

Transitional Times

What to Do Until the Transit is Over

Transition

Transition is generally recognized as a period of change from one state to another, *a passage of time*, a conversion or changeover. While a passage of time might suggest a movement from A to B, a transition suggests, a chrysalis of change, something is left behind so a new way of being can emerge. These transitional and transformational times are astrologically symbolized by planetary transits.

Each planet's progress embodies qualities particular to transition and the atmosphere of the times. Planetary movements do not make time, but are astute for reading time. While the birth chart remains unchanged, endless planetary transits animate the horoscope through time. Our astrological transit-system identifies the trans-*port* that you board to make the transition.

The punctuations of time, as witnessed by the planets' present positions and their interconnection to your natal horoscope, symbolize transition. The word 'transit' can be used either as a verb, implying an action and a process, or as a noun identifying a place, a person or a thing. As an action, transit implies passing from one state to another. As an astrological verb, it points towards patterns of change that invite consciousness and participation. As an astrological noun, the word accompanies a planetary adjective such as a 'Saturn transit', which is objective and descriptive of the nature of the process. As astrologers we use transits to narrate time; however, we also listen for the underlying felt experience that arises from remembered disturbances during past cycles.

Quintessentially, life is a state of transition between birth and death. Life's intermediary adjustments are often referred to as liminal states. These states are times of suspension between what was once familiar, yet is now the past, and what will be is not yet known. While confusing and disorientating, the space opens up a world of new possibilities. Therefore liminal periods are often depicted as initiations or rites of passage and are appropriate times for ritual observances that assist in journeying these transitions successfully. Liminal times are when we are most likely to encounter the divine either through an epiphany, an event, an encounter, a crossroads, an inspiration, a numinous experience, a vision, an illness or a myriad of ways that open doors to an otherworld.....

Not all transitions involve trauma; however all transitions imply something is left behind. When trauma is involved in transition, it may not always find an avenue of expression and can become physiologically or psychologically embedded until the next cycle brings an opportunity for reflection, release and healing.

Clients often ask what they could do to improve their understanding and experience when undergoing a major transit. Foremost is participating with the transition as consciously as possible, but this is not always an easy task. Honouring the transiting planetary archetypes is a good beginning.

Generally, it is the slower-moving planets that script the major storylines of the transitional experience. Psychological and spiritual models can help to reframe the narratives of these transitions allegorically. For example, one outline I have found helpful in framing the emotional and psychological states of transition is Dr Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief developed through her work with terminally ill patients. These stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are listed sequentially, but are interchangeable during the course of major life transitions. I find value in recognizing and reflecting on the multivalent stages in the process of major astrological transits; therefore, encourage students and clients to find stories, metaphors, images, theories and other ways of thinking that help to picture their major transitions.

Metaphorically, transitions are like the alchemical process when primal matter is transmuted into gold. Like alchemical work, there are stages in the transitional process. After the initial struggles that accompany the changes, there is an interval when self-doubt, anxiety and despair surface. Yet, it is

during this phase of anguish that the seeds of the new cycle are planted. As they take root, there is hope for the future. In the final phases the process becomes grounded in the material world, where it takes shape and has substance. The process of a transit, like alchemical work, is transforming as we move through its stages.

Transits

Generic transits are time passages constellated around life stages and ageing. In ancient societies, communal rituals and rites of passage helped the individual to navigate these life-cycle transitions. While graduation, marriage and retirement ceremonies mark important life events, they often do not address the deeper psychological and spiritual resources needed to successfully pilot this passage of time.

Major transits of the social and outer planets often equate with periods of enormous personal change, crisis and instability. Emotional and painful transitions can be assisted by the rituals and reflections that astrology helps us consider. When we are aware which archetype stirs beneath the surface, it can be acknowledged and encouraged through conscious intention and ritual. Astrology assists in negotiating this terrain, as it offers images and symbols to reflect and respect the transiting energy. When ritualized, the planetary god becomes honoured; in an ancient way of thinking this brought a sacred process into being.

