

JOHN WINTERS

HEALTH CARE ESSENTIALS

‘Transition is the hardest place to be’

The gentleman cheerfully explained why he was selling his lawn mower. He was 97 years old and no longer able to mow his own lawn. Losing our abilities and letting go of what no longer serves our best interests is hard to do, yet this fellow seemed to have mastered the art of a smooth transition. Change is what happens to us, transition is the internal response to these events. Researcher and author William Bridges, Ph.D., said, “Every transition begins with an ending and ends with a beginning. Between the ending and beginning lurks an awkward neutral zone most want to avoid, but is essential to personal growth.”

Transition is the hardest place to be. Liminal space is that space between where you have been and what comes next in your life. It is a place of unknowing, which often involves loss, letting go, accepting new or different conditions, and moving on. We want to skip this part, but it is where we learn the most.

Transition could be likened to a slippery log over a rushing mountain stream that you must cross to reach the meadow beyond. Barbara Kingsolver said, “The changes we dread most may contain our salvation.”

Our modern lives are full of uncertainty and change ... even the Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted in 500 BCE, “Everything changes, nothing stays the same.” Adjusting to ongoing changes with COVID-19, politics, climate change, wildfires and smoke takes energy. Then there are personal concerns like our jobs, health and relationships. It helps to realize adaptation takes energy and thought. We want to reach the meadow, but getting there is tricky and we have to pay attention.

Our internal workings, brain and body, crave calm. Life for the body is easiest when all needs are met and nothing changes. Wouldn't that be nice, at least for a while? Any shifts in the internal milieu require attention and adjustment. A new job or relationship, illness or loss of any sort affects your inner balance. Events, whether you label them good or bad, occur daily. Having a child, starting a new job or losing a loved one all require adjustments.

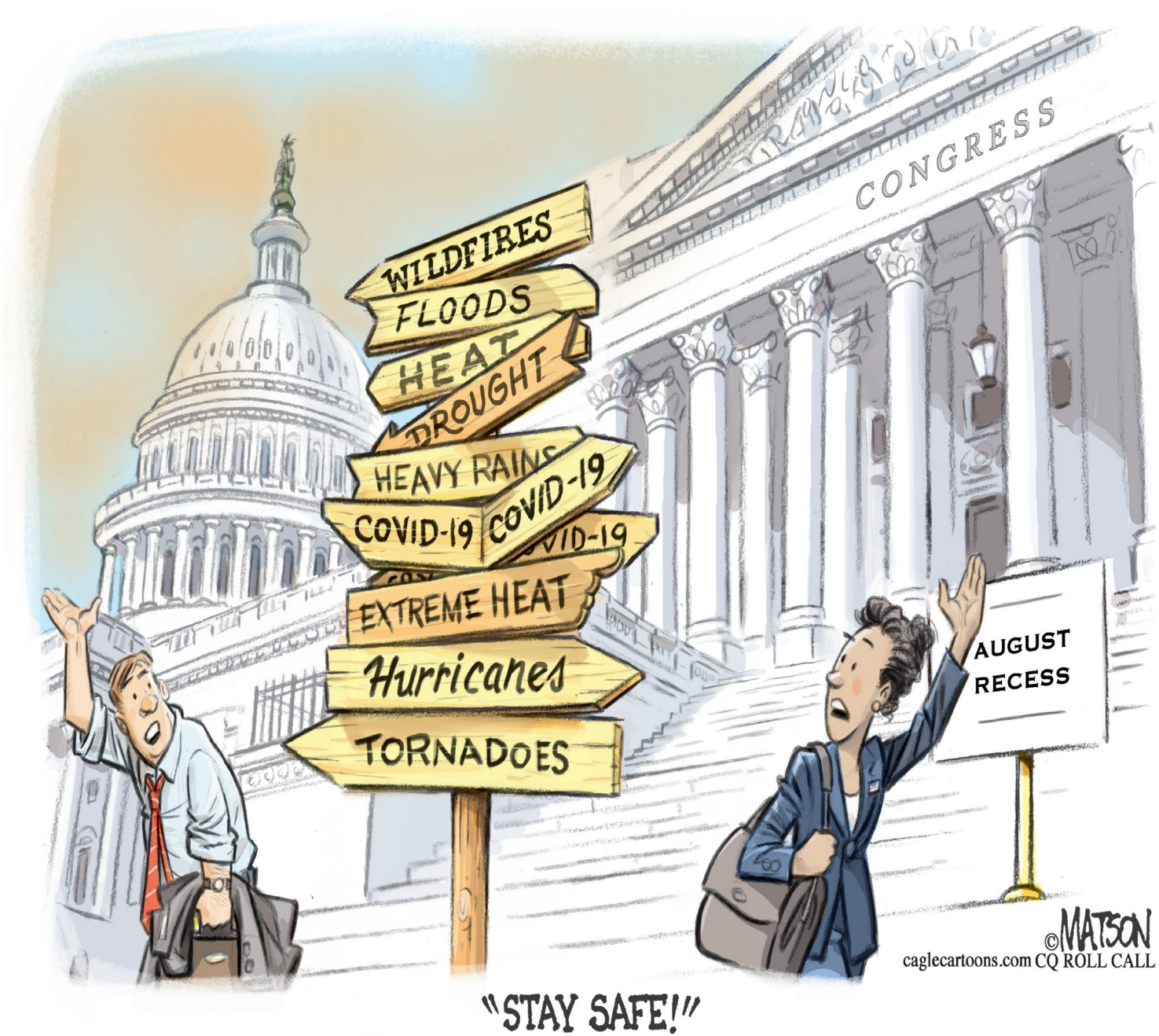
Stress can make you stronger, or sicker. Problems arise when changes in your life outpace your current resources and ability to adapt. Our body is built to withstand just about anything, but self awareness makes the job a lot easier. Some stress is vital to an interesting, adventurous and productive life, but to get there you have to cross the bridge of transition. When challenged, our body and mind work to recover. Failure to regain inner balance and peace can result in anxiety, depression, weight gain, fatigue, poor sleep and many chronic diseases.

