

Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-changes: The Science of Managing Transitions



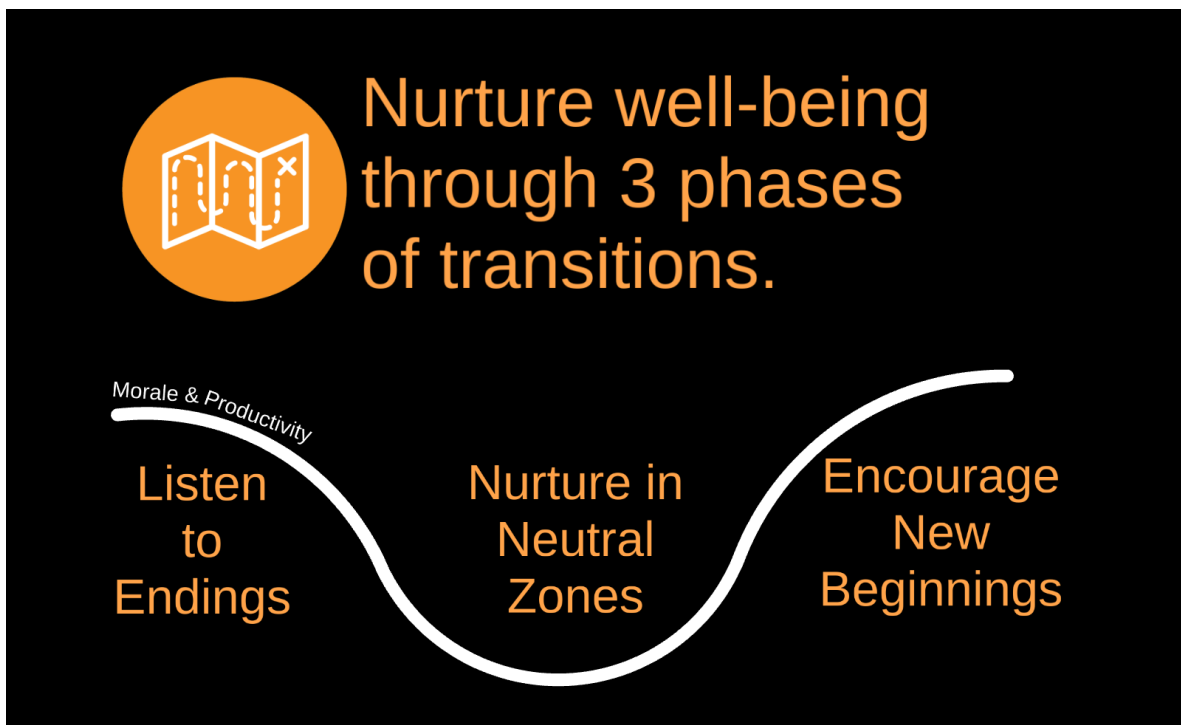
Talk Summary

Transition is the internal process of adapting to change.

Change is external. Transition is internal. As William Bridges writes in his classic book *Transitions: Making the Most of Life's Changes*:

