGRATULATIONS!

Through downloading this report, you are taking the first step towards managing the transition you are currently experiencing. I know it is not easy for some people to reach out for support or help, so if that seems like you, know that you are taking a pro-active attitude towards managing the life transition you are going through, with confidence.

For over 15 years I have been privileged to work with many people in the midst of their own life transition. What I have learned in that time is that every person has their own unique experience that defines who they are, how they make meaning of their experience and their response to the life transition they face. However in spite of our unique experience of life, as human beings we all share a vulnerability to stress. Confronted with the unexpected and unpredictable emotionality that threatens to hijack your usual presence of mind, a life transition can literally strip you of your confidence and self-belief.

In this report, I share with you some of the latest neurological research findings that give explanation to your body's physiological and psychological reactions and strategies that research has proved to be useful in counteracting the stress of a life transition. These tips can help you to manage the life transition you are in with confidence.

In addition to this report, you will also be receiving my monthly newsletter where I present the latest information, up to date research, creative ideas and strategies to enhance your personal growth, wellbeing and ongoing potential whilst in this life transition and beyond.

Remember that it takes time, courage, self-determination and practice to implement new strategies that will restore your former self-belief and confidence. Don't be hard on yourself if you struggle to implement these strategies. Learn to be kind to yourself and approach these strategies using 'baby steps'. Celebrate every baby step you take, recognising that it is another small step closer to feeling you are in control of your life again.



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It is not unusual whilst experiencing a life transition to find you feel 'stuck', overwhelmed and struggling to function. This may be because there are unresolved issues, hither to out of your awareness, which this current life transition has raised to your awareness. You may need to reach out to professional support to assist you in moving through a difficult period. I encourage you to seek out the help of a professional counsellor so that you may begin to navigate your life transition with the confidence you desire.

Please send me your feedback about this report or share your success stories with me through my email at: colleen@watersedgecounselling.com

I wish you all the best for navigating your life transition with confidence!

Colleen Morris



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7 TIPS TO NAVIGATE LIFE TRANSITIONS WITH CONFIDENCE

Transitions of any nature arouse conflicting emotions that evoke a stress response within a person. Confusion, anger, sadness, anxiety and lethargy are just some of the typical responses you might experience during a time of transition, making it difficult to function at your optimal level. At a time when you are seeking to recruit more energy and stamina from your physical, mental and emotional reserves, you discover those resources to be depleted.

A study published July 25th 2012 in the Journal of Neuroscience has found that people who are stressed out are more likely to lapse back into easy habits and are therefore likely to underachieve rather than to work toward their goals. The brain produces two stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, that interact to lower the activity of brain regions involved in goal- directed behaviour. This impairment of the goal-directed system produces this habit behaviour, hampering your ability to make changes designed to adjust to the stress you experience.

Learning how to compensate for the impairment that stress has on your goal- directed brain -region will assist you to navigate your transitions with a minimum of stress.

Here are 7 tips to navigate life transitions with confidence:



7 Tips on How to Navigate Life Transitions with Confidence

1. Practice self-care

Essentially self-care is about being kind to you and intentionally caring for your mind, body and spirit.

Self-care is often confused with selfishness. If you experience strong feelings of guilt when you take time to care for yourself, have a think about where in your childhood experience you heard the message that it was selfish to put your needs before others. The messages you received as a child, from the significant adults in your life, became internalised and you act them out unconsciously as an adult - accepting these beliefs as your own, unaware that you have absorbed them without evaluating the impact on your life now.

A healthy perspective on self-care recognises that in order to function at my optimal level and be available to others, I choose to take responsibility for my personal health and well-being. When you deliberately prioritise self-care, times of transition, whilst being stressful, are manageable because your inner resources are continually being replenished and nurtured, allowing your tolerance of stress to grow stronger.

Self-care builds resilience, nourishes and energises you to focus for a confident transition.

2. Maintain your physical and mental health

Your physical and mental health is your primary resources for healthy functioning and keeping them in peak condition ensures a more confident transition.

