

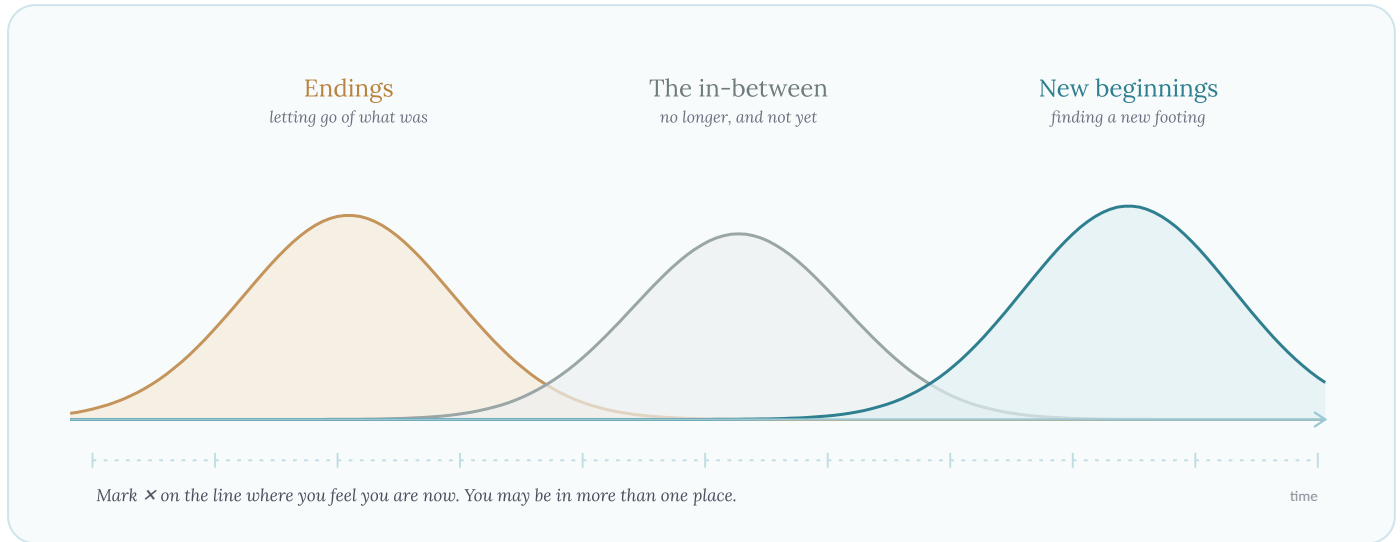
Life in Transition

Making sense of big changes: endings, the in-between, and new beginnings

Change is what happens around us: a job ends, we move, retire, receive a diagnosis, or children leave home. **Transition** is the slower, inner process of adjusting to it. Many people find it helpful to think of three overlapping phases.

The change I'm going through

Since



01 Three overlapping phases

a map, not a timetable

Endings · *letting go*

WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE

- Loss, sadness, anger or relief
- "Who am I without this?"
- Missing routines, people, roles

WHAT CAN HELP

- Name what is ending, and grieve it
- Mark it: a goodbye or small ritual
- Notice what isn't ending

The in-between · *not yet*

WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE

- Foggy, flat, restless or unsure
- Old ways gone, new ones not settled
- Can also hold fresh ideas

WHAT CAN HELP

- Lower your expectations for a while
- Keep simple routines and anchors
- Try small experiments; delay big decisions if you can

New beginnings · *finding footing*

WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE

- Tentative hope, new energy
- Doubt, or pangs for the past
- A new sense of "this is me"

WHAT CAN HELP

- Make small, concrete commitments
- Build new connections and roles
- Notice what's working

The phases often overlap and can loop back. This framework comes from clinical and organisational practice rather than controlled research, but many people find it a useful map for experiences that can otherwise feel confusing.

02 Taking stock

four areas that shape how a transition goes

Situation

What is changing? Did I choose it? What else is happening at the same time?

Self

Strengths I bring, and past changes I've come through

Support

People, groups and practical help I can draw on

Strategies

What helps me cope, and what I could try

My Transition Map

What I'm leaving, what stays with me, and what I'm moving towards

Research on loss and change suggests that many people adapt well over time, often more than they expect. Mapping a transition can help you honour what's ending while holding on to what continues.

03 My map

honest, not tidy

What I'm <i>leaving</i> roles, routines, places, people	→	What <i>stays</i> with me values, relationships, strengths, skills, memories	→	What I'm <i>moving towards</i> hopes, possibilities, who I'd like to be
---	---	--	---	---

04 Staying connected

groups and roles matter

Groups and roles I'm keeping family, friends, teams, communities, faith, interests	Groups or roles I could join or grow new or renewed connections
--	---

Studies of people moving to university, recovering from stroke and retiring suggest that keeping existing group memberships, and building new ones, is linked with better wellbeing after big changes. How much this helps can vary between people and cultures.

05 Small experiments

for the in-between

Something small I'll try	When	What I noticed

When it's more than a transition

Big changes can bring grief, low mood or anxiety. If distress isn't easing, or daily life is becoming hard to manage, it may help to talk this through with your psychologist.

To bring to my next session

SOURCES

Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: Have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events? *American Psychologist*, 59(1), 20–28. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.20>

Bridges, W. (2004). *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes* (Rev. 25th anniversary ed.). Da Capo Press.

Haslam, C., Holme, A., Haslam, S. A., Iyer, A., Jetten, J., & Williams, W. H. (2008). Maintaining group memberships: Social identity continuity predicts well-being after stroke. *Neuropsychological Rehabilitation*, 18(5–6), 671–691.

Iyer, A., Jetten, J., Tsivrikos, D., Postmes, T., & Haslam, S. A. (2009). The more (and the more compatible) the merrier: Multiple group memberships and identity compatibility as predictors of adjustment after life transitions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(4), 707–733.

Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 9(2), 2–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001100008100900202>