

TRANSITIONS



MF
RC ESQUIMALT

IN THE LIVES OF
MILITARY FAMILIES

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The names in this booklet are fictitious and the stories are composites of the experiences of military families. Any resemblance to actual events or real persons is coincidental.

“ We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

- Joseph Campbell

This booklet is for military families experiencing changes in their lives and how to effectively work through them. It will help you understand the effect of the military lifestyle, including transitions within relocation, deployment and retirement or release from the military. You will read personal stories that explain the many challenges, stresses and feelings experienced by military family members and the steps they took to make change less disruptive in their lives. You will also learn about the stages of transition and the strategies you can use to manage changes in your own life.

If you are transitioning to civilian life, you may read this booklet reflecting back on past experiences and learned skills you've develop through your military family journey. The learning and resilience you have built up over the years can be transferable into this new phase.



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Life is a state of constant change. Some changes are profound and may seem overwhelming, like losing your job or ending a relationship. Others are as simple as walking home a new way.

Changes are based on an external event. Something happens that results in a fundamental difference in your situation. How you react and adjust to this change is a transition. A transition is the process you go through when making a change.

This book takes a closer look at changes and how you can work through them. You'll learn about voluntary and involuntary changes, dealing with one change at a time and how risk and change work together. You'll learn the steps of working through transitions, understanding and facing fear, and taking risks.

This book also looks at some of the stresses people face when dealing with changes and transitions, as well as some ways to lessen that stress.

All in all, this book will shed some light on planned and unexpected changes, how they affect you and how you can effectively work through them.



Understanding Change – Jeff's Story

Jeff really loved his job in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and his friends in his unit. Along with the milestone of his 14th year of service came a promotion and likely a move to Ottawa.

He considered the huge challenge of moving with his spouse and their two teenage girls across the country. His wife had a great job that she loved and one of his daughters was halfway through high school. Should they sell their house in a slow market or consider living separately for a short time?

Should he retire from the military and start a new career as a civilian? While he considered seeking employment with a Department of National Defence contractor, he was concerned he might lose the sense of financial security and his identity as part of the military. He and his family had to sit down and talk through the many transitions ahead and decide which path to take.

Understanding Change

There are two kinds of changes—voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary changes are the changes you choose to make and are prepared for. Examples include quitting a job, accepting a promotion, taking early retirement or starting your own business. When you take charge and choose to make a change in your life, you may feel excited, relieved or anxious—all typical reactions.

Involuntary changes are ones that happen and are beyond your control. These can be a change in health; a change in a relationship due to death or divorce; a change in your work situation, such as being laid off, fired or forced to retire; or a decrease or increase in demand for your skills or services. Initially, most people react to involuntary changes with anger, sadness or fear.

Changes can be both voluntary and involuntary depending on the situation and how you view it. For example, you may voluntarily choose to get additional training, but you may be doing this to avoid losing your job and feel you have no choice in the matter.

One thing is for sure: change is constant. Every day we face new changes—voluntary and involuntary, big and small—and you'll know how to work through them if you are prepared.

Take Charge of Change

In today's workplace, making strategic career moves is perfectly acceptable. As a worker today, you don't expect employers to look after your career, as was often the case in previous generations. You now manage your own career path and look to create your own opportunities. You have the power to change not only your work role or work environment, but also other areas of your life.

Prepare for Expected Changes

Trends can be a source of change. A trend is a widespread change in social direction, such as the increased use of technology at work and its effect on the labour market. Trends don't just pop up; they grow like a wave, gathering momentum. Trends are supported by a great deal of evidence and are identified by many sources. Looking back, you can trace the start of a trend, its growth and its effect on society. By keeping an eye on trends, you can become aware of and prepare for upcoming changes.

- Look for trends by reading, watching TV, talking to people and checking out websites.
- Contact professional associations or agencies for information.
- Take action to respond to trends.
- Prepare for future opportunities.



Prepare for Expected Changes: Jessica's Story

Jessica was a military member and she liked to be organized.

She had deployed to far away countries, she trained hard to stay in shape, and she looked forward to a future in the military. However, now that Jessica was expecting her first child, she felt overwhelmed when she thought about how to incorporate single parenthood with work.

When she looked into daycare, she discovered that infant care was very expensive, difficult to find, and there were really long wait lists! One of her friends suggested she call the MFRC to find out where to apply. It felt good to take that first step, and to put together some concrete plans.

DID YOU KNOW?

People who live an active, balanced life with a variety of interests and supports, who stay current and involved in life, are usually able to respond to and cope with unplanned changes much better than those who do not.

Changes in the Military Lifestyle: Kelly's Story

Kelly thought she was used to the military lifestyle with all the moves and deployments over the past 20 years, but this deployment was different.

It was much longer, almost a year with the workups and the time away. And it was more dangerous. Kelly found herself glued to her smart phone in the daytime and the TV at night, watching and waiting. She felt more worried than ever before and not sure what to do. She was experienced, so why couldn't she handle it? Kelly decided to reach out and talk with some other military spouses about how she was really feeling, and she realized that she was not alone. The military lifestyle was changing, but there were also new ways to deal with it and people who could help.

DID YOU KNOW?

Focus, attitude and direction can help you prepare to take action and respond to trends.

Changes in the Military Lifestyle

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are away more frequently, for longer periods of time and involved in higher-risk missions than in the previous generation. Families are required to move every two to five years, resulting in disruption of the partner's career and a lack of continuity of the children's education. The unique stressors of the military lifestyle are a result of the combined impact of these three factors: mobility, risk and separation (Ombudsman Report to the Minister of National Defence, 2013).

At the same time, the nature of families is changing and families are grappling with the reality of current economic pressures. Although almost half of the spouses work full time, many report that they have difficulty finding meaningful work with each move (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2013). In the past, families often lived in military family housing, but now 83% of families live in the greater civilian community (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2012). Military families also experience the same financial issues as other families, such as the high cost of housing and child care; however, they may have to buy and sell their homes more often, have difficulty obtaining a job for a necessary second income, and they may be far down on waitlists for child care.



