



Reflecting on a Past Year of Transitions, and Moving Forward — BLOG POST

By nicespeechlady.com / February 1, 2022 /

As we embark on this new year, I reflect on the magnitude of last year's changes — last year really was a year of transition for me. I didn't recognize it at the time — because of I was in the thick of it, but I now have an opportunity to consider all that we have had a chance to wade through, and have reached the other side.

I would like to take a moment to consider what I can take-away from the “year of transition” — what has worked, and what didn't, and what I can continue to employ in my life to keep myself on the course with my commitments.

Some of the changes included: moving from employee status with a side-hustle to full-time self-employment, becoming empty-nesters, movement to a new city/town for my husband's educational pursuits, selling our home in our previous town, purchasing a home in our new town, expanding Nice Speech Lady's business dealings to include a telepractice arm, tweaking a food plan, starting worship at a new church and receiving private business coaching to intentionally direct my steps and commitments overall in my life. Yes, a lot.

Take-aways from all of these changes? There are many. They include:

- Structure helps.

Yes, structure helps — a lot. The consistency of a schedule — an effective way to organize time, allows for the orchestration of variables that facilitate the mechanism for deliberate action. I just wrote that line of line of text and I am currently thinking, “wow, did I just write that?” Yes, having a mechanism for organizing action allows for the delivery of planned actions. Without a way to organize our time, we are just blowing in the wind. Becoming my own boss allowed myself to be required to self-motivate at a level that I have not done so before, and I have learned that having plans each day, each week and each month — allows me a road map to the destination I am planning to trod. In particular, my “to do list” is my “brain” and includes all of my appointments, today's plans and A, B, C, D priority plans for the future. Each day I take time to organize how to proceed based on the totality of the information.

- **Change is easier to take when we choose it.**

Let's face it, change can be a challenge for most people. However, when it is self-directed, it allows us to more effective and in control of the variables. When I was a child, I absolutely



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hated change. I realize now that is because there were many things about the change that I experienced as a child that I didn't have control over. So, I have learned that change "my way" is much more smooth, as I will have opportunity to have more input into the transitional steps and options. However, I have also learned this year that even with aspects of change that I cannot control, there is some things that I can control – my attitude, my responses, my acceptance, my problem-solving and my overall perspective on how to navigate myself. I may not always have control over a situation – and at the same time, I do have control over how I absorb the information and process it, and therefore my responses. I also know that I can choose to act toward situations in ways that make the overall picture worse. Sometimes, in situations, it is about making choices to avoid the worsening of a problem in the face of change. Sometimes, it is about opportunities to improve a situation. My perspective has been about seeing what I can do to avoid a worsening of a situation, and seeking avenues to improve my role in an environment I may or may not be able to change. Regardless of a situation in any sort sort of changing environment, I can either embrace my role in trying to contribute to solutions – or I can fight it. Finding solutions and making a way for perspectives that ease transitions tends to be a win-win for all involved.

- Prioritizing.

My father tells me all of the time: "You can do anything, but you cannot do everything." I admit that I like the first part of this quote. I like it when he says I can do anything; and at the same time, the reality is that there are only so many hours in the day and there are only so many resources that I have at my disposal. I only have so much energy to devote to my projects in a healthy way, so this means that I must prioritize. Prioritizing means that I must sometimes say "no, thank you" to things that may be actually be worthy pursuits – so that I can make space for the "Yes, Yes!" opportunities that will be the most wise, powerful and effective next-step for me, my business and my family. So, to do this, prioritizing takes time. And, consistently going back to my plans for the future and tweaking how to best deliver on my dreams is required. This also means that with new information coming my way, I also need to update my plans. I have learned to accept that sometimes, it is acceptable to step away from projects that I thought were worthy of a certain slice of time, and place them on the back-burner, until I can have more information that will catapult it into a new level with renewed life. It is a dance of "figuring it out," and I have learned to step forward and step back, sometimes take the lead, sometimes follow another, and all of the while keep my mind on the tempo of the beat and enjoy the music.

- Feeding the mind.

