Transitions

Assignment 1

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**How to Make the Most of Your Life Transitions**

Major life transitions -- moving to a new city, becoming a parent, retirement -- can be an exciting and invigorating part of life. Yet transitions, even happy ones, can also be stressful and bring up mixed feelings.

Heidi always knew she would move to a new city after college. She wanted to live somewhere new and pursue her career in a large city. But her first few weeks after the move were much more difficult than she anticipated. Similarly, Jane found that after months of trying to get pregnant, she felt suddenly anxious and unprepared to be a parent when she found out she was expecting. And Mark, recently retired, was looking forward to improving his golf game and spending time with his wife. He was caught off guard, however, by the strong feelings of loss he felt related to his career ending.

The best way to prepare for major transitions is to take some time for self-reflection. Use the following guide to help you to embrace change and make the most of your new role:

1. **Recognize that transitions are hard because they can shake your sense of identity.** We naturally define ourselves in part by our surroundings. When these surrounds change, it can be disorienting. Getting married changes your identity from a single person to a partner. Having a child changes your sense of identity from wife or daughter to now include being a mother. A new job changes your identity or role at work. Carrie, for example, was delighted to have been giving a promotion at her company. Her new position had more responsibility, which she liked, but as a manager she no longer had the peer team she was used to working with. She missed her former colleagues and felt overwhelmed. She worried, Am I really equipped for this job? Maybe I was better off before. It took some time for her to re-build her sense of identity in her new role. As she became more comfortable in her new duties and with new colleagues, her work identity was re-established.

2. **Being in transition is a wonderful opportunity for growth.** Take a look at the parts of yourself and your life that you most value-- how can you bring those parts of yourself into your new role? Next, look at the areas of yourself that you'd like to make changes to. Perhaps you've been neglectful of some important area of your life. Transitions are an opportunity to begin practicing new habits and ways of interacting with others. For example, when Tracy got married to Heath, she used the wedding as a time to reflect on what kind of a partner she wanted to be and how she could work to make her marriage strong.

3. **Remind yourself why you chose to make the change**. In the midst of feeling a little lost during a transition, it can be easy to regret your decision. Why did I break up with Dennis? I'm lonely and it's hard to find someone new. When doubt creeps in, review the reasons you made your decision: I broke up with Dennis because he didn't treat me very well and I wasn't happy in our relationship. I knew I didn't want to be with him long term, and wouldn't be able to move on while I was involved still with him. When you see the big picture, it helps you move from feeling overwhelmed to understanding that this is a temporary adjustment, and while it's difficult now, you are willing to go through some uncertainty and discomfort for the long term gain.

4. **Recall other times in your life when you've successfully dealt with transitions.** What helped you get through that period in your life? Looking back, how do you feel about the past decisions you've made? What were you proud of, and what would you have done differently? Reflecting on your past can help you to make good decisions as you move forward.

5. **When you're in transition, it's easy to become overly focused on yourself.** One way to shift your focus is to look at others who may need your help. If you're at work, it may be a coworker who you notice is having a bad day. If you're in a prenatal yoga class, reach out to another mom-to-be that seems like she is having a hard time. Making an effort to support others helps you remember that everyone struggles at times, and that human connection can be a powerful aid in helping get through it.

6. **Part of what helps you feel secure in transition is having a support system.** Make an effort to stay connected; keep in touch with your family, call up an old friend who lives in the area you just moved to, volunteer or get involved in an organization, ask a new co-worked to join you for lunch. Find people who you can really talk to; whether it's a trusted friend or close family member, being able to share how you're really feeling can be a tremendous source of strength for you.

As you prepare for your new endeavors, know that the time you've taken to reflect and prepare for your next phase of life will help you live more fully and with purpose.

**Answer the following Questions in Complete Sentences**

1. What are some examples of life transitions this article gives? 2pts
2. According to this article, what is the best way to prepare for life transitions? 2pts
3. The article says we get used to our surroundings, What happens when our surroundings change? 2pts
4. Give an example of when your “surroundings” changed that caused a transition. 2pts
5. What is being in transition an “excellent opportunity for”? Why? 2pts
6. Name two things that have helped you in the past overcome transitions. 2pts
7. When you are in Transition, what can you become easily too focused on? How is this bad? 2pts
8. Think ahead to some possible transitions you have in the future. In 4 sentences Explain how you will prepare yourself for these transitions. 6pts.