
Coping with Transitions in Life

A LIFE EFFECTIVENESS GUIDE

Copyright ownership:

Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors Pty Ltd ATF AIPC Trust ACN 077 738 035. This document is copyright protected under the Berne Convention. All rights reserved. No reproduction or distribution without express permission.

Australian Institute of Professional Counsellors
Head Office 47 Baxter St.
Fortitude Valley, QLD 4006
www.aipc.net.au

This document is protected by copyright and may not be distributed, reproduced or copied either in part or in whole nor used for financial gain without the express approval in writing of the owner of the copyright.



All Case Histories in this text are presented as examples only
and any comparison which might be made with persons either
living or dead is purely coincidental

Coping with Transitions in Life

A LIFE EFFECTIVENESS GUIDE

CONTENTS

Understanding the Situation.....	3
Positive Aspects of Change.....	5
Options	9
Recommendations	14
Conclusion	22
References and Bibliography	23

'It isn't so much that hard times are coming; the change observed is mostly soft times going'

Groucho Marx

(cited in The New International Websters Pocket Quotation Dictionary, 1997: 36)

Understanding the Situation

Transition is often seen as being synonymous with change. Transition as a term tends to have a more organic quality to it (as distinct from a mechanical quality), reflecting in human terms a change in a person's life situation and journey through life. Transition can also mean something different to being transformed, although transformation can and often does occur for many people. Not everyone becomes transformed into someone positive and new because of changing situations or circumstances. Some people cling desperately to the world that they know, to their habits and patterns of thinking and behaviour, even if the world and many people in it are changing around them. They are likely to have lots of difficult problems in life, including social and emotional ones. Some people have change suddenly thrust upon them so much so that they have little time to effectively adapt and harness their individual resources. Some people thrive with change, and some may even lead change for themselves and others.

Transition and change are an inevitable part of human lives. Our lives are ever changing especially in our highly technological, highly communicable, and consumerist world. In any case our physical bodies are constantly changing from birth until death with regeneration and degeneration a cyclical part of our existence. Recent research indicates that even our brains are ever changing adapting in response our experiences of the world around us and also gradually deteriorating as we age.

Some transitions or change can be quite sudden or unexpected and can be stressful (e.g., death of a spouse or child) or exciting (e.g., finding out you are pregnant or gaining an award or a prize). Some transitions can be gradual, almost unnoticeable or insidious. Even with a change that is exciting or wonderful, change can still be stressful

(e.g., problems with a pregnancy, change in workload). Adjustments in one's life are often needed, and this can be uncomfortable especially if adjustments need to be made quickly. Some people are scared of losing control of their life situation when a change or transition occurs. Roles and responsibilities can change – a new mother or father suddenly have this little baby to cope with for example, and work involves caring and nurturing and protecting – changing nappies, making decisions about cloth or disposable nappies and the effects on the environment, feeding, burping, comforting and cuddling, strollers, travelling arrangements are just a few of the things that new parents suddenly become confronted with. Many people who retire hold wonderful fantasies about moving to the coast, leisure and travelling. However unless they have a strong financial base, a reduction in money may require a reduction in existing lifestyle and certainly the more extravagant of their dreams. Farmers too have difficulties in retirement transition and intergenerational transfer of their farms. Often family tensions become almost intolerable as farm succession issues go to court and family members are pitched against one another. Similar transition issues also occur in family businesses.

Obviously major transitions occur for all people throughout life including various transitions during childhood development, transition from a child to adolescence, then young adulthood, middle age, old age and older old age. Women also experience menopause in particular in their 40's and 50's, and changes in behaviour and thinking occur for many women in addition to physical problems such as 'hot flushes' and osteoporosis. Men have been particularly susceptible to cardiovascular diseases and prostate cancer as they age into their 50's and 60's and to prevent the risk, major changes are required in their lifestyles including altering factors such as diet, exercise, tobacco use, and ensuring regular health checks and so on. Some people have made almost miraculous changes from being say a criminal to a respectable member of a community.

Positive Aspects of Change

So far we have focused on theory that tends to paint a difficult picture of transition or change. Remember that life is a dynamic or cyclical balance of negatives and positives. Let's explore some potential positives? The Ceridian foundation (2002: 3-4) is a source for the following insights into positive change.