You can take steps to safely cross the risky transition zone! Your thoughts are most important. “Self talk,” those recordings in your head, can build you up or tear you down. Practice thinking rationally, creatively and constructively. Recall your past successes and use those skills again. Choose humor, acceptance, health, and gratitude over blaming, complaining, denial or worry. Improving physical health with restful sleep, daily physical activity, mindful breathing, relaxation and healthy foods builds a body strong enough to pull you through the transition. Connection to others by sharing or asking for help, listening and being heard, is helpful. Remember to take breaks, celebrate even small successes and have fun!

Kate Berado offers “The 5 R's of Change.” **Routines:** activities, food, rituals create structure; **Reactions** to what others say and do. Take nothing personally; **Roles:** gain clarity on your role; **Relationships:** choose positive, stable, satisfying relationships. Nurture the important relationships; and **Reflection** about your values. What has worked, or not worked, for you in the past?

Avoiding change and adapting to change each take energy. The choice of how to negotiate the inevitable transitions we all face in our lives is yours. May you flow well!

John Winters is a naturopathic physician who retired after operating a practice in La Grande since 1992.



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Gifts of vacation and coming home



LINDSAY MURDOCK

FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN

Rain pelted my bare legs and arms, along with my face as I walked down the dusty, gravel road. Doing my best to navigate the occasional holes of powdery, soft, sink-when-you-step-into-it dirt, I trudged forward. Forward toward home.

The rain speckled my face, making friends with the freckles that have been there for years. They were drops of moisture I knew wouldn't amount to much, and I wanted to do all I could to soak them into my dry and weary body the best I could. I imagined the dusty road and summer fallow on either side of me were doing the same, wishing for each drop to multiply in abundance, to give life to what felt a bit dead.

Wind whipped my short, sun-kissed hair in every direction, with clouds of dirt swirling and beautiful memories from the short vacation I just returned from keeping my eyes focused on where I was going. Would the boys wonder what was keeping me, or would they know deep down that I needed the walk in the rain as much as anything else, to remember and reflect on where I had just been?

It had only been six days earlier when the road trip south had begun with the rising of the sun. The highway from Bend to Crater Lake is one that is well traveled, especially during the summer months, and we had found ourselves travelers on a path many have taken. RVs, SUVs, small cars and pickup trucks with license plates from

every corner of the USA filled the parking lots, the scenic pullouts, and trailheads.

We had entered through the north entrance of the park, and made our first stop near Hillman Peak. The crater wasn't in view without walking up the small sandy dune from the parking lot, and my youngest son and nieces ran ahead, wanting to be the first to get a glimpse of this magnificent lake we had been telling them about. They had listened intently and seemed interested, but I don't think they understood the magnitude of the depth, nor greatness of size, until it was directly in front of them.

