

Getting Started

The writers here at *Represent* used the tools on pages 36-38 to make transitions in their lives and kept diaries of their progress. You can use the tools and keep a diary to help you make a change in your own life.

You can pick a change that's already happening to you—like getting moved to a new foster home, or aging out—and use the tools to make this change go more smoothly for you. Or you can choose a change that you'd like to make.

Pick a Change to Work On

To pick a change you want to work on, think deeply about a change you're going through or a change you want to make. Set a goal that is meaningful but modest enough for you to succeed at. For example, you might want to make progress in becoming more trusting of others. That is a huge goal! So ask yourself: What are specific behaviors I want to change? What are specific feelings I would like to become less intense for me?

If you want to become more trusting, your goal might just be something like this: My goal is to identify one person I'd like to get closer to and find ways to understand and calm down the fear I feel about opening up to that person.

Write Down Your Goals

In your transitions journal, write down a very specific summary of the goal you want to achieve. Write down exactly what behavior or feelings you want to work on, and how long you plan to spend on your transition (6-12 weeks).

In writing, answer the following questions:

1. How will I benefit from working on this transition?
2. What will be difficult for me about trying to make this change?
3. What times or emotions from my past might this change remind me of?
4. Who can I turn to for support in making this change?

Identify the Stage You're In

Once you've chosen the change you want to work on, write down some of the emotions you associate with this change. For instance, if you want to work on finding someone trustworthy to open up to, you might feel excited but also afraid that someone will let you down or hurt you if you let yourself become vulnerable.

Look at the emotions on pages 36-38 and check off the ones that you associate with the change you hope to make. Where are *most* of your emotions? That's the stage you're in.

Each stage has tools you can use to make your change easier. Begin by using tools related to that stage.

As you continue using your tools, check back in with the stages. Are you moving forward?

Use the Tools

Each week, pick a tool from the lists on pp. 36-38 and write a detailed paragraph about how you plan to do it. If you are going to set a daily ritual, what will the ritual be? How long will you spend on it? Etc. Make sure to explain how this tool relates to your goal.

The key is to use tools you normally *don't* use to handle changes. You can't use the same behaviors you always use and expect a different outcome! So challenge yourself to use tools that are new to you. For example, if you love to read and write, try using more "Social Support." Or if seeking social support comes easily to you, try "Reflection and Experimentation."

But don't start out with the very hardest or most emotionally difficult tools. Start out with tools that feel somewhat comfortable to you and challenge yourself as you go. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, choose more comfortable tools again for a week or two.

Reflect on Your Progress

After each week, write in your journal about how your tool helped or didn't help you make progress. Here are some questions to guide your reflection:

1. Describe exactly what you did for you tool this week, in detail.
2. How did it go?
3. How did you feel about doing it?
4. What effect do you feel it's had on you?

Conclusions

When you've finished the amount of time you planned to spend on your tools, write about your progress in your journal. Some questions to guide you:

1. What are some things you learned about yourself by working on your tools?
2. What are some things you learned about yourself by keeping a journal of your progress?
3. How do you plan to continue working on your transition?
4. What are some tools that you tried that you'd like to continue using as part of your everyday life?



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Independent Living Instructors and Social Workers: You can use the transitions tools and diaries with the teens that you work with. For additional instructions go to:

www.youthcomm.org/Teachers/TeacherResources.htm



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