Change Happens

Some changes just happen, and you have no control over them. These kinds of changes can be work-related, like getting laid off or having your company reorganize, or personal, like getting injured or losing a loved one. We're often left feeling helpless, like a deer caught in the headlights. What can you do about involuntary changes at work, at home and in your life?

Are You Prepared for the Future?

Regardless of what kind of work you do, you can look for trends and be ready to take advantage of future opportunities.

1. What changes are affecting you right now?

2. What actions can you take to respond to these changes?

Look Before You Leap

Before making a major change, consider the following factors:

Research: When you get your posting notice, look into the labour market in your new community. Is the work you are interested in available or is there a related kind of work you could do?

Skills: Do you have the necessary training or do you need to develop additional skills? How willing are you to retrain or go back to school? Is the college program transferable?

Moving: If you are looking for a new job, where is the hidden job market? What steps can you take to get to know people and build connections?

Support: What kinds of supports will you need in your new community? Do you need to get on a daycare waitlist? Will you need additional supports because of an upcoming deployment?

Looking for opportunities: Ben's Story

Ben's partner, Elisa, was about to get posted again. Ben would be starting from square one, or maybe square zero. He looked forward to the move, but not the job search. Employers looked at his employment history and wondered why he changed jobs every two years.

He decided to be proactive this time. He emailed an employment counsellor in the new community and asked for help in finding the hidden job market. The employment counsellor asked him to send his resume so they could get started looking at his strengths and matching them with the local job market. Soon he was exploring opportunities in his field and he felt much more hopeful.

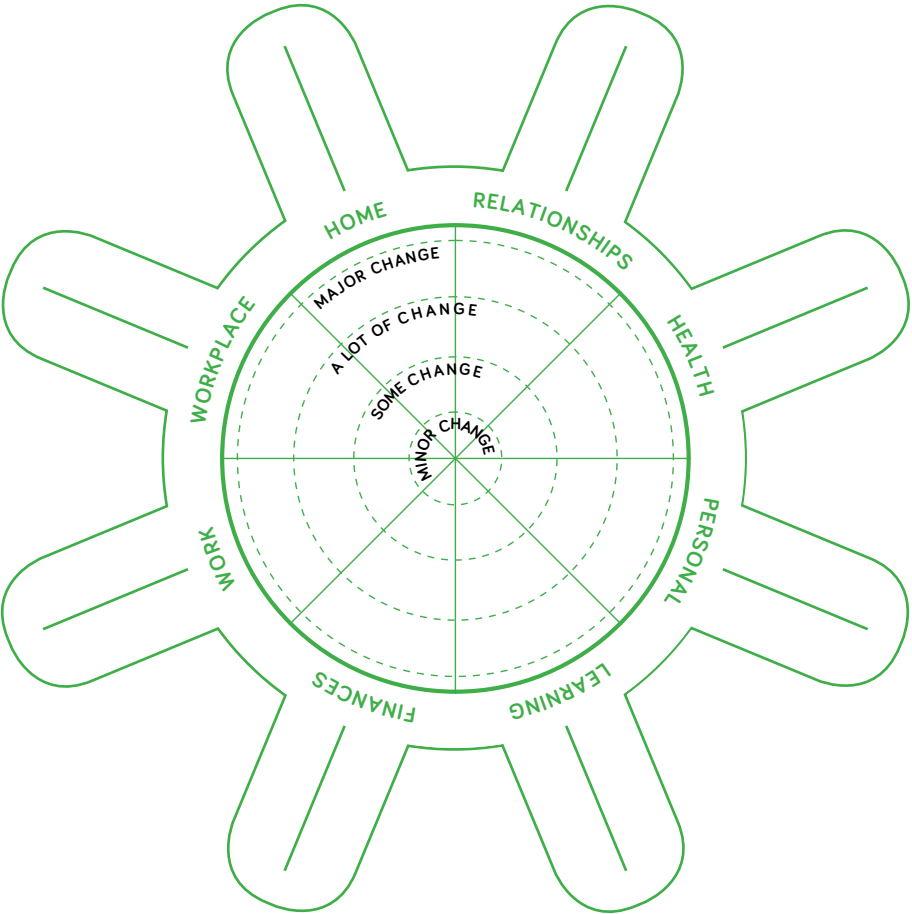
One Change at a Time

Change can happen in more than one area of your life at once—at home, to your health, to your family. Sometimes your individual change areas can feel somewhat manageable. But when change occurs in several areas, it can feel overwhelming, leading to a great deal of confusion and uncertainty.

The Change Wheel

The change wheel is a simple tool you can use to get a clearer focus on the areas in your life that are currently stable and those that are changing. You can use the change wheel to help you respond to multiple changes. By looking at your life in eight key areas, you can determine how much change is taking place in each and how you are responding to that change. This helps you to recognize which areas you want to concentrate on. As you focus on stabilizing one area at a time, you will regain a sense of control over multiple changes.

Here are the eight key areas of life along with a brief description of each. If there is an aspect of your life that is not reflected, add it to the area that's the best fit for you. Some life situations may fit into more than one key area.



