

In the Midst of Transition as a Couple Wearing Many Hats

What is this about?

You wear many hats in your life—maybe you are spouse/partner, parent, son/daughter, employee, friend, neighbor, church member, or underwater basket weaving club president. During life transitions, our roles often change. We may lose or add roles, or the tasks of our current roles may shift. Your role within your relationship could feel a little different too. Maybe you used to do the grocery shopping, but now your partner is the one working from home, so it makes sense for them to take it over. Maybe you used to be the social one in the relationship, but now you feel too drained to plan outings with friends for you and your partner.



There is nothing wrong with changes like these, but sometimes they can make us feel a little lost or even unsure of our identity or our value. You are probably both bringing expectations into this new life situation, but you might not know what your partner is hoping or imagining (you might not even know what *you* are hoping or imagining!). It is important to communicate with your partner about how you are feeling about changes in your roles.

What do we do?

1. Grab a journal or notepad and spend some time on your own brainstorming the following:
 - a. What hats did I wear before this transition? What hats am I wearing now?
 - b. What expectations do I have for the hats I will wear and my partner will wear after this transition is complete?
 - c. What responsibilities or roles am I afraid of losing in this transition? Which ones am I glad to be done with?
 - d. What responsibilities and roles am I afraid of adding in this transition? Which ones am I looking forward to?
2. Discuss your answers with your partner. It can be helpful to use feeling words to let your partner know what this experience is like for you (I feel...anxious, embarrassed, hopeful, uncertain, dismissed, etc.). Be sure to listen well when your partner shares their answers too. It can be helpful to repeat back to them what you are hearing to make sure you have understood them and that they know you're listening.
3. Make a plan. Are there any adjustments either of you need to make to your expectations? Or are there things you can each adjust to accommodate each other's needs in this transition? Remember your shared goals! You can be a team in this transition, both aiming to help each other succeed.

What did we learn?

This exercise invited you to grow your virtues of honesty, kindness, responsibility, and courage. During a period in your life in which most things probably feel uncertain and out of control, you get to imagine and commit to a better future as a couple!

Reflect: What did you learn about yourself as you completed this exercise? What did you learn about your partner? What is the main thing you want to remember from completing this exercise that will help your relationship?