

Bloom

Hope...for the uprooted woman



Taking a
new path

Have you or someone you know been uprooted by a move or other major life change? Think of this issue of Bloom as part of your road map for successfully navigating the twists and turns of life. You'll find encouragement for your mind, heart, and spirit, as well as practical ideas that you can implement today. With this and Susan Miller's book, *After the Boxes Are Unpacked*, you're off to a good start!

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Great Expectations

We're being encouraged by experts to **be present** — present to the moment, present to our emotions, present to others. "But that's the point," you may say. "I don't like the 'present.' I don't want to be here. I don't want to be living this move (...this illness, ...this grief, ...this divorce, ... this ____)."

What were your expectations for this time in your life?

Stop. Don't rush on to finish reading. Take a moment to answer that question.

Gerald May observed, "Expectations are premeditated resentments." When life doesn't meet our expectations, anxiety, bitterness, and discontent can take root. Ponder this by Dr. Ted Wueste:

Releasing expectations is essential if we're going to move into all that God desires for us. Anxiety has a way of shrinking our hearts so that there is not room for God. Physically, we may even feel muscle tension or shortness of breath. As we release expectation, our hearts expand and are able to hold whatever is and however God is involved. ...We don't do this by trying to control our anxiety and expectations but by 'releasing' them ('casting all your anxieties' [1 Peter 5:7]). We can do this because He cares about us. We can let go because He has plans and ways that are loving and gracious and wise and perfect.

Expectations are best discerned by looking at our anxieties. Spend a few minutes prayerfully asking, *What am I anxious about?* Then, consider: what are the expectations underneath that anxiety? Once you've identified the expectations, release them as you simply pray: *Father, I know you care, so I let go of my grip on this version of reality.* Meditate on 1 Peter 5:6,7 and repeat this exercise as you are able throughout the day.

Ted Wueste, DMin, *Prepare Him Room: Advent Reflections*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing



Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts

abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of — throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself. — C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*



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Three Stages to Starting Over

1 Let Go

Choose to let go of anything you are emotionally holding on to that could prevent you from starting over and moving forward. You can start by choosing to cherish the things you left behind, rather than clinging to them.

2 Start Over

As you start over, first face any feelings of loneliness, loss of identity, and inadequacy. Rebuild your life one step at a time. In your home, surround yourself with familiar things you love, buy a plant as a reminder you are putting down new roots. Join up and join in to fight loneliness.

3 Move Forward

In choosing to move forward, you are making a choice to live above your circumstances, live with a positive attitude, and live in contentment. Begin to change your focus from yourself to others. There is always someone else who is also struggling with transition and change.

These steps will help:

- Accept where you are and release expectations that you'll move back or return to your former way of life.
- Let go of expectations that life will be the same.
- Focus on what you have, not on what you used to have.
- Find a gym, find a church, find a Starbucks. Find a place that helps give your week structure, comfort, and purpose.

This is not a simple, quick, or linear process. Learn more in *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller, available at JustMovedShop.com

Now what? First steps in a new place

You've settled into your new home. Suddenly, you find yourself with hours to fill, in a town where no one knows you and you're afraid you'll get lost just going to the library. You may be tempted to stay within the security of your four walls, but you know that will only add to your loneliness. Use these ideas to launch you into a plan to make the most of each day.

- **Be neighborly.** We don't know if they are shy or just too busy, but neighbors aren't always the first to say hello. Bake some cookies and knock on your neighbor's door to say hello.
- **Volunteer.** Opportunities abound for volunteering. From the local school to the hospital to the homeless shelter — no offering is too small and your time and skills can make a real difference. While you're helping, you're also meeting people!
- **Be an explorer.** Every day decide on one new place you'll investigate, even if it's just the Department of Motor Vehicles to get a new license. It could be an area like a lovely park or neighborhood you've heard about. It could be a business or attraction that interests you or is historically significant.
- **Be a joiner.** Join a fitness class, the library book club, a political campaign, a MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) group, a neighborhood watch, etc. A "joiner" more quickly becomes a "belonger."
- **Go back to school.** You don't have to be pursuing a degree to sign up for a class at the local community college or university. There are plenty of choices for those who are interested in personal and professional development. Take a guitar class, hone your writing skills, take a computer class . . . just sign up for something that interests you.
- **Join a small group at church.** By all means find a church to attend regularly, but beyond that become a part of a smaller group. Your best bet as a newcomer is to find or start an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study. (Learn more at JustMoved.org/after-the-boxes-study)

The Upside of Change by Ann Kelley

Some respond to change with excitement, some with fear, some with a combination of the two. Change is part of life. We can choose to grumble about it or grow through it.

Whether your life change is a choice you make or is thrust upon you, you'll have less fear and anxiety if you can be open to the possible opportunities for personal growth that lie ahead.

