

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS

Helping People Manage Transition

Managing Endings: How to Get People to Let Go

1. Identify who is losing what:
 - describe in detail what is actually going to change
 - who is going to have to let go of something? what must they let go of?
 - what is over for everyone?
2. Accept the reality and importance of the subjective loss
3. Don't be surprised at "overreaction"
4. Acknowledge the losses openly and sympathetically
5. Expect and accept the signs of grieving (denial, anger, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, confusion, depression)
6. Compensate for the losses: what can you give back to balance what's been taken away?
7. Give people information, and do it again and again
8. Define what's over and what isn't
9. Mark the endings with ritual
10. Treat the past with respect
11. Let people take a piece of the old way with them
12. Show how endings ensure continuity of what really matters

Managing the Neutral Zone

1. Help people to realize that the neutral zone is necessary, like the winter during which the spring's new growth is taking shape under the earth
2. Help people to recognize that it is natural to feel somewhat frightened and confused
3. Try to protect people from further changes or, if you cannot do so, try to cluster the new changes together into a coherent whole

4. Set short-range goals so that there are some quick successes
5. Try to rebuild a sense of identification with the group and of connectedness with one another
6. Use frequent communications to help people feel included in and connected to the church community
7. Use the neutral zone creatively
 - establish by word and example that this is a time to step back and take stock, a time to question the “usual,” and a time to come up with new and creative solutions to difficulties facing the churches
 - conduct retreats, surveys, suggestion campaigns to gather ideas
 - encourage experiment
 - embrace losses, setbacks and disadvantages as beginning points for new solutions
 - look for opportunities to brainstorm new answers to old problems
 - restrain the natural impulse in times of ambiguity and disorganization to push prematurely for certainty and closure

Launching New Beginnings

1. Realize that new beginnings may bring relief but they are also scary
2. Although you cannot choose when your group will reach the “Promised Land,” you can do the following:
 - explain the basic *purpose* behind the outcome you seek
 - paint a *picture* of how the outcome will look and feel (even though it is helpful to show this picture to people as soon as the change is announced, do not expect the picture to have its effect before people have made an ending and let go of the past)
 - lay out a step by step *plan* for phasing in the outcome
 - give each person a *part* to play in both the plan and the outcome itself

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