The Change Wheel

Eight Key Areas of Life

Home—where you live and how you live

Relationships—your partner, family, friends and community

Health—your level of health, physical fitness and leisure

Personal—your spiritual, emotional and personal development

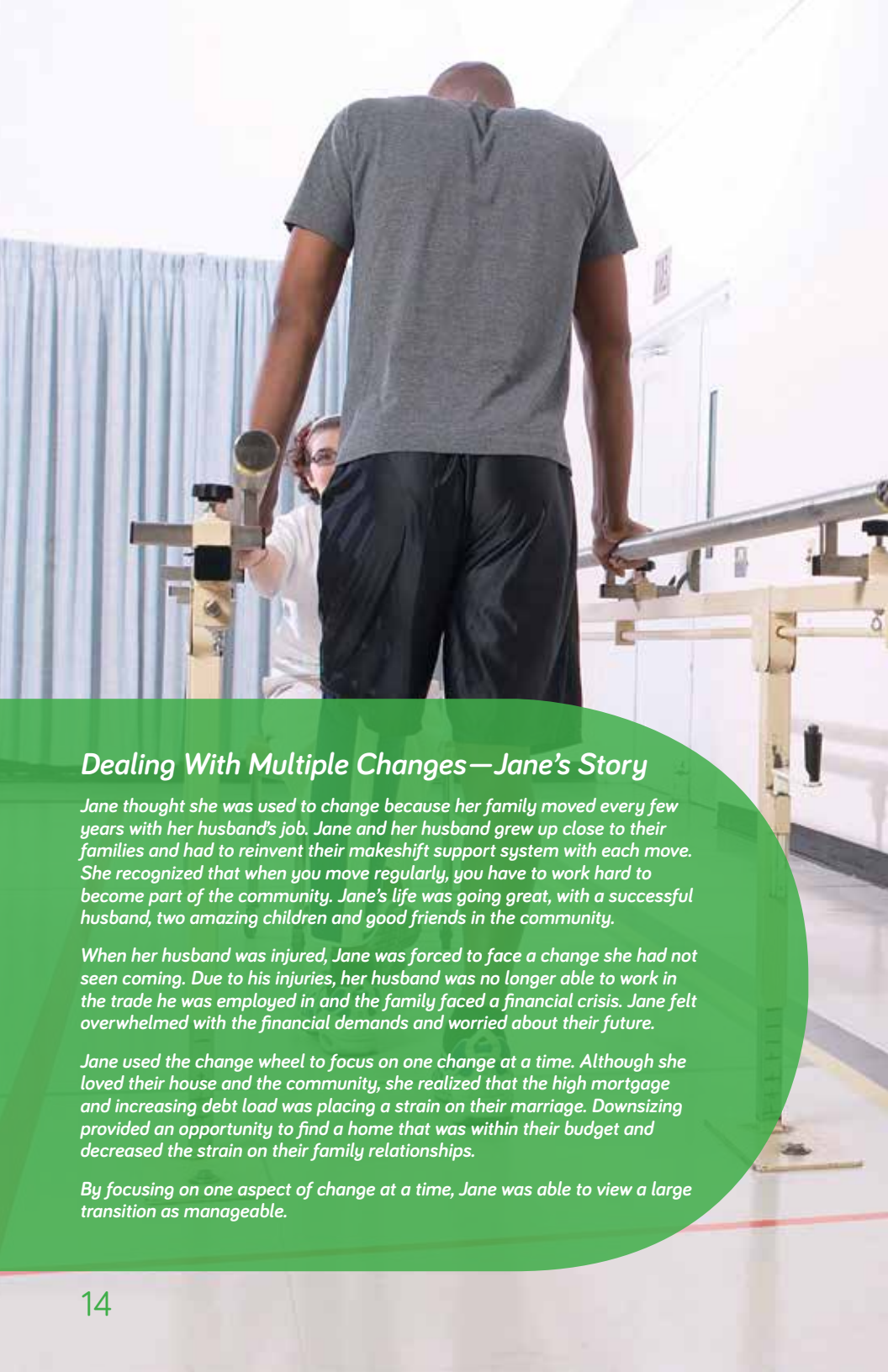
Learning—your skills, training and knowledge

Finances—the money you earn and the expenses you have

Work—any paid or volunteer work you do

Workplace—where you work and the people you work with

1. Looking at the sections of the wheel, representing eight different areas of life, consider the amount of change you are experiencing in each.
2. From the centre of the wheel, move out to the dotted line that represents the degree of change you are experiencing in each area (minor change, some change, a lot of change or major change). Colour or shade each section up to that dotted line.
3. Look at each area again. Regardless of how much change you identified, rate how you feel about your ability to respond to each change. Use the scale below, writing your answer on the spoke outside of the change wheel:
 - manageable
 - somewhat manageable
 - unmanageable



Dealing With Multiple Changes—Jane's Story

Jane thought she was used to change because her family moved every few years with her husband's job. Jane and her husband grew up close to their families and had to reinvent their makeshift support system with each move. She recognized that when you move regularly, you have to work hard to become part of the community. Jane's life was going great, with a successful husband, two amazing children and good friends in the community.

When her husband was injured, Jane was forced to face a change she had not seen coming. Due to his injuries, her husband was no longer able to work in the trade he was employed in and the family faced a financial crisis. Jane felt overwhelmed with the financial demands and worried about their future.

Jane used the change wheel to focus on one change at a time. Although she loved their house and the community, she realized that the high mortgage and increasing debt load was placing a strain on their marriage. Downsizing provided an opportunity to find a home that was within their budget and decreased the strain on their family relationships.

By focusing on one aspect of change at a time, Jane was able to view a large transition as manageable.

4. Pick one area where you want increased stability and control. Which one is it?

5. What can you do to increase the stability of this area? What obstacles do you need to overcome? How can you do this?

6. When can you make this happen? Be specific. Write down the dates that you plan to start and finish.

Start working on your plan right away. It doesn't have to be a big thing. You will find that it will focus your energy and lead to improvements in this area of your life. Once you have increased stability in one area, choose another. You will find a sense of control returning—one change at a time!

An Exercise in Control

Even if the change is one you have chosen, you may still feel that you've lost control over the direction your life has taken. If the change is involuntary, you may feel especially threatened. Here is another exercise that can help you focus your attention when responding to change.

1. Write down a change you have experienced or are about to experience.

2. Write down the things about the change that you feel you can control, can control somewhat or cannot control at all, in the space at right.
3. Next, focus on those changes you can control or somewhat control. Identify ways to keep yourself centred on these areas. Let go of the things you cannot control.

Put your energy into areas where you can have some impact and see results, and you will begin to regain a sense of being in charge. Accept that there are some things that are not within your ability to control. By letting go of those, you can begin the process of moving forward.

I can control

(e.g. my attitude)

I can control somewhat

(e.g. whether I work part time or full time)

I cannot control

(e.g. my age)

Rules to Risk By

The more control you have over a situation, the healthier you feel about it. Regardless of what changes you are going through, you do have control over your responses to them. You can exert control by making decisions about how much risk you want to take.

- Assess the risk—never risk more than you are willing to lose.
- Reduce the amount of risk by doing research, building support and getting as much control as possible over the outcome.
- Practise with small risks to build your confidence.
- Keep track of the risks you take.
- Look at risks that fail as temporary setbacks and opportunities to learn.

