

4 Keys to Smooth Transitions

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Change is the only thing that's permanent.

Heraclitus

The only constant in change is that it is always with us. The changes I am observing lately seem to be increasing in intensity! Join me and learn 4 simple keys to handling what is arguably the most unsettling kind of change we experience.

Change, which we so cleverly avoid, has three faces, *alteration*, modification which is often imperceptible or limited, *swapping*, exchanging one distinct entity for another and *transformation*, movement from one distinct state or condition to another, often as a passage experience. Transformation is the most unnerving face of change and often throws us completely.

In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice, in her curious experiences, becomes familiar with transformation. Her size changes alone are so pronounced they have their own designation, *transmogrification*, or gross transformation.

Raised in the Victorian era, ever the polite child, Alice misses her opportunities to take control of the topsy-turvy world of Wonderland. As her size moves back and forth between tiny and huge, surely we can imagine her bewilderment and anxiety at these unsettling and highly disruptive changes. What might Alice have done differently, steps she might have taken or for that matter, that any of us experiencing the bewildering and unsettling might implement? Begin with these few effective, commonsense suggestions.

1. Stop and Take Stock

Alice missed her opportunity for this and consequently see-sawed from one alarming size to another. Once she chose to react in desperation, the possibility of mastering the unsettling circumstances of change flew out the window.

To avoid Alice's mistake, do what it takes to land on solid ground, however briefly. Stop the cycle of knee-*jerk* reaction and begin thinking in terms of planned response. Your final outcome will benefit from a brief rationality break. But how do you gain that moment of clear thought when you are in the throes of potentially life-altering circumstances?

If the transformation is *external*, such as a move, the loss of a home or job, a separation from a loved one, a change in your designation, try to step away briefly, temporarily removing yourself from the scene of the mayhem. It will still be there when you return, but you will be better able to deal with it.

If the change is *internal*, one you cannot walk away from, a physical transformation such as comes with age or maturing, or which might come with diagnosis of an abnormality or a perhaps a distinct change in your understanding which would affect your philosophy going forward, try to withdraw your *mind* from the circumstances. I do not suggest that this will be easy, but with practice and perseverance, it is possible.

2. Move Slowly

Now that you have taken stock and you have moved some distance from *emotional reaction* and toward *mental response*, deliberate action is crucial. Did you ever try to walk on a moving train? It is the physical correlation to the emotional sensation of navigating transformation. Move slowly until you get the hang of it.

Do not be afraid to take time to consider each move carefully before executing it and then build on it, assessing the results before moving on.

If the transformation you are facing is of a fast-paced or emergency nature, it does not preclude this action. Talk with any skilled first responder, a fire fighter, paramedic or police officer who has learned to operate effectively in this manner. Countless lives and futures hinge, day in and day out, on their ability to function just this way. Speed of response does not disqualify wisdom and careful consideration, but it does require practice.

Practice weighing options and making carefully considered decisions under normal conditions, before transforming change overtakes you. Train your brain exactly how you want it to perform under the challenging conditions of change.

3. Maintain a Spot of Familiarity

However brief, *visits* to a spot that remains untouched by the transformation process will go a long way toward keeping you steady when the newness of the circumstances threatens to overwhelm you. Prayer and time in the Word create the most valuable spot of familiarity there is and neither requires a geographical location. Both are readily available in all situations. Remember that the secret place of the Most High God is ours at any time. (Psalm 91:1 AMP)

If have the luxury of planning the transformation, incorporate this step into the plan at the outset. It may not seem necessary to you when you are in the distant perspective of the blueprint stage, but you will be glad you made provision for a comfort station once your journey of transformation begins!

Do not skip this step. It may well be the difference between victory and failure in coming through transformation relatively unscathed.

4. Expect the Unexpected

When Alice decided to enter the mirror image world in Carroll's *Alice Through The Looking Glass*, she would have done well to apply this principle. As soon as she noted that things were getting *curiouser and curiouser*, it was a sure sign that the unexpected was to be expected!

In his 1886 classic, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson's main character not only invites, but himself engineers the appearances of his malevolent alter ego, all in the name of science. However, he misses this all-important step when designing the truly grotesque transformation to his evil counterpart, Mr. Hyde. He mistakenly expects to retain control of the separation between the two sides of his nature, but of course he cannot and the results are horrific.

Alice loses her ability to discern dream state from reality and her reactions reflect this critical error. Both characters fail to expect the unexpected. But if you have made use of periods of normalcy as practice ground for *responding* rather than *reacting*; if you have formulated a Vision of how you will handle yourself in times of change and upheaval; if you are prepared to move deliberately, then you will have prepared yourself to shine in your own personal moments of passage. You will maintain a clear-headed ability, discernment and control of yourself in the process, and may even find yourself standing at the helm and plotting the course for others as well as!

So when you are planning transformative change, or as soon as you sense its approach, begin to look for a *spot of familiarity* or enduring normalcy. Begin *taking stock*, recording your observations to better enable you to process them as the transformation progresses. Make *no sudden moves*, considering your responses carefully. Then, *expect to be surprised*, knowing that the unexpected can be around any corner and is definitely the order of the day.

Finally

None of us can avoid transforming change. It is a fact of life. So before transformational change appears on your horizon, practice the suggestions above, weighing your options and making carefully considered decisions. Train your brain by practicing the steps outlined.

Choose a transformation you are currently facing, considering or actively planning. Sit down with an accountability partner, and move through the steps above.

Identify your *spot of familiarity* and make provision for it, before you do anything else. *Take stock*. As much as you are certain you will remember all, you won't. Record everything. It will go a long way toward helping you maintain a true perspective. Make no radical or *sudden moves*. Your accountability partner will be invaluable in this. And then, plan for and *expect the unexpected*. Look at consequences you might not ordinarily and consider how you would handle them.

While no one is ever totally prepared for the transformations of life, it is possible to have your emergency kit at the ready.



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