

From Darkness to Light



*Learning to Adapt to Change
&
Move Through Transition*

María Tomás-Keegan

Welcome!

One of the questions I get asked most often is, "Why is change so hard?" Some people welcome change for the opportunities it brings, while others duck and take cover. And sometimes it just depends on how big the change is before we decide how to react.

I'm reminded of a wonderful quote by M. Ferguson:

*"It's not so much that we're afraid of change, or so in love with the old ways,
but it's the place in between that we fear...
It's like being between trapezes.
It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer.
There's nothing to hold on to."*

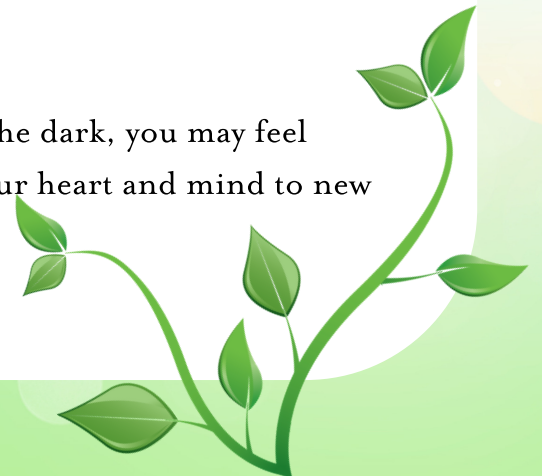
It's human nature to fear the unknown. We're taught that being in control is a good thing. There is a sense of safety and security. Yet, the truth is, there is so much in life that is outside of our control.

When a major life event turns your world upside down, you don't know which end is up or what to expect next. It's difficult to plan when you don't know what to plan for.

That can lead you into darkness. Some describe this place as a black hole, where there is no light. Others describe it as a dark tunnel—they can see light at both ends. They don't want to go back where they came from, and they are not sure how to move forward to the light at the other end.

My intention for writing this short book is to share what I know about change and transition—the difference between them and the choices we get to make when change happens.

I hope to shed some light where there may be darkness. In the dark, you may feel uncertain and fearful. As we shine the light, it may open your heart and mind to new possibilities that come through change and transition.



What is Change?

Change is typically caused by some external event. It could be something expected, like a career move that you planned or knowing that your children are grown and will be leaving the nest soon.

Change can also be unexpected—something that came out of the blue. Perhaps it's notice from your landlord that he's selling the house you're renting that requires you to move in 30 days, or the sudden loss of a loved one.

There are so many things in life that change for us. Big changes that take us out at the knees and knock the breath out of us. Small changes that are easier to roll with and adapt to. One of the laws of life is that there will be change.

Change can happen one at a time, or it can require things to shift in multiple areas of your life. A divorce, for instance, whether you initiated it, or it was thrust upon you, can change your sense of identity, your finances, your living arrangements, and your relationships with family and friends.

Your health may also become affected by a change like this. How you perform at work may be affected. This can become very overwhelming and lead you into a dark place.

*Growth is painful.
Change is painful.
But nothing is as painful
as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong.*

~ Mandy Hale



Why is Change So Challenging?

Resistance is a major contributor to the challenge. Asking questions like, "Why me?" can add to the frustration and anxiety you feel.

Sometimes there are no answers for the question why. If change is one of the laws of life, learning to expect it, rather than resist it, can lead you down a path of less resistance. Even though you may not know what the next change will be, building your resilience to the inevitable nature of change can serve you well.

It takes enormous energy to adapt to change. There may be times when your energy is drained, leaving you with less capacity to deal with it. You may feel overloaded with responsibilities as a result, leaving you overwhelmed and feeling stuck in one place.

There may be people around you who are also mired in the change and they are depending on you to be strong, have all the answers, and provide direction—when you may not have a clue what to do next. You may feel pressured to “fix” everything for others, when you are struggling to make sense of it all yourself.

One of the most important things to recognize when there is change, is that it takes some time to adapt. Allowing yourself space to step back, breathe, and assess the situation so you can explore reactions, responses and solutions to the change is worthy of your time.

Consider this. It's a favorite quote of mine from Emily Maroutian:

You're Not Stuck.

*You're just committed to certain patterns of behavior
because they helped you in the past.*

*Now those behaviors have become more harmful than helpful.
The reason why you can't move forward is because you keep applying
an old formula to a new level in your life.
Change the formula to get a different result.*



Why is it Important to Adapt to Change?