Risk

Risks are unavoidable in life. You face them every day. Sometimes the risks are physical, like climbing a mountain to overcome your fear of heights and gain confidence. Risks can be emotional, like making a commitment to a relationship. Or, risks can be financial, like investing in a business or financing your education.



DID YOU KNOW?

There's no such thing as a sure thing. Gathering as much information and support as possible builds a safety net and decreases the amount of uncalculated risk involved.

People have different comfort levels when it comes to risk. What is risky for you may not be risky for another. Also, you may be willing to take risks in some areas of your life, like cooking new foods, but be very cautious in other areas, like managing money. Your willingness to take risks may be related to how you handle change. If your comfort level with risk is high, you may be more willing to embrace change. A low comfort level may stop you from making a change that you really want to make.

In order to develop as a person, you have to push yourself beyond what is most comfortable, try new things and take a few risks. Often, when facing change, you'll be uncertain of the outcome or won't feel you have complete control over the situation. Taking risks goes hand in hand with change and transition.

Take a Chance

One way to increase your capacity for risk taking is to take small risks every day. Look again at the eight areas of life that make up the change wheel (home, relationships, health, personal, learning, finances, work, workplace). Pick a small risk to work on, and make small adjustments in each area. By simply repeating that small risk until you become comfortable, you will expand your comfort zone and become ready to move on to the next small risk. The bonus is that changes in your habits and routines can add creativity and excitement to life!

Making the Transition

Every time something changes in your life, you undergo a period of transition, a period when you react and adjust emotionally to the new situation. A transition period can be very brief, a few days or weeks, or it can take a few months or years. The length of the transition depends on many things, including the type of change you're experiencing, the way you feel about yourself, the kind of support you have, and whether you've chosen this change or not. Because people manage transitions in their own ways, there is no right or wrong amount of time.

The Three Stages of Transition

Though the factors and time frames will be different for each person, the process and stages of transition are the same for everyone. Transition has three basic stages—the Ending Stage, the Neutral Stage and the New Beginning Stage. Each stage involves different feelings and processes. Sometimes you'll deal with one stage before moving to the next; other times you'll slide back and forth between stages.

The Ending Stage

For Jack, being told he had an aggressive form of cancer was a turning point of his 27-year career with the Canadian Armed Forces. He would no longer meet the requirements for universality of service and he would face a medical release. Jack loved his work and was increasingly concerned about what his future would be like after release. Jack was often tired, angry and bitter with the world. He could no longer work in his trade and was unsure of his future employability due to medical limitations.

Transition starts with an ending. Before a new change take place, something else has to end. The first step in dealing with things that are new and different is to acknowledge that things have changed and you will need to let go of the past. Recognizing that something is really over is often the hardest part. Jack loved being a member of the Canadian Armed Forces and did not want to quit. He was angry and frustrated with the medical limitations and felt they unnecessarily restricted him from doing his job.

You may have conflicting feelings of anger, shock, sadness and even excitement. You may not want to accept your new situation that causes you to worry, doubt yourself or lose confidence. It takes time to grieve the loss, accept that the past is over and let go. It may not be easy, but it is necessary so you can move on to the Neutral Stage.

The Neutral Stage

At first, Jack told very few people about his diagnosis but found himself thinking about it every day and knowing he had to learn more. Jack began to explore his treatment options, changed his diet and went back to the gym. With his no-nonsense methodical approach to problem solving, Jack began to think about what he would like to do with his life after his medical release. He began to ask questions about programs and services available to help him find a job or go back to school for retraining in another career. Jack thought about his lifestyle and interests and began to spend more time engaging in hobbies and researching options for future employment.

The Neutral Stage is often the most uncomfortable stage because of its uncertainty. However, it is also the stage where you have the greatest opportunity to learn about yourself, thinking both about the past and the future. Working through the Neutral Stage will help you see the opportunities and challenges where you once saw threats and barriers. As you begin to accept the change, you begin to create new opportunities for yourself and gather strength for the changes to come.

This stage can be confusing because you will find yourself caught between the old and the new. The Neutral Stage is like a bridge that you've decided to cross, even though you don't know what is on the other side. You may feel scared, unfocused or depressed. You may, for a while, feel helpless, lonely and stuck. These feelings are typical and much like how Jack felt. Once Jack accepted that he would be medically released and would no longer be an active serving member of the Canadian Armed Forces, he didn't know what to do next. He had been a service member all his adult life. He questioned his skills and abilities. He was anxious about the future.

The Neutral Stage is a time to question, reflect, talk to other people, explore options and search for answers. Career planning workshops can help you become aware of your strengths and start the process of exploring the future.

The New Beginning Stage

Jack leads an amazingly robust and productive life centered on his family, friends, and his commitment to giving back through service to his community. Building on his past skills and knowledge, Jack enrolled in community college courses to upgrade his skills. Though Jack is not sure everything will work out, through the initial steps he has taken he has become increasingly optimistic and hopeful about his future.

After a period of reflection and exploration in the Neutral Stage, you're ready to start again by taking things step by step. You want to move on, try new things or take a calculated risk. You've moved into the New Beginning Stage.

At this stage, you'll begin to feel more energetic and positive as you take the first tentative steps to carry on with your life. You may also feel excited and a little nervous about the future. Are you doing the right thing? Will this work out? You may feel happy that you're moving forward. These feelings are all typical.

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Bridges, William. *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2004. Print.
Bridges William. *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press, 2009. Print.

What Stage Are You At?

Now that you have reviewed the three stages of transition, explore the stages for yourself.

1. Write it down.

2. What emotions are you feeling? Write down as many as you can.

3. Which of the three stages of transition do you see yourself in right now—Ending, Neutral or New Beginning?

4. What is one specific task you can do in this stage that will help you? How will you do this? When will you start?

As you begin to deal with the change, check in with yourself several times. Knowing the stages of transition will help you understand your feelings and reactions.

