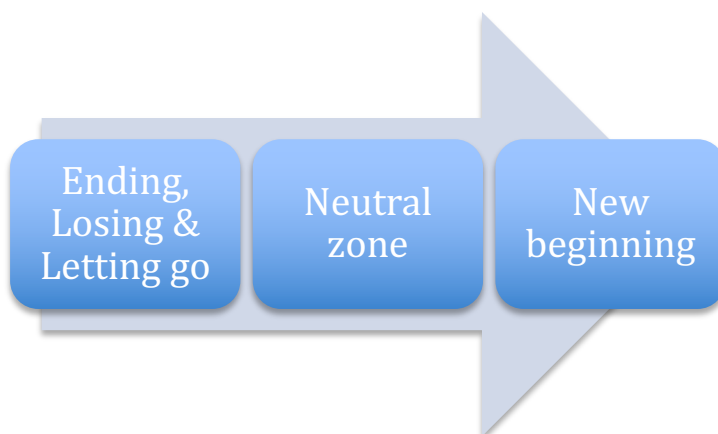


Bridges' Transition Model for Mentoring

The main strength of Bridges' model is that it focuses on transition, not change. The difference between these is subtle but important. Change is something that happens to people, even if they don't agree with it. Transition, on the other hand, is internal: it's what happens in people's minds as they go through change. Change can happen very quickly, while transition usually occurs more slowly.

The model highlights three stages of transition that people go through when they experience change. These are:



People will go through each stage at their own pace. For example, those who are comfortable with the change will most likely move ahead to stage three quickly, while others will linger at stages one or two.

In a mentoring relationship a mentor can support a mentee through change and transition following this model;

- to help the mentee to understand which stage of transition they are currently in and acknowledge their feelings as normal in a crisis
- as a framework to reflect on the type of support the mentee needs at this time.

Stage 1: Ending, Losing, and Letting Go

The mentee will enter this initial stage of transition when first presented with change. This stage is often marked with resistance and emotional upheaval because they are being forced to let go of something that they are comfortable with and this is the time a mentor can help the mentee deal with their losses.

At this stage, the mentee may experience these emotions:

Fear	Denial	Anger	Sadness
Disorientation	Frustration	Uncertainty	A sense of loss

Generally, there has to be an acceptance that something is ending for acceptance of the new idea. If emotions are not acknowledged, the mentee may resist the entire change process.

Supporting the mentee through stage one

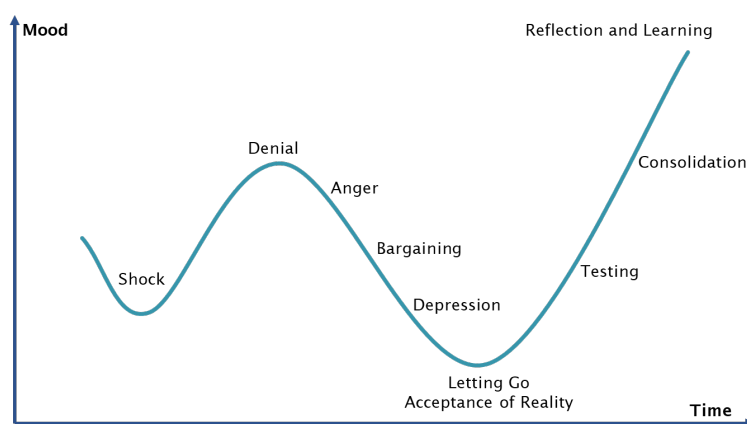
It's important to accept the mentee's resistance and understand their emotions. Allow them time to accept the change and let go and try to get them to talk about what they are feeling. In these conversations, make sure that you listen empathically and support them in understanding their emotions.

It may be a fear of what they don't understand, so the more you can focus them on a positive outcome, and how they can utilise their knowledge and skills, the likelier they are to move on to the next stage.

In the extreme times of a pandemic, these might include feelings such as:

- The world has changed
- Losing the sense of 'normal'
- Having lost connection with others
- Fearing the future, economic depression, loss of life etc.
- Some of this is 'anticipatory grief' and we are grieving on a micro and macro level

They may well go through several stages of grief as shown below.



Techniques a mentor can use in the 'Letting go' stage include:

- Understanding that 'anticipatory grief' is really anxiety – and helping them to find balance
- Helping the mentee stay in the present

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- Encouraging them to let go of what can't be controlled and practise acceptance
 - Using your compassionate empathy when you listen, to help the mentee to name their emotions and acknowledge them

Stage 2: The Neutral Zone

In this stage, the mentee may be confused, uncertain, and impatient. Depending on how well the change has been managed, they may also experience a higher workload as they get used to new systems and new ways of working.

Think of this phase as the bridge between the old and the new; in some ways, they will still be attached to the old, while they are also trying to adapt to the new.

The mentee might experience:

- Resentment towards the change initiative
- Low morale and low productivity, and maybe even depression
- Anxiety about their role, status or identity

Despite these, this stage can also be one of great creativity, innovation, and renewal. This is a great time to encourage the mentee to try new ways of thinking or working i.e. developing adaptive capacity.

Supporting through stage two

A mentor's support is incredibly important as the mentee goes through this neutral period. This can be an uncomfortable time, because it can seem unproductive, and it can seem that little progress is being made.

Because they might feel a bit lost, focus them on their direction, reviewing their original mentoring objectives, and encouraging them to talk about what they are feeling.

It's also important to set short-term goals during this stage, so that they can experience some quick wins; this will help to improve motivation as well as helping them have a more positive perception of the change effort.

Mentees can develop adaptive capacity through:

- A willingness to engage continuously with a diverse range of people
- The ability to observe, listen and recalibrate their views
- The willingness to learn from all situations
- A willingness to experiment and take risks
- By embracing diversity and inclusiveness

The mentor can support through this period of temporary flux by:

- Encouraging experimentation
- Supporting the mentee's innovation in creating coping mechanisms

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- Helping the mentee to embrace the losses but remaining motivated to try out new ways of working and socialising
 - Helping the mentee to develop an 'uncertainty capability' – supporting them to frame situations so they can deal with them

Mentors can help the mentee reframe the situations they might find themselves in by discussing them.

- Learning – what can I learn from this challenge?
- Game – accepting that frustration is all part of the game. Rather than beating ourselves up when we lose something, see that while we may lose today, we could win tomorrow
- Gratitude – recognise all that you already have
- Randomness – a lot of life is random. What happens to me isn't always my doing
- Obstacles – are the way forward!

Stage 3: The New Beginning

The last transition stage is a time of acceptance and energy. As the mentee begins to embrace the change initiative, they are building the skills they need to work successfully in the new way, and they're starting to see early wins from their efforts. They have begun to embrace new ways of being, working and living.

At this stage, they are likely to experience:

- High energy
- Openness to learning
- Renewed commitment to their team or their role

Mentoring through stage three

As the mentee begins to adopt the change, it's essential that the mentor supports them in sustaining the change, helping them to recognise stories of success brought about by the change and to celebrate their movement. This might be achieved through:

- Supporting the development of new ways of working and living
- Helping to create a revised purpose or vision, if appropriate
- Providing challenge, feedback and a reality check
- Celebrating successes!

The Transition Model was created by change consultant, William Bridges, published in his 1991 book "Managing Transitions."