

Change and transition

Topic: Change and transition in work role and identity.

Central Ideas found in the work:

Working Identity by Herminia Ibarra

'Challenging the culture of consumption: Rites of passage and communities of acknowledgement' by Michael White

Changing careers is actually a process of changing identity. Any work changes that we consider undertaking is usually assumed to take a straight forward process of leaving our current job, looking for another and then applying for the new job.

There is a psychological process of transition itself that reveals the confusing and complex nature of change.

This process is more akin to transformation of our identity full of long and tentative exploration, full of false starts and small triumphs.

Reinventing ourselves is not just a decision. It is made from a long process or testing period where initial decisions are revised to become more defined until they take propose realistic choices that we can evaluate.

We can honour the struggle itself and obtain the necessary support of others as a way to sustain ourselves into better choices. Shortcuts to the process can lead you back to where you started from so it is worth tapping into your patience and ease into the process.

Supervision Tips

Move away from introspection and analysis of a new career and start 'doing' differently trying out different actions so you can figure out what you feel, think and want.

Be informed of what each step you take teaches you and that each step helps you to take the next.

Explore the concept of 'possible selves' using a test and learn process so that reflection is prioritised. We are made up of many possibilities not about trying to find and identify with one true self.

Acting in the world gives us information about how we see ourselves through our behaviours. We can reflect on how we adjust as we learn. We can examine ourselves in action rather than staying at a conceptual or analytical level.

It is more important to help yourself to 'stay the course' when you may feel like you are coming 'undone' in order to create your transition letting yourself oscillate between holding on and letting go.

There may be job offers along the way but for full reinvention of your professional identity time is needed as you move yourself from the old to the new.

What will you do to sustain yourself along this path?

Who will support you as you go adventuring?

What will do for yourself to manage strong emotions and challenges to your self identity?

Theoretical Concepts

Parallel Paths (Herminia Ibarra) is about making experiments or side projects and temporary assignments to explore possible career identities. These are not binding assignments and can help you to ascertain your enduring values and preferences.

These side projects can help you to get a feel for a new line or style of working.

The confusing period of 'in-between' or Liminal Space* is part of transitions

Expect to feel confused as you enter into the space of wanting something different for yourself as you head into the unknown possibilities of your career or job role change.

Changing careers or job roles involves our personal identity as well as self image, our relationships, social status, sense of personal agency and responsibility in the world.

How you see the world will shift.

Help in the form of:

Rites of Passage Arnold Van Gennep (1900's)

Van Gennep*, anthropologist and ethnographer identifies three stages of movement from one phase of life into another:

Separation, where you leave behind what you were.

Liminality, or threshold between one thing and another and,
Incorporation, where you fully take on and embody your new identity

Certain positions (or two truths at once) can thrust you into liminality such as:
I do not want to do this work anymore...but what to do next?
I cannot leave this work because of finances yet I know I need to go.
I do not know what exactly to
look for in my next role yet it is time to move on.



Expected emotions

Expected emotions now your known category or professional identity is going:

Intense emotions.
Confusion.
Elation but nothing to hold onto.
Feeling blank and empty.
Feeling invisible.
Socially distant and in hiding.
Being introduced as some thing that you think you want to be doing.
Nothing definitive.
Juggling lots of possibilities at once.
Unsure of how to make decisions.
Feeling negative shame and frustration.
In fact the more you push for decisions the more frustration and confusion results.
Expected states and tips for staying with the process:

SUPERVISION TIPS:

Acknowledge Grief-letting go of what you had. Punctuate this with a ritual, a holiday, long service leave or mark the losses in creative ways (Discuss the use of art therapy with your supervisor)

Surrender-Remain patient in the liminal phase. It is only discomfort.

Discuss ways to manage discomfort with your supervisor if needed. Increase your frustration tolerance.

Create small doable goals and be clear about when you researching, experimenting, doing your old familiar or trying to take higher risks. Dedicate time periods and days of the week for when you will be or do certain transition and non-transition activities.

Seek like minded others to share your experience with, people who are also going through change, find people who can hold you to account.

Rather than feeling stuck, consider your freedom to play, explore and experience your unique transition.

A Journey Metaphor

Using a journey metaphor (Michael White) can allow you to remember your unique style and talents that you used when you have previously taken journeys such as travelling to unknown or new places/countries/localities. What kind of traveller are you? How do you prepare for new adventures? Ask yourself:

How can I create a map of what I might expect on taking this journey? This can inform us of what preparation we may be able to take before setting out and and can be used along the way. Without a map we might turn back from our journey or career transition-preparation by predicting as much as possible can help us to stay on the journey.

Written by Daphne Middleton BSW

Clinical Supervisor and Mental Health Social Worker

Contact Daphne to book your supervision on 0404 014 343

daphnemiddleton1@gmail.com

END