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The Emotions of Transition

It's official. I have become my mother.

My mother was incredibly efficient, effective, and overachieving. She did it all. Nurse, school board chair, Girl Scout cookie chair, mother of four strong, accomplished daughters, loyal wife of 50 years. Comparisons to her unending patience, even-keeled temperament, and ability to keep 100 plates spinning at the same time with none crashing, always made me stand a little taller. But none of that is what assures me I have become her.

The first time my husband and I were getting into the car to drive back to Pittsburgh after a visit to my former home in upstate New York, my mother cried. In fact, she cried every time we prepared to leave after visiting home. I found that interesting—because my mother *never* cried. She survived malignant breast cancer twice, the death of parents, a hectic full-time job

working with and being married to a demanding surgeon husband—and I saw her cry only once in my life prior to these farewells. She was one of those women seemingly bred for toughness and resiliency. And yet, whenever we left after visiting home—even after 30 years, she cried.

This past Memorial Day, I walked my son, daughter-in-law, and new grandbaby to their car after an amazing and fun weekend together—and as I kissed those sweet faces good-bye, I was instantly a puddle. We had a wonderful weekend together—and my heart was full contemplating the life they were building together in their new home city. So how did I go from smiles to tears in microseconds? It hit me: I have become my mother.

As I reflected on the good-bye scene, I was struck by the emotionality of transitions—whether personal or professional. Is it the immediate feeling of

loss that makes it hard? Or a reminder that life is changing? Or that we are all getting older? (*I don't feel old nor find myself adverse, generally, to change . . .*) Perhaps it is simply that saying farewell to something or someone we love, is just plain hard. We grieve for what was . . . and the future is not always clear.

My Memorial Day farewell was a reminder that transitions, even when welcomed . . . even when anticipated . . . even when precipitating positive, exciting new opportunities . . . are emotional times for us all. Even when we are strong, resilient, incredibly capable, and accustomed to a lot of plate-spinning . . . the reality is that before we say hello to our next season, we have to say farewell to one that is comfortable and familiar to us. And the more we love what we are transitioning from, the harder it is to let go and move on.

Letting go is necessary to welcome what's next . . . but that doesn't mean it's easy. Be patient with yourself. Allow yourself to just be as you navigate coming-from to going-to. The emotions of transition are real and often not under our control. Thankfully, time and sometimes tears, help.



LESLIE W. BRAKSICK, Ph.D.

Co-Founder & Senior Partner, leslie.braksick@mynextseason.com

Find Dr. Braksick's new book, *Your Next Season: Advice for Executives on Transitioning from Intense Careers to Fulfilling Next Seasons*, on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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