
Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

June 2005

Mastering the Art of Transition

By Valerie J. Santos

Transition. We've all been there, but how did we deal with it? Heads nodded in agreement as Irene Oudyk-Suk of In-Touch Community Services talked about "transitions" at the May 16 Manila Women's Forum in Pilar Martinez-Miranda's home. Irene has advanced training in psychotherapy, coaching, trauma and marital therapy. Since coming to Manila in January 2004, she has facilitated several skills-building workshops on transition, marriage, and self-enhancement. She also offers counseling and coaching in Makati and Ortigas Center. She is married and has two grown children and two foster children.

Irene discussed the differences between change and transition. Most women at the meeting agreed that change is generally easier to handle, even welcome at times. It is something external, situational, or based on circumstances. It is most likely a discreet event or milestone in our lives, like a birth, graduation, the first day of a job, wedding, moving day, or death. Transition is much more complicated. It is the process or internal adjustment to change.

Irene talked about transition as 3 fluid phases: Endings, Wilderness, and Beginnings. She defined each phase

and offered ways to move through them more smoothly. She emphasized the concept of emotional resonance, meaning we deal with today's transition in relation to previous experiences. It is important to recognize that past fears, disappointments, or insecurities shape how we deal with circumstances today. Once we realize they are there, we can work past them more easily.

Ending is the process of letting go of the way things used to be. It can be a time of reflection, a time to express sadness, a time to say goodbye. The difficulty for most women is the challenge to one's identity or sense of purpose. Some rush through this phase while others cling to it. The latter can be especially true for those who do not choose the change—such as the child of a parent who is transferred overseas.

To help you through endings: Reflect on the situation you are leaving. Ask yourself:
Who was I during that phase of my life?
What was life like then?
What went wrong?
What did I learn in that phase?
Investigate. Learn all you can about what happened, what others have experienced in similar situations, and what you need to do, given your new circumstances.

Wilderness is the nebulous time that feels like life is "just there." There are no rituals attached to it such as graduation, baptism, or your first day on the job. There are many uncertainties as we wonder what is going to happen. It can also be a time of growth, learning, and opportunity. In order to evolve from this phase, we need a sense of curiosity, surrender, and patience.

To help you through the wilderness:
Keep a notebook of all those fleeting ideas, projects, and plans
Take a solitary retreat
Consider everything as a message or opportunity

Beginnings start in the wilderness but only time reveals them. Right now, those of us in the wilderness may have a beginning happening and just aren't aware of it. (Let's hope so, anyway!) Irene ended by saying, "How many of you have met a spouse at a party that you didn't want to attend? When we're ready to make a beginning, one seems to drop in our laps."

For more information about Irene's transition workshop, please call In-Touch Community Services at: 0917-853-5351 or email Irene@Oudyk.com

Next MWF Meeting

What: Tami Tagaki, a Philippine tribal textile expert who has lived in the Philippines for about 30 years, will demonstrate the art of weaving with a back strap loom in the Ifugao technique and will have examples of other tribal styles to display. All of those in attendance will have an opportunity to try it during the session.
When: 6:30 p.m., Monday June 20, 2005.
Where: Manju Gagoomal's home, 110 Tanguile St., North Forbes Park, Makati
Bring: A contribution to the potluck dinner.
July meeting: 6:30 p.m., Monday July 18, 2005

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."
— George Eliot

"It's been said that the only constant in our world today is change."

It's June. And speaking of adjusting to change, here are some situations that sure fit the bill—family moves and grandparents raising grandchildren.



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Selected and Edited
by Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

June—and Weddings

We all know that June has been the most popular choice for weddings for centuries. The original reasons, however, are far from romantic. It all dates back to the 1400 and 1500s, when indoor plumbing was not common. An “annual bath” therefore, meant exactly that: people had a thorough bath only once a year, in May. As a result, June was the month when you can count on majority of the population to smell fresh! What better time could there be then, to hold such important events as weddings?

Another version of the explanation is that people took their annual bath not in May, but in June. This once-a-year ritual segues into buying a new set of clothes, which people are sewn in, to be worn permanently for the rest of the year until next June. A wedding held in June, therefore, guaranteed that the bride is literally at her freshest—fresh from the bath and freshly clothed!

