

## Focusing on Transition

By Elaine Kinney & Karen Merson

On a cold Saturday morning, eighteen women made their way to a workshop called **Women In Transition** (WIT), a Signature TTN Program, led by two highly skilled facilitators, Karen Merson and Joanne Leweler Harpel. Karen and Joanne brought their deep understanding of the complexities of moving through the endings and new beginnings that make up all of our lives. They made this phenomenon tangible, concrete, and actionable within the few short hours it took to complete the workshop.



Participants came with work, retirement, and relationship issues. In their own words they said they were looking for "guidance," how to overcome "the fear of leaving," "how not to have work define me," how to "get more comfortable," "find structure," "overcome social isolation," and "live a richer existence." The guidance and sharing quickly began. So often in our daily lives we are too "distracted" to really examine "Who am I?" and "What am I telling myself?" Joanne introduced a way to reframe the transition. "The anxiety of transition can make one feel fragile, but that does not mean we are helpless." She said that we can dig into the questions of "self" and can share our stories with ourselves and others in a new way.

***At the end of this segment participants shared: "I am excited about this next phase of life," "I got a nugget when I think of changing my story," and "We have a lot in common."***



Karen and Joanne guided the next part of the workshop using William Bridges' three phase Model of Transition. The transition actually begins with the Endings phase, then moves to the Neutral and often chaotic phase, and finally the New Beginnings phase. They warned that there are no shortcuts, but the transition can be a time of great creativity. It is a time when we have to do the hard work of clarifying what our values really are and who we are other than the roles we have played. This internal work is not for the faint of heart. Although it is a journey that must be done alone, a group allows individuals to be heard and validated, making it



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also an exciting journey. To find "What I can do that is consistent with my values?" is to create a new beginning. Karen and Joanne helped the participants imagine that new beginning.

As the morning drew to a close, the women gave voice to the benefits they received from the workshop. They included insights such as: "I decided...", "I realize...", "I am in a process," "I still have a lot of work to do," and "I have recognized my freedom." For some, they identified next steps: "I need to let go," "I need to prioritize," "I am giving myself a pat on the back," "I need to take small steps," and "I am going to focus on what I have."

The overall consensus was that they made a good decision by joining TTN, registering for this workshop and finding a safe and trusted community they can grow with and support.



**Not bad for four hours!**

**The Life Transition Services (LTS) team welcomes your suggestions for additional topics to explore in the fall. And invites members interested in facilitating talking circles or workshops to contact the LTS Committee Chair Eileen Kobrin [eileenkobrin@gmail.com](mailto:eileenkobrin@gmail.com).**