

RESOURCES

To learn more about Seasons of Change, you can purchase Carol McClelland's book at:

<http://www.transitiondynamics.com/books/index.html>

The Empty Nest Moms website provides a wonderful avenue to meet others dealing with the Empty Nest Transitions, featuring a magazine, message board, chat room, as well as many other resources.

<http://www.emptynestmoms.com>

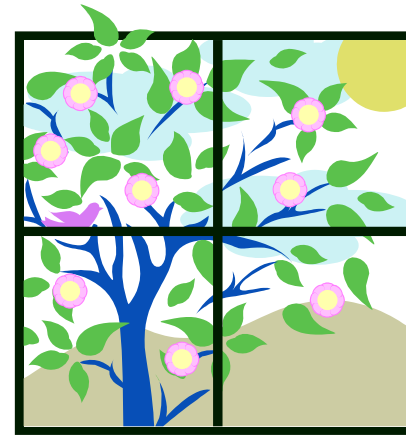
If you are struggling with finding your way through the Empty Nest Transition, coaching can help you move beyond the dark days and create a fulfilling, purposeful life. If you're interested in seeing whether coaching can help you with this difficult transition, please visit Ellen's website at:

<http://www.familytransitionscoaching.com>

The founder of [Family Transitions Coaching](http://www.familytransitionscoaching.com), and the coach for the [Empty Nest Moms](http://www.emptynestmoms.com) webgroup, Ellen is committed to helping women not only survive but thrive during this difficult period. With a Ph.D. in Family Psychology and certified as a Seasons of Change Transition coach, she helps her clients to move beyond the sadness and create purposeful, filling lives.

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Understanding the Empty Nest Transition



*With the help of the tree outside my window and
the Seasons of Change*

By

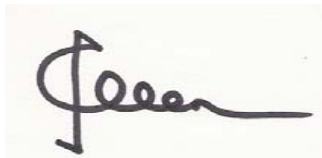
Ellen Neiley Ritter, Ph.D.

All transitions are difficult but for many of us, none has a greater impact than the Empty Nest Transition. Even though we always knew our children would eventually leave, we are not prepared for how much this change impacts us, and aren't sure how to get through the sadness and use this time to redefine our new roles and create lives which will be fulfilling.

As a transition coach, I have found that Carol McClelland's *Season of Change* theory provides a wonderful model to not only help to explain the transition process but also identify the different steps you can take to make this transaction a more positive, purposeful experience.

As McClelland suggests, we can use nature's wisdom to help us to best deal with life's inevitable changes. Outside my window is a majestic sugar maple tree which has served to illustrate my own journey through difficult transition, symbolizing the seasons of change. It is my hope that this booklet will increase your understanding of transitions and how you can use nature's lessons to help you with this difficult transition.

If you have any questions, please feel free to [contact me](#) or join our regularly scheduled [Empty Nest Mom's Transitions Chats](#).



FALL



As the days get shorter, my tree slowly begins to change, its leaves showing the first signs of color, until it becomes a mixture of brilliant colors glowing in the sun, before falling away.

Fall is the season when you begin to realize that change is coming, that summer is ending and winter is coming.

Are you in Fall?

I am worrying about the future.

I am looking at options, starting to consider what I want to do.

I feel as though I am waiting, know that things will be changing in the near future.

I am anxious about change.

TASKS FOR THIS STAGE

Acknowledge that things are about to change and begin to prepare.

Take stock of where you are now and where you hope to go.

Start thinking about what brings you pleasure or makes you feel fulfilled and get involved. Join a club, begin to develop a hobby, think about volunteering, or going back to school.

Connect with old friends, go out with your spouse, develop a support system.

Enjoy the time that is left. Don't let the anxiety or fear keep you from enjoying this time with your child.

WINTER



My tree sits on the hill, alone, its branches now filled only with snow. While it shows no outward signs of growth, inside it is busy storing up its energy so it can burst forth when the time comes, ready to once again show its splendor .

Early Winter days are dark and depressing as you try to make sense of the change and its impact. While this is a time of confusion, the turning point or Winter Solstice, occurs when you let go of the old, open your mind to new insights and possibilities.

Are you in Winter?

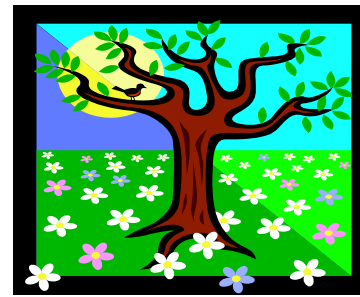
I keep crying or feeling sad.