- **The creation of new opportunities.** Without change survival would be impossible. Culture, agriculture, education, business would all fail. You don't have to like all aspects of change (there may be some disadvantages or even teething problems with some change) but there may be useful or interesting benefits as well. Studies of some communities and sects (and they are extremely rare) that have denied change of any sort and prevented the flow of people and information to and from the communities and development of any new ideas have been found to be totally unsustainable and have survived no more than a few generations before breaking up. Similarly if an individual or a family is resistant to change, they will also fail to adapt and significant health and other problems will be inevitable in their lives. New opportunities may arise out of a change in employment, or a change in learning, or a change in eating and exercise (maybe look sexier), or a change in a political party, a change based upon research evidence and so on.
- **Keeping you flexible** – avoiding getting set in your ways and do try being open to new ideas and ways of working or living. They may not always work but they keep your mind open to suggestions and forming creative solutions or approaches to coping.
- **Building self-confidence** – Change and personal growth and development have been well established in research findings. Being in one's own comfort zone can lead to some contentment for a while, but as time goes on you lose or don't acquire confidence and abilities and skills and become out of touch. This can lead to social isolation and feelings of marginalisation or alienation as others around you function more effectively in a changing world.

- ***You can be educated*** – the most obvious area is learning from research and how this can lead, for example, to exciting and important new scientific and medical advances, or lead to understanding healthier ways of living.
- ***You can focus on your priorities*** – there are opportunities to develop new perspectives, and the pressure of change can force you to make decisions or problem-solve – a bit painful perhaps but it really focuses your attention to what you believe is valuable or important to you as a reason for adopting the change.
- ***It can build your strengths*** – with each change and adaptation people have degrees of success and with each experience of coping with change, self-worth and self-esteem develop and provides resilience or strength and knowledge to deal with further changes when they occur.

As indicated above, stress can accompany even favourable experiences of transition or change. Therefore we need to know what sort of problems that stress can cause.

Affects of stress include:

- Headaches
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Heart palpitations
- Insomnia (difficulty in sleeping or getting to sleep)
- Overeating or other eating disorders
- Mood swings
- Poor concentration
- Stomach upsets and other digestive problems
- Neck and back aches
- Dental problems from grinding teeth
- Depression
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Sexual problems

- **Understanding your feelings and emotions**

Obviously there may be many different feelings and emotions that a person could experience depending on the situation or circumstances. One person may fear change whilst another may revel in it and enjoy the challenges. A child about to enter early adolescence may also have a sense of fear or anxiety about what changes to expect, embarrassment about bodily changes, heightened sexual desires and bodily discharges. A woman nearing 50 may begin to worry about menopause and may harbour fears of getting breast cancer or osteoporosis. A young adult married man with a family may fear that he might lose his job and be unable to provide for his family. A child may fear going to school for the first time away from his parents.

Fear of the unknown is often something that people worry about when a change occurs that could impact seriously on their lives. The stress response innervates the autonomic nervous system and people can either fight the stressors that are causing their stress or fly away from the stressors and hide or avoid them. People may even become quite depressed because of a transition in their life and their circumstances and their behaviour and mood can adversely affect other people around them such as relatives, workmates, friends and so on.

According to 'Spot, Seek, Solve – Depression' (a mental health promotion initiative of Hunter New England Area Health Services, 2001-2006), Symptoms of Depression (which may directly relate to loneliness) may include **feeling:**

- Down
- Worthless
- Hopeless
- Angry
- Tired & Irritable
- Suicidal

And/or finding it hard to:

- Sleep (not enough sleep, sleeping too much and/or waking up early in the morning)
- Concentrate

- Control your moods
- Enjoy the things you usually like
- Eat regularly

Other symptoms may include:

- having aches and pains for no apparent reason
- being extremely pessimistic
- losing interest in other people and not caring what happens
- having a sense of failure or guilt
- Loss of outward affection and going off sex

It is important to try to understand your own feelings and emotions because everyone's situation and circumstances will usually be quite different.

Options

- **Defining ineffective options**

Again it is a bit difficult to define ineffective options simply because it is easier to describe those situations where people have ineffective options to react to change.

