

## The Season of In Between



*By Cathey Wise, CAE*

I was the executive director of a thriving 19,000 member association.

Until I wasn't. I served a noble mission for 7+ years.

Until I didn't.

Association staff know we can be in a vulnerable position serving the will of ever-changing Boards. But when the Board wants to go in another direction and you are now looking for your next mission to serve, it's a kick in the gut.

I've defined this career gap as the "season of in between." It's a time for reflection, introspection, and catching up.

It feels great and sucks a lot -- all at the same time.

Here are a few things that might be helpful if you face a similar season:

### Identity

As professionals, we tend to align ourselves with our work and its noble mission. We find power in our work and it can define our personal identity. Is this a healthy perspective? Probably not. For me, it's true nonetheless.

When I meet someone new, they ask, "What do you do?" I used to stumble and feel inadequate. Now I say, "I'm in the season of in between looking for a noble mission to serve." Do I get puzzled looks? Yep! And, I use this as an opportunity to connect and network.

### What's Next?

Realizing what I WANT to do, as well as what I do NOT want to do has tremendous value. Make a list of what you do not want to do. It's an anxiety-reducing exercise and can get you one step closer to what you want to do.

### Feel It and Let it Go

When this happened to me, I allowed myself two days to lick my wounds. Why? If I did not set a limit, I may not have gotten out of bed. While I'm still obsessing over what ifs, I'm striving to look forward. This is a work in progress.

### Faith

Strengthening my faith has been my foundation of this season. Slowing down, looking forward and looking up have kept me grounded and reduced my anxiety. I encourage you to connect with your higher power to provide peace and clarity.

### **Approach This Season Like A Job**

Each day, I look for opportunities and connections. Set the alarm, get dressed and tackle the day!

### **Connect or Reconnect**

Have you been planning to visit loved ones, but could not align a trip with your schedule? Plan almost-free trips. For us, we packed a car and headed to friends eager to host us in their homes. While we don't have the financial confidence to hop on a plane, we are making the most of a few tanks of gas and free places to stay.

Dig deeper with your professional tribe to connect and grow. For me, DFWAE is where I'm making deeper connections. Maybe DFWAE could be for you too?

### **Projects and To-Do's**

I finally cleaned the attic and decluttered our home resulting in a huge yard sale and many donated items. This felt GREAT and made me feel like I accomplished something.

### **Connect Your Interest with Learning**

DEI is an area of interest where I want to grow. I'm exploring courses and certifications to align interests with professional learning. Be a student!

### **This Season Can Be More than Work**

This “season of in between” transcends more than work. It can be transitions in personal relationships, young children, empty nesting, or caring for parents. Or loss brought on by COVID. This season can be unexpected or planned. While it can look different for each of us, it can pack a similar punch. Identify and name this season and what it means for you. It can help you move forward.

### **Self Care and Self Compassion are Not Just Buzzwords**

I used to be an avid reader. I am now reading a book FOR LEISURE! I'm reading for joy and loving it! Be kind to yourself and make sure your self-talk is positive and productive. I'm mindful of my “self talk” to ensure a healthier mental space. Take care of yourself during this season, and let others take care of you too.

### **Confession**

I'm still figuring it out. Some days I move forward and other days I stall. With that said, I am confident that my next opportunity will be fulfilling and my contributions will be valued. I want to maximize this season to better myself, to connect with my beloveds and to remind myself what's really important.

I don't wish any of you a season of in between. But if you find yourself in one, you will be OK and might even be stronger because of it. And I'm here as a new friend and someone you can talk to as we figure it out together.

Wanna talk? Hit me up on [DFWEngage](#) !