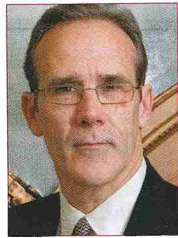




Exits: The End Of The Beginning

by Esther Muller and Michael Williams, Ph.D.



Exits are entrances. In ending, opportunities for beginning present. Everything ends, exiting in its time and turn. Exits can be planned and purposeful celebrating achievement, acknowledging transition, and embracing the promise of the future. In turn, exits can be sudden and shocking, savaging our sense of stability rendering us numb, near paralytic. The conditions and context of exiting may or may not be controllable; however our attributions and actions associated

with exits are within our control.

We exit personal and professional relationships daily. From the tender and apprehensive goodbye of young parents, to their child boarding a school bus for the first time, to a company president transitioning an established business rich with legacy and pride to a new iteration of itself, a boutique firm elite, sleek, and nimble. Exits require endings. Our view of exits and endings is jaded. We prefer beginnings; exhilarating, steeped in mystery, and pregnant with the promise of the future. Often, our perspectives of exits are associated with loss not liberation; pain not possibility. Life's lessons have informed and inferred to us the paradoxical nature of exits. Sociologist Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot writes in her book *Exit: The Endings That Set Us Free*, that exits are often realized in "vivid moments in which we say: I'm done. I'm through. Or, in more messy, iterative processes in which, we know and realize that we've been exiting for a long time."

Exits initiate the end of beginnings. A beginning, like birth can be a celebratory or solemn event. It can be an epiphanal moment flooding mind and emotion with the revelation of personal and professional potential; a pinnacle moment filled with self-actualization. Alternatively, an end simply stopping; employment ended, a life truncated before beginning. As a culture, Americans tend to avoid exits and endings as catalysts for personal or professional transformation. We associate sadness and grief with exits hindering our experiences and the joy and release they offer.

How can we harness the power and potential inherent in exits and endings to fuel new beginnings? Models can guide our way enabling us to learn, reflect, and grow.

Models And Maps: Exits And Ending

Exiting personal or professional relationships can be accompanied by stages of grief. Grief can influence how we manage ours and other's exits. One model for navigating the grief associated with exits is, *The 5 Stages of Grief* created by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Kübler-Ross identified five stages of grief that we pass through when exiting moving toward new beginnings.

The five stages are:

1. *Denial* - A defensive response, buffering the impact of shock allowing, us to rationalize and manage emotions.

2. *Anger* - Denial fades replaced with reality and pain. Reality brings anger, guilt, and blame.

3. *Bargaining* - Negotiating with higher powers and others; appealing for more favorable conditions, or change of circumstances.

4. *Depression* - Indicating degrees of acceptance; accompanied by the sadness and regret associated with leaving others.

5. *Acceptance* - Readiness to exit, expressing thoughts and feelings enabling healing. Coaches can help you understand and explore the use and value of this model when exiting.

All The World's A Stage

In Act II, Scene VII of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Jaques offers "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts," offers context to the important, yet fleeting nature of exits in our lives. Exits, as entrances are inevitabilities, they frame and partition our lives. How we manage exits reflect our integrity, compassion, and wisdom and our ability to maximize the benefits inherent in endings. Leaders neither possessing nor applying these characteristics may not survive the rapidity and relentlessness of the 21st century global business environment. Leaders shape organizational cultures. Therefore, they must know their parts in leveraging exits and entrances in order to effectively play the many parts necessary to lead upon the corporate stage.

Change Leadership: Thought And Action

Leading change requires vision, fortitude, and courage. Leaders must have a vision and equip agents with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage it. Dottie Herman, President of Prudential Douglas Elliman states, "Exits transform businesses, in turn change how people manage their productivity and practices. Change management is a key component of my leadership; always aware, ready, and responsive to change; anticipating and managing it for the benefit of the company and its constituents. It enables me to lead, creating our future today.

Coaches coach leaders and constituents to effectively management change. Success is the destination, so take the next exit on the roadway to your success; engage a coach.

Get coached; get results. ■

Esther Muller

*Co-Founder of the Academy for Coaching and Training
& Master Coach*

Tel: 646-391-7406

Esther@EmpowerAct.com

www.EmpowerAct.com

www.EstherMuller.com

www.RealEstateAcademy.com

Michael Williams, Ph.D.

*Co-Founder of the Academy for Coaching and Training
& Board Certified Coach*

Tel: 973-477-6727

Michael@EmpowerAct.com

www.EmpowerAct.com

www.StrategicHRM.org