Draw on your own experiences of what has or has not been helpful when you have experienced major life changes. Reflect on therapeutic, counselling and healing modalities that have been effective; courses and activities that have helped you move forward, or other activities or ways of being that have facilitated more consciousness and self-awareness. There is no manual for what each individual specifically needs, but astrology and our own creativity are reliable guides.

It is beneficial for an individual to feel there are ways they can engage and participate with the transit without feeling overwhelmed or victimized. Many clients feel that doing something different would be useful and meaningful. Ironically, most often it is the involvement with their current life process, and working through the transitional stages and troubles, that is often most helpful. Being in the moment, aware of the processes taking place, completing tasks and engaging in self-discovery and disclosure through ritual can all be highly effective and evocative.

When considering the timing of a transiting planet, we must be mindful that each planet has its own timetable according to the length of its cycle. The inner planets move quickly, so their influence is seen as passing quickly. They are highly effective when reflecting on a particular event such as an accident, celebration, emotional reaction, unusual experience or even a dream. The faster-moving planets are often triggers for these types of event.

The social planets – Jupiter and Saturn – may also transit an area of the horoscope fairly quickly; however, due to their retrograde sub-cycle they can also pass over an area of the horoscope three times, elongating the duration of their transit. Outer planets always pass over an area of the zodiac three times and sometimes five, depending on their retrograde pattern. Therefore, these transits last longer, with the planet moving back and forth to highlight a particular area of the horoscope. Timing of astrological cycles can be very empowering for individuals when they realize that there is an order and rhythm to transitions. The retrograde periods of the planetary cycle emphasize and deepen the experience of the transition.

What to do until the transit is over

Rituals are psychological processes that create a space for overwhelming feelings to be contained and modified. Through conscious intention and participation, the painful feelings connected with transition can be refocused. With the release of these tensions there is a renewal of faith and optimism as well as a wellspring of creative energies to propel us forward. In a modern context a ritual is a mindful practice that settles, focuses and utilizes the transitional energies in a constructive and creative way, such as enrolling in a course of study, pursuing a passion, being occupied with an

engaging hobby, craft or creative activity, travel, volunteering, sports or other physical activities, therapies, healing techniques, consciousness-raising – the list is endless.

It is apparent that many of these practices resonate closely with certain planetary archetypes. A catalogue of helpful remedies for each transiting planet – whether therapies, courses, hobbies, sports, activities or some form of healing modality – can be compiled as a resource inventory for each transit. It is important not to be too rigid about defining what modality is best suited for a particular transit because each individual's experience will be unique. For any practice to be effective, it needs to suit the person's temperament, personality and stage of life.

There is magic to astrology. We could look at this in two ways: organized or formal magic and spontaneous magic. Astrology has an historical association with magic. But while the tradition may have flirted with organized magic, in itself astrology is magical, not because of any technique, spell, chant, convention or ritual, but through an authentic participation in and sensitivity to its symbols.

Magic arises through spontaneous and participatory work with astrological symbols. Astrological magic is not manipulated, but works through us when we engage, honour and participate with its images in an intelligent and respectful way. When we engage with the transiting symbol through contemplation or action, we are involved with its process; in a way we are working with the gods of the moment. This is the concept of theurgy. The word 'theurgy' is from the ancient Greek words *theos*, god, and *ergos*, work, suggesting 'divine working' or working with the gods. Theurgy engages us in a process that invokes a divine presence. In a contemporary way to appeal to the archetypal energy assists in participating in our self-development symbolized by the transit.

In the ancient world invocations, rituals and operations were employed to connect with the divine. In our modern age we can imagine the symbol of the transiting planet as a call to participate with the archetype. We do not really need to fully understand the nature of magic or the *participation mystique* in order for the process to be effective. We do need to honour the archetypal energy and there is a variety of ways to do this. Before we consider devising a list of potential rituals for each transiting planet, it is helpful to contemplate the planet's nature, such as whether it is more active or reflective, public or private, etc. Then we can begin to imagine some rituals that might be effective during major transits of the social and outer planets. Expand this list with your own experience and suggestions.