Nonetheless some ineffective options may include:

- Denying that a change is occurring;
- Not being aware of one's environment – of change that is emerging over time.
- Not planning properly for change even when it is predictable (e.g., as in retirement or changing jobs or moving house or schools);
- Overreacting to possible consequences that change might bring;
- Listening to gossip and misinformation about what change might lead to;
- As a consequence not understanding the process of change and the likely outcomes (not doing one's homework so to speak);
- Ignoring or pretending that the change will go away;
- Letting your defences down – giving in to stress and withdrawing or changing behaviour and thinking in a negative way – becoming depressed;
- Having few social support networks and friends to help you out when needed.

Case Examples

Case Study One – Sally

Sally is an 18 year old girl who has just completed her High School Education. Sally has done exceptionally well in her exams, but has no idea what she wants to do with her life and what she wants to study at university. Sally tells her friend Jody that she is really anxious because her parents are expecting her to leave home next year and move to another city to study at a good university there. Sally has never had much responsibility in her life and has relied on her parents to make most of the big decisions for her. Sally feels that it is all too much for her and she decides not to apply at all. Sally is too scared to tell her parents. Sally just wants to work at the local fish and chip shop and pretend that everything will go on as it always has.

What is problematic here?

Well maybe nothing is too problematic here, except that Sally is pretty confused and ambivalent about her future. A big change or transition is looming, and under the stress and pressure, Sally opts for an easy solution – one she can gain satisfaction from without too much effort. Furthermore, Sally has not been open or honest with her parents and this is creating a dilemma in her mind. To cope, Sally simply shuts out the stress and dilemma and hopes that everything will turn out okay and the status quo of her existence will remain. Unfortunately these things have a way of coming back and pretty soon Sally may have to do some explaining to her parents when they find out.

Kids these days have lots of pressures on them to perform and to meet incredible technological and social changes head on. Many kids are pretty technologically savvy, however in terms of understanding or dealing with social change and making real life decisions, not all kids have the skills to be able to cope. Some kids are disadvantaged and poor and have to fight every inch of the way to secure reasonable prospects for their life ahead. The so called 'Me' generation have been noted to be rather selfish and self-centred in their attitudes to life, and have been protected from the nasty big world outside by their parents. This of course, is pretty stereotypical; however some commentators and researchers argue that kids these days are staying at home with their

parents for much longer than kids have done in the past. In particular they prefer to stay at home whilst studying at their local university or TAFE or similar colleges because of the enormous financial costs of living away from home and feelings of isolation and abandonment should they move away. Their parents often foot the bills and provide emotional support for them as well.

Case Study Two – Graham

Graham is 65 years of age and is married to Sue aged 61 years. They have two grown up married daughters who live and work overseas. Graham has recently retired (head storeman at the local chemical factory) and he has great plans to buy a new 4 wheel drive car, to move to the coast and buy a little cottage and a boat and live near the beach, to fish, go to the club and go on trips overseas. Unfortunately Graham's superannuation payout was not as much as was expected and Sue has told him that he is 'a silly old bugger', that the money won't last long and that they will have to tighten their belts if they are going to survive for the next ten years or so. Sue had given up her full-time job as a sales clerk two years ago due to back problems and now works one or two days a week as a sales assistant at the local dress shop. Sue realises that she doesn't earn that much and she is worried about how they will cope with the bills and everything.

Graham won't hear a word of giving up his dreams and says he has got plenty of money and that you can't take it with you and he's going to spend it while he's got it and give Sue a good time. However one year later, Graham is starting to realise that money is getting really tight – he can only afford to drive into town a couple of times a week, they have had stop going out to dinner, and he won't be able to buy the new car, house and boat that he dreamed about. He certainly won't be able to afford to go overseas and he has become quite depressed. He had no idea that retirement would be so hard and wished he had planned his finances better when he was younger.

The Healthy Ageing Taskforce (2000:11) commented on the barriers to healthy ageing through the lifespan, but especially for older people of retirement age. They stated:

'The family, social and work patterns, established over several generations, have changed significantly in the past two decades. People now have greater choice and flexibility about their roles throughout life. However, economic reforms and the need to compete in the global environment have created a labour market where older people's experience, maturity and commitment appear to be undervalued.'

The chances of Graham being able to undertake even some casual or part time work may be difficult given his age and the way business often discriminates against age. Old notions of retirement age say at 65 years were developed in a period when people did not live very long and really have nothing to do with the current situation where life expectancy for men and women is now on average closer to 80 years of age and where people are healthier and fitter than at any time in past history on average.