You can choose to adapt to change or not. If not, you may be choosing to sit back and watch while things change around you, which could make you feel anxious, disconnected, and out of control.

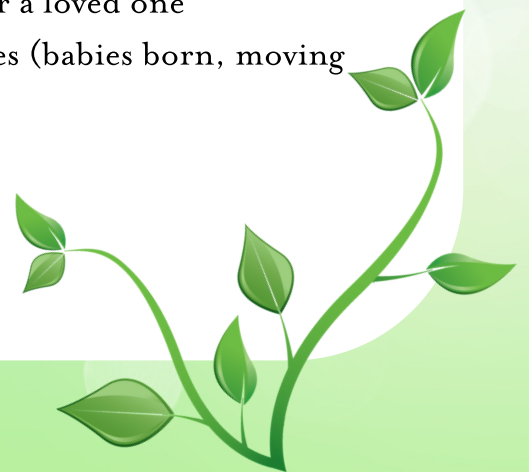
Or you could resist change and feel resentful, victimized and angry. It's a choice we each get to make.

When I think of adapting to change, the chameleon comes to mind. Some species are highly adaptive for a variety of reasons. When they are threatened, some chameleons can change their colors to blend into their environment. If they are feeling aggressive, their colors may become vibrant to ward off their enemy. Some can turn black in the cool of the morning sun to absorb more heat. Later, in the heat of the day, they can turn a light grey to reflect light. They adapt to the changing world around them in an attempt to survive.

Although that's a dramatic example, you may also feel the need to survive when a major life change turns your world upside down. You may feel the need to fight to get yourself back to a new normal.

What are some of the life events that can threaten your sense of harmony and balance?

- Job loss
- Moving
- Company re-organization
- Relationship breakups
- Loss of a loved one
- Health challenges
- Empty nest
- Caregiving for a loved one
- Family changes (babies born, moving away)
- Retirement



This is obviously not an exhaustive list, but it covers what I believe are the top ten life events that can knock us down and lay us out for a while.

Many of us have experienced more than one of these changes—I know I have. With each one, you might feel a wave of emotions, like fear, anger, blame, and grief. You may feel like your sense of security and control are destroyed.

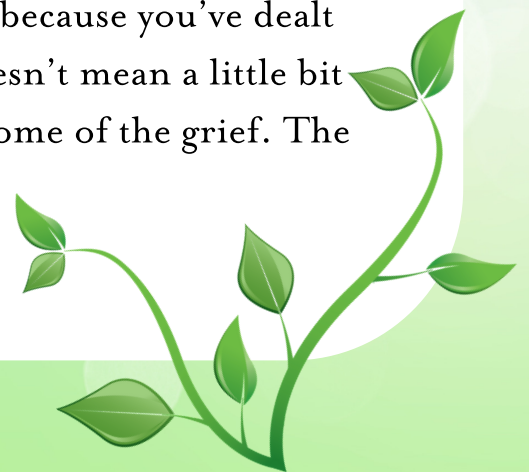
Chaos and disorder often follow. There may be discomfort and uncertainty. That is to say—if you allow it. Back to the point earlier about choice.

Don't get me wrong, those feelings are there to teach you something, so don't ignore them. Brushing them under the rug will only delay the inevitable.

They will come out as huge dust-bunnies at some point—no sense in delaying the clean-up. May as well get to the job of dealing with the emotions before you move on to learning the skills that will help you adapt to change.

When there is a change in the air, you can choose to embrace it and step into it because with change comes new opportunities. There is growth when you adapt to change. You can use it to build self-confidence. Make change work FOR you, so you can build resilience and acceptance because both are remarkably powerful skills to have in your treasure chest as you learn to adapt.

With all those emotions that can come with change, you can re-frame all that fear, anger, blame and grief into something else. Just because you've dealt with those emotions, felt them and released them, doesn't mean a little bit of that fear doesn't come back to haunt. Maybe even some of the grief. The doubt and uncertainty, for sure.



When it does, you can use your power to choose to think about it differently. Turn it into something else, for instance, a feeling of excitement—for the new opportunities, your growth, and your growing self-confidence.

Re-framing emotions that can take you down for the count, is a great way to turn that pit-in-your-stomach-feeling into something that will serve you, rather than derail you.



How Can You Adapt to Change with Dignity and Grace?

Why dignity and grace? Doing something with dignity and grace means to me that you do it in a manner that is worthy of honor and respect, and you do it with elegance and good will.

