Rising to the Challenge

Ways to deal more positively with life-changing events—good or bad

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Life-altering changes often happen quickly. But the transition these situations trigger is a slower, unique process that affects an individual's psychological and emotional makeup and challenges his or her ability to adjust to different circumstances. Successful transitioning requires that we negotiate a period of loss and grieving until we're able to reclaim a measure of control and comfort with new and unfamiliar situations.

Author William Bridges, a noted pioneer on the subject, transformed the way people think about change. "Transition always starts with an ending," Bridges wrote in his essential guidebook Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes. "To become something else, you have to stop being what you are now; to start doing things a new way, you have to end the way you are doing them now; and to develop a new attitude or outlook, you have to let go of the old."

Life coach and speaker Iyanla Vanzant, the host of the TV show Iyanla: Fix My Life, which airs on OWN, suggests that we look within before embarking on any life-changing transition.

She says the best way to view transitions is not to focus so much on what happens to you. Her advice? Consider the most effective ways to respond to the inevitable changes you'll face in life. Whether they involve marriage, children, loss of a job, illness or death, this approach can help you handle anything that life brings to you.

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