

Life Transitions:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

Life never stays the same. There are several stages with unique challenges that make each one memorable. As new parents you add new responsibilities and a baby to your life while trying to establish yourselves as a couple. This new role means sharing your partner with someone else so make sure you talk to each other, have a date night, and share your struggles. Adjustment is easier when you know what challenges exist.

The next stage is the teen years and the bid for independence. This coincides with financial concerns such as maintaining a home, supporting the family, preparing for college, and possibly helping an elderly parent. Know that the caregiver role for your child is starting to end. To prepare your child for adulthood, teach him/her about financial and personal responsibility and be open with your spouse about any conflicts you have about letting go.

Next is sending your child off to college, career, or marriage. You are no longer the parent/controller but a friend/advisor. If this is your last child it may mean reconnecting with your spouse since the previous years have been focused on your child(ren). You might also be adding the role of caregiver for a parent. Keep in mind as you struggle with your changing roles, your parent is also struggling with his/her loss of independence. Be patient, include your parent in decisions when possible, ask siblings and friends for help, and be honest about your feelings.

The last stage is retirement where some have a loss of identity because they no longer work while others find new beginnings. To make the transition successful, consciously look for things to do. Resurrect an old hobby or find a new one. Travel to visit family and spend time with your grandchildren. If you can't travel, call them on the phone or use email. Stay connected and interested and you will find a whole new world.

(Source: Magellan Health Services www.magellanassist.com/mem/library)

References / Resources:

www.aarp.org – American Association of Retired Persons – many articles on retirement, life changes, boomerang generation, and role transitions

www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Life-Transitions.aspx - information from Evangelical Lutheran Church of America on various life transitions – tips for churches & members

www.focusonthefamily.com/ - Focus on the Family – search 'life transitions'

www.adolescenthealth.org/The_Healthy_Student.pdfControl - Society for Adolescent Medicine – tips for parents and college students