Jupiter

Jupiter's urge is to learn more and to travel wider in its quest to venture beyond what is known. Its nature is to investigate, to lead an expedition beyond the coherent boundaries of the present. Its temperament is active; it believes in positivity and abundance; therefore, being cautious about overdoing or overcompensating is recommended. It is a time of possibilities and movement as well as a time of hope for the future.

What to do when Jupiter is watching

During a Jupiter transit an individual is encouraged to stretch themselves. Consider the following suggestions of courses, activities and sports:

- A study of literature, philosophy, ethics or cross-cultural studies, such as a course in the classics, ancient civilizations, religions or foreign languages
- Activities that venture into nature and explore the outdoors, like bush walking, camping, hiking, white-water rafting and horse riding
- Jupiter is associated with travel and pilgrimage; therefore, adventure tours, travel to foreign and exotic places, a tour of mythological, historical or religious sites, revisiting places you have loved, or returning to your homeland or ancestral home may be of interest during this period. Visiting an ashram, a mosque, a church, a temple or experiencing prayer, meditation or other spiritual practices
- Becoming involved in different activities such as community work, coaching kids, volunteering for social work such as teaching refugees English as a second language, or community emergency work like fighting fires or the SES (special emergency services)

- Becoming involved in a team sport or communal activity

Saturn

By transit Saturn confronts an individual to become more authentic, to acknowledge their calling, to manage their time and resources better and to become more responsible and self-aware in their everyday life. It is a time of maturing, stepping up, or a promotion or movement into another level of being responsible. While the individual may feel under pressure or over-committed, it is important to complete any current obligations or contracts before considering how any new structures can be employed. It is a time of grounding, reorganizing and reforming so that a step forward can be taken. Saturn's urge is to master; therefore, its transiting location in the horoscope suggests an area under construction, improvement and development.

How not to let Saturn run rings around you

There are many ways that an individual under a Saturn transit could work with this energy:

- In terms of becoming more autonomous at work, a study of economics, management skills, time management or running your own business may be of interest. Writing or rewriting your CV, strategic business planning
- Hobbies that may be interesting and/or constructive that are also grounding, such as gardening, rock collecting, building projects, furniture repair
- Activities that help to organize your time, including keeping a diary, journal keeping, budgeting, scheduling
- Games of strategy where planning is necessary and choices and consequences are evident – perhaps backgammon, bridge, chess or Scrabble
- Activities that support us to be more flexible, poised and stable in the body such as yoga; ones that strengthen the spine and lower back, for instance weight training; or exercise regimes that help improve fitness and focus, leisurely and focused exercise like golf
- Focusing on mental well-being using such techniques as mindfulness as well as physical well-being utilizing massage, Feldenkrais, etc.
- Following a chiropractic or osteopathic course to improve posture and heal back or shoulder pain
- Being aware and actively supportive of everyday rituals that help to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle such as a suitable diet, appropriate sleep, adequate water intake, a daily walk, meditation, etc

Chiron

Under major Chiron transits an individual may be involved in a personal 'healing crisis'. Whether this is a physical, mental, psychological or spiritual emergency, it marks out a time of personal growth and acceptance. What arises through the pain of living is an awareness of what is not being lived out authentically. These times invite participation with the disorder, not fixing or fighting it, but accepting the limitations by listening to the voices of our symptoms. A Chiron transit can often be an encounter with a wild Centaur, a holy man, a healer, an illness or trauma that becomes our teacher and guide to helping us help ourselves.

Letting Chiron become your mentor

Chiron's call returns us to an inner sanctuary to explore what the soul needs to feel fulfilled. It is a time of healing constellated through accepting the marginal aspects of self. Therefore, activities encouraging the inner world of symbol and image will be a healing balm.

