



Organizational Change and Transition

This document is to be used together with the Transition Curve chart on page 3 & 4.

Transition Curve Tool

Organizations go through many types of **changes** and employees may go through different emotions and reactions during these changes and over time. This tool can support organization leaders to facilitate successful **transitions**.

Transition Phases

Endings: People in the “Endings” section are in the midst of change. They may fear loss of security, competence, relationships, or territory, and may lack a sense of direction. A caterpillar, “**worried about letting go.**”

Neutral Zone: In the “Neutral Zone,” people are amidst shifting attitudes, practices, and roles; they may feel unfocused and frustrated, but may also seek new options and opportunities. A cocoon, a place of transformation, an **attitude shift**, and a turning point, often where the most **creativity** happens.

New Beginnings: In the “New Beginnings” section, people are actively engaged, with clear individual and team focus with planning and actions. A butterfly, ready to “**commit to the new.**”

Role of leaders through change

As a leader, you should understand where you and the people you work with are along the transition curve. The capacity to manage change increases when an organization demonstrates trauma-informed leadership and care, staff wellness practices, and a work environment that supports resiliency for everyone. When organizations are rooted in missions and core values, individuals will experience more meaningful transitions. There are action steps, listed on the **outside** of the transition curve, that leaders and peers can take to move through the transition successfully. **See next page for strategies in using this tool.**

"Change is situational:
the new site, the new
boss, new team roles.

Transition is the
psychological process
people go through to
come to terms with the
new situation.

**Change is external,
transition is internal."**

William Bridges

Comments about the use of the Transition Curve tool:

"I truly appreciated the change/transition piece...The chart gave me a clear visual walk through to help work through it." Training participant.

"Transition Curve really helped with acceptance of where we are as an organization and personally as well." Training participant.

"The curve reminds us that beginnings start with an ending, and endings start beginnings."
Beckie Masaki.

Using the Transition Curve Tool (on page 3-4)

Recommended users: Directors, managers, staff, board of directors, facilitators, and trainers.

Strategies for Leaders to Facilitate Transition

1. Communicate, acknowledge feelings, and express the value of individuals' knowledge and skills.
2. Implement the recommended actions/strategies listed in the **Transition Curve** that individuals can take for themselves and to support others.
3. Establish expectations, and provide solid direction, frequent feedback, support, and motivation.
4. Facilitate a plan for success, encourage engagement/leadership, and provide opportunities for professional development. Assess and support the unique needs of each individual.

How to use this tool

Introduce and explain the Transition Curve, and how this tool can help your team discuss the **change** that you are going through, and also help develop actions steps to support each other in the **transition**. Establish ground rules for the discussion; for example confidentiality, respect for individuals, "listen to understand", and mutual support.

Sample activities:

Ask the group or individual to review the Transition Curve. Individuals should consider their current feelings and self-select where they belong along the Transition Curve: **Endings, Neutral Zone, and Beginnings**. Individuals may do this publicly or privately.

Group discussion questions, can be divided into small groups or in pairs:

- Why are you in this phase? What are some of your feelings or worries on the change?
- What would you want others to know?
- How do you view your role related to the change? Sponsor/lead, implementer, or advocate?
- What can you do for yourself and others to move positively through the transition? (See Transition Curve chart for ideas). Consider behaviors and procedures to support others.
- How can we help?

Reflecting and cross-group sharing:

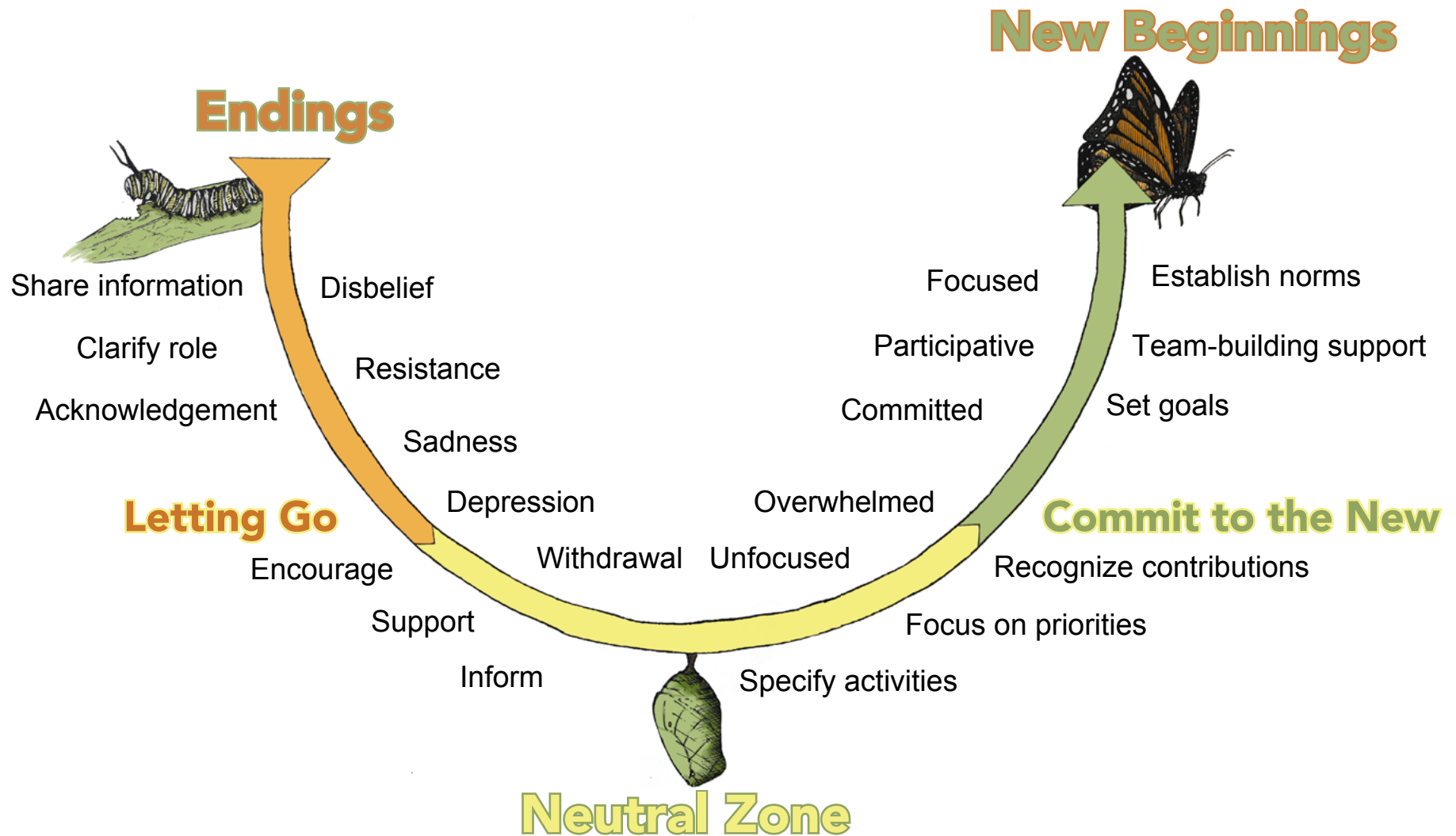
Bring all groups together to share about conversations with particular emphasis on what you would want others to know and **what you can do for yourself and others in the transition phases**.