Children and Family Moves

AACAP Facts for Families No. 14
(Updated 4/99)

Moving to a new community may be one of the most stress-producing experiences a

family faces. Frequent moves or even a single move can be especially hard on children and adolescents. Studies show children who move frequently are more likely to have problems at school. Moves are even more difficult if accompanied by other significant changes in the child's life, such as a death, divorce, loss of family income, or a need to change schools.

Moves interrupt friendships. To a new child at school, it may at first seem that everyone else has a best friend or is securely involved with a group of peers. The child must get used to a different schedule and curriculum, and may be ahead in certain subjects and behind in others. This situation may make the child stressed, anxious or bored.

Children in kindergarten or first grade may be particularly vulnerable to a family move because developmentally they are just in the process of separating from their parents and adjusting to new authority figures and social relationships. The relocation can interfere with that normal process of separation by causing them to return to a more dependent relationship with their parents.

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In general, the older the child, the more difficulty he or she will have with the move because of the increasing importance of the peer group. Pre-teens and teenagers may repeatedly protest the move, or ask to stay in their hometown with a friend's family. Some youngsters may not talk about their distress, so parents should be aware of the warning signs of depression, including changes in appetite, social withdrawal, a drop in grades, irritability, sleep disturbances or other dramatic changes in behavior or mood.

Children who seem depressed by a move may be reacting more to the stress they are experiencing than to the relocation. Sometimes one parent may be against the move, and children will sense and react to this parental discord.

If the child shows persistent signs of depression or distress, parents can ask their family doctor, their pediatrician, or the local medical society to refer them to a child and adolescent psychiatrist. The child and adolescent psychiatrist can evaluate and treat the child's emotional problems which may be associated with stress and also help parents make the transition and new experience easier for the whole family.

To make the move easier on children, parents may take these steps:

(Continued on p. 3)

“A place where there isn't any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place Toto? There must be. It's not a place you can get to by a boat or a train. It's far, far away. Behind the moon, beyond the rain.”

— Dorothy, in
The Wizard
of Oz



Illustration by Joanne de Leon / Isis International-Manila. E-mail feedback to communications@isiswomen.org

Joanne de Leon / Isis International Manila

(*Children...continued from p. 2*)

- Explain clearly to the children why the move is necessary.
- Familiarize the children as much as possible with the new area with maps, photographs or the daily newspaper.
- Describe advantages of the new location that the child might appreciate such as a lake, mountain or an amusement park.
- After the move, get involved with the children in activities of the local church or synagogue, PTA, scouts, YMCA, etc.
- If a son or daughter is a senior in high school, consider the possibility of letting him or her stay with a trusted family until the school year is over.
- Let children participate in designing or furnishing their room.
- Help children keep in touch with friends from the previous neighborhood through telephone, letters, e-mail, and personal visits.

The more frequently a family moves, the more important is the need for internal stability. With the proper attention from parents, and professional help if necessary, moving can be a positive growth experience for children, leading to increased self-confidence and interpersonal skills.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

AACAP Facts for Families No. 77
(Updated 09/00)

Grandparents are an important resource for both parents and children. They routinely provide child care, financial assistance and emotional support. Occasionally they are called upon to provide much more including temporary or full time care and responsibility for their grandchildren.

An increasing number of children in the United States live in households headed by a grandparent. This trend is due to:

- increasing numbers of single parent families
- the high rate of divorce
- teenage pregnancies
- AIDS
- incarcerations of parents
- substance abuse by parents

- death or disability of parents
- parental abuse and neglect

In many of these homes, neither of the child's biological parents is present. In most cases, children taken care of by grandparents move in with them as infants or preschoolers and remain with them for five years or more. These grandparents are a diverse group ranging in ages from the thirties to the seventies. Many grandparents are ready to simplify their lives and slow down. Giving that up and taking over the responsibilities of being a primary parent again can stir up many feelings including grief, anger, loss, resentment and possibly guilt. This transition can be very stressful and the emotional and financial burdens can be significant. Culture shock at having to deal with children and adolescents of a different generation can be great. Grandparent headed households have a significantly higher poverty rate than other kinds of family units.

