

As Bruce Feiler has stated on the cover page of his book, changes are on the way and we should be ready. At that moment, he could not have imagined how foresighted his statement could be. Since the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, we are going through transitions in our lives, both small changes like transitioning into home-office, or big hardships such as surviving through a harsh disease or bereavement of a beloved person.

No matter if you are struggling with the consequences brought by the COVID-19 outbreak, or tussling with challenges related to individual life or work life, this book review will be your manual in navigating through big changes. While you may find transitions fearful and confusing, you will see that they open up invaluable doors in showing you what is significant in your life.

Using some main tools will help you to seize any worry and ambiguity, and make you ready to deal with any change successfully.

Chapter 1 - Telling stories saves you in hardship.

Think about the life stories that you tell. What are the answers you give when everything transforms in an unprecedented and unpredicted way that is not under your control?

When his normal life shattered by personal challenges, Bruce Feiler came across these transitions and questions. A unique and fatal type of bone cancer was seen on him. He was almost going through bankruptcy. What he learned made the situation worse; his father with Parkinson's disease tried to suicide several times.

Even though Feiler had an accomplished writing career, he perceived as if the administration of his life story slipped out of his hands. Just like Bruce, his father, being diagnosed with Parkinson's, was thinking that his life was worth nothing anymore. Feiler recognized that what they were going through was a storytelling issue: their life had gone astray and they did not know how to tell the story of it.

Feiler started to find the "narrative solution" as he called it and asked questions to his father. He asked about simple things such as the most special toy of his father's childhood. If his father's answers were enthusiastic, Feiler asked more complicated questions such as the major penitence of his father.

This solution changed his father's life - within four years he had composed an autobiography and retrieved his desire to live. This solution worked well and facilitated changes in Bruce's life as well. However, he found out a huge problem: Since people do not know how to tell the stories of the major life changes in their lives, they do not know how to deal with them.

Fiedler determined to conduct more research to back up his intuition. In the next three years, he did interviews during his trip around the United States for his "Life Story Project". In the conclusion of the project, 225 interviews with people of different ages and histories had been performed. These people were sharing one thing: they were experiencing unpredicted transitions in their lives, and they were trying to figure out how to understand what they were

going through. What follows is these people's exceptional narratives, and you will grasp how to navigate through transitions with tales.

Chapter 2 - The first thing to do is to quit the belief that our lives go straight.

In which shape is your tale of life? What a weird question! Could our lives have a shape? If you think deeper, you can see that we are inclined to consider our lives going through a specified path.

Often, we consider our lives to go straight. After our birth, we age and go through all the other steps in the way. We see this thought as perfectly ordinary since it is too embedded in our norms. However, this setup we have in our minds was considered very differently in previous times.

Ancient cultures in Babylon and Egypt were thinking that their lives were going in circles through different periods. According to them, humans were pieces of this circle, so they were doing the identical ceremonies again and again annually.

During recent ancient times, this opinion has changed. Humans, with the impact of the recognition of the Bible, began to imagine life as straight, which can be seen through the picturing of ages as a line. In the initial parts of modern times, this thought had already been solidified as people experience different phases going from juvenility to wedding to elderliness.

The emergence of the manufacturing age in the 19th century caused worry in people for the concept of time. In the 1800s, people started to utilize pocket watches widely. It was the initial time that people could design their lives second by second.

The idea that we have a life that goes through a line is advanced throughout time. However, we do not live through predetermined steps that we can foresee. It is normal to experience unforeseen changes, not an irregularity. Also, we cannot foresee at which time in our life these changes can occur.

Think about the timespan people have children, which ranges from late adolescence to age around 40. We are into the idea of "midlife crises" however, we cannot say the exact time that it will happen.

If transitions and distortions are normal, we should reconsider our concept of the shape of life and stop thinking as if it is going through a smooth line. What we should do is to find a little bit more imaginative tales.

Chapter 3 - Life quakes in life undermine the basis of our presence.

Think like you have recognized that you are homosexual after marrying someone from the other gender. Or think like you have discovered that the gender you are given at the time of your birth is not who you are in reality.

Feiler is told lots of such changes every time during his research, as he gathered tales of change. Essentially, 52 different types of life transitions that humans involved repeatedly are specified by him. What he called “disruptors” are classified into five main concepts: physical, romantic, professional, personal, and religious.

Physical disruptors can be growing fat or developing an obstinate disease. A woman described how everything disrupted with her liver failure developed suddenly during her university years. Lots of Americans are accustomed to their lives that are impacted by fear of health problems: six out of ten people endure obstinate diseases such as heart disease.

