

The Transition Blues

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Singing the Blues

I've been listening these days to The Transition Blues. It's a yowling, howling hound dog type sound and the words in the song go something like this.

I'm in transition...

And things are weird...

I'm an emotional wreck...

So I've got me the blues....

Lordy Lordy....

The transition's here...

I've got me no answers...

For these rattled nerves...

I'm feeling so bad...

Waking up each night...

Brewing and stewing on "what was" and "what might"...

Lordy Lordy....

What should I do...

Now that I've got me...

The Transition Blues.

These are dangerous times for characters like me. I'm officially a member of the "Old Geeky Managers Club," getting on in years, decades in the business, settled into my club, money in the bank, at peace with the world, growing long in the tooth, reflecting on The Journey, drinking my wine, happy with my routines. Life is good. Predictable. Comfortable. Stable.

And very, very dangerous.

Dangerous because things change. Transitions occur. The world goes from "here" to "there." It's easy to forget that Life's a rocky road and a Mad Hatter's ride. Change is coming.

Best I get ready.

"I'm In Transition---and Things Are Weird"

At some point in our careers, each of us will be singing The Transition Blues.

I'm surrounded by professionals who are in transition, filled with The Angst and The Hope that are the companions of change.

I see The Hope---undergraduates becoming assistant managers, assistant managers becoming clubhouse managers, clubhouse managers becoming G.M.s---new jobs, new challenges, big transitions.

I see The Angst---managers transitioning from sixty hour weeks to retirement. I see managers transitioning to new clubs in new places with strange weather. I see managers, thirty-five years in the business, late fifties, out of a job with no headhunters returning their calls. I see managers on the edge of retirement, their savings wiped out by a market gone wild. I see managers forcibly "transitioned" by a new board looking for change. I see managers bored by what they're doing and wanting "more." I see managers leaving the industry for "greener pastures" in insurance or real estate or consulting only to discover that it's colder and more hostile "out there" than "in here." I see managers divorcing their spouses. Loved ones dying. Drifting into Alzheimer's. Moving from youth to old age. Big changes.

"Are you ready?"

Transitions are filled with pain and emptiness, a longing for the old, the secure, the unchanging, for certainties now gone once the transition occurs. Within the hopes and the dreams and the promises of a transition---and each transition is embedded with hopes and dreams and promises---is an emptiness, something in the gut that says "you've left the good stuff behind," a "buyer's remorse," a "why did I do this" moment when every

rationale for transitioning seems pretty dumb and short sighted. Transitions are filled with "Three A.M. Moments" when a manager wakes, short of breath, sweating, seeing demons in the shadows, insecure, unsure, wondering, sleepless. When The Angst surfaces.

"Are you ready?"

Transitions are coming and no-one knows where or when---new president, new economy, new world order, new members, new board, new employees, new jobs, new definition of "the good," new kids, new challenges, new possibilities, new technology. If you ponder transitions you'll get The Twitch. "Am I ready?" "Can I handle it?" "Will I survive?" Change is coming.

No time for The Blues.

Get ready.

"I've Got Me No Answers---For These Rattled Nerves."

Each of us needs a "Transition Tool Box" to strengthen us during the move from "here" to "somewhere else." Transitioners need tactic to smooth the journey and to improve the outcome.

Here are mine.

Anticipation. Change is coming. Bet on it. Accept it. Envision transition scenarios and create a game plan for each. Listing the "possibles" makes the "possibles" possible in your brain, and once you accept that transitions "might be" they lose the power to surprise and defeat you.

Right Priorities. Get balanced---leave time each day for work, play, reflection, community and family. Attend to your health with lots of exercise, right diet, plenty of sleep. Know your passions and pursue them on a regular basis. Do something productive, something that's needed by someone somewhere. Cultivate your dreams. Connect with a community of like minded people. Spend time with your family and significant other. Right priorities give one The Strength to survive The Transition.

People. Connect with your Network of family, friends and industry peers. Find mentors to guide your transition---people who retired, lost a job, got divorced, left the business to teach or consult, mentors who'll talk endlessly about change and who'll join you while singing The Transition Blues.

Patterns. Routines are the framework for and the emotional foundation of a productive, happy life and a successful transition. Identify your patterns. Create daily, weekly,

monthly, annual “patterns” that can survive The Transition. The usual, the predictable and the familiar give comfort during times of change.

Cash. Life is fueled by money. Having The Bucks makes one secure, confident, ready to confront The Transition. Money gives you options. Live cheap during the good times. Lower your expectations, live on less, avoid debt, save the bucks.

Doing. The best anecdote for the “Transition Blues” is doing something, accomplishing something, making stuff happen, stretching the limbs. There are lots of ways to “do” that make the Transition Blues disappear. Give back---teach, volunteer, serve on a board, write the newsletter for the CMAA chapter. Do something manual---build a desk, tear down a motorcycle, mow the lawn. Work at something different, easy, fun---flip burgers in McDonald’s, man the front desk in the local Holiday Inn, make cappuccinos in Starbucks. Exercise and “achieve”---lift weights, walk, bowl, play tennis, “achieve” something physical.

Avoid “Old Poopdom.” Don’t fall into the trap of romanticizing what’s gone and how good things were on “the other side” before the transition took place. Old Poopdom leads to cynicism and negativity toward the “now” and “the future.” Old Poops are radioactive, driving away those who might embrace and comfort the Transitioner. Old Poopdom makes change harder to digest.

Reflection. You are not alone in The Transition. Explore your transition by reflecting “with those who have gone before.” Books. Music. Paintings. Movies. Transition is one of those universal themes and the arts have, throughout time, addressed and amplified The Transition Blues.

Think deep and reflect on your personal journey. Speak to others. Write. Teach. Talk to groups. Release the demons.

Meditate. Pray. Take long walks and ponder. Write stuff down.

Transition time gives you the opportunity to “look deep” into yourself and the Big Issues of life. What are your “deeply embedded life interests?” How can you “give back” to family, friends, community and industry? What do you want on your “end of life” resume??? Reflection leads to growth and a “better you.”

With the right tools, The Transition can be a fascinating journey, “manageable” and “survivable.”

Get ready.

“What Should I Do---Now That I’ve Got Me---The Transition Blues?”

Don’t wait for The Transition to happen. Be assured---it’s coming. Don’t know how and don’t know when.

Anticipate Transition’s arrival. Fill your toolbox with tactics. Confront possibilities and script your response. Job gone. Spouse gone. House gone. City gone. You’re gone. Get your priorities straight. Reflect. Mentor others. Get mentored. Confront The Angst in advance and prepare for the journey. Fill your Transition Toolbox---now. Beat back complacency.

Get ready.

And enjoy the journey-----