Change Checklist

To help you during a period of career transition

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ do a skills assessment | ☐ take time to dream |
| ☐ stay flexible; nothing is set in stone | ☐ laugh when you can |
| ☐ set realistic goals | ☐ help others by volunteering |
| ☐ update your résumé | ☐ be creative |
| ☐ take a course | ☐ keep up your networking |
| ☐ take time for yourself | ☐ don't go it alone; talk to friends and family |
| ☐ exercise your mind and body | ☐ take a risk |
| ☐ indulge in a hobby | |

Face Your Fears

Fear is a fact of life. Whether you call it worry, anxiety or concern, everyone has fear that affects them at least some of the time. Some of the more common fears in times of change include

- fear of failure
- fear of success
- fear of the unknown
- fear of embarrassment
- fear of looking bad/disapproval
- fear of rejection
- fear of trying
- fear of taking risks



Relocation: Josie's Story

Josie found herself a 21-year-old stranger living in Victoria. After spending her life in Boston, Massachusetts, the move to British Columbia was a big culture shock for her. To trade a stressful, fast-paced life in the big city for an easy-going west coast life in B.C.'s capital city was a real adjustment. It was hard to leave a lifetime of friends and family behind to start from scratch in somewhere new.

Josie had no idea what to expect when she moved across the continent and married someone in the military. When her husband got posted to a ship, she grew further isolated in her new community. She was a young woman living in an empty apartment, in a new town, where she knew no one. Later that year, Josie and her husband welcomed a daughter to their family. A chance meeting with a neighbour directed her to the respite child care service at the MFRC. She didn't know anything about the organization, but she gradually started to participate in the weekly parent drop-ins. Josie eventually became a MFRC volunteer helping to organize events and provide support to other families experiencing work-related separations. Her involvement with the organization gave her the springboard to make some lasting friendships to help her thrive in her new environment.

DID YOU KNOW?

Setting small goals and visualizing what you need to do to succeed can help you overcome your fears.

Seven Strategies for Handling Fear

Fear is one of the major obstacles to embracing change. As you go through change and transition, you're likely to feel varying degrees of several kinds of fear. One of the best "fear busters" is to enlist help from the personal and professional connections around you. To ask for support, you have to overcome a fear of being rejected. Asking for support is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of confidence.

Don't let fear block you from doing what you want to in life. Even the most confident people have fears. They have learned and practised strategies for handling their fear. You can learn these strategies too!

1. Name your greatest fear

What scares you about the transition you are going through? Say it out loud. Write it down. This way you can stare it in the face and know exactly what you are dealing with. Often, fear loses some of its power once it has been identified.

2. Ask yourself “what if?”

Imagine what could happen if your fear became true.
Be specific and write it down.

How would you feel if your fear really happened?

Now that you have a good picture of the worst that can happen, what are some things you could do to handle it?

Planning how to handle something in advance reduces your fear of the unknown and increases your ability to manage it.

3. Don't waste time worrying

What if your fear didn't come true after all? Research suggests that 90% of what we worry about never happens. Are you going to let a 10% chance stop you from doing what you want? Think back. Have there been times when you worried needlessly? Is this a pattern you would like to change? How?

4. Decide to do nothing

Ask yourself "what if I do nothing?" Sometimes, the best solution is deciding not to choose at this time. What could happen in your present situation if you do nothing?

How would you deal with it?

5. Turn unknowns into knowns

Often fear comes from not knowing what to expect. Lessen your fear by getting information from talking to people, reading books and searching the Internet.

Where can you go for information?

Who can you talk to for support?

6. Face your fear

Do something! Sitting at home stewing about your fear actually makes it worse. Facing your fear and taking a small action or risk to begin dealing with your fear builds confidence and lessens the fear.

For example, if you dread going to a job interview, visit the site of the interview a day or two before. Learn how to get there, how long it takes by bus or by car and whether you will need change for parking. Go into the building, get a feel for the atmosphere and pick up company brochures. Check out the dress code by seeing what employees are wearing to work. These actions are far more productive than sitting at home worrying.

What action can you take to confront your fear?

Fear of the Unknown: Karen's Story

When Karen moved with her partner, she didn't fully understand the military lifestyle. Leaving friends and family in Halifax to start over somewhere completely new was rough. When her partner deployed, it was the first time the couple had been apart. Karen felt disconnected and lonely, and too unsure of herself to go out on her own.

At the urging of family and friends back home, Karen reluctantly decided to check out the MFRC Coffee Night. The group turned out to be exactly what she needed, providing great comfort and an emotional release for Karen. She appreciated being able to have a conversation with others who had similar experiences and feelings. It felt good to know that she was not alone.

When Karen reached out and made the effort to engage with others who were experiencing similar issues, she discovered a social network for herself and new ways to connect with her partner while they were apart.



7. Believe in yourself

People are often their own worst critics. Focus on maintaining a positive attitude and remind yourself of your strengths. Change your “I can’t” into “I can.”

Here are a few positive things you can tell yourself:

- I am now aware of my fears.
- I am losing my fear of change.
- I am finding the right path for me.
- I am prepared for the transition.
- I am making a good decision.
- I am becoming more confident every day.
- I am adapting to change.

Add your own statements. Write them down in the present tense and keep them positive. Keep repeating these messages. Change your negatives into positives.

Support

Don't go it alone. Another key to navigating the transition period is to ensure that you have a support network available. Friends, family, neighbours, co-workers, mentors, health-care practitioners and clergy are just some of the people you can turn to for a helping hand, a friendly conversation, guidance and advice. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Choosing a New Direction: Bob's Story

After twenty years in the military, Bob left behind a job with people he cared about, a steady paycheck and a sense of security, but he also looked forward to spending more time with family and friends. He no longer had to worry about deployments and work expectations, and yet he felt a sense of instability with the lack of structure and camaraderie with his military colleagues. Although he had planned for retirement, he found himself often longing for familiar routines.

Bob began to build structure into his day by setting exercise goals, exploring options and creating an action plan for his future. He enjoyed carpentry as a hobby and decided to register for a course at community college. He pursued carpentry on a part-time basis to bring in extra income, meet new people and provide him with a sense of purpose.

Bob realized it was unrealistic to think he could instantly adjust to civilian life without some challenges. Bob created a vision for his future based on achievable goals and interests.

