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## How I'm Coping with the Three Phases of Change

I recently told a colleague that I needed to attend a new employee orientation because it seems like I'm working for a new company. Wisely, they replied that I might need to attend one each week because it's changing so fast! It was a humorous exchange but it hints at the effects of our swirling, changing environment. I want to share my response to these changes because it may be helpful to know you're not the only one who's facing the challenges change brings.

Bill Bridges taught me about the transitions of change, which include three phases:

1. Endings — which involves the realization that we're saying good-bye to the way things were. When I've felt sad and even depressed at home and at work, it's been helpful to understand that the emotions involve the grief and loss that naturally result when we say goodbye to people or situations we love and are comfortable with. This is a tough stage to go through because it affects your confidence and your sense of competence.
2. The neutral zone — which is filled with anxiety, because you don't really know what's going on. It's easy to worry and be confused or impatient because you don't know what the future holds or how it will affect you. I think everyone who's paying attention to the healthcare environment understands these feelings.
3. New beginnings — which is when the sun starts to shine again. You feel a sense of understanding, calmness, excitement, and new confidence.

**In my counseling work over the years I've often shared this advice: Don't get stuck.** That's my advice today, which I'm repeating to myself sometimes, too. Don't get stuck in endings or the neutral zone. Remind yourself that the stress and anxiety you're feeling now will not last forever. Keep moving — and take care of yourself as you're passing through these phases.

What am I doing that helps?

1. My mantra is: "Focus on what's in my control." I keep looking for what is in my control and what's not changing.
2. Reach out to others for support and to know I'm not alone. It helps to know that these changes aren't personal to me — they're happening in every healthcare system around the country.
3. Stay engaged so I can hear the information that will help me and so I can potentially influence the direction of change.
4. Remember that self-care is mandatory. Sleep helps me heal from worry and loss and gives me energy to try another day to do my best.
5. Focus daily on what goes right. Some days are harder than others, but I can usually find three good things each day that bring me meaning and joy.

Adopting a growth mindset and taking care of yourself as the journey unfolds allows your journey to continue on the best possible road. What are you doing to find that road and cope with your transitions?

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