What is problematic here?

Like many people who seek to retire, unrealistic romanticised dreams of freedom and living life to the full are common themes. Many people simply do not plan properly for their retirement and then when they do retire they suddenly find that they cannot do the things they thought they could and that they have to try to live on very tight budgets because their superannuation payments are not sufficient to live life the way they had previously when earning an income from work. Research findings show time and again that many people but especially men who retire have unrealistic expectations. Emotionally many men have built their lives around their jobs and their work mates, and suddenly their whole purpose in life has stopped. Women tend to have more diverse interests and relationships in life and this build their resilience.

Many men who retire on the other hand and who do not properly plan for their retirement, are susceptible to physical and mental illnesses such as depression, cardiovascular disease, strokes and cancers. Many men say that they miss their jobs and

their mates. A study by Foskey, Dodwell and Avery (2005) of retired mine workers in NSW found that this was a major concern and where mateship contact continued after retirement, the men were much more resilient – they would help their mates when they were in trouble financially or if they needed emotional support.

It may be important for Graham and Sue to sit down and budget properly or seek a retirement planner to help them sort out their finances so that they can have some quality of life. Graham will need to develop other interests and to make some friends if he is to overcome his disappointments and feelings of depression. Seeking counselling would be a good option for Graham to help him to get things off his chest and to help to guide him in identifying and engaging in activities that won't cost the Earth and may increase his happiness and satisfaction in life (as well as improving his physical and mental health through things like regular exercise, and having a hobby). He may also benefit by exploring ways to develop social networks and relationships with other people.

Recommendations

- **Preferred Options, Strategies and skills**

Experience and the literature inform us that transitions or changes in life are inevitable and you can fight them, flee from them or preferably accept that you need to prepare for and adapt to the changes in some way. Having confidence in being able to plan for and adapt to change, by having skills and knowledge that you know will work, by building resilience so that you have the emotional strength to problem solve and make decisions is certainly important. Being proactive rather than reactive to change means that it is you that is in charge and you prevent becoming a victim of change. Some tips to help cope with change include the following:

- **Try to anticipate change** – identifying factors leading to change and planning for change requires flexibility of mind not rigidity. Davey (1992) cited in Dadds, Seinen, Roth & Harnett's (2000: 15) work titled 'Early intervention for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents' stated:

'Outcome expectancy models of anxiety postulate that humans develop an expectation of outcome based on a variety of sources of information and existing beliefs...Hence, existing beliefs in highly anxious persons tend to lead to an overestimation of threat and an underestimation of coping resources.'

Having a clearer informed knowledge of change and what it may really entail can help to prevent exaggeration of the nature and consequences of change or transition.

- **You need to maintain friendships and social networks**, to maintain or develop new interests and activities to stop you from stagnating, and accept new challenges armed with confidence, skills and knowledge.
- **Care for your physical and emotional health** – you need strength of body and mind to meet the challenges involved in change or transition. Regular exercise, a good balanced and nutritious diet, quality sleep and

relaxation, and limiting stimulants like alcohol, coffee and other substances will help you to feel energised and able to cope with stress.

- **Learn how to use relaxation techniques** – since stress is a natural part of life and adapting to change is stressful, learning how to relax your body and mind can be helpful. Activities such as yoga, tai chi, qigong (Lin 2000), listening to relaxing music or relaxation tapes (from local bookstores or libraries), going for a bush walk or a walk along the beach, meditation, developing breathing techniques for relaxation and so on are some ways in which to cope with stress and restore harmony and balance. Music therapy is a well established form of counselling that may, like drama therapy also be useful at least for reducing stress and anxiety relating to change (Bright, 2002).
- **Keep an open mind** – try to be objective and avoid jumping to conclusions too quickly without understanding the nature of change and its consequences. You may well like the change when at first it didn't look too *inviting*.
- **Gather information for learning** – fear of the unknown can be a great source for cultivating a cycle of distress and ignorance. Change or transition can foster uncertainty for many people. By understanding how change works and what the change may entail builds your confidence to adapt to change. You can do some research on the internet or go to your local library and study what change may bring. Being prepared and having some knowledge can reduce the uncertainty and the fear of the unknown that drives anxiety and stress.
- **Gradually build the changes - 'limit the pace of change'** – trying to tackle big changes all at once is a recipe for failure – it is just too stressful and consuming of your time and energy. Try to tackle and adjust to smaller changes at a time so that you can have control over what you understand and how you deal with the change. Trying to tackle and adjust to big changes may become too overwhelming and you may end up becoming too stressed and develop depression or anxiety if you fail.