In the October 2011 edition of American Psychologist, Psychiatrist Roger Walsh from the University of California in his article, 'Lifestyle and Mental Health' states that 'lifestyle factors can be potent in determining both physical and mental health'.

These lifestyle factors include:

- **physical exercise** - sufficient research evidence exists identifying exercise as a viable means of treating depression and anxiety and improving mental wellbeing. The anti-depressant effect that exercises holds 'spans physiological, psychological and neural domains' (Walsh 2011). Physiologically, exercise stimulates serotonin uptake, enhances sleep and releases endorphins in the brain. Psychologically, exercise stimulates self-efficacy and self-esteem and disturbs negative thought patterns. Neurologically, exercise increases brain volume and blood flow and improves cognitive function. Why wouldn't you exercise when the benefits are so clearly in favour of your health and wellbeing?
- **nutrition and diet** - A diet that consists of multicolour fruits and vegetables (a "rainbow diet") and fish that are high in omega-3 have been proven to have medical and neuron-protective benefits including reducing excess calories, enhancing cognitive function and improved mental health.
- **nature** - spending time outdoors with nature can heal and calm you and draw your mind to the things that really matter to you.

By attending to and maintaining good physical and mental health, you will be in your best condition for a confident transition.



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3. Invest in personal relationships

Of all the means which are procured by wisdom to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends.

(Epicurus, quoted in D. Gordon, 1999, p. 35)

When under pressure it is easy to neglect relationships due to feeling 'time-poor' and physically drained. This reinforces the sense of isolation that times of transition bring. Human beings are interdependent creatures. The emerging field of neuroscience (study of the brain) has established that the brain is hardwired for relationship and empathy by the presence of the mirror neuron system. Positive relationships are essential to good physical and mental wellbeing. The physical benefits can reduce health risks ranging from the common cold to stroke, mortality, and multiple psychopathologies. Relationships are associated with enhanced happiness, quality of life, resilience and cognitive capacity.

Some of the benefits of investing your valuable time in relationships throughout transition include the following:

- honest feedback
- encouragement
- opportunity to 'bounce off' ideas
- grounding
- comfort
- stimulation outside of your current focus
- friendship
- gives meaning to your life
- encourages you to be actively engaged in life - to have fun, be creative and not take life so seriously.

Without these things and in isolation, stress erodes your natural resilience and has the effect of producing 'skewed thinking'. You lose perspective and your anxiety heightens, feeding paranoid thought-patterns. Your personal relationships can normalise you and remind you that 'this too shall pass'.



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4. Practice emotional intelligence

Distress not only erodes mental abilities, but also makes people less emotionally intelligent. People who are upset have trouble reading emotions accurately in other people - decreasing the most basic skill needed for empathy and, as a result, impairing their social skills.

Transitions are times of uncertainty and confusion. You have moved from the familiar to the unfamiliar, evoking strong emotions within as you try to adjust to change. Managing your emotional response is tricky because when you do not feel in control, your emotions are less predictable and more difficult to contain. A strong, calm person might become controlling and angry. A placid, easy-going person may become melancholy and uncommunicative. Your emotional reaction to stress is uniquely your own and you will be familiar with your particular response because it is a learned childhood behaviour. I call this our 'default position'.

Your 'default position' is an involuntary and unconscious response to the circumstance, designed to help you cope and survive in times of stress. If you are aware of your 'default position', it is possible, with time and practice to take a less reactive, more conscious and reasoned approach to the things that stress you. If however, you are unaware of your reactive position then you are likely to impact the people around you in ways that are counterproductive. Daniel Goleman, author of the book *Emotional Hyjacking*, reports a recent Yale study of moods and their contagion, where 'the performance of groups making executive decisions about how best to allocate yearly bonuses was measurably boosted by positive feelings and was impaired by negative ones. **Significantly, the group members themselves did not realize the influence of their own moods**' (Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Hyjacking*, October 25, 2012).

Engaging with how your emotions impact you, your current situation and other people will provide clarity and increased understanding of the effect on self and others thereby ensuring a confident and successful transition.



