

Discernment During Transition

Listening when life is changing and certainty is not yet available

The unsettled middle

Transitions often bring both possibility and disorientation. A person may be leaving a role, relationship, community, belief system, career, identity, or familiar way of being. Something has ended, but what comes next may not yet be clear.

In this unsettled middle, it can be tempting to rush toward resolution. The mind wants a plan. The anxious body wants the discomfort to end. Others may want reassurance that everything is fine. But some transitions require a slower kind of listening.

Spiritual direction can offer a place to honor the threshold without forcing premature certainty.

What transition asks of us

Transition often asks us to grieve what is ending, bless what was real, release what can no longer be carried, and listen for what is emerging. This may involve sadness, relief, anger, guilt, excitement, confusion, or all of these at once.

A transition may also reveal old patterns. Some people try to control the unknown. Some withdraw. Some overfunction. Some seek quick reassurance. Some spiritualize uncertainty before they have allowed themselves to feel it. These responses are understandable. They may also become part of the discernment.

Discernment without panic

Discernment during transition does not require immediate clarity. It may begin with small questions: What is ending? What is not yet ready to be named? What needs to be grieved? What still gives life? What feels false now? What support is needed?

The work is not to make a decision before its time. It is to stay present enough to notice the movement of life as it becomes clearer.

Helpful practices

- Name what is ending and what is beginning, even if the beginning is only a hint.
- Notice whether urgency is coming from wisdom, fear, pressure, or exhaustion.
- Return to simple practices: walking, prayer, meditation, journaling, silence, conversation, rest, and ordinary care for the body.
- Ask what can be known now, and what must be allowed to remain unknown for a while.
- Seek companions who can tolerate uncertainty without rushing you.

Closing reflection

Transition is not only a problem to solve. It can be a passage. The task is not to force the next form of life to appear, but to listen faithfully while the old form loosens and the new one begins to gather itself.

Sometimes discernment is simply learning how to stand at the threshold with honesty, patience, and enough trust for one next step.