



Navigating Transitions for Young Adults

George Swingler

This booklet offers tips on how to:

- ◆ find your bearings
- ◆ plot your course and
- ◆ get started on the next stage of your life's journey.

A lot happens in your Twenties and Thirties, and your choices at 22 will be very different from those at 30. So the booklet is in two parts:

1. On the Runway - Early Twenties 4 [>>Go there..](#)
2. Take-off! - Into the Thirties 9 [>>Go there..](#)

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Version 1 (April 2016)

Dear Reader

I hope you find this booklet useful. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone else you think might benefit.

Please remember that we are all different, and none of the suggestions will apply to everyone. Use what's helpful and disregard the rest.

I'll be delighted to receive your comments for improvement [>>Email . .](#)

There **is a special 'alchemy' in** having someone listening empathically and without judgement to what you are thinking [>>more..](#) Drop me a line if **you'd like** to supplement this booklet with in-person coaching [>>Email . .](#)

To download any other **free 'navigation' resources (for yourself, or friends or family)** [>>click here:](#)

Navigation in Midlife

Navigation in the Sixties

Navigation by Journaling

Regular blog posts and/or news items are [>>just a click away.](#)

And you can check out [>>My Website](#)

Bon voyage!

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Navigating Life Transitions for Young Adults

Everything keeps changing!

- ◆ Things are so uncertain, and it's so complex that maybe **you're not sure how you** can keep up, let alone plan ahead.
- ◆ Perhaps you are lucky and will have a whole lot of options, but that makes it even harder to make choices.
- ◆ **It's not surprising that you feel a bit lost.**

An opportunity?

- ◆ You probably have fewer commitments now than at any other time in your life.
- ◆ This is the time to form your identity, and gain more clarity about who you are. **It's** time for exploring, experimenting, travel, relationships.
- ◆ This will take time, values-based choices and learning from inevitable failures.

The Challenge

- ◆ Your Twenties is **the time for 'breaking out', developing identity, confidence, self-reliance, self-compassion and courage. It's the time for exploring, experimenting, risks and travel.**
- ◆ And a time for experiencing. It is said that your world view develops in your Twenties - so look for fruitful experiences that push your comfort zone and challenge your assumptions about life and the world.

On the Runway - Early Twenties



This is what you've been waiting for! The possibilities seem endless. You're both excited and terrified.

Will you find a job? Will you be good enough?

How can you work this all out on you own!? And your friends probably seem just as confused.

Maybe you could move back to your parents for a while? Save money to pay back loans, buy some time, and slowly work things out. After all, they've got DSTv and uncapped Internet...

Or is there another way?

Excitement and fear are a package deal

The countless possibilities and choices are very exciting, but they can be very scary. **Don't shrink your dreams by** giving in to fear and going for comfortable options, e.g. by staying too close to old routines, hanging on to school and varsity buddies and not venturing out.

By opening yourself to new experiences and people you can work out what does and doesn't work for you – and thereby make better decisions with less fear.

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Eleanor Roosevelt

Get to know yourself

If you're not sure who you are, **join** the club! Finding out who you are takes a lifetime, and **there's no better time to start than now**. Taking new risks and experiencing new things is a great way to learn about yourself. Be sure to choose the risks with the aim of reaching your potential, and to avoid the **'risky behaviours'** that could prevent you reaching that potential.

"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."

e e cummings

It's a good idea to get to know yourself *before*:

- ◆ you commit to a career path or a postgrad degree;
- ◆ you get into a long-term relationship.

Waiting will give you a much better sense of what will work in the long haul.

Ask yourself 'What would I do if I weren't afraid?'

Spencer Johnson: *Who Moved My Cheese?*

You may find it hard to handle such an uncertain future. If so, the following can make it easier to manage:

- ◆ see change as an opportunity;
 - ◆ the popular book, [">>"Who Moved my Cheese?"](#) or [">>the 16-minute animated version"](#), will show you how you can actually *benefit* from change.
- ◆ take good care of yourself;
- ◆ **make close connections that don't** need a lifelong commitment;
- ◆ use support from family and good friends;
- ◆ accept yourself, and enjoy time alone.

When you move beyond your fear, you feel free.

Spencer Johnson: *Who Moved My Cheese?*

Sort out your values and principles

As you face our super-complex and changing world your values will be your most **reliable 'compass' for the direction you choose.**

Clarifying values will take time, and requires an inner conversation with yourself. You may find this **easy. Or not. Listen to yourself and you'll gradually start to notice what feels right and what doesn't.** One or more of the following may help you to do this:

- ◆ journaling. This can become a kind of coaching conversation with yourself;
[>>click here for a free download on how you could use a journal](#)
- ◆ a regular time alone;
- ◆ some form of meditation. If you are not sure of which type of meditation, mindfulness is widely applicable. [>>An eight-week course](#) has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, irritability and stress, and to improve relationships and immunity. The guided meditations used in this course are [>>available free online](#). So are [>>a similar set from another academic institution](#), and [>>a fuller collection](#).