Romantic disruptors may contain any types of transitions in mutual intercourses. These transitions in human lives maybe because of giving birth, or the requirement to begin taking care of an old mother or father. Another reason may be separating from one’s husband or wife and constructing a fresh family sign. This disruptor is seen very frequently. We have an old fashioned idea that most people will marry and once they marry, they will remain in the same family form. In reality, the number of marriages decreased by $\frac{2}{3}$ since the 50s, and the majority of the houses are administered by partners that did not marry or were solo persons.

It is considered normal if professional life is transformed. A physics academician, interviewed for Fiedler’s Life Story Project, quit his tenure in the pursuit of fame on YouTube with his music group, and a freelance author, to be a mortician, dropped writing. These examples are not unique occurrences. Numbers demonstrate that people stay in the same occupation for around four years. The majority work on a minimum of 12 distinct jobs until the age of 50.

The other two disruptors are personal and religious. Beliefs of humans can alter, or their views can change by getting a university education. Personal transitions in identity may be triggered by changing cities or reconsidering the breed.

An ordinary human being goes through 36 devastating transitions throughout their lives. One can adapt to some of them without struggle however, as we will see in the following lines, some of them will undermine the basis of our lives.

Chapter 4 - Life quakes in life push us to reconsider what is valuable in our lives.

The marketing director Lisa participated in a meeting a couple of minutes earlier and overheard her counterparts’ chats about her brutal penchant and acidulous creation. The

following day, Lisa went to the office of her boss and left her job that was making her wretched for ages. With transitions in occupations, she worked as a mentor and then a hypnotherapist to help people heal from the hardships she went through for a long time.

That meeting was a milestone in her life that urged Lisa to move. This was a life quake that is called for changes in the foundation of how she understands herself and her life.

We can select to go through a life quake of our own accord by running into unfamiliarity with our decisions to transform our lives. However, in general, these are occurrences that we do not have a chance to select or have no power on. For instance, a force majeure, or assassination can undermine your life in the twinkle of an eye. You can also face a special hardship such as being fired from your job. As life quakes can be negative, they can be favorable as well. Favorable transformations such as getting a university degree or purchasing an apartment can also be so oppressive.

In general, the number of life quakes humans face in their lives range from three to five. What are the factors for a life change to shake our lives while some other disruptors do not affect us much? It is not just what we experienced in the times of life quakes, it is what we perceive to have happened. Although two people have experienced same cancer, one may think of this as a life quake and changes in perspectives occur but cause no change in perspective in the other person.

If a life change comes at a time when we are especially exhausted or unguarded, a life quake can happen. The occurrences that look simple but cause huge responses may also be disruptors. In Lisa's case, she left her occupation, not because of the coworkers' rumors, the rumors triggered her movement.

If lots of life changes happen simultaneously, this may cause life quakes as well. Frequently, not only one problem comes at a time, more than one problem comes at the same time. Think about the case of a man who is talked for the Life Story Project that is fired from his job and learned that his wife was cheating at the same time. Life quake is caused by breaking off of all the things owned at the same time.

Life quakes are frightening and bewildering in their build. However, there also present chances to reconsider our lives and what is significant for us.

Chapter 5 - Generally, we do not have the power to change devastating events, but we have the power to decide which action we will take in answer to them.

The reason for life quakes to be so bewildering is that they shake the life tales that we tell inside us. Humans who give importance to being a member of a strong family bond can feel damaged by the separation of their parents. People who feel honored about their successes in their work-life can feel the big damage when they are dismissed from their occupation.

We should develop skills in storytelling and the creation of tales that involve the progressions in our lives, to deal with a life quake.

How can we make this happen? In the beginning, we should understand what motivates us. What are the things that induce our feelings of wealth, significance, and value in life? The motives will be different for everyone.

Fiedler came up with the “A-B-C of meaning” with his study. A is for “autonomy”, B is for “belonging”, and C is for “cause”. Certain people care about autonomy the most; having the power to direct their lives is the most crucial thing for them in decision-making. Feeling like a part of a group is the most crucial for some other people. Finally, participating in a bigger picture and giving for a better world are the motivators for people who are driven by a cause and what makes them feel their significance in life.

Life quakes happen at the core of the things that motivate us and push us to reconsider our decisions. For instance, a lead ballerina that is proud of her independence and aspiration had to go through a transition in her profession after an accident. Currently, she found the meaning of her life in assisting other people and became a mentor. A mom who devoted her life to her children to grow them is forced to get a job in a different place after a life quake that shows her that she is not happy with what she is doing. Besides, a man left his propitious profession in country music to be a clergyman.

These changes are called “shape-shifting”. Rather than struggling to turn back to the previous life and get rid of a life quake, one can select to change the path one will follow and completely change where their lives will go.

Chapter 6 - Ceremonies allow us to give up on our previous lives that we are letting go of.