Many grandparents in this care taking role underestimate or are unaware of the added burdens their new role as 'parents' will place upon them. Grandparents often assume their role will be to nurture and reward children without having to set limits. When grandparents serve as parents, however, they must learn to set limits and establish controls as they did with their own children.

Many children living with grandparents arrive with preexisting problems or risk factors including abuse, neglect, prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol, and loss of parents (death, abandonment and incarceration). This situation can create risks for both children and grandparents. Caring for your grandchild can also be very positive and rewarding. Grandparents bring the benefit of experience and perspective. They can also provide important stability, predictability, and be a healthy role model for their grandchildren.

It is very important for grandparents to receive support and assistance. Seeking out other family members, clergy, support groups and social agencies can be helpful. The Grandparents Information Center (sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons) is a good place to get information, referrals and support. The American Association of Retired Persons website address is www.aarp.org.

Financial aid may be available especially if the child was abandoned, neglected or abused. Mental health professionals including child and adolescent psychiatrists, community mental health and child welfare agencies and parent-teacher associations are other important resources for the grandparents.

Child and adolescent psychiatrists recognize the important role many grandparents play in raising their grandchildren. The better grandparents are able to meet their own needs, the better they can fulfill the demands of parenting.

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10 popular irrational beliefs

1. I must be loved, or at least liked, and approved by every significant person I meet.
2. I must be completely competent, make no mistakes, and achieve in every possible way, if I am to be worthwhile.
3. Some people are bad, wicked, or evil, and they should be blamed and punished for this.
4. It is dreadful, nearly the end of the world, when things aren't how I would like them to be.
5. Human unhappiness, including mine, is caused by factors outside of my control, so little can be done about it.
6. If something might be dangerous, unpleasant, or frightening, I should worry about it a great deal.
7. It's easier to put off something difficult or unpleasant than it is to face up to it.
8. I need someone stronger than myself to depend on.
9. My problem(s) were caused by event(s) in my past, and that's why I have my problem(s) now.
10. I should be very upset by other people's problems and difficulties.

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Coping with Change

Introduction

Change is a part of everyday life. Change can be big, small, subtle or sudden – it can be positive or just plain difficult.

Your relationship with your partner will grow with time and with this growth comes change. Relationships have a better chance at thriving if you are both flexible, understanding and open to doing things differently. When people are able to adapt to new situations in a positive manner and do not feel threatened by change life can become far less stressful.

Self esteem

List 10 adjectives about yourself and reframe the negatives into positives... (eg the negative “silly” is restated as “funny”; “soft” to “kind”; “loud” to “clever” etc). Examples:

Negative	Positive
Silly	Funny
Soft	Kind
Loud	Energetic

Source: Relationships Australia.
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People experience change in different ways. It's important that you know yourself and understand that how you cope with things may be different. This will help you recognise that your partner may respond very differently to you. There are skills you can learn and develop that help you to stay connected as a couple when you are experiencing change.

- Do not try to cope with everything on your own, share your feelings with people you trust, such as, your partner, family, friends or your doctor
- Spend time with your family and friends doing things that you enjoy
- Encourage your partner to ask you for help if they need it
- Realise that you do not need to have all the answers or solve all the problems
- Take responsibility for your own emotions and give yourself time to make sense of the changes
- Going through big changes can be really tiring so make sure you make time for yourself and do something that recharges your batteries

Individuals bring different things to a relationship – their values, beliefs, opinions and priorities. As a couple, there will be times where you don't see eye to eye on things. Its unreasonable to think that all differences in a relationship must or can be resolved in favour of both people. Agreeing to disagree on some issues, and understanding and valuing your differences, will help keep your relationship healthy and happy.

Compromise is important for all relationships but its important for each

of you to feel valued. You should never feel that your values and beliefs are less important than your partners or that you should have to give them up. Relationships are a partnership where both people should feel valued, safe and loved.

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The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Susan Nishihira**, Programs. **Beaulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 812-3932, Tel/Fax 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

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