I am confused and want time for myself, just to think.

I feel stuck, filled with doubts.

I'm starting to get new insight into my future.

SPRING



Buds begin to emerge at the tips of the branches, swelling, and finally bursting with new leaves of a glorious bright green, suggesting the potential glory of the tree that is to come again. New birds begin bringing in the materials that they need to build their new nest.

Spring is the time of new growth and possibilities. It is the time to let your insights begin to come forward, to begin create the life you want.

Are you in Spring?

I am beginning to act on my insights and plans for the future.

I am feeling full of energy, excited about the possibilities.

I am trying new things, new roles in my life.

I am feeling uneasy about the new things in my life.

TASKS FOR THIS STAGE

Give yourself permission to mourn your child leaving. Acknowledging and accepting these feelings is a part of the process of letting go. †

Don't fill your time with obligations which may become energy drainers or distract you from taking the time to focus on what type of life you hope to create. Busy is not always the best way.

Instead, stop and reflect, consider all possibilities. Challenge "shoulds" and old perceptions by asking yourself new questions. Remember, if you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always gotten.

If you become "stuck" in this stage, think of reaching out for help. Journaling, reading inspirational books, talking with a coach or others, all can help in this process.

† If you find that the sadness becomes overwhelming or doesn't begin to lessen, consider talking with a mental health professional.

TASKS FOR THIS STAGE

Filled with insight into the life you want to create, now is the time to begin figuring out how to achieve those.

Trust your own sense of timing! Don't rush into new roles until you are ready. There is no "right time" to come through this difficult transition.

Think outside the box. Explore even those ideas which seem to stretch you, all part of creating a fulfilling, purposeful life.

Find the information you need, and begin developing realistic plans on how to achieve your new goals or roles.

If you find yourself procrastinating or avoiding taking on new roles, don't become frustrated or self-doubting. Instead, stop and examine why. Perhaps you just need to spend more time refining your insights and plans before moving forward.

SUMMER



During summer my tree is in its full glory, its broad branches covered with dark green leaves, providing cool shelter to those underneath, and home to many birds who have come to raise their offspring in the tree.

Summer is the time to celebrate, to enjoy all you have accomplished.

Are you in Summer?
I feel confident.

I feel a sense of clarity about my life purpose.

I am seeing positive results from my efforts.

I feel good about myself and my life.

TASKS FOR THIS STAGE

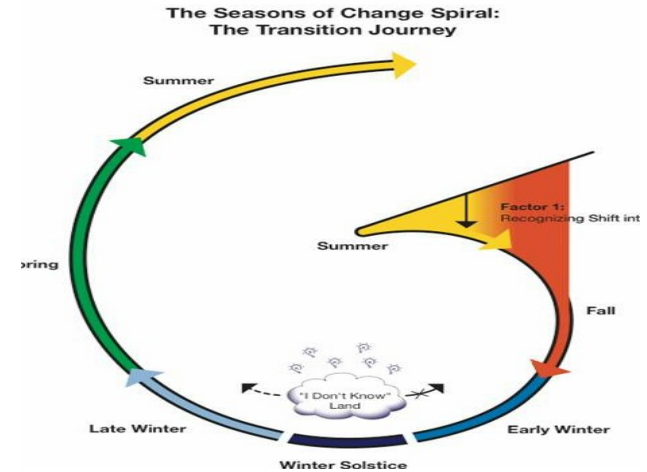
Celebrate! You deserve it! You have taken the time to come through the Empty Nest transition, have taken the time to really consider your future, and have begun to create a life for yourself.

Enjoy who you have become.

Live in the present. While there will be other transitions in your life, now is not the time to worry about them.

Instead, enjoy what you have accomplished, continue to grow, and know that the next time you are faced with a difficult transition, you will be better prepared, knowing that you have successfully come through the seasons of change.

Congratulations!



REMINDERS FOR THE JOURNEY

Take care of yourself! You've taken care of everyone else and you now need and deserve to take care of yourself. Pamper yourself, listen to your body – if you're tired, rest and recharge your energy; if you're feeling stressed, do something relaxing.

Go with the flow! Don't rush through the process or become impatient with yourself if you're not moving forward as quickly as you or others think you should.

Avoid black and white, catastrophic, or negative thinking. As hard as this time may be, believe in the power of positive thinking to make a difference in your perceptions, behaviors, and ability to cope.

If you get stuck, if you find that the journey is too much, reach out to others and get the help you need.

And most importantly, remember that you can not only survive but thrive this difficult transition!