We plan for at least three square meals a day to feed our bodies, and sometimes snacks in between. How often do we schedule in time to feed our minds? I learned last year that reading books (in particular, listening to books), watching Ted Talks, and hearing from motivational speakers and people from a variety of occupational backgrounds each bring value to my perspective, motivation and learning. Also, new technology tools, etc., can save time and improve my efficiency. Asking myself each day: "How can I feed my mind today?" was a helpful first-place to start. Even if it is just a 5-minute Youtube video on a new topic, or reading a devotion, consistently feeding my mind has been a mechanism to grow in my resolve to achieve my dreams and move forward. There are new apps, etc., coming out all of the time on ways to feed our minds in unique ways – opening our minds to ways to re-



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center ourselves and tackle what lies ahead. The flip-side of not feeding our minds, we become a sponge to whatever we run into within our environment – we soak up the feelings, thoughts and beliefs of others without being self-directed. We may not have the emotional or thought reserve in order to be able to navigate distressing events, if we haven't fed our minds in advance. We need to be prepared for whatever life throws at us each day – out there in the world there are screech owls and panthers and all sort of potential dangerous variables waiting to pounce on us. We need to come to situations within ourselves from the start from a place of strength, wisdom, love and responsiveness, not knee-jerk reactions. We can only do this if we fill our minds with information that will allow us to navigate whatever comes our way. First things first – feed our minds.

- Having an accountability group.

I benefit from being a part of a mastermind group that meets from 0730 to 0800 each day of the workweek to learn new information about business, sales communication, outlook, approaches and motivation. It is not an SLP-specific group, but sometimes being in mixed groups of professionals allows us perspective that we wouldn't otherwise see, if we were to stuck to our homogenous gatherings. While there is some repetition in these meetings, this is actually a beneficial attribute. Repetition allows us to marinate on content in a deep level each time we hear/process it. Having an accountability group, be it personal, business or otherwise – allows us a chance to ask questions where we wouldn't otherwise have a format to do so, in a safe space. It allows for discussion and brain-storming and this is an extreme benefit for all involved. Having a group of people we can confide in and share our current life lessons with allows for growth. It also keeps us accountable to the things we have communicated that we are planning for our life, business and family. We know that this group will ask us for updates, so during the week we are more likely to follow-through upon actions we have listed for the future. I highly recommend finding a small group to connect with that will validate, encourage, push and challenge beliefs, perspectives and statuses.

- Breaking down plans into realistic, bite-sized actions.

Plans that we make for ourselves can feel overwhelming. If we can simplify our next-steps in ways that are more manage levels, we are more likely to follow-through. Asking ourselves – what is realistic today? What is realistic this week? What can I actually follow-through upon that will take me to my next level in my business, personal life and family life? If we over-plan and don't break down our actions into realistic, bite-sized pieces, we are setting ourselves up for challenges along the way. It is more effective to set ourselves up for success – what is something I know I can follow-through upon? What actions will take me to my desired outcome? What will assist me in achieving my “best bang for the buck,” in terms of time and resources? Taking a perspective as “just for today” – I will :_____ is an approach that is helpful, if the tasks are broken down into something that is sustainable, and “follow-through-able.”

- Commitments, not goals.

One of the take-aways I have received in the mastermind on weekday mornings has been the significant shift of previously focusing on goals – to instead investing my time and energy into commitments. I set commitments toward the achievement of a goal. Goals are



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focused upon outcomes; commitments are focused upon actions I can choose to follow-through upon — that I myself have control over. I may not be able to achieve the specific criteria set in a goal — and at the same time, my commitments that I make can impact the outcome. I cannot control the goal, but I can control the commitment. Today, I keep goals in mind as I follow-through on commitments in the pursuit of these goals. I invest my time in letting consistency be my superpower — I follow-through and the outcomes in goals will take care of themselves.

- Backup of important content is vital

Backup of content, such as my “to do-list,” otherwise known as my “brain,” which includes more than just things I need to do today — such as my emailing a copy to myself on a regular basis, or saving it to a word document, etc. is important. Backup of information that we use to organize ourselves is necessary because technology will fail us, things come up and while we cannot control all hiccups that come along the way, we can safeguard ourselves in having backup of data we create. It is important to be able to have technology back-ups of our information so that we can sleep well at night, knowing we have our content in safe keeping, no matter what.