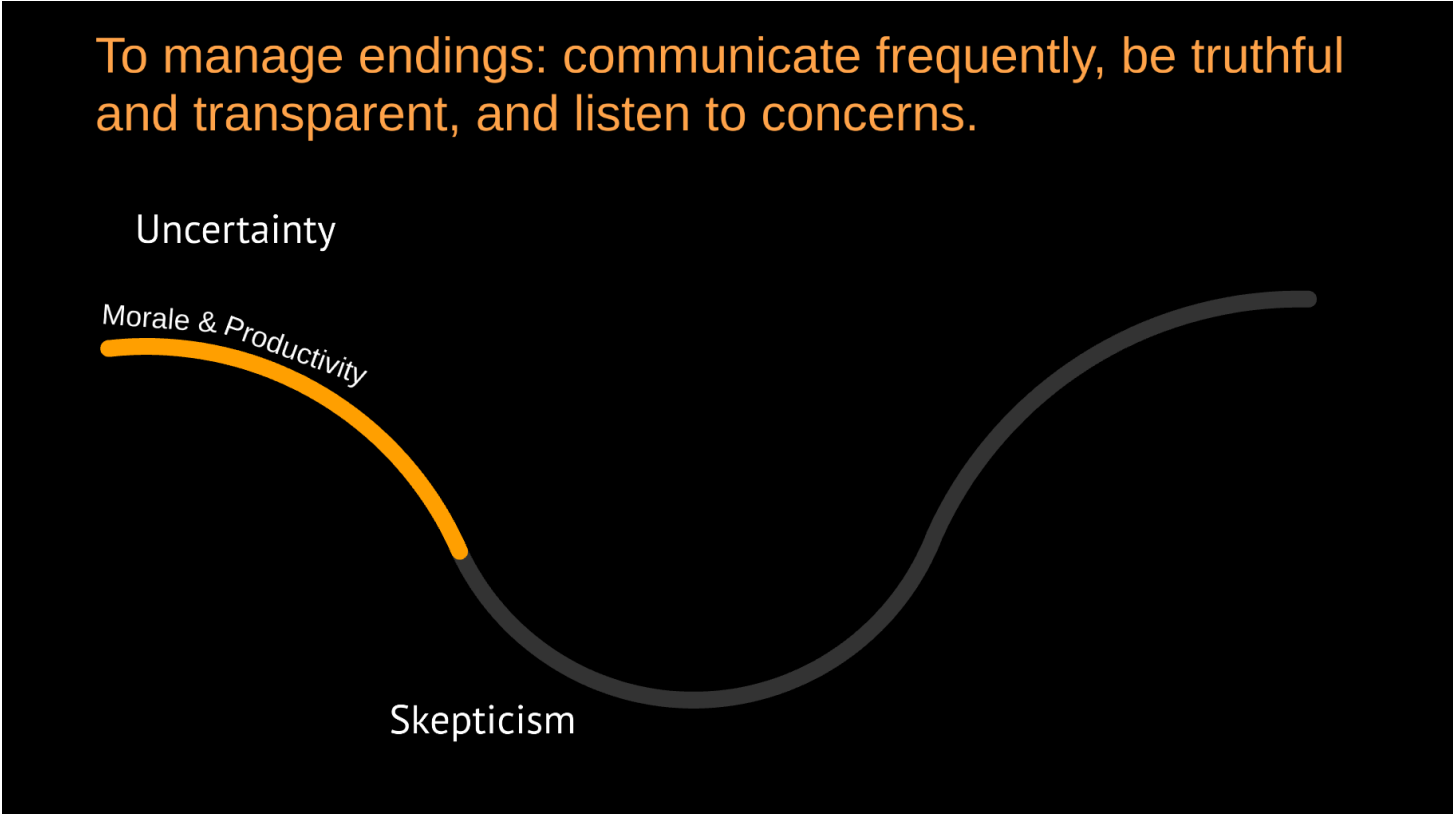
"Change is situational. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation and self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life...Unless transition happens, the change won't work, because it doesn't 'take'."

Nurture well-being through 3 phases of transitions.



