

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Schlossberg defined a transition as any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. It is important to note that perception plays a key role in transitions as an event, or non-event, meets the definition of a transition only if it is so defined by the individual experiencing it. In order to understand the meaning that a transition has for a particular individual, the type, context, and impact of the transition must be considered.

Type of transition

- Anticipated transitions: ones that occur predictably, such as graduation from college
- Unanticipated transitions: not predictable or scheduled, such as divorce or sudden death of a loved one
- Non-events: transitions that are expected but do not occur, such as failure to be admitted to medical school
 - Personal non-event: related to individual aspirations
 - Ripple non-event: felt due to a nonevent of someone else
 - Resultant non-event: caused by an event
 - Delayed non-event: anticipating an event that might still happen
- Context refers to one's relationship with the transition and to the setting in which the transition takes place.
- Impact is determined by the degree to which a transition alters one's daily life.

Schlossberg identified four major sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition: situation, self, support, and strategies, which are also known as the 4 S's.

Situation

- Trigger: What precipitated the transition?
- Timing: Is the transition considered "on time" or "off time" in terms of one's social clock?

- Control: What aspect of the transition does the individual perceive as being within his/her control?
- Role change: Is a role change involved and, if so, is it viewed as a gain or a loss?
- Duration: Is it seen as permanent, temporary, or uncertain?
- Previous experience with a similar transition: How effectively did the person cope then, and what are implications for the current transition?
- Concurrent stress: Are other sources of stress present?
- Assessment: Who or what is seen as responsible for the transition, and how is the individual's behavior affected by this person?

Self: factors considered important in relation to the self are classified into two categories

- Personal and demographic characteristics affect how an individual views life, such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity.
- Psychological resources include ego development, outlook, and commitment and values.

Social support

- Intimate relationships
- Family units
- Networks of friends
- Institutions and communities

Strategies, or coping responses, are divided into three categories

- Those that modify the situation
- Those that control the meaning of the problem
- Those that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath

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