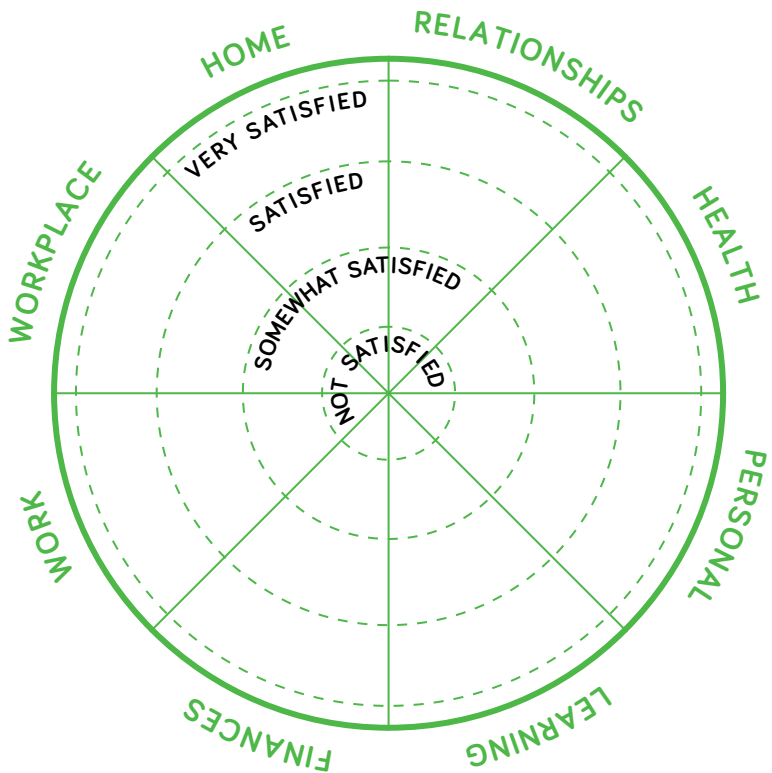
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Explore Your Options

Rather than wait for change to happen, you have the power to create your own change. You can choose to change work roles, start or end a relationship, start an exercise program or leisure activity, have a child, move to a new location, or enroll in a course or training program. Life would be boring without change!

The Choice Wheel

Like the change wheel, the choice wheel is a tool that shows you where you may want to implement a change in your life. Each of the eight sections on the choice wheel represents an area of life. The choice wheel can help you figure out which areas of your life are satisfying to you now and which are less satisfying. Using this information, you can choose which area you would like to create a small or large change in.



Eight Key Areas of Life

Home—Are you satisfied with where you live and your lifestyle?

Relationships—How solid is your network of family and friends?

Health—Do you have any health or wellness concerns?

Personal—Are you satisfied with your level of personal growth?

Learning—Are you satisfied with your skills, training or knowledge?

Finances—Are you comfortable living on what you earn?

Work—Are you happy with your present work situation?

Workplace—Do you like where you work and the people you work with?

1. Think about the degree of satisfaction you have with each area of your life.
2. On the choice wheel (page 35), colour or shade each section from the centre out to the dotted line that represents your degree of satisfaction—not satisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied or very satisfied.
3. If one area of your life could become more satisfying, what area would you want that to be?

4. What can you do to increase your satisfaction in this area?

5. When will you start to make this happen?

Be specific with a start date. Start immediately, if you can.

Now, put this on your to-do list, calendar or organizer, and start to make it happen.

New Opportunities: Sarah's Story

Sarah had heard the term "expect the unexpected" when she married into the military lifestyle. Now, after several moves, she was tired of putting her career plans on hold and began to get excited about getting back into the workforce.

Sarah hoped going back to school would provide new opportunities, but she had been reluctant to begin the application process and hesitant to make the commitment in case they moved again.

Sarah knew moving would be one of the difficult realities of the military lifestyle. She decided online training was the way to go because of its flexibility to complete assignments after their children went to bed. She enjoyed participating in virtual classroom experiences and becoming part of an online learning community that allowed her to complete course work in spite of the demands of military relocation. Sarah's choice provided her with a sense of continuity for the future.



Access Your Hope

Take a moment to look at what changes you are facing and what you can do to increase your hope.

1. What major change are you facing in your life?

2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), how would you rate your hope right now?

3. Describe a time in your life when you felt hopeful.

4. What is the smallest thing that could happen to increase your hope?

5. How can you nurture your hope? (For example, listen to hopeful music, cook a favourite food, call a good friend, etc.)

Hope—Energy to Support Change

Working through changes and transitions takes time, and overcoming doubts and fears takes effort. One strategy for managing change is to become intentional about your hope.

What Is Hope?

Wherever there is uncertainty, confusion or conflict, there is also hope. Hope is the energy that helps you cope and move through the tough spots in life. Hope is a sense that you will be okay no matter how things turn out. Very simply, hope is the “yes” to life.

Each person’s hope is unique. It is shaped and influenced by the people and events that person has experienced in his or her life. It’s inside all of us, even when it is difficult to see.

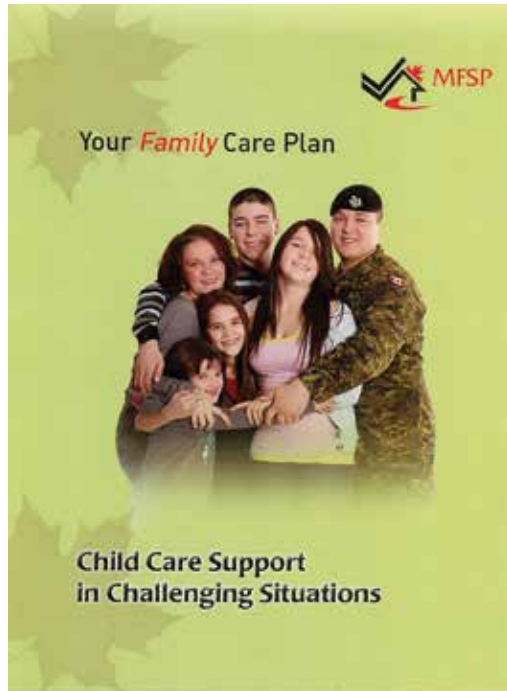
Hope can be accessed through our senses of touch, hearing, sight, taste and smell. Because each person’s hope is different, the way you express hope is as individual as you are.

