

# Hanging in the Breeze

November 1, 2006 by [lifeshifting](#)

Good morning from sunny...and not-so-sunny...Florida! Every time I spend time in southern Florida I'm constantly aware of the awesome presence of Mother Nature and her mercurial personality. Not that there isn't any "nature" to be had in New York City, but I guess just being in a more tropical environment, where the weather constantly shifts—from sun to rain to wind back to sun, sometimes in mere moments—brings the truth that life is constantly shifting front and center in my consciousness.

Today however, in the midst of a glorious sun-drenched thunderstorm, I want to write about stillness. I want to write about the space between the changes in weather: that quiet moment of empty space between clouds and sun, between wind and calm. How do we weather those moments? With grace? With gratitude? Or maybe with angst and fear and insecurity?

It seems that a number of my clients and close friends are going through very serious life-shifts at the moment. A number of them are letting go of career and relationship identities and moving through the stages of life-shifting that include feeling that an identity or label no longer fits, waking up to a pattern that no longer works, crafting a vision for the change, working through the resistance and facing the inevitable feelings of loss, sadness and grief that accompany it (see last post).

What is profoundly interesting to me though, as my friends and clients put the principles of Life-Shifting into practice, is to discover that one of the most difficult stages of the process comes at that moment seemingly between stages, that moment when the old identity has come loose and been discarded but the new one is not yet fully formed. In this moment, or week, or month—or year?—we often experience feelings of confusion, dislocation, sometimes boredom, or emptiness.

It is easy to mistake this experience for depression. When in the midst of major change and you find yourself just wanting to take a week off to do nothing but curl up on the sofa with a book, or you find yourself with an endless to-do list and no energy to do any of it, you may be tempted to think: time for the anti-depressants. Not so fast. Yes, you may feel down, even suddenly sad or flooded with grief, but this is not so much depression, as an emotional way station as you move from one way of being towards something new and unknown. It is simply nature's way of taking a breather before getting back in the game. So why is it so difficult to relax in those moments, to give ourselves a break...maybe even a rest?

We high-achiever types have a hard time with the idea of doing nothing, of being patient, of just SITTING STILL. Yet, sometimes that is exactly what is required. We need to stop all the *doing and just step back and be.*

Hanging out in the unknown, however, can be very uncomfortable. It goes against the grain of our fast-paced, always going somewhere kind of life. To make matters worse, this limbo state may be particularly acute if you are undergoing life-shifts in more than one domain: relationship, career, family, etc. Sometimes life just swoops in and uproots us completely such that many of the identities that we have constructed get torn asunder all at once.

Reverend August Gold, who is the spiritual director at a wonderful spiritual center in New York City called the [Sacred Center](#), tells people that whenever they feel like their whole life has been uprooted, well, it probably has! She likens our personal journey to a plant in a pot. When we grow plants and they become pot-bound, what do we do? We go out and buy a bigger pot. Then we proceed to dig them up, roots and all, put new soil and nutrients in the larger pot, and re-plant them. Surely, if we were to ask how the plants feel about this experience, we would hear that they find it rather traumatic. Yet, it is a necessary part of their lifecycle, and without it, they would become totally pot-bound and quickly begin to rot from the inside out.

So it is with humans—and our tightly bound lives! Reverend August reminds us that whenever we are ready to grow into a bigger life, a more satisfying life, a more fully realized life, we have to step out of that comfy, little “pot”, and find a bigger one, a more nutritious, fresh, vitalized place, where we can sink in roots and, ultimately, spread our wings. This is what Life-Shifting is all about. Simple...but not easy...for as Rev. August points out, there is always this in-between moment when we *are not quite out of the old pot or fully in the new one*. Plucked from the old identity and not yet grounded in the safe soils of the new one, we hang in mid-air for a while, roots dangling, precarious and vulnerable. This is the empty place. The place of waiting. The place of raw vulnerability. It can be a scary moment. And it may seem like forever.

But, perhaps, we can see it another way—as simply a necessary part of the journey. A breathing point. A way station. My friends who are currently undergoing major life-shifts are busy trying to avoid these dangling roots kind of moments—they sometimes strike me as just a bit too busy, a tad too focused on what’s next. The truth is that other than just having a vision, an inkling, or an intuition, what the future will hold is beyond our knowing. What’s next is a bigger pot, no doubt about that...but it has not yet arrived. Sometimes we just have to wait. The universe is on its timetable, not ours.

I tell them to relax. Read a book. Put your feet up and watch a little TV. No, you are not becoming lazy. No, you are not depressed. You are in transition. Be gentle, patient...and most of all, nurture yourself. A good, hot bubble bath may be in order.

So the next time you see a break in the clouds, or feel the breeze suddenly go dead and the air become still, stop for a moment and FEEL THE STILLNESS deep within. Is there a feeling of momentary panic, of emptiness, or perhaps a glimmer of wonder...maybe awe?

Life may be constantly in motion; we all may be constantly shifting; yet, there are moments—fortunately—when all is quiet. Empty. Waiting.

In those moments, can you just hang in the breeze?

There will always be plenty to do.

Peace,