

# Navigating Transitions



## Transitions in Wildland Fire

In wildland fire, we tend to think of “transitions” in the context of moving in and out of the fire season. As fall approaches, you may be helping your kids transition from summer vacation to back to school mode or making plans for fall. For many of us, winter and early spring involve preparing for the upcoming fire season such as hiring personnel, pre-season PT, resolving IT and credit card issues, connecting or re-connecting with the crew, putting bills on autopay. Our lives are dynamic and complex, and meeting these demands can take a toll.

### What would you tell your younger self?

*“Thinking back to when I was a seasonal, I would tell myself that there is always someone to do the work, but if you miss birthdays, family gatherings, and holidays, or lose touch with friends, you can’t get that back. Moving back to work in my hometown made sure I didn’t miss out, and it allowed me to enjoy the transition to something else in the winter. The transition wasn’t ever hard for me.”*

Fire Management Officer (FMO), 23-year career

## Life Transitions

We know that transitions can occur in our professional and personal lives, with one impacting the other. Life transitions may look like added responsibilities at work following a promotion, a baby, illness, marriage, death of a parent, divorce, or retirement. The key to successfully navigating transitions is flexibility and adaptability.

### What are the barriers to integrating back to your family, friends, hobbies, and routines after a busy season?

*“There are times when I feel “too exhausted” to want to be around people, even loved ones. When I feel that way, I know it’s time to take a chunk of time off and stay away from my work phone and computer. I also know I need a break when all I can talk about is work-related stuff. These are signs that it’s time to let go of work and step away for a while.”*

Fire Budget Analyst, 22-year career

## Finding Your Balance

Balancing work and life can be difficult. At times, major decisions may need to be made to allow us to find a better balance. For some, it may look like taking a season off to focus on school. For others, it may mean stepping away from a career opportunity to spend more time with family and engage in self-care. For some it might mean stepping away from wildland fire entirely. There is no single “right way” for us each of us to find that balance.

The constant demands of being in wildland fire can put us in a reactive mode. Striving to develop and maintain a well-balanced life can help us navigate life changes more effectively.



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