

## EXPLORATIONS FOR THE WILDERNESS PERIOD

### **Visit prior transitions:**

Go back over significant changes you've made over the years. List them and learn what you can from this list. Are there few or many transitions? How many did you choose and how many were imposed upon you? How significant have these transitions been? Were some of them traumatic? How did you respond to each one? Do you see a pattern in your responses? What helped you through these times? What does all this say about the time you're in now. Gather what you know about yourself as a transitioner.

### **Take respites:**

Even if this is a heavy time for you, you don't have to be weighed down constantly or completely. Give yourself breaks from the pressures. Go to a play or movie, a ball game or a museum. Spend time with people you like. Read something light-hearted. Listen to something entertaining. Watch something amusing. Do something frivolous. When you return from these experiences, you'll feel fresher and you'll be refreshed.

### **Spend time in nature:**

Take long walks outside. Breathe the air slowly. Look around you deliberately. Inspect the trees. Touch the flowers. Lie back to back with the earth and study the clouds. Ponder seeds and sprouts, leaves and limbs, the tiny and the tremendous. Gather lessons as you watch sunrises and sunsets, winter storms and summer rains. You'll find here messages, not just about the created world, but about your place in that world. You'll find just as surely a message or two about this transition you're going through.

### **Inventory your resources:**

Be clear about what you have going for you. Get it down in black and white. List the strengths you have that can get you through this time: the skills you've acquired through the years, the traits you were born with, the advantages you've been given. Name people to whom you can turn for specific needs: emotional support, cognitive guidance, tangible assistance, surefire fun. Include your informal networks as well as formal organizations. Keep this list nearby. You can never tell when it will come in handy.

**Visualize ideal outcomes:**

The only way to get where you want to go is to know what that place is. What do you want your future group to look like? In the best of all possible worlds, given what is happening to you, how would you like to focus your group meeting time? What would be included in the work and what would you like to move on from? What would add meaning to your gatherings? Start visualizing your ideal as a guide for when it's time to make your way to the real.

**Make a retreat:**

Get away somewhere and make room for your soul to listen and speak. Spend a few days in quietness or attend an event at a retreat centre. If you're hesitant about going alone, ask a friend to go with you. Locate a spiritual director or a mentor in your area and spend time with her/him on a regular basis.

*Adapted from "Change and Possibility: Discovering Hope in Life's Transitions", by James E. Miller, Willowgreen Publishing*