Develop an active awareness of things and activities that give you hope. Then, set short-term goals to build your hope by participating in them. Here are some possibilities:

- Be creative—paint a picture, cultivate your green thumb, work on a craft project.
- Identify “hopeful” role models and apply those characteristics to yourself.
- Construct “hope” collages or take photographs.
- Write a story that describes your hope.
- Volunteer in your community.

Explore various aspects of your hope. Hope can play a role in helping you manage change more effectively.

Adapted with permission from the Hope Foundation of Alberta.



Reducing Stress: Kara and Shane's Story

Kara and Shane were both military members who moved in together shortly after the birth of their now 3-month-old daughter. Recently, Shane asked Kara how she would feel about his 14-year-old son from a previous marriage coming to live with them. Wanting to be supportive of her new partner, Kara agreed.

The couple quickly realized that they were not prepared for the stress of caring for a newborn, a teen trying to adjust to a new living situation, Shane's demanding work schedule and an upcoming deployment.

After a lengthy discussion, the couple took the time to identify what support Kara would need, especially while Shane was deployed. Kara said that it was difficult to care for a baby and teen in addition to finding some time for herself.

When they looked at their Family Care Plan as part of the deployment planning, they realized that Shane's retired mother could stay with Kara and the children while he was away. Shane also arranged for a house cleaner to come in once a week and for his son to go to his mother's every second weekend. As a couple, they realized that with a bit of planning a potentially stressful situation could be managed.

Reducing Your Stress

It's a fact: Life can be stressful. Learning to cope with this stress is an important step in ensuring a healthy, balanced life and improving your ability to manage change.

Stress the Good Points

A little stress is a good thing; it drives us and it challenges us. You feel anxious, your heart beats faster and your breathing speeds up. It's your body's normal fight-or-flight reaction to danger. It's good to know where it comes from so that you can work at managing it. But too much stress is not healthy. It can cause increased blood pressure, stress headaches and many other physical and mental reactions. Don't ignore these symptoms!



DID YOU KNOW?

Eating well, exercising and getting enough sleep can help to reduce your stress.

Feeling Over-Stressed?

People are funny. Sometimes they try to take on too much, do too much and be too much. When they do, they can become stressed out. Some common warning signs of too much stress are

- moodiness
- loss of appetite
- trouble sleeping
- feeling overwhelmed
- memory problems
- concentration problems
- anxious or racing thoughts

Simple Stress Busters

- Sing your favourite song as loudly as you like.
- Take a long hot bath or shower.
- Let yourself have a good cry.
- Make up a fantasy—starring you—and enjoy it for a few minutes.
- Walk or run around the block.
- Hug your children.
- Do something nice for someone.
- Smile at three people you don't know.
- Relive a favourite memory.

Tips for Reducing Stress

Change causes stress. Looking for work causes stress. Reorganizations, downsizing, outsourcing, mergers and technological changes increase stress in the workplace. Then there's stress at home: dealing with relationships, house repairs, family budgets and more. While stress can be a powerful motivating factor, it's important to keep it at a manageable level.

Different people manage stress in different ways. There is no one right way to reduce stress. Choose what works best for you.

Take one thing at a time and one day at a time

There's a limit to how much you can do. Set priorities. When you have many tasks and responsibilities, concentrate on the one thing you need to do now and put the others aside until later.

Listen to your feelings

Listen to yourself. Reframe your thoughts in a positive light. For example, "I will be as ready as I can be," as opposed to, "I will never be ready in time."

Breathe deeply

This is easy and effective and takes only minutes a day. Feel the immediate calm when you consciously breathe in deeply through your nose from deep down in your diaphragm. Place your hand gently on your stomach to feel it expand a little as you breathe in. Hold for a few moments, and then slowly let it go, all of it, through your mouth.

Relax in a calm setting

Sit outside, smell the flowers, watch the clouds overhead or enjoy the silence of freshly fallen snow. If you can't be in a natural area or park, head to a balcony, deck, garden or walking trail. Or visualize a peaceful setting that works for you.

Listen to music

Choose music that soothes you. As you listen, mentally focus on one body part at a time, starting with your head and gradually moving to your toes. Slowly tell each to relax. Feel the tensions melt away.

Move your body

Go for a walk during your lunch break. Run, bicycle, swim, dance, lift weights or play a sport. Feel energy, vitality and zest return.

Laugh it off

Spend time with fun people in fun situations. Watch funny movies or television shows. Read books that make you chuckle. Play with a pet or a young child. Laughing releases tension and reverses the physical effects of stress on your body.

Do something creative for yourself

Enjoy a hobby that will keep your hands busy and absorb your attention for a while. Garden, paint ceramics, create a scrapbook, draw, doodle or work with wood and other natural materials.

Live a balanced life

You've heard the one about all work and no play. Make time for family, friends and leisure activities in your life.

Talk to someone

Tell your story and fears to a person you feel comfortable with. Or call a help line. Or get it off your chest by writing it all down on paper, letting the words flow without stopping to check or edit. Look for ways to make changes and improvements.

Start Reducing Your Stress Today

What stresses you out?

Pick one of the tips to reduce stress that you can start doing right now. How will you do this? What time of day will you do this? Try this regularly for three weeks until it becomes a habit.

Apply another tip when you are ready. Practise for three weeks until it, too, becomes a habit.

Continue your new habits or try other stress reducers, until your stress is at the level you are comfortable with.

Create a Better Life Balance

How often do you hear people say that they need more balance in their lives? Sometimes it feels like life is controlling you rather than you being in control of your life. Think about the number of activities you try to fit in every day:

- work
- learning
- leisure
- relationships
- eating and household tasks
- sleeping

Think of the various roles you may play: student, worker, spouse, parent, friend, volunteer and homemaker. Your life balance varies to accommodate the activities, needs and responsibilities of your roles at different phases of your life.

There are only so many minutes in a day, and you want to spend your time wisely. Yet if you don't think about how your days are spent, it is easy for things to get hectic.

How Do You Spend Your Time?

Take a few minutes right now and think about how you spend your time.