- **Talk to other people who can help and who you trust** – try to be specific about your worries or concerns with someone you trust and you know will help. This gives the other person the best chance of being clear about what you are going through and how best to help. Being mutually open and cooperative can help to solve lots of problems and issues, and gives you a sense of 'well I'm not doing this all on my own'.
- **Consider joining a support group** – experience can be a great teacher. Other people who have experienced transition or change may be able to share their story or stories with you. The purpose of a support group is to assist with understanding and to support one another as they try to cope with change.
- **Consider professional counselling** – professional counsellors are people trained with knowledge, skills and experience to provide understanding and assistance for anyone who find life or change difficult to cope with. They can help you to express your concerns, your fears, and your feelings and to understand how you feel about change. They can also help you to develop your own skills and strategies to deal with change so that you have confidence and competence in adapting to change (can be lifelong skills). Professional counsellors are facilitators of learning and change and they can guide you to making better decisions and solving problems yourself (Freshwater, 2003: 69). They develop with you a therapeutic relationship aimed to help you mobilise resources (internal and external) and to develop a plan or plans of action. Keeping a reflective journal or diary can help one focus on change experiences, reactions to change and the evaluation of the effectiveness of coping with change.
- **Keep a sense of humour** – we know that life should not be all doom and gloom. We all have the capacity to laugh and find humour in the craziest of things. Change can be stressful so having a sense of humour can break down the seriousness a bit and make change look not so daunting or tough. In a hundred years who is going to care about the change you are faced with today – it's all a matter of perceptions. Go out and see or rent a funny movie or one that makes you laugh. Meet with friends who make you laugh and see

the funny or ridiculous side of things. That old Monty Python song 'Always look on the bright side of life' and having a laugh at adversity can actually help you to look at change in a totally different and less sinister or threatening light. Humour is good for your body and mind too as it releases pent up energy and reduces the build up of cortisol that is released during stress, especially chronic levels of stress where high levels of cortisol can be damaging to the body and brain and to fighting off infections and wound healing.

- **Journaling and an exercise**

Either a daily or weekly diary or journal book can be useful for helping people to cope with change. What sort of things would you write? Well for one thing change often causes self doubts and stress as fear of the unknown or uncertainty is a normal part of being human. Uncomfortable feelings and emotions can often arise and this can affect a person's activities, relationships with others and behaviour and thinking. At the severe end of the scale one could become overwhelmed by a change or a transition such as having a baby, losing a job, being separated or divorced, experiencing a major illness or a change in one's body and psychological state (e.g., puberty, menopause, middle age crisis) and end up with say major depression. The idea of resilience is to ensure that you have the resources and support systems that will prevent such a situation from eventuating.

A journal can be as simple as writing down your thoughts and activities each day including how you feel about them. In Cognitive Behavioural Therapy a journal or diary could outline positive and negative experiences, promoting where possible the positive experiences, feelings and emotions so that resilience is constantly being built up, and memory and effective habits can be formed rather than ineffective options. Reflection of your experiences is an important part of interpreting the story or points that you have written in your journal and it is important to also write down these reflections and interpretations.

Exercise:

Some questions that you might ask yourself could include the following. Indeed this could be a great exercise for you to engage in right now.

- *Do you feel that you are able to deal with smaller aspects of a change that is confronting you?*
- *If so what sort of resources and assistance do you need to do this?*
- *How do you maintain some quality of life each day so that the change does not overwhelm your life and those of others around you?*
- *How do you relax in the face of stress?*
- *How is your relationship with friends and those you love affected by the change?*
- *Are you able to communicate your feelings and concerns to them?*
- *How could you improve communication in terms of content and relationship aspects?*
- *Who can you go to for help and support? If you have sought support what was the outcome?*
- *Do you think that a change or dealing with a change today has been beneficial or not? Perhaps rate the benefit or not as per the following scale:*

0	1	2	3	4	5
No			Moderate		High
Benefit		Benefit		Benefit	

By reflecting on these sorts of questions when writing daily experiences, change and your reaction to change can be mapped and progress of coping with change discussed at the counselling session.