Again, you have a choice to stare down change and put your hands out—arms rigid and fully extended—to push it back, or you can open your arms and allow the change to transform you for the better. That's dignity and grace.

Think about which way feels best to you.

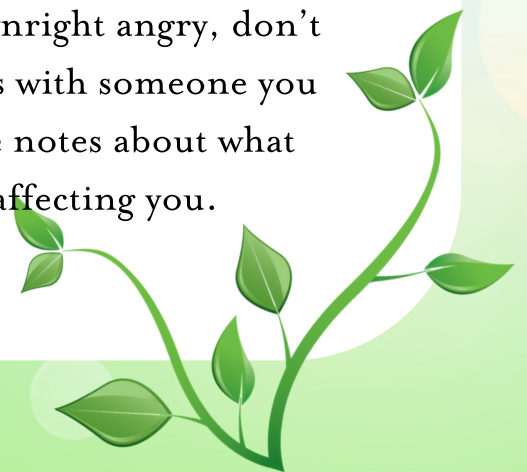
Let me share 5 strategies to help you adapt to change with dignity and grace:

1. Accept the Change

Let the shock wear off. Don't duck and take cover. Face it head-on. Allow your emotions to flow through so you can get on the other side of them with more perspective. Choose to be the victor, rather than the victim. Approach the change in a way that allows you to look yourself in the mirror and like what you see. Dignity.

2. Face What Scares You

Whether it is fear, the uncertainty, or you're just downright angry, don't allow all that to paralyze you. Talk about your feelings with someone you trust will listen and tell you the truth. Jot down some notes about what you're feeling, so you gain self-awareness of how it's affecting you.



Writing can bring clarity. Step back and gain perspective about your emotions. What's the worst thing that can happen? Is it likely? Or, are you blowing it out of proportion?

3. Change How You Look at Things

Perspective is your friend. What if this change was your idea? How would you react then? Not everything is within your control, but some things are — especially your choices about how to react to the change around you. Examine how you've behaved in the past when a change has flipped you on your head. What did you do well? What could you have done better? Look for the unexpected gems that come from those times when things have changed.

4. Build Resilience, Not Resistance

Allow the change to make you stronger, more resilient. Learn from each experience with change, so the next one doesn't take you down for the count. At least, not for long. Learning from your past strengthens you and allows you to use the strategies again and again. Since life is designed to change, you'll need that arsenal at the ready.

5. Don't Be a Lone Wolf

Ask for help. Create a support network around you, what I like to call your Personal Board of Directors. Seek people who have been through what you're going through. Allow them to reveal the truth, share trust, and bring objectivity. Take solace in the fact that you're not alone.



What is Transition?

Transition is the process you go through as you navigate change. It is the journey that takes you from where you are today, and who you are today, to where you will land as a result of the change. It is almost always an emotional journey, at the very least. It can be a spiritual and physical journey, as well.

Transition is that period of time during which you react and adapt to the life circumstances that have changed.

It comes in phases, which can take some time to navigate, depending on the scope of the change and the complexities of the transition. It also matters how committed you are to trust the process so you can move through it at your own pace—always taking small steps forward.



What are the Phases of Transition?

If you've done any research on this subject of transition, you'll find that there are a number of answers to this question. All of them are valid descriptions of the journey.

Through my own experience and working through it with my clients, I believe the transition journey looks something like this:

Phase One—Wearing a Mask

You recognize that something is happening, and you need to make a change so you can breathe freely again. It feels scary and you're not sure what lies ahead. You wear a mask showing everyone around you that you are just fine—while deep inside you're not. This is the first place where your comfort zone gets tested.

Phase Two—I Can Handle Anything

The mask works for a while, but you realize more might be needed to protect yourself from the unknown. So, you don a full suit of armor of protection, pretending that you can handle anything that comes your way. A new realization sets in.



Phase Three—The Mask Cracks

Try as you might, if you're serious about walking this transition path, you can't hold back what is bursting through. The mask (even the suit of armor) will begin to crack—from the inside out. This is a time of deep reflection.

Phase Four—All Mixed Up

You can no longer deny the emotions that come through the cracks. Learning to recognize them, believing that they bear gifts for you, and learning what they have to teach is an important part of the journey. Your heart begins to open to the possibilities.