Dig through your pockets, check the bottom of your dresser drawer, shake the piggy bank and find 24 nickels. Each nickel represents an hour in your day. It's up to you how you spend that hour.

- 1. Put a nickel in a row below for every hour you spend on that area a day. Eight hours of sleep = eight nickels in that row. If you didn't find enough nickels, use a pencil and make checkmarks. But remember, only 24 checkmarks in total.

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		Current Total	Desired Total
Work			
Learning			
Leisure			
Relationships			
Eating and Household Tasks			
Sleeping			



Creating Balance: Laurie's Story

After completing her degree, Laurie found a high-paying job in her field, and she thought she had found the perfect life as a military spouse. After she had her two children, she found that her demanding job was less than satisfying, so Laurie decided to strike out on her own. She created a business that reflected the needs of a healthy young family: making time to exercise, practicing good nutrition, connecting with other women and having fun with children. Her health and fitness program was a huge success, and it created a "can do" mindset toward life's challenges and a sense of self-empowerment for women in the community. Laurie had to learn business operations, accounting, marketing, merchandising and franchising to put her energy and expertise into practice. Now Laurie's job gives her the satisfaction of seeing new moms interacting with experienced moms to gain confidence while their children have fun and learn the benefits of a balanced lifestyle from an early age.

2. Add up the nickel in each row and write the score in the Current Total column. Have a look at your current life balance. Now that you see it laid out before you, what do you think? Are you happy with how you are spending your time, how you are balancing your life?
3. Spend your nickels again. This time, spend them the way you would like to have your life balance look. Write the score in the Desired Total column.

You may want to talk to your family and ask them to do this activity with you. Then you can compare desired life balances to understand how priorities may differ between family members. Are there major discrepancies in how you like to spend your time? Your spouse may want to spend more time on some areas than you do. Be open to negotiating and think of ways to compromise. Work together toward achieving a satisfying balance for all.





Positive Attitude: The Miller Family Story

The Miller family knew that moving was part of their life in the military; however, their recent move was harder in a different way when their daughter, Cindy, struggled with the thought of changing schools (again) and leaving her friends. While Cindy knew what to expect, she didn't look forward to another first day as the "new kid" trying to make friends and fit in to a new school environment.

Planning ahead and including Cindy in the process provided them a chance to talk about the challenges and opportunities together. Instead of focusing on the downside of moving, they talked about meeting new people and trying out new activities as a family. They identified soccer as one constant in Cindy's life that allowed her to make new friends in the past and encouraged her to research local soccer clubs in their new community. It was tough for Cindy and her family to say goodbye and to cope with the roller coaster of emotions associated with moving, but their positive attitude and planning made moving more manageable.



Stay Positive

A positive attitude in the workplace has a positive effect on co-workers and customers. Put your positive attitude to work for you.

- Choose your attitude for the day. Focus on the good.
- Give someone an unexpected compliment.
- Really listen.
- Help someone.
- Before going to sleep, review your day and note the small positive things that have happened.





Listening to Yourself: Jenny's Story

Jenny found that the first few months after she and her CAF husband moved were unbelievably difficult. She realized that she needed to take control of the aspects of her life that she could control. First, she identified people who were light, who could talk about things other than their problems, and who were making the most out of their new community. Second, she decided she needed to take better care of her physical self. She started to use the gym that she had bought a membership at three months earlier. She ate healthier. She learned new cooking techniques. Finally, Jenny made the commitment to meditate every single day.

Taking control of her social, physical and spiritual/mental health made a world of difference for Jenny during this move. She can now take this knowledge forward in future moves where she will continue to face tremendous amounts of change. She knows that she may not always have a choice in where they go, but there are always some things she can control. To help maintain her peace of mind, Jenny decided she will focus on those things. By taking control she is empowering herself.



Keep It Simple

Simplifying the way we live is one way to regain control of our lives during times of change and transition. Take into account what you need to live, what you want and what you can do without. You'll be surprised what fits into the last category. Consider these 7 steps.

1. Plan ahead

- Prepare a plan for deployment.
- Get connected to your community.
- Establish an emergency fund.

2. Spend time with people who are important to you

- Family, friends and neighbours are part of your support network.
- Often the simplest pleasures are the most rewarding.
- Don't be afraid to ask others for help.

3. Re-evaluate your priorities and values

- Focus on the things that bring you meaning.
- Think about your personal values and work obligations.
- Look at your life balance.

4. Spend time doing the things that are important to you

- Explore your hobbies and passions.
- Exercise your mind, body and spirit.
- Plan a getaway together either before or after the deployment.

Continued on the next page

5. Listen to yourself

- Take control of your own life.
- Steer yourself toward doing what you enjoy.
- Turn your “I can’t’s” into “I cans.”

6. Remind yourself that your needs are important

- Look after yourself so you will be able to look after others.
- Do a little something for yourself every day.

7. Get help

- Ask family members and friends for their support.
- Visit your local MFRC and connect with your community.
- Check online to find out more about community resources: Recreation centre, library, parks.
- Call someone if you need to talk: Family Information Line for military families 24/7, 1-800-866-4546.

Summary

Change will always be a part of our lives—it happens every day and to everybody. Regardless of whether the changes are voluntary or unexpected, learning how to deal with them is an essential survival skill for life.

We hope the information and key strategies presented in this book will help you move through the transition period and overcome the stress you may be feeling during this time.

Review this book from time to time and make the most of change.

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Resources

Are you looking for more information? Try the resources below.

Family Force

Connecting families with Military Family Resource Centres across the country and CAF services. Bilingual. www.familyforce.ca

Family Navigator

Helping military families find resources and navigate systems in the greater community across Canada. Relocation resources. Bilingual. www.familynavigator.ca

Family Information Line

Confidential information, referral and support service. 24/7. Bilingual. 1-800-866-4546.

CAFMAP

Voluntary confidential counselling service for CAF members and their families. 24/7. Bilingual. 1-800-268-7708

SISIP Financial Services

Financial advice and solutions for CAF members and their families. www.sisip.com

Raising Your Military Child

Interactive parenting e-tool. Military lifestyle. Bilingual. www.esquimaltmfrc.com

Psychology Foundation of Canada

Resources for parenting and managing stress. www.psychologyfoundation.org