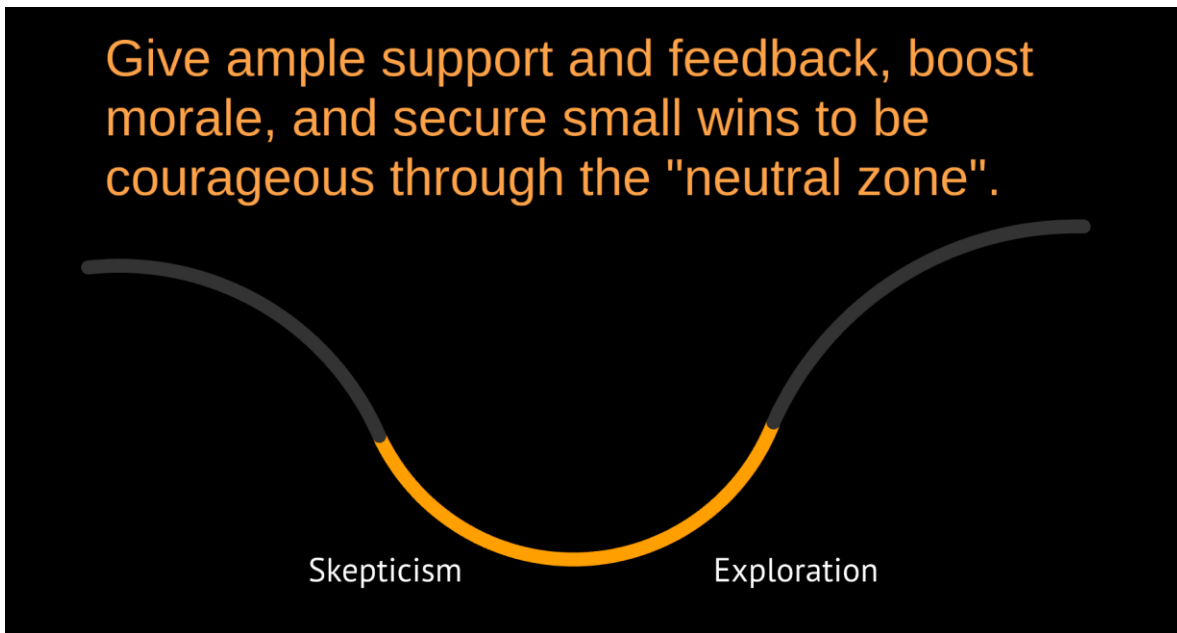
Most people readily acknowledge endings and beginnings, but not the critical “Neutral Zone” that shows up in between. All 3 phases of transition need different approaches to help you and your colleagues successfully adapt to change.

Exercise: Where would you put yourself on the curve of transitions? Where do you think the average person is on the team you are on? What about the team you lead?



To help people through endings, you need to help them process their emotions. People are grieving the loss of the old ways—and more importantly their old identity—whether they are consciously aware of their grief or not. Be prepared for uncertainty, anticipation, denial,

confusion, reservation, frustration, and skepticism during this phase. People need to acknowledge and accept the feelings they are having to move through them into the next phase.



In the “Neutral Zone” (also known as “The Transition Zone”), people are between the old and the new. For most people, it’s a very uncomfortable place. Generally speaking, people move from skepticism toward exploration in this phase, with anxiety, resistance, and confusion showing up along the way.

But this can also be a tremendous period of creativity and innovation, if handled correctly. While productivity will be lower during this time, people and organizations can discover and create valuable new products and processes during times of change.

To make the most of the neutral zone, support your people with ample feedback. Morale will be low, so take specific, science-based actions to improve morale. Celebrating progress and securing small wins is crucial to both morale and momentum during this phase.