- Chiron is the courage to heal. Therefore, this transition is soul-searching for what emotional and psychological trauma underpins the symptom. Dream work and astrological counselling to promote healing through the understanding of symbols, symptoms and images of our life
- There are various healing modalities that resonate with Chiron, such as flower essences, homeopathic treatments, visualization and guided imagery, meditation, active imagination, absent and spiritual healing

- Chironic interventions are more inclined to be from complementary or alternative medicine; therefore, treatments like acupuncture, Ayurveda, Qigong and Reiki resonate with this passage of time. The name 'Chiron' is derived from the Greek word, *cheir* or 'hand'; therefore, we think of Chiron as handy; consequently, the laying on of hands, remedial massage and chiropractic treatments evoke the soulful essence of Chiron
- Alternative or ancient healing techniques such as homeopathy, naturopathy, natural remedies, herbs, Chinese and Oriental medicine also ritualize the archetype
- Biofeedback and hypnosis are consistent with Chiron's healing traditions
- Whether portrayed as animal and human, heaven and earth or secular and sacred, Chiron is the space between the worlds; therefore, processes like shamanistic training, crisis counselling and chthonic healing are appropriate at this time
- Vision quests and sweat lodges
- Chiron symbolizes the disenfranchised; therefore, volunteering to work with the handicapped, the underprivileged, the homeless, refugees or displaced people will be a way to focus the energy of the transit

Uranus

Uranus jolts us into awareness; therefore, Uranus transits can feel equally invigorating and unstable. Its intention is change; often long-term change. The insights we receive during this period are often omens for our future, messages well ahead of 'real time'. During a Uranus transit the margins of time are breached; therefore, images and symbols in the future can often feel as if they are imminent rather than distant. It is a time of experimentation, even risk-taking, as the road less travelled and the unknown beckon. We are called to change our routines and disengage from what no longer sustains us. Since many opportunities present themselves during the period, discernment of choice is necessary. Not all can be taken; therefore, the passage of time feels as if the individual is at a crossroads with alternative or possible selves.

Expect the Unexpected with Uranus: Class of the Titans or a Roller Coaster Ride

To become more centred during this period and embrace the Uranian archetype, an individual may benefit from the following:

- A therapeutic experience or training, such as Gestalt therapy, Voice Dialogue, group therapy or an individually orientated psychotherapy, which helps us to become more aware of our sub-personalities and conflicting parts of the self
- Uranus is future-orientated, so courses that focus on future studies, information technology, political reforms, etc., may be of interest
- Other studies that deal with understanding, developing and improving the human mind such as an archetypal or humanistic-based approach to psychology or comparative studies in sociology or astrology
- Human resources or social concerns
- Unique and distinctive activities that the individual may be attracted to can be encouraged during this time. My experience of interests that clients have pursued during major Uranus transits has proved to be very helpful. These unusual or personal pastimes have included hobbies such as philately, glass blowing, bird watching and collecting feathers, and adventure activities including rock climbing, abseiling and white-water rafting
- Making a difference in the local community through volunteering, whether that is for the emergency services, a humanitarian project like Greenpeace, Big Brothers, World Vision or a local animal refuge, the library, hospital or retirement home
- Commence a physical training programme to help decrease anxiety, burn off the calories and reduce stress

Neptune

The conspiracy with a Neptune transit is that we are awakened from our multi-layered dreams to bring us closer to what is humanly possible. Under a Neptune transit the veil between the worlds is

thinner than at any other time; therefore, feeling simultaneously vulnerable and inspired is common. It is a time of drifting, being anchorless and offshore. The 'real' world no longer seems as real as it did before. It is as if we are in a dream state; that is, we do not know the next scene or the plot at present, as we are moving through a different dimension. To a pragmatist this will sound fanciful; in essence it is, as during the Neptune transition we cannot even picture the possibilities. We have our dreams, our goals and our life path, but now a more divine architect is smoothing down the rough edges of our character. It is a creative time, a period of colour and full of imaginative episodes that bring us closer to the soul.