- **Positive Case Examples**

The following case studies are based on real life experiences however the names and circumstances are fictional and designed purely for educational purposes.

Case Study One – Leisha

Leisha is a 17 year old girl who has a young infant daughter Tippa aged 15 months. Her partner left the relationship before Leisha had the baby and hasn't been seen or heard of since. Leisha lives at home with her parents. Initially Leisha was very scared about having a baby, and although she went to all the prenatal classes, she wondered what was going to happen with her life.

Leisha decided to stay at school despite having her baby because she felt that she needed to be able to have something to fall back on for the future, and without this education she would have difficulties getting jobs. Leisha had had very productive meetings with the school principal, the school's career guidance counsellor, her teachers and friends at school and in her local church group and she believes that she has made the right decision. Leisha also recognised that she needed lots of help and she rallied her family and friends to give her support. This made her feel a lot less anxious. Her parents after the initial shock committed themselves to supporting their daughter and they were just so elated when Tippa was born and they became grandparents. Leisha was loved and supported and comforted by everyone before and after her pregnancy, and Leisha has been getting really good grades at school. Leisha wants to go to the local TAFE and study to be a Chef as she loves cooking and being creative and plans to open her own restaurant one day. Leisha has also been seeing a counsellor once every few weeks, and she has found this has helped her to understand her parenting role, to take charge of her life and to plan out what she is going to do in the immediate future. Leisha loves going out with her friends and has a very active social life which her parents happily support. Leisha also does some part-time work on weekends at the local café.

What can we make of Leisha's story?

His situation could have turned out so differently and have had many negative consequences. Fortunately Leisha has a strong sense of who she is and what she wants to do. She was anxious at first about having the baby and being a sole parent, but she has such a great social support network that any challenges that she has met she has been easily able to deal with. Her parents, friends and teachers are all part of Leisha's support team and Leisha has built up lots of resilience evidenced by having excellent internal and external resources and that she is not afraid to seek out help when she needs it.

Case Study Two – Carla

Carla is a 37 year old woman who works as a manager in a large engineering firm. She is married with two children a boy aged 10 (Carlos) and girl aged 8 (Anna). Her husband Rodrigo is great with the kids and very devoted and loving to Carla but he has recently been laid off from work (clothing factory supervisor) because the company became liquidated and folded. Although her job is well paid, Carla has been very worried about finances, the mortgage and having enough money to pay for all of the bills such as council rates, telephone and electricity bills, school fees, food, clothes and fuel for the two cars. There has been a bit of tension lately since Rodrigo lost his job and both Carla and Rodrigo have had some heated verbal exchanges. Carla realises that she is under a lot of pressure and has sought the help of a counsellor to see what can be done with her circumstances. The counsellor has been great because Carla can get lots of feelings and frustrations off her chest and is able to get some really pragmatic ideas about getting support. Carla also has a very supportive family and her father has stated that he will help them out financially for the time being. Carla also has a great bunch of girlfriends that she talks to and has coffee with on a regular basis and a couple of mothers whose kids go to the same school as Carlos and Anna have helped out with transport to and from school. This has relieved Carla's anxiety, but she knows that she will need a longer term plan and that Rodrigo is going to have to help. Rodrigo has been trying to get another job, but he may have to travel to another suburb much further away where

there is some work vacancies. He has applied for two positions and has been asked to come in for an interview soon so he is focused and a bit on edge but is quietly confident he has the experience and knowledge to be successful. Carla and Rodrigo have been to see their accountant so that they can sort out a plan to ease their financial burden and whilst money is tight, they can see that they will be able to cope, especially with her father's offer of support. Carla continues to go to the gym in the mornings and to book club every second Saturday which she enjoys.

What can we make of Carla's story?