It was absolutely stunning that day, as if putting on a show just for us. The water was crystal clear, with every shade of blues and greens, cobalt, royal and teal, shimmering the entirety of the distance across, the reflection of the occasional cloud seeming to pull us into a dream. We hiked on a few trails, picnicked, and marveled at how awesome every angle of the volcanic crater we were getting to experience and observe was just as breathtaking as the first.

The very next day, our feet carried us through Stout Grove to the Smith River in the Redwood Forest. It was quiet there that day, with only the slightest breeze. The trees were massive in size, up close and personal with each step we took. Having the opportunity to weave through the forest with humongous trees in every direction was fascinating.

Our pace was slow and steady, unhurried in every sort of way as we walked and gawked at their beauty, their size, and the stories they held. How many years have people been taking the same steps, balancing on the same stumps, and holding their arms out wide to measure the enormity and greatness of the world they've found themselves in? Standing in the grove of trees

was breathtaking, and a memory I will hold deep within me for years to come.

I looked up and out, focusing not only on the height, but wondering about the depths of the roots that held the giants in place. Growing slow and steady is worth following their lead if we want to live a life that is quietly awesome and hugely graceful.

The wind changed direction and my foot caught the edge of soft, sinking dirt on the gravel road where not one tree can be found nor any large amount of crystal-clear water. Spits of rain continued to fall as I realized the 2 miles I had walked had brought me back to the intersection in front of our house.

The memories of Crater Lake and Stout Grove held me upright as I looked down. My shoes were covered with dust, the dogs were running circles around me, and the 60 calves we had just weaned were bawling uncontrollably in the pen next to me. I laughed out loud about the chaos erupting in spite of my daydreaming. How does one prepare their heart to leave one season and enter the next?

My best guess is this: By soaking up that which makes us stronger, letting our roots run deep every chance we get, looking forward at what's to come, but also reflecting on where we have been, appreciating time, and stepping ahead to the edge of craters and around the largest of obstacles with trust in the unknown future. The two national parks I had found myself in this summer grew me and grounded me.

They slowed me down, and left me awestruck. I can only hope that some of what they gave me rubs off on others in the season to come.

Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.

Future leaders cultivated at county fairs



CHRIS NOVAK

OTHER VIEWS

County fair season has arrived in Oregon. This month, generations will come together to celebrate the hard work of those involved in programs like 4-H and FFA.

I was once one of those young people whose life was changed by FFA. As we begin our annual celebration of agriculture's next generation, I want to recognize FFA's work and the young leaders it has mentored and changed.

I grew up on a small farm in Iowa that belonged to my grandfather and then my father. I learned at an early age the importance of hard work and the responsibility that comes with caring for animals and the land.

While my career aspirations never included coming back to the farm, with the love of agriculture that my father had instilled, I didn't have to be convinced to join FFA when my high school's vocational agriculture instructor stopped at the farm

one summer day.

“I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words, but of deeds ...”

More than 40 years have passed since my instructor made us memorize the FFA Creed during our freshman year in high school, but the words still ring true as an inspiration to those of us who wore the blue and gold jackets.

The creed is about learning the history of agriculture, learning the values that we all shared, and glimpsing a vision of a future agricultural system that we could help shape. These are still relevant in my world today.

FFA provides a glimpse of the future that motivates you to try new things, take on new challenges, and succeed in ways that you could not have imagined.

Our chapter frequently hosted state and national FFA officers. To meet these fellow students — who were confident, articulate, and shared a passion for agriculture — was an inspiration.

So you set your goals, worked, and learned how to handle success and defeat. Once I got the chance to serve as a state FFA officer, I learned what it was like to work as a team — to share ideas, compromise, and

work in service of others.

I didn't return to the farm, but thanks to FFA I have enjoyed a career in service to agriculture. Today, serving CropLife America, I feel that I am still pursuing FFA's creed's vision of “better days through better ways.”

As agriculture technology continues to be challenged, I believe it is imperative that all of us speak with passion about the public interest we serve. Just as I learned in FFA, we must continue to work as a team to share ideas, find solutions, and continue working in the service of others.

FFA is dedicated to education, providing learning opportunities in the classroom, supervised experiences, and developing leadership skills that help drive personal growth. All of these learning opportunities work together to provide a well-rounded education to our young leaders.

It is during this key time on the farm that we should be grateful, as a nation, for what FFA provides in shaping the face of American agriculture and the next generation of teachers, lawyers, scientists and problems solvers.

Chris Novak is president and CEO of CropLife America.