

# connections

Your Health & Wellness Newsletter

ISSUE

01

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Its official! We've all made it to the end of June and hopefully to some more relaxing days ahead. It seems that for most adults getting through May and June can feel busy and exhausting, whether you have school-aged kids at home or not. Work schedules and life schedules in general seem to ramp up, as our energy winds down. For this newsletter our team chose the topic of transitions, as they are happening all the time all around us, some more significant and challenging than others. But, two things remain:

1) change is hard, 2) change is constant.

Upper Island Counselling's changes this spring include welcoming 3 new organizations to our membership, beautiful new windows in our offices, and new opportunities for connecting with our communities through community health, safety, and wellness presentations.

What changes or transitions are you facing this year? Adult transitions tend to occur in 3 phases; endings, neutral zones, and beginnings. So if you are having to say goodbye to the end of something and are muddling emotionally through the neutral zone that follows, just know that beginnings are on the horizon for you.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy summer from our team at UIC.

Kelsi Baine MSc, CCC  
Executive Director, Counsellor

## Office Locations:

625C 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Campbell River, BC

280B Anderton Road  
Courtenay, BC

Phone 250-287-2266

Toll free 1-866-789-2266

[www.uics.ca](http://www.uics.ca)



## The Benefits of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is sometimes called the “sunshine vitamin” because it’s produced in your skin in response to sunlight. You can also get it through certain foods (salmon, egg yolk, fortified milk, etc) and supplements.

Vitamin D’s most important functions are regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorus, and facilitating normal immune system function. Sufficient vitamin D is important for bones and teeth, as well as improved resistance against certain diseases.

Three more surprising benefits:

- **Vitamin D fights disease** Research suggests that vitamin D may also play a role in reducing your risk of multiple sclerosis, decreasing your chance of developing heart disease, helping to reduce your likelihood of developing the flu.
- **Vitamin D reduces depression** Research has shown that vitamin D might play an important role in regulating mood and warding off depression.
- **Vitamin D boosts weight loss** In one study, people taking a daily calcium and vitamin D supplement were able to lose more weight than subjects taking a placebo supplement. In another study, overweight people who took a daily vitamin D supplement improved their heart disease risk markers.

### Beware of D-ficiency

Doctors can diagnose a vitamin D deficiency by performing a simple blood test.

Be sure to check with your doctor before taking vitamins or supplements.

*Adapted from [www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/benefits-vitamin-d](http://www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/benefits-vitamin-d)*

## Keys to Handling Life’s Transitions

### Ready or not, we all go through numerous transitions in our lives

Ready or not, we all go through numerous transitions in our lives – leaving high school to go to college or work, changing jobs, getting married, having children. These become those weeks or months or longer of awkward emotional spaces where we have cut ties with what we know and have not quite settled into what is new. Some are by choice, others come from natural ends – like graduating from college – and still others are unwillingly imposed on us – like a sudden layoff from a job, or an unwanted relationship break-up. Whatever the circumstances, navigating this grey-zone of transitions can be difficult, presenting us with new problems and demanding us to respond in new ways.

Here are some tips for surviving and thriving through these difficult and uncertain times:

**Expect to feel some depression and anxiety.** Whenever we move forward we leave something behind, and this creates a psychological state of grief, however small. And if the change is unexpected and unwanted – the sudden job layoff or relationship break-up – the shock and depression are greater. And with such turmoil comes anxiety. We are out of our comfort zone; our imaginations run wild; we worry about an unknown future. This is all normal.

**Realize that this is a new / old chapter in your life.** While you need to acknowledge your loss, you don’t want to get stuck in the past. Acknowledging that a door has closed is psychologically healthy; spending your time staring at it is not.

While it sounds like a cliché, the next step after an ending is a new beginning, and keeping this in mind can give you a sense of a fresh start. While the particular circumstances are new, the process itself is familiar. You have, after all, made transitions before – changing schools, neighborhoods, relationships, jobs. You know the terrain, you’ve acquired experience and skills along the way. You can do this again, and this time even better.

**Think positive, think opportunity.** During times of transition, when everything seems to be in flux, when your old patterns have collapsed, you may feel unsteady, but you are also most malleable to change. Now is the time to explore, brainstorm, and consider the possibilities before your life begins to naturally solidify into new patterns. This is the time to think outside the box.

**Hit the ground running.** But, don’t take too long to get started. We are creatures of habit and routine, and those routines can congeal quickly. If you let your anxiety take over during a period of transition, you could find yourself in 6 months lying on the couch, eating a frozen dinner and watching TV night after night. When the momentum is lost, it can feel harder to get back into motion.

**Get support.** It can be tough to do this all on your own. Remember that you are not alone. Friends and family are available for moral support, and professional counsellors can give you tools and strategies to help you along the way.

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## Keys to Handling Life Transitions (cont'd)

When you are feeling a bit ungrounded, support from others can help you keep perspective and keep moving ahead.

**Have realistic timeframes and expectations.** Expect that there will be difficult days when all the changes seem overwhelming and you think you aren't adapting fast enough. It is important to be patient and kind to yourself. Remember that it takes time to find a new job, to feel confident in a new job once you've found it, to learn a new city, to make new friends, or

to get back into the dating scene. To forget this only adds further pressure and stress.

Transitions are those unique times when we toss off the old but have not yet stepped into the new. While the circumstances are always different, the skills and attitudes needed to successfully move ahead are always the same – namely being positive, patient, and proactive.

