

TRANSITIONS

Sustaining Social Change

*there is no beginning without an end
what is over? what isn't?*

Guide to Diagnosing Stages of Transition in Community Changes

Everyone experiences transition differently. There are, however, some common behaviors that can signal when a person is in each of the three phases. The chart below identifies some of the more common reactions people may have when they experience community changes, some possible causes for the behaviors, and ideas for how to guide people through each stage of Transition.

This chart should be used as a general guide, which can be modified with your own list of reactions, behaviors, and intervention strategies that are specific to your community's transition.

It is also helpful to identify the specific transitions issues that arise in each phase for different stakeholders. The [Transitions Forecast](#) exercise gives an example of how to do this analysis.

Endings

Behaviors: How do I know if someone is in Endings (what behaviors do they demonstrate)?	Underlying Causes: What are the reasons for Endings behavior?	Common Emotions: What are "common emotions" during Endings?	Intervention Strategies: What intervention strategies can help someone through Endings?
<p>Self-Protection - Unwilling to engage in discussion/think about possibilities different than the status quo.</p> <p>Blaming - The problem is the other group. They are getting in the way of our hopes/vision.</p> <p>Resistance/Non Participation - Unwillingness to participate in dialogue or come to the table with other parties.</p> <p>Inability to see the future - Lots of conversation about the past, the "way it used to be," past traumas and events.</p> <p>Vocal distrust in the other party's leadership - As long as "x" is in charge, we'll never get anywhere.</p> <p>Expressed desire for revenge - No interest in dialogue until "x" group has paid for what they did.</p>	<p>Feeling of risk - Engaging in dialogue suggests that we are doing something "wrong" now and/or we may have to do something differently.</p> <p>Fear of being blamed - Concern that the process will solidify and deepen story of blame.</p> <p>Distrust - Disbelief that the "other" will not change their behavior.</p> <p>Tension within party-lines - Lack of internal unity makes it riskier to talk with the "other" party.</p> <p>Hopelessness/Helplessness - Belief that nothing about the current situation can ever improve.</p>	<p>Anger</p> <p>Grief</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Depression/ Helplessness</p>	<p>Stay the course - Persist with a process even when parties are resistant to participating. Leave the option open to do something different.</p> <p>Develop a more nuanced understanding of stakeholder groups and work with multiple ones- Different groups may have different endings. Devise different strategies to deal with different kinds of endings. Use stakeholder groups that may be further along to create momentum.</p> <p>Work within stakeholder groups first - Help each group talk about and recognize their own endings before asking them to work with the "other."</p> <p>Create forums for mourning and grief - (e.g., dialogue sessions, rituals, ceremonies)</p> <p>Work with the leadership - Talk with them about the complexity of the problem. If possible, do a double interview - publicly appearing together.</p> <p>Anonymous questionnaires - Jump start your process with individual input that can be solicited anonymously to make it less threatening.</p>

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Neutral Zone

Behaviors: How do I know if someone is in the Neutral Zone (what behaviors do they demonstrate)?	Underlying Causes: What are the reasons for Neutral Zone behavior?	Common Emotions: What are "common emotions" during the Neutral Zone?	Intervention Strategies: What intervention strategies can help someone through the Neutral Zone?
<p>Cautious Optimism – Willingness to talk about the future as different than the present and past, but not always.</p> <p>Visible signs of Progress – Agreements made, initiatives launched publicly, structural ways of interacting across groups established, etc.</p> <p>Participation – Willingness and sometimes eagerness to participate in a process with the "other."</p> <p>Dialogue or Implementation Happening – The creation of alternatives for a different future are being articulated in some form.</p> <p>Public Events Derail Progress, but only Temporarily – Incidents in the community or public domain that indicate "old" ways of interacting derail forward momentum or cause significant disruptions. At the same time, you can get things back on track in ways that weren't possible before.</p> <p>Fractiousness within Stakeholder Groups – Smaller factions within stakeholder groups protest work with the "other." The "fight" shifts from across stakeholder groups to within them.</p>	<p>Desire for things to be Different – No matter how risky it is, the possibility of a different future is worth engaging.</p> <p>Threats to Group Identity – While people may want change, it often entails re-casting a group identity that is at war with the "other" by definition. A more complex view of the other requires an identity-shift. Slipping back to the "old way" at times is part of the identity struggle.</p> <p>Fear of Splitting within Groups – Intra-group divisions regarding agenda/strategy may make leaders less willing to work with the "other" because they don't want to risk losing dissenting members of their group.</p>	<p>Cautiousness/Optimism</p> <p>Frustration with steps "back"</p> <p>Hope</p> <p>Disappointment</p>	<p>Re-visit why this is Important – Build opportunities into your process to talk about why participants want to change the situation.</p> <p>Continue to work with Leadership from all Stakeholder Groups – Set up regular meetings with leadership (together AND apart) to keep things on track when setbacks happen.</p> <p>Work with the Press – Find reporters who will report progress in a positive way to build momentum and good feeling/pride among participants.</p> <p>Create Systems and structures for ongoing dialogue – (e.g., resource centers, facilitated forums, etc., that are a resource for addressing issues as implementation of agreements moves ahead)</p> <p>Continue to Help each Group Work with their Internal Divisions – Ongoing retreats to air individual agendas/concerns and to resolve differences.</p>

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New Beginnings

Behaviors:	Underlying Causes:	Common Emotions:	Intervention Strategies:
<p>How do I know if someone is in New Beginnings (what behaviors do they demonstrate)?</p> <p>Success on the Ground - Elements of agreements are implemented on and off the ground.</p> <p>One-on-One Interaction Transformed - Individuals across conflicting groups can work productively together.</p> <p>Rhetoric about the "other" is more Positive - Public conversation about the value of the other group.</p> <p>Community Based Structures in Place to Manage Future Problems - (e.g., the launch of a Community Problem-Solving Center)</p> <p>Outside Conveners and Facilitators are Less Needed/Lead Less - Efforts are now being led by people in the community with original conveners as "back up."</p>	<p>What are the reasons for New Beginnings behavior?</p> <p>Progress on the Ground Outweighs Skepticism - When enough different behavior is experienced, people begin to believe that progress is possible.</p> <p>Ownership shifted from Convener to Participant - It is no longer easy to bow out when the initiative is being led by your own stakeholder group.</p>	<p>What are "common emotions" during New Beginnings</p> <p>Hope</p> <p>Work-focused</p>	<p>What intervention strategies can help someone through New Beginnings?</p> <p>Celebrate along the Way - Find ways to publicly mark milestones and progress to demonstrate that progress is recognized.</p> <p>Be Mindful of New Transition Cycles - There may be new transitions on the horizon. Be ready to work on Endings with new groups or on new issues.</p> <p>Stay Focused on Implementation and Resources Needed - Do everything you can to shore up resources needed for implementation.</p>