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5. Be future focused

Times of high turbulence and stress encourage you to be present-focused, in order to maintain some level of safety and stability. Whilst a present focus can calm and settle you, when you become stuck there, your focus becomes problem-saturated rather than solution-focused.

By looking forward rather than backward, you become excited about and involved in planning for your future. Thinking about what you want to direct yourself towards, in order to generate good feelings, assists to overcome the need for excessive self-indulgence and self-centeredness that is often evoked in times of transition. With a future-focus, long-range goals determine your decisions and actions in the present. This keeps you engaged, optimistic and enthusiastic for a better life.

Research shows that Future-focused people are more successful professionally and academically and generally lead a healthier lifestyle.

A future focus can assist you to transition with confidence by enabling you to define your mission, your purpose and your goals ensuring that you stay aligned throughout the transition, to the planned outcome.

6. Invest in your personal development

'Personal time' is specifically that time you put aside to promote personal development. In times of transition, the stress that impacts your goal-directed brain region causes you to revert to former unhelpful habits such as procrastination and other controlling behaviours that can be confusing and discouraging. You are like a ship at sea caught in an intense storm, and unable to find your bearings. Consider seeking out a mentoring or coaching relationship that is specifically for the purpose of facilitating your personal development.

The benefits of a mentoring or coaching relationship include:

- *Facilitating the exploration of needs, motivations, desires, skills and thought processes that will assist you in the process of transition and beyond.*
- *Questioning techniques that facilitate your thought processes in order to identify solutions and actions*
- *Support in setting appropriate goals and methods of assessing progress in relation to these goals.*
- *Encouraging a commitment to action and the development of lasting personal growth & change.*
- *Encourage you to continually improve competencies and to develop new developmental alliances where necessary to achieve their goals.*

Purposely taking time out on a regular basis provides an opportunity to evaluate and reassess your goals across every facet of your life. This will keep you focused and balanced throughout transition.



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7. Have a healthy sense of humour

How will a healthy sense of humour contribute to a confident transition? 'Laughter is the best medicine' so goes the old adage and undeniable truth.

Laughter is a natural stress reliever. Have you noticed that when you laugh, tension leaves your body? Recall a situation where there has been heightened tension and that moment when someone makes a joke that brings people to laughter. What is the effect? You feel more relaxed, the tension drains from the situation, people relax, and smile and dialogue begins.

Why is this? Humour accesses & stimulates the creative side of your brain, secreting endorphins which are a natural anti-depressant. This helps relieve stress, relaxes and has a grounding effect that brings you into the 'moment'.

'Being in the moment' may sound and appear to be unproductive however going against this thought and being counter-intuitive will reap a rich reward. Being 'in the moment' allows your body, mind and spirit to relax and simply 'be'. Energy that has been enlisted for worry, anxiety, frustration and action is now redirected back into the whole body, giving you a feeling of well-being, hopefulness and groundedness. You feel energised, you have more clarity and insight into the situation and your self-confidence is restored, making the transition experience a challenge to be relished and enjoyed as a growth experience.

CONCLUSION

I hope you have found these tips helpful as you continue to navigate your particular life transition with confidence. Remember to be patient and kind to yourself if you struggle to implement new behaviours. If you find that you are not progressing as confidently as you would desire, I encourage you to seek the support of a professional counsellor who is trained to help and support you through the difficulties you are presently experiencing in this transition process.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Colleen Morris is a Family Therapist, Coach and Counsellor and is passionate to help others to change and grow towards their full potential.

Colleen is a clinical member of the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia. She is also a clinical member of the Australian Association of Family Therapy. Colleen has a systemic approach that uses the context of family to explore and make meaning of a person's current experience. Colleen has a particular interest in the potential for life transitions to be an impetus for healing, personal growth and development.

Watersedgescounselling offers counselling and family therapy for singles, couples and families in the Greater Geelong region and is located in the CBD of Geelong, Victoria. To book an appointment or a FREE 10 minute no-obligation telephone consultation, please visit www.watersedgescounselling.com and book on my on-line appointment scheduler.

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