How to sail the stormy seas with Neptune or turning a pitchfork into a tuning fork

Therefore, to enter into the process of Neptune during a major transit, the individual could consider:

- Any imaginative therapies that give a voice to the soul and the inner life, such as Jungian analysis, dream work or a soul-centred psychotherapy
- Any study that awakens the power of symbols through imagery such as the Tarot, mythology or literature
- Any artistic pursuit that activates the creative sensibilities and imagination, such as painting, sketching, singing, playing music, etc.
- Forms of movement that help to centre and bring peace and relaxation, such as Tai Chi, yoga or other types of elegant movement. Self-expression and enjoyment through dance are always effective and many clients during a transit of Neptune have greatly benefitted from dance classes
- Physical movements and sports that focus on balance, stretching, grace and symmetry; perhaps fencing to bring out the graceful warrior
- Other activities such as walking meditations, which might include walking the dog or taking time out to relax the mind. During a Neptune transit it is important to value and create times of solitude and times of centring
- Beautifying the physical space to create a healing space using subtle and vibrational effects through music, colour, art or design. Using essential oils, aromatherapy, candles or flower essences evoke the spirit of Neptune
- Being immersed in water, the elixir of life, during this time is renewing and a symbol of baptism into the spiritual side of life. Visiting the sea, swimming, perhaps swimming with dolphins, floatation tanks, spas and baths could be invigorating

Pluto

Transits of Pluto turn off the lights in our life so we can be accustomed to seeing in the dark. Therefore, under this passage we become aware of what is hidden, buried and ignored in the basement of our selves. It is a time of descent, a natural turning away from the busy life to see what has been left unattended and unmet. Therefore, it often feels as if it is a time of loss, of grief, of depression. These feelings belong to the soul; during the Pluto transit they have an opportunity to be acknowledged, mourned, accepted and integrated. Pluto encourages us to look deep and celebrate the intensity and integrity of the soul. It is a time of facing some of the demons in the dark, speaking the shame and forgiving the self. When consciousness infiltrates these areas of our lives, the light returns. Mythopoetically this transition is illustrated as the hero's descent into the underworld to return with gifts that benefit himself and his community on his forward journey.

Finding your seat in the dark with Pluto

Some activities that could guide or be a companion during this descent into the abyss might be:

- Therapies that honour and value the darker feeling life and assist in reintegrating and accepting feelings of shame and guilt, such as in-depth psychotherapy, sex therapy or psychoanalysis
- Finding a way to acknowledge negative feelings and responses without self-blame or injury

- Primal therapy and other forms of healing like re-birthing that assist with birth or early trauma; any other form of recommended and well-established trauma counselling
- Any activity that is regenerative or transformative, such as renovating the bathroom or kitchen, cultivating and replanting a garden that has become overgrown, restoring a loved piece of old furniture or redecorating the bedroom or private part of the home
- Starting a physical training programme that helps to lose weight and improve body image. A makeover, cutting hair, change of presentation and dress
- During passages of Pluto there are often episodes of loss and grief. While seemingly located in the present the affect may be originating in the past; therefore, I have often found grief and loss counselling to be very beneficial during this period
- Trauma from the past may often be embedded or stuck in the body, especially the muscles and joints; hence healing modalities like deep tissue massage and Rolfing are often effective in releasing the pain
- Pluto is about release, especially release of toxins and waste; therefore, some activities like fasting, detoxification and even colonic irrigation may be appropriate. Of course, this also needs to be balanced with a transformation in diet and awareness of bodily rituals such as cleanliness, drinking enough water, getting enough sleep, etc.
- During the Pluto passage there is a need to retreat from the world, experience periods of silence and aloneness; therefore, it is often valuable to consciously take time for retreat and time out to be alone. There is little time to waste on banalities and superficialities

Temperament and Transition

Ever since I can remember I have loved the road, packing a suitcase, boarding a train and heading off. I have always been more comfortable *in between* places than I have *in* places. I like leaving and arriving, but staying is never easy. But when I began leading tours and retreats, it became clear that not everyone shared the same outlook or approach to transition as I did. I began to be aware of each individual's unique approach to transition. Being mindful of different personal styles helped me to be more accepting of myself and others in changing times, as well as revealing what might be needed to maximize a safe and successful passage.