- Balance

Speaking of sleeping well at night, this is an area that is important — particularly within the area of establishing balance in our lives. As my father always tells me “Self-care, self-care, self-care.” “Do I sound like a broken record?” he says. “No,” I say jokingly. And, the reality is that it is not a joke. “You are a single-engine airplane,” he says. Meaning, I am “holding down the fort” so to speak, and many are counting on me, and if I don’t perform my needed regular maintenance, the plane is going down, and myself and others won’t continue to fly and achieve their destinations. I am counting on myself, and others are too. The vital maintenance includes: a sustainable and healthy food plan, time allowed for follow-through on necessary movement and exercise, establishment of rest and relaxation, an “like clock-work” plan for sleeping and recharging, opportunities for leisure and fun, moments for reflection, activities that will fortify and enrich my spiritual life and reinforcing and growing in healthy relationships that will encourage and develop my personal life onto it’s next level, among others. Also, balance means sometimes carving out time in ways that may disappoint others — and at the same time, I have to place my balance needs at the forefront in order to keep this plane flying healthily. It also means setting boundaries with others and advocating for what I need in relationships. It’s hard. Life is hard. Giving myself time to navigate all that life has to offer has been helpful in knowing how to proceed. It has also been helpful for me to know that I don’t always know all of the information in a situation and to give others the benefit of the doubt — as a vehicle for removing extreme emotions in interactions as much as possible. It has been a great journey in learning how to step back and see someone else’s behavior as “their stuff” and try my best to separate behavior from the situations, and use skills to proceed mindfully in ways that will help to achieve the goal we all desire. Pursuing alternate ways to process extreme emotions and not bringing them to the table with others has been particular helpful, such as journaling, praying and not immediately reacting to others, but seeking advice and slowly proceeding mindfully and responding in ways that is balanced and is in the pursuit of the new path I have found: “I



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choose love.” Do I always get it “right”? Not always, no. Am I making an attempt to keep growing in this area? Absolutely.

- Contributing

And finally, I have benefitting from revising an aspect of my life that I absolutely love — focusing on how I can benefit others. What can I do today to help place a smile on someone else’s face? How can I do something big or small, outside of my regular day, that will show others that they matter? As SLPs, we are in a helping profession. We were drawn to assist people with their “next-step” in improving their area of involvement. Of course, I love to contribute on the job. And, of course — connecting with co-workers and others we come into contact with. Showing myself friendly and finding ways to fortify others has been a rewarding process. How can I contribute today? How can I find a way to improve a situation? How can I lighten someone else’s load in a way that is sustainable to myself? Sometimes it is just a joke, an encouraging word, or finding a solutions to a problem that is “outside of the box.” We are rich in our opportunities for contributing. They are all around us. We can look at all interactions and situations through the lens of scouting for contributing situations. Yes, it benefits others. And, the big secret is that it helps us, too. It gives a lift. It gives us a reason. It adds fuel to our fire to “press on.”

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In conclusion, I have listed here some take-a-ways from last year, now that I have a chance to reflect on it this time frame, in it’s totality.

I am sure that there are reflections from last year that you could contribute to this list as well.

In the face of all of the mountain challenges that we come across on the daily, we have choices. In fact, every day — we have choices. Some days we end our day, knowing that we could have made more effective choices, and we learn from them. Some days we end our day with the satisfaction that we poured ourselves into navigating ourselves in such a way that we are growing, and we are helping others grow to the place to where they desire. So, thank you 2021. Thank you for the lessons learned. I will keep these close to my heart and ponder on them, reminding myself that there is always room for movement. And I am so thankful for all of the resources I have at my disposal. I am thankful for the gifts that I have been given, and what I am able to enjoy — and I decide right here that I do not want to waste them. I am grateful for opportunity and I am grateful for the light that shines.

So, 2022. Here we go.

Onward!



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