Creativity. New experiences can lead to new ways of thinking. New ways of thinking foster creativity as you approach problems, solutions, and the changing demands of life.

Flexibility. A rigid, controlling response to change will only make you crazy. When life around you is changing, you have more opportunities to learn to adjust and adapt. It may not be easy at first, but adaptation can become a way of life and serve you well.

The courage to risk. Reasonable risk is going after something that's important to you, but success isn't guaranteed. Weigh all the options and the ramifications of failure and decide if it's worth it. Is your need for control keeping you from going after your dreams? If you never try, will you regret it?

Empathy and understanding. Being uprooted from the familiar can help you be more empathetic to others going through something similar. Being transplanted into a different city or country, with people who observe a different way of life, can broaden your worldview and your appreciation for different perspectives.

Discover your personal strengths and abilities. Being stretched beyond your comfort zone can lead you to discover new abilities and to grown in confidence.

Strengthen your faith in God. If everything in your life is controlled and "safe," you'll never need to rely on God for courage, strength, wisdom, and guidance. **As God reveals more of himself to you, he reveals more of you to you.**

Keep in mind that these benefits and opportunities for growth can be short-circuited by fear, anger, anxiety, comparison, and the need to control. If any of these have their ugly grip on you, resist the urge to push them down or smear them all over the people around you. Spend time with these feelings, ask yourself why they're there, and invite God to look at them with you. Ask Him to show you what's at the root of these feelings.

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Created for Relationship by Rosalie Garde

The longings and loneliness in the newcomer's heart are profound and hard for the well-entrenched to relate to. Can I blame others for being unable to relate? Will I ever drop my expectations? Should I be more forgiving and understanding when they don't seem to get where I'm at or when I feel dismissed or left out? Can I get over myself?

God created us for relationship. If he hadn't, I wouldn't be desperately searching for it.

Treading down the path of relationship-building is challenging. It takes courage. It takes accepting the risk that you won't be liked, that others won't have time for you, get you, or even care. It takes wisdom to know who to spend your energies on and how. It takes resilience. It takes accepting others just where they're at without expecting they'll be your new best friend.

Through my moves I've learned that trusting in God and His ways of helping me connect is imperative. Giving all my wants, needs, and emotions to Him is the only way to find peace. Embracing God's purpose and pathway is important. I can say, without a doubt, that through experiencing loneliness and lostness, I've become more compassionate, aware, brave, and passionate about helping a new person get connected. There are purposes in the lessons. Eventually I hope the richness of it all will replace the stress of it. It's been a tough pathway, but I'm starting to see light.



The Power of Gratitude by Susan Miller



When life gets hard and we want to retreat from it all, most of us do not have the luxury of being able to run away. There is still the job to go to, the children that need supervision, the meal to get on the table, the elderly parent who needs love and help. I'm sure you can come up with your own daily responsibilities that keep you tethered to reality.

The most difficult, stressful moves that I made brought me to a point many times when I wanted to raise a white flag and give up. When God called me to start an international ministry, I felt unqualified for the task. When my beloved Bill died after 45 years of marriage, I felt as if I couldn't possibly go on without him.

So how do I keep moving forward? How can you keep moving forward despite feeling like you have a heavy anchor weighing you down?

When life has lost its joy, **seek for the deeper joy** that transcends circumstances. Take your eyes off of yourself long enough to experience joy in your surroundings: in the beauty of a stream, the laughter of a child, the loveliness of a sunset, the soft caress of a breeze. Remind yourself of God's deep love for you – just as you are.

Thank God for these small gifts of joy. Every day write down things for which you're grateful. Start small. Can you be grateful for the sunshine? Croaking frogs? A car that runs? Healthy children? You'll be amazed at the impact that gratitude will have on your outlook.

Recognizing small joys and having even the slightest hint of gratitude can often change my outlook and attitude enough for me to be able to take a deep breath and get back to doing the next thing.

And speaking of the next thing.... If you're overwhelmed by life and the tasks that lie before you, use this phrase that I learned from the late Elisabeth Elliott: "**Do the next thing.**" Don't focus on the entire list of to do's, but on *the next thing*. Life, taken one step at a time – one task at a time – is much more do-able.

You and I won't do everything right in this lifetime, but God uses all things for good in our lives. Remember this: God goes with you and before you in this life and His desire is that you lean on Him.

Don't do life without Him.

Join with us in strengthening military families!

Give to Operation Hope for the Uprooted Military Family

Just Moved Ministry will provide everything needed to offer an *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* military group study AT NO COST.

Support this ambitious project through a donation of any amount.

Become a sponsor! When you donate \$350 or more, you will be covering the entire cost for providing the study for a military installation and will be offered specific ways to pray for the women and families there.

Learn more at JustMoved.org/operation-hope-for-the-uprooted-military-family. Give at JustMoved.org/donate