A new journey awaits.

Adapted from: Psychology Today  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fixing-families/201307/keys-handling-lifes-transitions>

## Taking Time Out

Summer is a great time to get away from it all, but for those who cannot take an official vacation during these sunny months, that much needed down time can be elusive. In that case, day trips or activities could be the answer. Here are a few ideas to help you get the most out of the summer:


1. **Hiking trails** – the upper island offers hiking trails for a variety of skill levels. From the challenging 8-hour round trip trek along the Tex Lyon trail in Port Hardy to the dozens of routes in the Beaver Lodge Lands in Campbell River or a leisurely stroll in The Gardens on Anderton, there is something for everyone.
2. **Take in a little history** - Port McNeill is the jumping off point for forestry tours led by the Forestry Information Centre and for the ferry to Alert Bay, where you might want to photograph the totem poles or walk through the historic town. Visit the Museum at Campbell River or go back 80 million years at the Courtenay and District Museum & Paleontology Centre.
3. **Beaches, rivers and lakes** - There is no shortage of waterways on the upper island. Whether it be fishing, swimming, kayaking, paddle boarding or just sitting next to it sipping a cool drink, water can be a great way to wash away those daily stresses!
4. **Mount Washington** – during the summer months, the popular ski hill offers multiple family activities such as disc & mini golf, quad bungee trampoline, mountain biking and hiking.

Relaxation reduces stress and helps to improve mental health. Other health benefits include: lowering your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate and reducing muscle tension and chronic pain. So, even if you can't take a "vacation", be sure to take some time to relax and enjoy the summer.

## Did you know...

- Vancouver Island is almost the same size as Holland
- Campbell River officially took its name in 1907 when its post office was built
- The Comox Valley is an amalgamation of communities including Comox, Courtenay, Cumberland and several others.
- Port Hardy's BC Ferries Terminal at Bear Cove is the oldest known site of human habitation on Vancouver Island (circa 5850 BCE).
- The world's largest burl, up to 30 tons and 350 years old, can be found in downtown Port McNeill.

## Online Resources

For more info on  day trips and activities on the upper island:

<https://gocampbellriver.com/category/visitor-information/>

<https://www.bcmag.ca/50-things-to-do-in-the-comox-valley/>

[www.vancouverislandnorth.ca](http://www.vancouverislandnorth.ca)

[www.whatsondigest.com](http://www.whatsondigest.com)

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/canada/vancouver-island/attractions/a/poi-sig/1335293>



## Safe Summertime Sun

For many, spending time outside is what summer is all about, but if you are not careful, summer fun in the sun can turn into a painful sunburn.

While it is important to protect your skin from the sun all year round, it becomes especially important in the summer when the days are longer, the sun is stronger, and it's easier to spend more time outdoors.

To avoid sun damage to your skin:

- when out in the sun, wear a hat and UV blocking sunglasses
- apply a "broad spectrum" sunscreen of at least SPF 30; reapply every 2 hours or more
- seek shade ; limit your direct exposure to the sun, especially between 10am and 4pm

And remember, no sunscreen is waterproof! Reapply after swimming or at least every 2 hours if sweating.

## How to Transition from School to Summer Mode

Be prepared for the fact that your child may have mixed emotions about the end of the year.

Parents often infuse the end of school with their own memories of family trips to the beach and gorging on ice pops. However, for some kids, leaving their teacher and classmates can trigger feelings of anxiety. To help ease your child's transition to vacation mode, follow these tips.

### Stick to a Schedule

All of those end-of-year parties and performances can make your child overtired and overstimulated. Enforce her bedtime, and don't be afraid to turn down an invitation. "Set a limit for how many events you are willing to do each week," suggests Amy McCready, author of *The "Me, Me, Me" Epidemic: A Step-by-Step Guide to Raising Capable, Grateful Kids in an Over-Entitled World*. "Every invitation sounds like fun, but it's easy to get overwhelmed by the constant activity."

### Maintain Friendships

Summer vacation is a great time to create family memories, but your child may be worried about not seeing the friends he's made at school. "Most children this age feel lonely if they go too long without interacting with kids their age; your child will appreciate it if you can arrange for him to have some playdates with school friends," says Dr. Kennedy-Moore. "While my daughter did relish hanging out with Mommy, Daddy, and her brother at the start of summer, she was begging for playdates only a few days into vacation."

### Watch Your Words

It's fun to look forward to what's next for your child. However, any talk about a new school year could make her uneasy. Ease up on the talk about how she's going to be a "big first-grader" now. If she tells you she's nervous about next year, don't brush her off by saying, "You'll be fine!" Instead, remind her of other new situations in which she was anxious and how she handled it. You could also tell your child a story of when you were nervous in a new situation and how you overcame your fears. "Kids love to hear stories about their parents," says Warrick. "They can't imagine that we ever have any trouble."

### Inspire Education

Before school ends, ask your child about his favorite classroom activities and brainstorm ways you can re-create them at home. If he enjoys art class, buy him some sketchpads and other art supplies. If nature gets your child excited, you might want to start planting a backyard garden together that you can tend to over the summer to learn about how plants grow. Don't worry about teaching skills for the next school year. Engage your child in what he's interested in and involve him in active play and learning. That's the best preparation you can give him.

*Adapted from <https://www.parents.com/kids/development/behavioral/transitioning-from-school-to-summer-vacation/>*

*Change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end.*

*– Robin Sharma*