We all may face catastrophes. For instance, having a car crash is very likely. What is different a lot is the way of responding to these types of crises. While some get angry and cannot move on after such an incident, others find the motivation to start a movement for safe roads and make it their career. A car crash is a disruptor that we do not have power on. Nobody wants such a transformation in their life tales. However, we have the power to select the meaning of this transformation in our lives.

To perceive disruptive events as eloquent changes, we need lots of exercises. Fortunately, there are some techniques that we can use to become an expert in coping with changes.

The first technique to learn is acquiescence. In general, we refuse and endure when we face life quakes. We want to stay in the life that we know very well. However, in the end, we need to face the truth and stop thinking about the world in our thoughts. Oddly enough, our thoughts conform less to the real world than our bodies are. A woman from Fiedler’s research was getting migraine attacks until the time she quits her awful job. Another

example was feeling something weird about her body until she learns the notion of being transgender.

Acquiescence can cause abrupt enlightenment or a chain of slow comprehension. No matter how you accomplish it, this is always the same that admitting an occurrence intuitively gives power. You do not think over questions such as reasons for an occurrence or how to get rid of it anymore. Besides, it gives you the power to see opportunities that you may not observe while you are whining and standing out against transitions.

It should be noted that acquiescence does not mean brushing all the emotions away and act like abruptly all is good. Changes bring bitter feelings such as fright, sorrow, and disgrace. Exercising acquiescence is also about letting these emotions be felt. One does not have to brush away the sorrow of losing a loved one or push the disgrace of previous errors down inside. Acknowledging the emotions and feeling bad for losses are important parts of a long farewell when you leave previous occurrences and accept a great life change.

Chapter 7 - Every huge change includes a chaotic midpoint that one feels so lost.

How to accept losses? The long farewell includes designing our ceremonies to remember the previous life that we cannot have back.

Ceremonies are crucial pieces for signing changes and making sense of them. They accelerate acquiescence and let us combine our histories with what is waiting for us. Some ceremonies may include signing the transitions on the body. For instance, an old fascist selected to wrap every despot tattoo on his body with devout signs to show his change. Some others select to have piercings or crazy hair after the end of their marriage.

Social occasions are significant types of ceremonies that allow people to mention happy events and milestones in addition to grieving for what is lost. Celebrations can sign a start of a change such as changing gender or giving birth. These can be also used for marking a finish such as getting a doctoral degree or curing of cancer.

Items can also be significant in ceremonies. An ex-captive and a war veteran told their tales of putting their unclean shoes in an apparent place in their houses. Old shoes were signs of old occurrences they want to accept, although they would not prefer to go back. People also may feel like they are in a place or with a person when they wear special jewelry.

When there is sorrow or loss, it is for sure that ceremonies become more significant. It is a finding of priest Larry when he found out that his first kid was born dead. In the synagogue, ceremonies for dead babies or miscarriages did not exist, so there was no way for parents to describe their sorrow in public. Therefore, Larry started to design ceremonies for himself and prepared a paper, and suggested how priests could be beneficial for people that experiencing the same thing.

Ceremonies can show us part of the chaos we have inside. We also find opportunities to engage with the general society with their help. Acknowledging bitter feelings and designing our ceremonies enable us to begin acknowledging transitions in our lives. In the following lines, we will understand that the next step is getting rid of every useless piece of our lives.

Chapter 8 - The creativity of us can assist us to design a new section in a change.

Like snakes that leave their old skins behind to allow the growth of healthier, shinier skin, we should want to leave our past lives behind in a change and give ourselves time to be bewildered and lost entirely.

The significance of being lost is realized by any prime spiritual tale and fairy story. Christ was thrown into the desert before his great enlightenment and Mohamed became wise on the top of a mountain. Red Riding Hood had her life-shaping experience that she might not experience otherwise while she was lost in the woods.

If we truly would like to adopt change, we need to adopt the chaotic midpoint in which we get rid of the previous life but not get into the new life yet. At this stage, we are pushed to get rid of old personalities or faith that no longer suit us. In addition to established practices that came from previous lives that we do not adopt anymore. The spill may make us feel helpless and sensitive since the feelings of loss and uncertainty of our individuality. At the same time, it provides an area to do novel things.

How to withstand the hard component of change? Some do it by shaping their lives in a different way such as joining a scheme that includes twelve stages for quitting alcohol or participating in a lecture. Getting a daily habit such as writing, planting, or wandering outside may also be preferred by others. These habitual things may make you step on your feet while dealing with major transitions.

While some prefer planned solutions, being independent may also be preferred by others. A perfect way to discover loss is traveling the world and, in real terms, walking through exciting adventures. A period of unknown times can be seen by some people as a chance to see their limits and experience new things such as taking drugs, flirting with various people, or joining parties. These types of planned solutions may be crucial pieces in the change process.

