

Handout 1: HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TRANSITION

Although transitioning from one stage to another is inevitable, understanding the process can help make it easier to get through.

- Stay flexible and open to feelings that unfold. When you shut them down by denying their existence, you short-circuit the transition process.
- Give yourself time. Accept that your transition is not going to happen overnight. Most people need more than two or three years to complete the process.
- Stay open to opportunities. This is a wonderful time to consider doing something just because it sounds interesting, especially if you've never done it before.
- Accept that there will be anxiety and discomfort. Listen to it and use it to learn and grow rather than try to stifle it.
- Come to grips with unrealized career fantasies. Expect to feel some anxiety that goes along with mourning the loss of what you are leaving behind, including things that you had hoped to accomplish and didn't.
- Let go of the past and accept that there are things you can't do, things that are lost to you forever or not longer available to you. Regrets can be a stumbling block to moving forward. Idealizing the past and insisting that it can be recovered is often a way to avoid recognizing loss.

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- Realize that a mild to moderate depression is normative for people in transition. Only a very small proportion of people go into client depression. Most do not.
- Be aware that a “can do” attitude and approach can be a defense against the anxiety and discomfort of transition. Be suspicious of advice that derails learning and growth.
- Expect to feel some social and psychological disconnection from your present life. This is often necessary before you can explore other options.
- Reach out to new people for fresh perspectives, insights, and support. Talk honestly with others going through your particular transition.
- Don’t become overly concerned about how you will identify yourself when you no longer have a job title. Instead, come up with a short, lively description that doesn’t pin you down. One woman laughingly introduces herself as a “hedonist,” which usually initiates a lively conversation.
- Expect good strategies to develop just from staying in touch with what is happening to you.
- Know that, like all of us, you enter this transitional period as a novice.

The Transition Network and Gail Bentsch, *Smart Women Don't Retire – They Break Free*. New York: Springboard Press, 2008. pp27-28

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