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Thriving through life transitions



Change is the only constant. And as we enter our later years, it seems the changes are more frequent. Before writing *Life Is in the Transitions*, Bruce Feiler interviewed 225 individuals to gain a sense of the ways people navigate disruption across the lifespan. He found that we experience roughly thirty-six transitions in a lifetime, averaging one every twelve to eighteen months. Often several pile up at once, especially when

we are older. Common transitions for older adults include a shift in health or ability, a marital change (death or divorce), a new housing situation, or a drop in expected income.

There are general phases to transitions. One phase is the “long goodbye,” our reconciling with the fact that one aspect of our life is irrevocably coming to a close. Another is the “messy middle”—figuring out how to find balance in the chaos of change. And the third is the “new beginning,” embracing a new way of living.

Here are seven strategies Feiler suggests using during a transition:

- **Accept it.** Grieving your loss is key for acceptance. Identify the emotions that arise in you as you let go of your old way(s). In Feiler’s study, fear, sadness, and shame were the emotions most commonly cited.
- **Mark it.** Whether burning a photo, burying a stone, or hanging a prism to represent your next chapter, ritual helps bring closure and open the door to something new.
- **Shed it.** This is one of the tougher activities. Identify what it is that needs to end: Habits, identity, dreams. Not that you won’t have new dreams or identity. But people describe a kind of molting before finding their new selves.
- **Create it.** Take up a creative pursuit—ukulele, poetry, juggling, dance. By introducing joy and creativity in the midst of chaos, it appears we cultivate the insight and innovative thinking needed to envision a revised sense of self.
- **Share it.** Make it real. Talk with others and be open to their wisdom.
- **Launch it.** People in the study frequently remarked upon their “first normal moment.” The first day without worrying. The first hearty laugh. Unexpectedly, the shadow of the past was superseded by a glimmer of what their new life might be. Nurture that ember when you feel it. Start with small goals or projects that enable you to build momentum in this new direction.
- **Tell it.** After you’ve regained your footing and are past the raw parts, reflect back. “I was X, then Y happened and I became Z.” Piecing together the meaning of the journey helps stitch your life back together, integrating purpose into your transition.

**Are you in a transition of aging? See one on the horizon?
Let us help guide you through. Give us a call at 206-456-5155.**



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Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.

Give us a call at 206-456-5155 to find out how we can support you.