The change in circumstances following her husband's loss of his job created considerable stress for Carla in the face of mounting bills and family tension testing her relationship with Rodrigo. Carla to her credit could understand the nature of this change and looked for ways to cope and people to talk to about her dilemma. Carla has strong family and social supports and this has enabled her to take control and seek out solutions to her problems. She has sought the help of her father and this has been very positive. She realises that this is not going to be a permanent solution and with Rodrigo they have sought out financial planning advice and help and have been able to ascertain that with some belt tightening in some areas they will be financially okay. Carla also realised that there was tension between her and Rodrigo and she sought the help of a professional counsellor. She has been able to express her fears and frustrations which have greatly relieved her anxiety and she realises that she needed to let off some steam. Carla also has some great girlfriends who have also given her lots of emotional and practical support. Carla has taken comfort in the fact that Rodrigo is doing a great job caring for the kids when her work commitments become too great under the stress. Carla has not given up her activities such as the gym and book club and this has helped her to relax a bit.

Conclusion

This booklet has explored the nature of life transitions or change. Change is necessary in all of our lives, but sometimes change is difficult to accept or to adapt to. Theory related to change has been discussed. It is apparent that people who have built some resilience physically, emotionally, socially and even spiritually have a greater chance of adapting to change and the stress this may engender than those who don't. Resilience or protective factors have been discussed and coping strategies utilise this knowledge to enable positive outcomes. Examples of ineffective coping and then more effective coping have been presented so that you can see a little bit of coping in action.

References and Bibliography

Bright, R., 2002, Supportive Eclectic Music therapy for Grief and Loss: A Practical Handbook for Professionals, MMB Music, Inc., Saint Louis.
Ceridian Foundation, 2002, Coping With Change, pp. 3-4.

Dadds, M., Seinen, A., Roth, J., & Harnett, P., 2000, Early intervention for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents, Griffith University, Queensland.

Foskey, R., 2002, Older Farmers and Retirement: A Report for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, RIRDC, Kingston, ACT.

Foskey, R., Dodwell, G., & Avery, A.J., 'Stories of mental health promotion in the field: Mature Men Matter – Mental wellness and experiences of retired miners', paper presented at the 10th Rural Mental Health Conference NSW, Twin Towns, Tweed Heads, November. Published in proceedings and on CD-ROM.

Freshwater, D., 2003, Counselling Skills for Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors, Open University Press, Maidenhead.

Healthy Ageing Taskforce, 2000, Commonwealth, State and Territory Strategy on Healthy Ageing, prepared by the Healthy Ageing Taskforce and endorsed by Commonwealth, State and territory Ministers responsible for ageing issues, Commonwealth, States and Territories of Australia, March 2000, Canberra.

Herzog, A. & Marcus, H., 1999, 'The self-concept in life-span and ageing research', in Handbook of Theories of Ageing, L.Vern Bengston & K Warner Schaie (eds.), Springer Publishing Company, New York, pp. 227-252.

HNEAHS, 2001-2006, Spot, Seek, Solve – Depression, a mental health promotion initiative of Hunter New England Area Health Services, Tamworth.

Lin, Chunyi, 2000, Spring forest Qigong for health, Learning Strategies Corporation, Minnesota.

Marx, G., in The New International Webster's Pocket Quotation Dictionary of the English Language, 1997, New Revised Edition, Trident Press International, Radcliffe.

Marziali, E. & Donahue, P., 2001, Resilience Indicators of post Retirement Well-Being, SEDAP Research Paper No. 49, McMaster University, Retrieved December 2002 from:

<http://socserv2mcmaster.ca/sedap>

McMurray, A., 2003, Community Health and Wellness: a Sociological Approach, 2nd edition, Mosby, Elsevier, Marrickville.

Regel, S. & Roberts, D. (eds.), 2002, Mental Health Liaison: A handbook for nurses and health professionals, Bailliere Tindall/Royal College of Nursing, Edinburgh.

Uhlenberg, P. & Miner, S., 1995, 'Life course and ageing: a cohort perspective', in Handbook of Ageing and the Social Sciences, R.H. Binstock & L.K. George, Academic Press, San Diego, pp. 208-228.

Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., and Fisch, B., 1974, 'Change: Principles of problems formulation and problem resolution', in L.M. Wright & M. Leahy (eds.), 2000, Nurses and Families: A Guide to Family Assessment and Intervention, 3rd edition, F.A. Davis Company, Philadelphia, pp.49-50.

Wright, L.M. & Leahy, M. (eds.), 2000, Nurses and Families: A Guide to Family Assessment and Intervention, 3rd edition, F.A. Davis Company, Philadelphia.