The chaotic midpoint may make you feel that you are entirely lost; anything that binds you to your personality is lost. Behind the curtains of these chaotic times, there is a fresh start.

Chapter 9 - Creating new tales that include our life changes is required.

Henri Matisse thought this was the termination of his art profession when he got cancer and endure exhausting operations. His ability to stand up deteriorated and he could not take the paintbrush in his hands. This calamity in his well-being indeed finished his art profession but at the same time, a new stage in his life started: He made exceptional paper works he initiated to do in his bed became so famous and carried out to even our times.

Although changes include loss, crises open up thrilling chances to create new things. We should let original things and experiences come to us while discovering the new chances.

Being imaginative and innovative can speed up your recovery after a calamity. There is a good example comes from Zach. This teenage war veteran was deformed in a conflict in Afghanistan, at this time, he wanted to suicide. However, his mom taught him how to cook and his thoughts changed. He devoted his life to cooking; having the perfect fluff on the pancakes and getting the best-grilled salmons were the things he was giving his power. Authoring poems, and art also became the activities that he brutally poured his depression into the paper. Zach's urge to create took his hand through digesting the shock he went through with the war and initiated an identity that is not related to military service.

During a change, inventiveness brought by writing is a significant instrument. Writing is an activity that enables the operation of creation of new life tales and makes people feel that they have power over their previous experiences. James Pennebaker, an expert in psychology, in one of his experiments, separated a bunch of people that left their jobs into two. He wanted one group to write up about their lay off and did not want this from the other group. After three months, from the first group who had authored the happening, 27 percent landed a new job; however, from the latter group that did not author, only 5 percent could find a job. Spilling the experiences into paper enabled them to digest their emotions in addition to letting them move forward looking for a new job. No matter if we dance, bake, paint, or write, creativeness saves our lives during a life quake.

Chapter 10 - Our new life tales should involve the changes we go through.

Feiler's father ended up writing 150 tales about his previous experiences until the end of his life and gathered them carefully in a book with attachments and pictures. Although he felt extremely vulnerable at one point in his life that had tried to suicide, just writing his experiences made him feel that his disease had rejected him.

In his research on "Life Story Project", Fiedler is told lots of tales of life changes and how these changes happened. Like his father's case, he recognized that how one tells about a change made a huge impact on the way he/ she deals with them.

When people tell that their life is affected by the changes negatively, what is called “contamination” tales, they were more vulnerable and did not able to move on. People who explained the changes as being challenging but bringing a favorable output, what is called “redemption” tales, were feeling that they have power and more favorable. Although we do not have power over the things that occurred in our lives, we can change the way we tell our stories about these experiences and the role of us in those.

Inventing new tales is so crucial; however, getting the opportunity to share them is more crucial.

In the times that our lives are in a calamity, feeling alone and in isolation is something normal. Even replying to a basic question that asks us what we are doing seems challenging if we are depressively seeking employment. However, talking about what we are going through is proved to provide individual endurance and enhance the sense of feeling good.

Steven told his tale of his running away from the Moonies sect. At the time he eventually ran away, he was feeling disgrace about his behaviors that he did not want to mention about them anymore. However, he recognized afterward that he had the power to assist people in running away from such happenings by talking about what happened. Therefore, he commenced sharing his tale in front of a huge audience, and Congress associates about how he is pressured to change his thoughts and his running away. After some time, he discovered a group that helps other people from the sect. By talking about his tale, he understood the meaning of his life.

If you are telling your tale, you should keep who is listening to you with a small circle of your mates and people you trust. After you acclimatize yourself with telling it to your small circle of people, you can find yourself more encouraged, as Steven felt. You should not forget that tales change a lot; you can transform them anytime you want. Furthermore, tales are useful if you are going through life transitions.

Life Is in the Transitions: Mastering Change at Any Age by Bruce Feiler Book Review

We have been raised with the belief that we will follow a straight line as we advance in our lives; however, this is not the reality. The truth is, our occupations, mutual intercourses, and belief will experience huge transitions as we live. If we want to deal with these changes elegantly, we need to be ready for them. Rather than trying to escape from the previous occurrences, we should be ready to design our new life stories. If we can understand how to utilize our inherent endurance and inventiveness, we can be the chief of transitions.

Focus on what you gain, even though they are minor things.

During a huge life change, you will frequently ask yourself about who you are and where you are going in your life. These questions may be significant, but you should also stay in the moment. A great way to master this is by focusing on minor daily things that you gain. The

simple facts that you can afford your cable invoice after monetary difficulties, or your recent soberness make you able to drive your kids to school may seem simple transitions but make you feel comfortable when you are dealing with a huge change.

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