

In the **FIRST** Place...

We Are All in Transition

"Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans." – John Lennon

In nature, with its laws and unchanging cycles, there is a time for everything, a wonderful and comforting predictability. While some of us may like Indian summer to last through February, wouldn't our confidence in nature be shaken if, just one year, nature decided to veer from the schedule as planned.

The course of any single human life isn't nearly as predictable as nature's seasons. Yet, we can plan our lives and establish major goals. We can also prepare for certain changes in our lives, but "Life Planning" can be difficult work. It requires setting personal and professional priorities and it is not as easy as it sounds. We may experience emotional confusion as we try to weigh factors and criteria in doing so. Throughout the course of our lives we experience many endings and many beginnings. In nature we observe times when things move slowly without visible change – and then suddenly acceleration occurs followed by a transformation. Daffodil shoots emerge from the ground, and before you know it bloom in an amazing array of beauty. Transitions are natural as day and night, and so it is with our lives.

At times, transitions are thrust upon us dramatically and unexpectedly. Health Reform, disabling accidents, death of a loved one, an illness, divorce, the loss of a job – all of these events mean that we must leave something behind and adjust to a new way of living, even if we feel unprepared to do so. These events can strike without warning and leave us in a personal crisis characterized by denial, anger, mourning and withdrawal. But not all transitions emerge from negative experiences. Marriage, a new job, a move to a new city, the birth of a child, or reconnecting with an old friend – these events, which may be planned and expected, can also lead us into the process of a life transition.

Currently, the state of Illinois is eight months behind in providing reimbursement to hospitals, putting enormous financial strain on them, especially those in our poorest communities. Health Reform will cut expenditures for Medicaid as well as Medicare while increasing the number of patients to be served. It is anticipated that, as in other countries where such a health-



BY MARY SPEISER

care program is in place, in the near future we will see: hospital closures in indigent areas; pressure placed on other facilities to care for patients that would have otherwise gone to the newly closed facilities; and access to healthcare limited by the mere fact that we will have fewer hospitals and care givers to provide healthcare to a larger patient population.

Many of these changes will not take place for as many as four years; however, with healthcare providers currently struggling to survive financially, the pressure is on to figure out how to do even more with significantly less. Healthcare leaders are already anticipating enormous staff reductions as they comprehend the cuts in Medicare and Medicaid while providing care for patients.

While we respond to change as individuals, adjustment usually occurs in stages. Here are a few tips to prepare for change and embrace transition:

- **Take Care of Your Health.** When your body is under stress, you need to eat right, get adequate rest and exercise, and keep a regular schedule.
- **Have a Plan.** Planning reduces stress and allows you to get things done.
- **Stay Connected.** Stay in touch with family, friends and coworkers. Get out and go places. Learn something new. Volunteer, help someone else.
- **Seek Help.** Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can help. A trusted friend, clergy, professional counselor. Help yourself in starting to make improvements in your life.

Change is a fact of life. In every dimension of our lives, the one thing we can count on is that "things will change". In some instances we initiate the change, in others it may be beyond our control. Regardless of how change happens, it will represent a shift from the expected. This shift will require a period of adjustment. Life is altered in some way and we are confronted with new realities.

Mary Speiser is a Senior Consultant at First Transitions, Inc., a corporate-sponsored career transition and executive coaching firm specializing in the healthcare field. She can be reached at (800) 358-1112. Chris Beck, Managing Director, First Transitions, Inc. in Atlanta, can be reached at (770) 891-7866 or cbeck@firsttransitions.com. You can also visit the website at www.firsttransitions.com.

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