Create a plan to implement and practice **strategies** from the Transition Curve. Assess and facilitate needed resources and training to support staff with the transition.

Follow-up and check-in to assess progress and needed support in transition. Recognize results.

Note: Each individual is unique and moves forward in transition in a different pace. Through communication and building trusting relationships, you can better help yourself and others move through transition.

Transition Curve



This visual tool marks and guides the phases of transitions during organizational changes: Endings, Neutral, and New Beginnings. Words **inside** the curve describe common emotions and reactions that people go through during transition. Words **outside** describe possible strategies and actions that we can take to move ourselves and help others through the transition. **Please see attached Transition Curve tool guide for description and guidance on using this tool.**

This Transition Curve model was developed by Beckie Masaki and is an adaptation of the work of William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions*.

Organizational Change and Transition

Endings Letting Go	Neutral Zone Sense Making/Attitude Shift	New Beginning Commit to the New
Emotions & Reactions	Emotions & Reactions	Emotions & Reactions
- Anger - Bargaining - Betrayal - Denial & fear - Disbelief - Individual focus - Resistance - Sadness	- Apathy - Defocused - Depression - Overwhelmed - Reduced productivity - Resistance - Unfocused - Withdrawal	- Clear focus & planning - Committed - Explore options - Involved - Participative - Proactive - Satisfaction - Team focused
Leaders can help by:	Leaders can help by:	Leaders can help by:
- Acknowledge concerns - Allow time - Clarify role - Give space - Honor the past - Listen to understand - Maximize communication - Share information, inform - Show care	- Encourage creativity & ideas - Focus on priorities - Follow-up - Meet with individuals - Provide information - Reinforce suggestions - Spark motivation - Specify activities - Foster autonomy and meaning	- Develop capacity/leadership - Establish norms - Review mission and values - Recognize commitments - Recognize contributions - Set goals and priorities - Share knowledge - Support team-building - Celebrate small wins
Leaders may ask: How are you doing? What are you feeling or thinking? How can I help?		
Individuals can: Listen, ask questions, express, talk, stay grounded, and seek support.	Individuals can: Find purpose, gain control, seek understanding, learn, engage, and act.	Individuals can: Set personal goals, build skills, seek mentors, and celebrate progress.

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Resources

❖ [Transition Curve Toolkit Video](#)

This five-minute video includes an overview of the Transition Curve.

This can be used as an introduction and lead a conversation on transition.

❖ [Ten Strategies to Enhance Employee Resilience and Engagement Within Survivor Serving Organizations](#)

- * [Leading Change in Uncertain Times Playbook](#): Tools and resources
- * [Managing Organizational Growth and Change Toolkit](#)
- * [Organizational Trauma and Resilience](#), (handout) Resource Sharing Project
- * [Organizational Resilience, Resilient Organizations](#) (resources & assessment)
- * [How to Ensure Board is Appropriately Involved in Projects for Change](#)
- * [Cultivating Resilient Organizations](#) – Toolkit of resources and strategies
- * [Change Management: Strategies to Help Nonprofit Leaders Make the Most of Uncertain Times](#), resource
- * [*Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*](#), William Bridges (book)
- * [*Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*](#), Heath (book)
- * [Who Moved My Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life](#), Johnson, Spencer 1st edition (1998)

*Non-federally funded resources.

This Transition Curve model was developed by Beckie Masaki and is an adaptation of the work of William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions*, as part of the SOS Institute, a project of Futures Without Violence.

This resource part of the [Supporting Organizational Sustainability \(SOS Institute\) Project](#). For questions and additional resources, please contact Futures Without Violence, at: learning@futureswithoutviolence.org.

This toolkit was created in 2018, and the resource links were updated in 2025.