



Living in Liminal Spaces - Between Who I Was and Who I'm Becoming

by Matt T.

Not long ago, I went back and read through my journal entries from the past nine months. It turned out to be a powerful exercise. What I wrote on any given day often seemed like boring details at the time, but reading it all together was eye-opening. It made something very clear to me: **I go up and down constantly.**

Still, whatever day I'm living in — today — always seems to carry the most weight. If I feel good on a given day, life is good, and everything seems alright. If I feel down that day, life feels hard and nothing seems okay. Yet reading through my journals reminded me how quickly things can change — sometimes even overnight.

Standing on the Threshold

One of the other things that stood out was how many **transitions** I've been living through. I've recently lost 25 pounds by changing my diet and exercise. That's been a big transition, both physically and mentally. On top of that, I just left a job I held for three and a half years — my last day was only nine days ago — and I start a new job this Monday. It's exciting, but also a little scary.

Not long ago, I was talking to a friend in the program who brought up the term “**liminal space.**” I hadn't really thought about it before. Liminal space is an **in-between space**, the place where you're on the verge of something new — between what was and what will be. It's a time of waiting and not knowing. The word itself comes from “threshold.”

Liminal spaces show up all over life: stairs, bridges, airport terminals. Even the covid pandemic was a kind of global liminal space. And recovery? It's full of liminal spaces — or really, a **series of them**, as I move from old ways of thinking, feeling, and acting into something new.

What It Feels Like to Be “In Between”

When I'm in these transition spaces, I often feel:

- **Anxiety and stress** — because I can't see the future yet.
- **Boredom and restlessness** — wanting to get somewhere already.

- **Confusion and shame** — wondering if something is wrong with me.
- **Disappointment** — because I thought things would be better by now.

How I Used to Cope... and What I'm Learning Now

For most of my life, I didn't handle these in-between times well. I tended to avoid them entirely or self-soothe in ways that weren't healthy — acting out sexually, overeating, or over-indulging in just about anything to distract myself.

Some of these challenges are still with me. I continue to work on my relationship with food — learning to pause and do something else instead of eating to avoid a feeling. I work on **being present**, especially with my wife — really listening to her. Even in meetings like these, I've had stretches where I found myself playing games on my phone instead of paying attention. That forced me to ask: *Why am I doing that?* I get so much more out of meetings when I listen, so I've been refocusing there.

Better Ways I'm Navigating Liminal Space Now

Today, I try to handle these transitional spaces differently. Here's what's helping me:

- **Journaling.** It shows me the ups and downs. When I read my last eight months of entries, it was obvious how often things shifted. At the time, it felt ordinary or even pointless to write down how I felt — but looking back was powerful. It reminded me things work out.
- **Taking action.** I've learned that motivation often comes *after* action, not before. Waiting to feel ready usually means I don't do anything. So I try to act first.
- **Dealing with memories.** I remind myself that what I did in the past is not who I truly am. There's a big difference between my old actions and my authentic self.
- **Focusing on positive outcomes.** I think of the old saying: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." When I say no to something unhealthy, I try to remember the bigger yes I'm saying to my future.

Seeing Transitions for What They Are

I've realized that **most of the good things in my life have required a transition time — have required me to go through a liminal space.** And whenever I'm in one, I can feel anxious and tempted to retreat to the old way, just because it's familiar.

But recovery itself is a constant set of transitions. It's moving from who I used to be and how I used to cope into something new, one small change at a time. These transitions are just part of living. The only way is through — in a sober, healthy way.