Phase Five—From Coping to Surviving

Instead of going through the motions, pretending you are okay, you see there is more on the horizon. You become excited at the prospect, inspired by the insights. You start to move forward, looking through the windshield, rather than the rearview mirror. A vision emerges.

Phase Six—Change: Are You Ready for Me?

You become filled with anticipation as you create a vision that tickles your imagination. Your faith strengthens. You believe in the transition you're designing. It feels like springtime and you are the new bloom coming through the soil or the caterpillar turned into a beautiful butterfly. Transformation begins.



Phase Seven—The Stuff that Dreams are Made Of

With tools in your treasure chest, you are ready to take the passionate actions to complete your vision. Those tools are at-the-ready for the next time there is an upside-down moment in your way of peace, joy, and happiness. Now, that's the stuff that dreams are made of.

I have found that these phases ebb and flow, much like the stages of grief. Just when you think you've gotten through the first couple and you're on your way, something happens, and you find that you're right back where you started.

Take heart. It only means that there is something more for you to learn and your visit won't take so long.

It is truly like an ocean wave. It's easier if you go with the flow than try to swim against the tide.



What are the Obstacles to a Successful Transition?

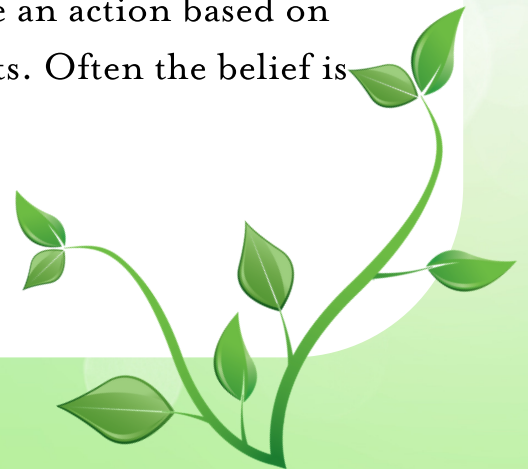
What we believe is true can often be a roadblock to moving through a transition. Beliefs are thoughts and statements that you perceive as reality, whether or not they are true for you today.

Beliefs come from experiences, assumptions and values. Something happens to you and you make up a belief that makes sense of what happened. Often these are embedded in your subconscious and you're not aware of them until something happens to bring it forward and allow you to challenge it.

Some examples of beliefs you might hold which can stop you in your tracks:

- I'm not good enough
- I have to please people for them to love me
- I'm not worthy
- If people really knew me, they wouldn't like or love me
- I can't make money doing what I love
- I have to get a 'real job' to pay the bills
- I'm too young/old
- I'm not smart enough

The belief or thought stimulates a feeling. You choose an action based on how you feel, and those actions generate certain results. Often the belief is so ingrained you don't even notice it.



As you grow through the process of transition, the beliefs that once protected you start to get in your way. You may believe that you are not smart enough or not good enough to accomplish something, when others can see very clearly that is not true.

Your beliefs can become a major obstacle to adapting to change and moving through transition.

Fears work much like beliefs. As a child you may have been bullied by your peers for the way you danced at a school prom. This may lead you to give up on your dream of becoming a ballerina, because of the fear that you're not good enough.

Fears can also come up when you are moving into unfamiliar territory. As you transition into a new lifestyle, career or relationship, you may find the need to challenge old ways of thinking. You may need to face some fears and do it anyway.

Along with beliefs and fears comes that all important self-talk. Those little voices in your head, which can get very loud and screechy at times, have the power to sabotage you at every step if you're not listening or paying attention to your reaction to them.

Learning to manage the chatter and giving those voices new things to say is a critical tool in overcoming the limiting beliefs and fears that keep you stuck.



Strategies for Moving Through Transition

The same strategies for adapting to change, shared earlier in this book, can definitely be applied here. The first being a great place to start: Recognize that something has changed and accept it, seeking the lessons you can learn. In addition, here are a few more strategies that may help.

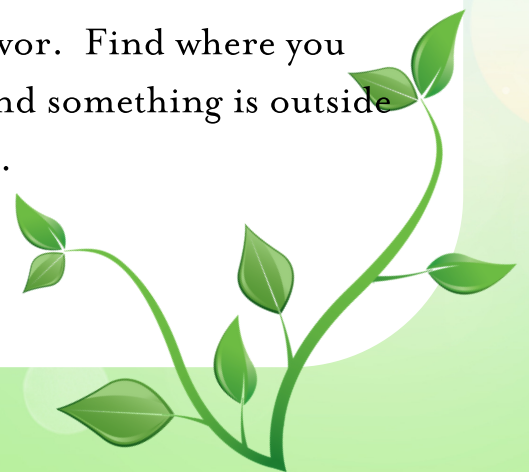
Get the support you need so you don't feel like you're doing this major life change alone. I can't over emphasize the importance of creating a network of people who have your back as you work through the limiting beliefs and fears, listen to all the inner chatter and notice that your mask is cracking, and it scares you.

