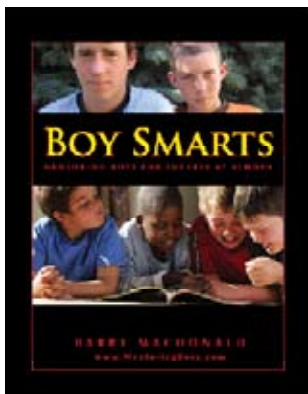




Easing the Transitions of the New Year



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As our calendar moves toward the solstice, and the days get shorter and shorter, and the school term draws to a close, I find myself thinking about the constant rhythm of change in our lives.

How do we learn, even as young people, to respond to change in creative ways? To make the inner shift that enables us to let go of the familiar and accept the new?

These thoughts on transitions are prompted by a significant change in my own life—my wife and I have sold our beautiful home which was getting too large for us, and have downsized to another lovely—but smaller place. Partly because we have moved into a newly built structure, we have found many challenges—unfinished things to attend to—that we did not anticipate. We are groping our way toward a new rhythm in our new environment.

As all of us, at every age, must do when we are in a new place—a new year, a differently configured family, a new school or class.

Some people, and some boys in particular, can be challenged by transitions, defined by William Bridges, author of *Transitions and Managing Transition*, as “the mental and emotional transformation that people must undergo to relinquish old arrangements and embrace new ones.” They may take a while to adapt to find the virtues of a new class, a new job, a new way of learning—even a different kind of food or a different kind of vacation.



Do you remember the concept of “growing pains”—or the shock you may have felt when you realized that you had outgrown some favourite article of clothing?

You may recall how the changes in your body during puberty, whether welcome or not, still took time to get used to.

When she falls through the rabbit hole in Wonderland, her changed circumstances cause Alice to question who she is. *“Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is: ‘Who in the world am I? Ah, that’s the great puzzle!’”*

Young people face changes in their environment, even in their bodies, that they must learn to make sense of in some way. Whether they are starting or leaving a school, moving to a new neighborhood, starting a new job or joining a new club or sports team, gaining or losing a group of friends, change can bring fear or excitement or both. But in the face of change, the one thing that can help young people make a successful transition is an inner resilience.

As adults, we can support our young people through change by modelling resilience.

And by giving space and time, in a spirit of quiet respect.

When we leave a boat which has been rocking and rolling in rough weather, how long does it take to find our land legs?

When, after a stormy period, we find ourselves in a place of calm, how long before our adrenaline stops pumping overtime?

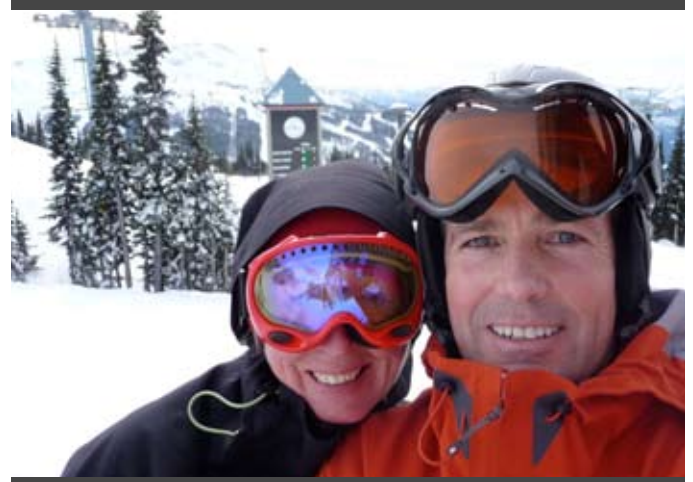
For some young people, it takes a while.

If you find yourself, as so many of us do at this time of year, worried about end-of-term pressures, holiday preparations, visits to or from relatives, health challenges—put your worry aside for a bit every day. Do nothing. Be with yourself, a child or loved one, the trees in your back yard or the lights in the park. Let something new emerge from this unplanned, unstructured time.

For you, and for the young ones you may be mentoring, my wish for you is the gift of time.

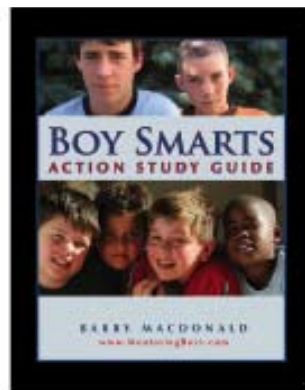
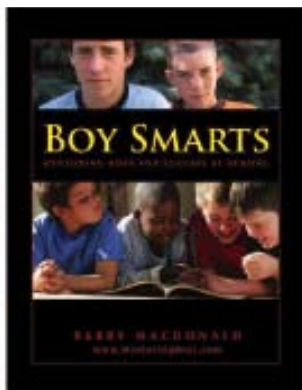
Time to settle into whatever new place, large or small, may be happening in your life right now.

Time to turn the outer event of change into an inner transition—a pause that allows for refreshment, integration, and connection. • • •



We wish you and your loved ones a Happy Holiday and peace and good health in the coming New Year.

Barry & Therese MacDonald
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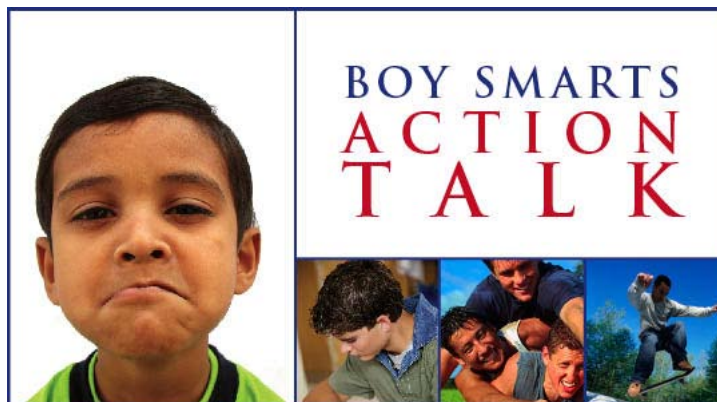
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