

Jones: Shifting mental gears

By Gail Kauranen Jones/*Transitions: The gifts of change*

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“Live out of your imagination, not your history.”

—Stephen Covey.

Like being in quicksand, we can't always move forward as fast as we like. Feeling “stuck” is a frequent occurrence during any transition. Yet, the more we focus on the quicksand, the longer we stay in it.

“Deal, don't dwell” is a phrase that inspires me to take charge of my life when I confront a challenge. But first I stop to pause—rest and reflection help discern which actions might be appropriate before charging ahead. If we react too quickly, we sometimes end up repeating the same pattern that caused us early discomfort or pain.

Look at the divorce statistics on second marriages, for example. They are significantly higher, by as much as 20 percent some estimate, than our current 50 percent-plus failure rate of first marriages. Taking time to heal between relationships, and create healthier, new patterns of loving, is often advised.

The “waiting” sometimes entails moments of despair, when we lose hope of life becoming more positive. In these moments—and most of us reach them some time during a transition—you have within your power the ability to make mental shifts. In fact, you have about ten seconds to alter a thought from fear to love before spiraling into negativity, some brain scientists suggest.

I call these mental tools used to rewire the brain to more positive outcomes “the three Ds”: **Discipline, Detach or Distract.**

In order to create differently, we need to believe and think differently. Imagining possibilities and feeling the outcome before it actually exists helps us manifest new life stories.

Yet, whenever we go for a new way of being, new intention or new goal, our ego wants to keep us in what is familiar, no matter how uncomfortable it is. Think of quitting

smoking or ending an unhealthy relationship. Even though we know we need to stop, these habits or ways of being are known to us. Risking the new brings forth all our internal saboteurs.

Paradoxically, sometimes the scarier it is to do something differently or more expansively means it is even more “right” for us. Discomfort can signal right livelihood, for example. Or, as Gregg Levoy, author of *Callings*, has said: “If you’re not feeling frightened, it’s probably NOT your calling.”

So, if you hit fear, rather than return to the old ways that no longer work in supporting your new dreams, choose to embrace a mood changer or energy shifter so you can stay centered on the new intention you want to manifest.

DISCIPLINE by: Focusing immediately on what you want (versus what you don’t want). If you just lost your job or a relationship has ended, for example, ask yourself what good could come out of this change. Think about some other part of your self that is longing to be more fully expressed.

DISTRACT by: Doing something that makes you feel good. Go for a walk, sing, take a bath, dance, recall memories of happy moments, hug a child, watch a movie, create a fantastic meal, take a nap, dabble in a hobby, write of a new dream or hope, or share with and inspire another.

DETACH by: Letting go of your ego’s desire to “will” and direct outcomes by avoiding “grasping” behavior which creates more struggle. Trust instead the most fulfilling outcomes manifest when you are clear, focus on what you want, create an open space to allow in opportunities, and wait for inner guidance and direction before taking inspired actions.

Then, when you feel “pulled” again towards a new idea, act on it—even if you take just one step forward. Often, it’s through a series of small steps that bigger outcomes and dreams are created. The incremental steps, in fact, help rewire the brain for success.

Think of each step you take as crossing a bridge from the old to the new desired result. Applaud yourself for your courage in creating anew, moment by moment, versus simply at the final destination.

Gail Kauranen Jones is an author, life coach and workshop leader who has been guiding adults in transition for 18 years. A frequent radio guest on Common Ground (a public affairs program of WZLX, Boston, 100.7 FM), she lives in Topsfield with her two children. Her Web site is: [www. SupportMatters.com](http://www.SupportMatters.com). She can be reached at gailjones@supportmatters.com.