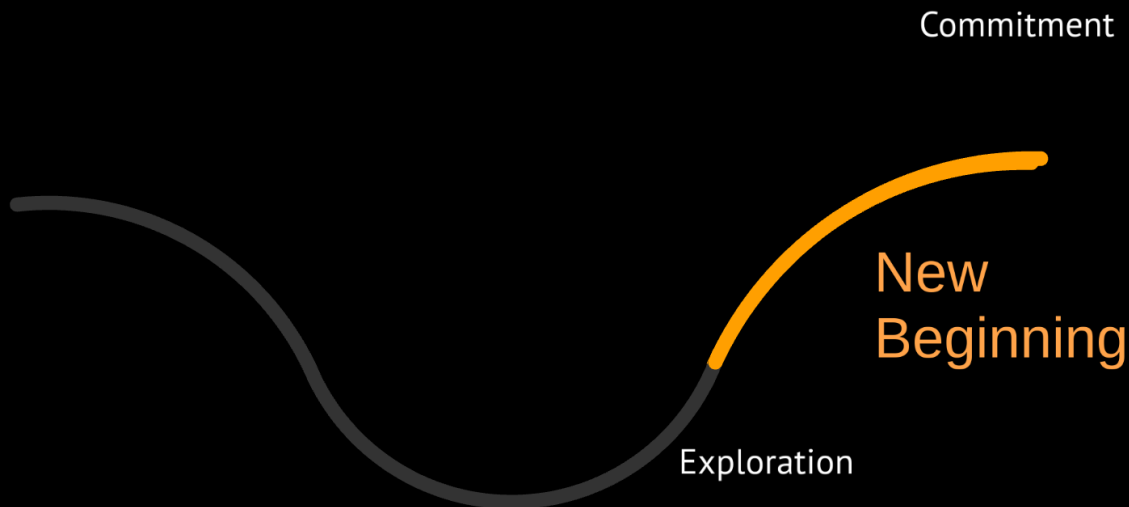
Exercise: What specific actions can you take to help you and those you lead make the most of the “Neutral Zone”?

SCARF summarizes what people need from each other, especially in stressful times. SCARF stands for Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness & Fairness. Depending on the duration of the session you attended, we may not have had time to cover SCARF in the session. We have a blog post explaining SCARF here:

<https://www.happybrainscience.com/blog/increase-employee-engagement-with-scarf/>

Exercise: What can you do to boost SCARF for yourself? For your colleagues?		
Need	Actions to take for myself	Actions to take for colleagues
<u>S</u> tatus		
<u>C</u> ertainty		
<u>A</u> utonomy		
<u>R</u> elatedness		
<u>F</u> airness		

Encourage new beginnings by facilitating energy moving in a new direction.



Eventually, you and your colleagues will gradually move into the third phase of transitions, new beginnings. But this is again a process. People tend to move from exploration to commitment, moving through ambivalence and hesitance into relief, learning, and accomplishment.

Don't be too optimistic about timing.

"You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end... with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality."



Admiral James Stockdale

As you move through the three phases of transition, you may want to be optimistic about progress and timing. “The Stockdale Paradox” suggests caution here. Especially during the multiple crises in recent years, none of us really know how and when we will come out of this turbulent time. Stockdale wisely suggests we balance unwavering optimism about *eventual* success with the discipline to fully face the current reality. Be very careful about declaring to yourself or others that “we’ll be through this by X date”.

With that caution in mind, focusing on the positive is also crucial. You and your people will need to look at and celebrate the bright side of hard change, including but not limited to the innovation that can come with it.

ACTIVITY: TRANSITIONS ACTION PLAN

Name:	Accountability Partner:
To better manage transitions, I will focus on doing these things:	When and where I will act on this:

*Please consider sharing your plan with others, in person or online.
When you share a plan publicly, research shows you are more likely to follow through.*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Articles:

Book Review and Brief Summary of both Transitions books by William Bridges

<https://www.happybrainscience.com/blog/transitions-by-william-bridges-book-review/>

Books:

Managing Transitions, Making the Most of Change (focused on leaders) and ***Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*** (focused on individuals), both by Dr. William Bridges

The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work by Theresa Amabile and Steven Kramer

12: The Elements of Great Managing, by Rodd Wagner and James Harter

Your Brain at Work, by David Rock

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler

Employee Engagement 2.0, by Kevin Kruse

All of the above and many other books are reviewed in our Recommended Reading List:

www.HappyBrainScience.com/recommended-reading

We'd love to hear your thoughts about applying these insights, any questions you have, and anything else related to bringing your best brain to work. Please contact us at happysupport@happybrainscience.com or one of the methods below.

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