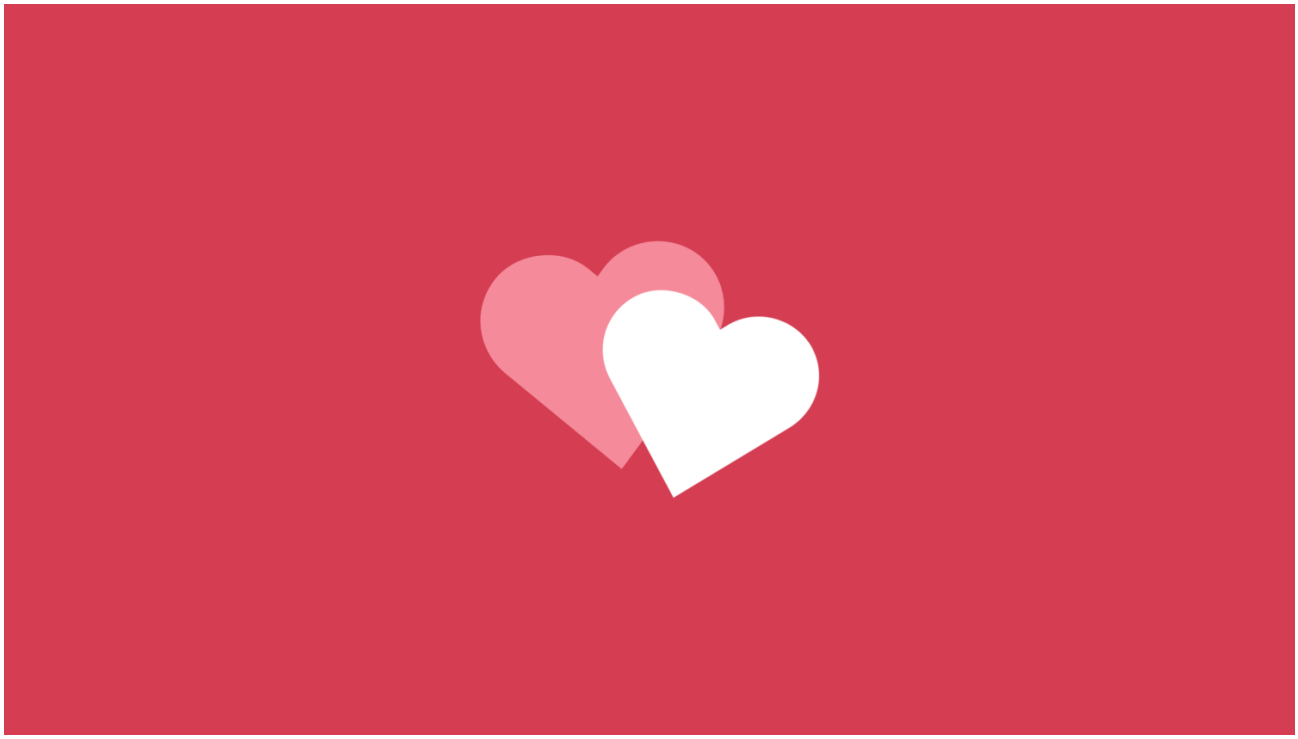
LOVE AND WORK TRANSITION CHECKLIST BY BILL BRIDGES

The author, teacher and consultant, William Bridges, recently passed away. He transformed the way people thought about life's transitions. His landmark book, Transitions: Making Sense of Life Changes, acted as a sort of how-to-manual in the 80's for people who found themselves burnt out in their job, in the middle of divorces, grieving a parent, and overwhelmed with new children.



Love and work: a transition checklist

- [ ] 1. Take your time. The outer forms of our lives can change in an instant, but the inner reorientation that brings us back into a vital relation to people and activity takes time.This does not mean that everything must come to a total standstill as you wait for self renewal. But it does mean that your commitments, either to the old situation that you haven't yet left for the new situation that you haven't yet invested yourself in are going to be somewhat provisional. And it means that you cannot rush the inner process whereby this state of affairs will change.

- [ ] 2. Arrange temporary structures. You will need to work out ways of going on while the inner work is being done. This may involve getting a temporary job while you look for a real job; it may involve agreements at home or at work to carry on in some modified fashion until something more permanent can be devised, or it may simply involve an inner resolve to accept a given situation as temporary and to transfer some energy to the job of finding a replacement for it.

- [ ] 3. Don't act for the sake of action. The temporary situation is frustrating and there is likely to be a temptation to “do something–anything.” This reaction is understandable, but it usually leads to more difficulty. The transition process requires not only that we bring a chapter of our lives to conclusion, but that we discover whatever we need to learn for the next step we are going to take.

- [ ] 4. Recognize why you are uncomfortable. Distress is not a sign that something has gone wrong but that something is changing. Understanding the transition process, expecting times of anxiety, expecting others to be threatened, expecting old fears to be awakened–all of these things are very important...

- [ ] 5. Take care of yourself in little ways. This is probably not the time to be living up to your highest self-image, although it is time to keep your agreements carefully. Be sensitive to your smallest needs and don't force change on yourself as though it were medicine. Find the little continuities that are important when everything else seems to be changing...

- [ ] 6. Explore the other side of the change. Some changes are chosen and some are not, and each kind of transition has its own difficulties. If you have not chosen a change, there are a dozen reasons to refuse to see its possible benefits–for by seeing such benefits you may undercut your anger at whoever forced the change on you, or you may realize that the old situation wasn't all that you thought it was.

- [ ] 7. Get someone to talk to. Whether you choose a professional counselor or just a good friend, you will need someone to talk to when you're going through an important transition in your work-life or your relationships. What you primarily need it is not advice, although that may occasionally be useful, but rather to put into words your dilemmas and your feelings so that you can fully understand what's going on.

- [ ] 8. Find out what is waiting in the wings of your life. Whether you chose your change or not, there are unlimited potentialities within you, interests and talents that you have not yet explored. Transitions clear the ground for new growth. They drop the curtain so that the stage can be set for a new scene.

- [ ] 9. Use this transition as the impetus to a new kind of learning. You knew much of what you needed to know for what you were, but what you are going to become will require new understandings and new skills that you may not yet possess. Edward Gibbon wrote that "every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second more personal and important, from himself." This transition point in your life may well be the time to launch that second education–or to begin it again, for while the first education follows a fixed curriculum to a stopping point, the second education opens out into new areas at every turning point.

- [ ] 10. Recognize that transition has a characteristic shape. Arnold Toynbee pointed out years ago in The Study of History that societies gain access to new energies and new directions only after a "time of troubles" initiates a process of disintegration where in the old order comes apart; and he showed how often the new orientation is made clear only after what he calls a "withdrawal and return" on the part of individuals or creative minorities within the society. The crucial change, it seems, takes place in some in between state or outside the margin of ordinary life. That is so with individual lives as well: Things end, there is a time of fertile emptiness, and then things begin a new.

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