Understand the implications of the change so you can become informed. If there are questions for which you need answers, seek the answers from trusted sources, so you can make smart choices and decisions.

Weigh the options, the pros and cons. Understand what works for you and what doesn't. Use your network—your Personal Board of Directors—to help you assess your situation with objectivity.

Take control of that which is within your control and release the rest. Easier said than done, I know that well. But a worthy endeavor. Find where you can impact the situation and move forward. If you find something is outside your power to control, don't waste your energy there.

More on this concept of control in the next chapter.



Lastly, and it should always come first, take care of yourself. Start with the things we take for granted and are often the first things we give short shrift.

Get enough rest, eat really good foods to sustain your energy, and move your body in the best ways that suit you.

Please don't underestimate the importance of self-care when you're experiencing a life-changing event which leads to a major transition for you.



Take Control Where You Can

I know you know this, yet many of us (especially women) want to “fix” everything, which causes us to want to control things that are outside our control. It's a frustrating and losing battle.

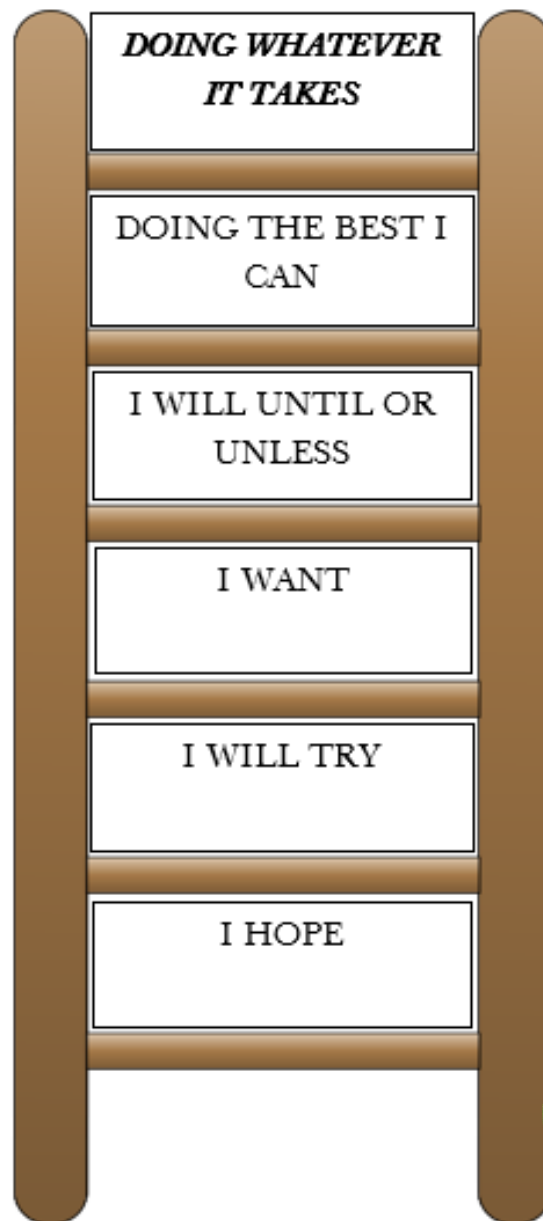
With that in mind, here is a simple reminder of some things that are totally within your control. Focus on these instead.



Assess Your Commitment

Once you decide what you can control as you adapt to the changing circumstances and you choose how to transition through it, I suggest you also contemplate your level of commitment to making the shifts you want.

Here is another simple graphic to help you determine your commitment. Start from the bottom. On which rung of the ladder are you?



Are you moving through this change hoping for the best?

With a wish and a prayer?

Or are you doing whatever it takes to make the change you want to make?

Many of us are somewhere in the middle, and it depends on the day. And that is perfectly okay.

This is just a simple way to assess where you are and to keep you on the track you set for yourself. Happy climbing!



What Actions Can You Take When You Find Yourself in the Midst of Change and Transition?