Let's appreciate your personal style of transition. Reflecting on elemental temperament, it is apparent that Fire's zealous approach to transition differs from Water's emotive or Earth's cautious style. I have observed that our unique brand of transition is primarily symbolized by our Ascendant, the ruler of the Ascendant and the Moon. Reflecting on three simple factors of our horoscope can be profound when considering what our natural approach to any transition may be.

The horizon of our horoscope is connected with emergence and disappearance, symbolized by the Sun's rise at the eastern horizon and its setting at the western portal. Birth and death, the two most powerful moments of transformation, are resonant images along this axis of transition. Metaphorically, the Ascendant marks a birth point, symbolizing the soul's entry into incarnation as well as the personality's lifelong attitude and reaction to new situations and stages of life. Our Ascendant is a potent image of how we approach transition; therefore, transits to the Ascendant-Descendant axis synchronize with significant life changes.

To reflect on your style of transition, contemplate your Ascendant sign's modality. It is immediately apparent that the cardinal style of transition will be very different from the fixed or mutable style. Cardinal signs may be more inclined to initiate the change and confront any impasses that arise; however, they may find it difficult to sustain the momentum as the transition advances. The element will differentiate whether the response may be more conceptual (Fire), hands-on (Earth), logical (Air) or emotional (Water). Fixed signs may approach the transition more warily, needing more time to plan and gather the skills and techniques which make the passage more coherent. However, they may also procrastinate, stall and get stuck in the process. A mutable rising may be in the change before they realize it, responding to situations as they arise and reacting on the spur of the moment; however,

this expenditure of energy may deplete the stamina needed to maintain the transition. The astrological combination of the modality and quality of each sign outlines twelve unique styles of transition.

Any planet on the horizon of the horoscope is summoned in times of transition; therefore, this planetary archetype can be used as a supportive orientating force during passages of change.

The ruler of the Ascendant also plays a major role, as it is like the chauffeur at the wheel of your vehicle during transitional times. This planetary archetype helps us to imagine how our transitional process may be handled and which path is best to follow. As a guide in transition, the condition of and aspects to the Ascendant ruler reveal the ease or effort that accompanies the change.

The Moon is also significant in considering your style of transition. How we defend, respond and react to change is all part of our lunar constitution. At its core the Moon is our symbol of home, a deeply felt sense of belonging that needs emotional constancy and psychological stability. In a way, all transition and change are a return home, a homecoming to an aspect of the Self. Pointers to how we might protect and nurture ourselves through the process of change are represented by the natal Moon. The sign reflects the qualities needed during transition while its aspects are a key to which patterns and memories will be stirred through the upheaval.

The trinity of the Ascendant, its ruler, and the Moon illustrate our personal style of transition. It is important to recognize that there is no one way or right way to transition through life, but our temperament revealed by the natal chart helps us to appreciate how we might manage change. There is only our way, and tuning into our natural response to transition assists us to move through the passages of our life authentically.

Transitions are recurring features in our lives, symbolized by the transits of the planets along their zodiacal path in the heavens. Each transition, like each horoscope, is unique; therefore each transit, while having similar archetypal themes, is experienced in a personal way. There is no standard manual for the way transits manifest. The transiting planets' archetypal natures will be our guide to understanding the patterns of time, both personally and collectively.

Be the Change You Wish to See in the World

Like other wise individuals, Mahatma Gandhi suggested we change ourselves first and this will be reflected in our world. Rumi expressed it this way:

*Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.*

A transit does not happen to you; it is this moment that invites you to be present in time. This is not an easy task, as often the times are stressful, uncertain, painful or full of anguish. Archetypal energy is part of the soul and through participation and ritual we create the chance to be conscious of the change we want to be.