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Cooperative Extension Service

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF CHANGE

Change is an event or situation that occurs.

Transition is the effort to deal with the change.

Sometimes you may struggle with the results of chosen changes or other people reaction to the changes; but, you can usually cope because you have a lot to say about whether or not they happen.

Then, there are changes that you do not choose and over which you may have little control. However, you still have to find ways to make the transition.

Change usually indicates that something has ended and something is beginning.

Fortunately, that means you have a choice! You can choose to focus on the ending or focus on the beginning.

Focusing on the ending may cause you to feel down and sad, and you might need to feel that way for a while. However, you

need to make the shift quickly to focus on the possibilities presented by the new beginning. This will move you from feeling sad to feeling excited about new opportunities.

Transitions can be difficult or they can be fun. Consider one of the examples (in the lower right box): “You might have to go to a different school.” This is a change and, thus, requires transition. You might dread the move to a new school. You might spend lots of time thinking about leaving your friends, teachers, and the activities you liked at school. ***Or, you can tap into that little piece of excitement you feel about starting new!*** You start to feel your way around, learn how everything works, make new

You **can have control** over some changes in your life:

- ◆ You can decide to cut your hair in a particular way.
- ◆ You can decide whether you want to hang out with certain people.
- ◆ You can decide to eat different kinds of foods.
- ◆ You can decide you want to get a part time job.
- ◆ You can decide to change your body weight.

You may have **very little control** over other changes that occur:

- ◆ Friends may decide they don't want to hang out with you.
- ◆ A boy friend or girl friend may break up with you.
- ◆ You might get sick and have to change your level of activity.
- ◆ You might have to go to a different school.
- ◆ You might have to move to a different neighborhood, town, or state.
- ◆ A family member or close friend might die.
- ◆ Your parents might separate or

friends, figure out how to interact with new teachers, pay attention to how the kids in the new school dress or act. Soon, you begin to move from feeling sad to enjoying something new. You are making the transition successfully. You have figured out how to cope with new people and new situations. Even if the old feelings of sadness come up every now and then you are still successful in your transition.

Making successfully transitions is not always easy and sometimes the sad or hurt feelings hang around a long time. Usually, difficult transitions bring on strong feelings about what you think of yourself and what you think other people think about you. You might also experience some frustration or anger about not having control over the circumstances that led you to the transition.

So what can you do to have a more successful transition and move toward feeling better?

- Δ **Physical activity** helps your body deal with changes you are going through and allows your head to relax a little.
- Δ Try to **concentrate on the possibilities offered by the change**, even though you might feel sad or angry.
- Δ **Think about successful transitions** you have been through before. You will probably find you have done this before and gotten through it okay!
- Δ **Establish daily routines** that provide structure to your life:
 - ◆ morning rituals (get up about the same time each day, brush your teeth, take a shower, get to school, hang out a little while with friends, get to class)
 - ◆ regular meals,
 - ◆ after school activities (exercise or sports, work, reading and homework, meetings, recreational activities, service projects),
 - ◆ nightly rituals (call a friend, watch a little TV, get ready for bed, read a little).
 Having an established routine will help you feel little more control of the transition.
- Δ **Think positive thoughts!** It is easy to get mired down in feeling bad. Even if you can only think of one thing to be positive about, concentrate on that.
- Δ **Talk to a trusted friend or adult.** Sometimes talking about the way you feel helps you have more control over your feelings.

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