When life events knock you to your knees, you may need a little help to get back up and find the bridge that takes you from where you are today to where you want to go, so you can become who you want to be.

The best thing you can do when this happens is find a guide to make your journey easier.

Just for women like you, I designed a system compiled from my personal, business, mentoring and coaching experience and education. It includes techniques that will create a firm foundation from which to move forward.

I call it 5 Petals of Power.

There are tools and strategies at each stage that you can learn and adapt to your unique circumstance. Then you can put them into your own treasure chest to access at any time in the future.

These tested techniques have helped many women put the pieces of their lives back together again in a new way.



What I know for sure is life events will continue to happen. When you learn to adapt to these events in ways that feel right, you will be prepared for anything life throws at you in the future.

It's how you can step into your power.



Discover Who You Are Today

5 Petals of Power is designed to offer transformational experiences that turn you from upside down to right side up, while you reduce the overwhelm, regain your confidence and renew your spirit, so you can see clearly the possibilities your next chapter can reveal.

Using the 5 Petals of Power system you can grow—from the inside out. It will give you permission to nurture yourself with kindness and teach you to thrive.

Discover who you are today, so you can move forward from there.

In 5 Petals of Power, you will move gently through a process of discovery, recovery and stepping into your natural confidence. Here's how it flows:

Find Your Footing

Participate in an exploratory activity to discover how life has changed for you. In this personal self-assessment, you will understand what has happened, how you got here and where you are now so you can begin to create a firm foundation—your footing—from which you can move forward in confidence. Then, embrace the importance of having a support system and create your own unique Board of Directors.



Clear Your Path

Obstacles and barriers—they can hold you back, cause you to take a detour or stop you in your tracks. We'll begin to uncover what roadblocks you may be experiencing before we start an eye-opening self-assessment, exploring ten life areas, perhaps some for the first time. This will likely uncover where there are obstacles and barriers to finding a new path in your life, now that events have turned your world upside down.

Create Your Roadmap

This Petal is focused on what you want your new life to be. What is your vision? Where are you? Who is with you? What color are you wearing? The deeper the detail the better the road map. And to ensure that this is expressed by you in the most positive terms that honor who you really are and what you really want, we will explore the power of “I Am” and Core Values. You will be amazed at what is possible for you.

Uncover Your Voice

What are the voices inside your head saying as you think about your obstacles and your vision of the future? Are they saying positive things? Or negative things? In this Petal, you'll discover how to suspend disbelief, the power of self-talk (when done to support you rather than sabotage you), and the golden thread in creating affirmative expressions of your new-found belief system and values. This is pure magic, my friends, and the wind beneath the wings of your roadmap.



You Take Flight

What good is having a rock-solid foundation if you don't have a strategy and a plan to make it happen? That unobstructed path you cleared, the road map you created, your crystal-clear vision of where you want to go, and those great intentions and affirming thoughts in your head, will just be beautiful words and pictures until you have a plan.

Discover these powerful techniques and tactics to create your plan of action to make the dream happen.

Some might say this is where the rubber meets the road. I say this is where you spread your incredible wings and take flight. It is where all the hard work starts to pay off.

This is where your passion meets your motivation—nicknamed “action planning on steroids.”



A Final Thought

If following a system like this feels like something you'd like to explore further, consider scheduling a private and complimentary chat to learn how it might work for you and your circumstance.

Go to: ChatWithMaria.com/DiscoverySession

It would be my pleasure to help you discover how you can make change work FOR you, instead of letting it happen to you.

Remember, I'm just the bridge and the guide. Your intention and commitment to adapting to change and moving through transition is the choice you get to make.



About the Author

María Tomás-Keegan is a Career & Life Coach for Women, specializing in transitions—what she calls “the Upside Downs of Life.”

Her 30-year career in corporate management, coupled with her experience of personal life-changing events along the way, has evolved into compassion for women who feel they need to be super-human. Family, friends, community, and career make for a very full plate, and many women feel the need to be perfect at all of it, all the time.

You are not alone!

When life events turn you upside down, there is an alternative to putting on a mask, pretending you're just fine, while you crumble inside. Having tools in your treasure chest, and putting strategies into practice, can prepare you for any major life event. When you stumble, you can make it part of your dance, and there can be someone to catch you.

Her new book, *Upside Down to Right Side Up: Turning Transition into Triumph*, is just one way she shares her experience and strategies.

You can check out her book here: [*Go to: Amazon*](#)





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