Conscience is a man's compass, and though the needle sometimes deviates, though one often perceives irregularities when directing one's course by it, one must still try to follow its direction.

Vincent van Gogh

Travel, explore, treat life as a temporary experiment

This is likely one of the few times of life when **you'll be free to 'try on'** a range of options before settling in for the longer journey.

- ◆ Think ahead, and look into possibilities that expand your horizons.
- ◆ Resist the temptation to stick to the secure options because others are scary.

Don't lock yourself into a career path too early

Career paths are maybe something of the past, and career changes are clearly much commoner than before.

It's ok at this stage not to have a clear career path, or know what company to work for. As long as you have an end goal in mind and keep working towards that goal many unexpected opportunities can pop up along the way.

- ◆ Allow yourself time to experiment, follow a wild dream or two, and test **possibilities that you're passionate about.**
- ◆ Try internships early on if you can, find a fellowship, part-time summer jobs, or sign on for short-term early career jobs instead of a long-term commitment.

Learn about money

- ◆ **Don't let your dreams be undone by your spending habits.**
- ◆ Discover the hidden costs that you may not have noticed when someone else was paying.
- ◆ Live within your means. Spend only what you earn.
- ◆ Save a little at all times.

Nurture life-giving relationships

- ◆ Learn to sustain deep and lasting friendships. These will serve you for a lifetime. This is not always easy. Use the time to build your capacity in this sphere.
- ◆ Accept responsibility for your own shortcomings and strengths, as a good friend and partner.
- ◆ Spend time with healthy people who will help you develop and sustain resilience.
- ◆ Read and consider workshops focused on this topic.
- ◆ In tough times you may also want to look for a counsellor or therapist.

Go for it!

Take-off! - Towards the Thirties



You've travelled, had a few jobs. And a few relationships, especially the one you left behind in ...

You're not sure that you've made all the right decisions.

And here you are, still not sure of what you should be doing.

You wonder how far you are behind your peers. Or are you ahead of them? Or just missing in action?

Maybe you'll study further, but where will you find the money?

The Challenge

If the Twenties is a time of 'breaking out', the Thirties is the time for 'making it': for working, results, winning, recognition, leading, acquiring, becoming.

Your parents have probably told you how they did things when they were your age. If **they have, you'll know that things have changed**. Back then there were fewer career options (especially for women), stronger societal pressures to settle early into a life-long career, and knowledge and skills were expected to stay relevant throughout their

careers. Today career paths are maybe something of the past - it is said that some people may change their type of job as many as seven times.

Who you are matters more than what you do

Your values and beliefs will be your compass in a landscape that will have few other reliable bearings (see p5 for tips on sorting out your values).

Positive experiences such as volunteering can help build who you are, and add to your employment record.

See life as an ongoing cycle of renewal

We repeatedly weave, unravel and re-weave our lives in a succession of cycles [>>Blog](#)
This was the underlying rhythm of life long before we arrived on the scene and thought that we could seize *control*. In our post-**industrial society**, **we're starting to realise that it doesn't work to buck these rhythms.**

Stay (or get) organised

- ◆ Set and maintain clear goals, with ways to measure your successes
- ◆ Create positive habits. We are creatures of habit.
- ◆ Regularly check on how you are doing.
- ◆ Ask for feedback. Sometimes it will hurt, but it saves plenty of pain in the long run.

Keep learning

It's by learning that we adapt to changing circumstances, and adults learn in repeating experiential cycles of renewal i.e. experience → observation → conceptualisation → experimentation → experience etc. [>>Blog](#) We can learn from every experience.

Reading also plays a huge role.

"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it."

Oscar Wilde

Your main learning needs will probably to be in the following areas:

Knowledge and information

Your knowledge will need replacement **several times in your lifetime**. **Don't** wait until you are out of date because then it will be very difficult to play catch up.

Technical skills

As with knowledge and information, stay up to date with the skills you need

Interpersonal skills

Listening, speaking, writing, persuading, leading, caring and managing conflict are becoming increasingly important in our post-industrial world. Of these, *listening* is perhaps the core skill.

What to UNLEARN

A crucial step in taking on new knowledge and skills is letting go of your existing information, attitudes and habits, when they get in the way.

Recognising what needs to be unlearned is a challenge in itself. You'll need to keep an open mind and repeatedly challenge your own assumptions and perceptions of the world.

Maintain balance

Beware of getting locked into highly specialised expertise. Specialisation often gives a competitive edge, but beware of the flip side of specialisation i.e. limitation in many other areas.

Frederic Hudson writes:

"...thirtysomethings tend to specialise in specific tasks for making it. This often leads to lopsided personalities, with ... enormous areas of undeveloped abilities ... A great many adults – particularly those who believe they are succeeding, die psychologically at the beginning of the middle years as they lock themselves out of the incremental gains available in the second half of life."

- ◆ Take care to maintain interests and relationships outside of work.
- ◆ Reflect regularly on where you are *as a person*, and not only where you are in your career.
- ◆ Consider >>some form of meditation
- ◆ Get sufficient sleep and recreation. Both are restorative and *increase* productivity.

Go for it!