

Transition:

Why are they here today

- experience RS, with mothers
- help them get excited, feel more comfortable

We want each young woman to know that HF loves them. That we love them. That they are welcome in RS. That RS is THEIR organization, too. That they are welcome in RS when they pray about it and feel it's time to join us.

Today's lesson is on transition—this is the name the Handbook gives the time between Young Women and Relief Society when young adult sisters move to Relief Society. It's a frightening time for many young sisters, and it is a time during which we lose many of them to inactivity.

"Let me share the thoughts of one young adult sister regarding transition: "The summer I graduated from high school I dreaded going to Relief Society. I was completely ready to leave Young Women, but I had no desire to participate in anything so old-fashioned as homemaking or visiting teaching. Some girls from my young adult ward invited me to attend their Relief Society, but instead I went with my high school friends to their ward. It wasn't until my freshman year at college that I got involved with visiting teaching and received my first Relief Society calling as the chorister. However, I continued to cringe inwardly as I looked around me at Relief Society, and I avoided going to homemaking. I didn't feel that I fit in, nor did I really want to fit in." (Bonnie Parkin)

Sister Parkin has given us a list of questions that can help us understand the difficulty of transitioning between YW and RS. I've given three of these questions to some of our transitioning women so that we can hear some of their answers:

- When you go to Relief Society for the first time, what would a positive experience be like? What would it sound like for you?
- Where could you sit on your first Sunday in Relief Society? What could you say to the sister next to you if you don't know her?
- Sister Smith is 75; how can knowing her make a difference in your life? What can you learn from each other?

Facts and Myths about Relief Society

Some of the difficulty in transitioning comes from preconceptions that we have about Relief Society.

Everyone in Relief Society is old.

- "I have learned that when two hearts connect, age is irrelevant. We desperately need more connections between young and old. And no matter our age, our needs are the same, aren't they? As Relief Society sisters support each other, we share our faith, friendship, and love." (Bonnie Parkin)

The motto of the Relief Society is “Charity Never Faileth”.

Relief Society is only for married women.

- Is that just political correctness? Did we just change it because so many women are single or divorced now? Let me read from the History of RS from the Church’s website: “In its early days, the sisterhood of Relief Society helped sustain the sisters as they joined the Church and gathered together. Twenty women attended the first meeting of Relief Society. Three were in their late teens, some were raising families, others were single, but none were alone.”

The Relief Society was founded in Nauvoo in 1842.

Everyone in Relief Society has a perfect life. How can they relate to me?

- Following is some information about former General Relief Society presidents that you may not know:
- Eliza R. Snow was childless;
- Zina D. H. Young organized RS sisters to campaign for women’s suffrage (right to vote), a widower who remarried raising two sons from her first marriage, one daughter from her second marriage (to Brigham Young), and four step children
- Under Louise Y. Robinson the Relief Society opened Mormon Handicraft, a shop where women could sell their handwork to supplement their family income in the 1937 Depression Era.
- Amy B. Lyman was a member of the Utah State Legislature
- Members of our ward’s Relief Society include single women, married women, divorced women; returned missionaries, childless women; professional women, women who don’t work outside the home, college graduates, students, those with little formal education, mothers, stepmothers; grandmothers, great-grandmothers--every age from 18-80 and all experiences that fall in between;
- What binds us together is not our shared experiences, but our shared testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. You and I may seem to have nothing in common, but we can always share our love of the Savior with each other. That spirit will make us sisters.

The Relief Society is for wimpy women.

- “Sister, you are needed [in Relief Society]. We need women who will applaud decency and quality in everything from the fashion of clothing to crucial social issues. We need women who are organized and women who can organize. We need women with executive ability who can plan and direct and administer; women who can teach, women who can speak out. There is a great need for women who can receive inspiration to guide them personally in their teaching and in their leadership responsibilities. We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the word and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or dangerous. We need women who can discern those positions that may

not be popular at all, but are right. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, in organizing the Relief Society, that there is a need for “decision of character, aside from sympathy” (*History of the Church*, 4:570).” – Boyd K Packer, The Relief Society, Ensign November 1978

I won't get anything out of Relief Society lessons. Relief Society lessons are only for mothers with 8 children.

- Our lesson manuals don't have outlines. That is so that our inspired teachers can choose from them the parts that will be of most worth to our sisterhood.
- Does that mean that every example will apply to your specific situation? No, but it does give us the latitude to adjust to fit every sister's needs, including yours.
- The basis of our lessons is always the principles of the Gospel. Those can be applied to any person.
- In April of 1945 Belle Smith Spafford became the president of the Relief Society. Only a week or two after she had been sustained a letter came from the National Council of Women, announcing their annual meeting to be held in New York City. Sister Spafford had attended those meetings before, and in view of her previous experience, she and her counselors carefully considered the invitation for several weeks. They decided to recommend to the President of the Church that the Relief Society terminate its membership in those councils. Sister Spafford [took a list of explanations to George A Smith and] explained how costly it was to go to New York, the time it took, and described the humiliation they occasionally experienced. She recommended that they withdraw because “we don't get a thing from these councils.” This wise, old prophet tipped back in his chair and looked at her with a disturbed expression. “You want to withdraw because you don't get anything out of it?” he questioned. “That is our feeling,” she replied. “Tell me,” he said, “what is it that you are putting into it? Sister Spafford,” he continued, “you surprise me. Do you always think in terms of what you get? Don't you think also in terms of what you have to give?” He returned that paper to her and extended his hand. With considerable firmness he said, “You continue your membership in these councils and make your influence felt.” And so they did! Sister Spafford took the gentle correction from that wise prophet, and the day came that she was president of that organization. Now, I pass that same message to each sister in the Church. If you are absenting yourself from Relief Society because “you don't get anything out of it,” tell me, dear sister, what is it that you are putting into it? – Boyd K Packer, The Relief Society, *Ensign*, November 1978

Relief Society provides women a safe haven from the world.

- "On 17 March 1842 the Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society—the Lord's organization for women. Relief Society is important to the Lord. I know that. He provided women a safe haven from the harshness of the world when He gave us Relief Society. From the beginning our association together and our direction from priesthood leaders have helped us come unto Christ. There was no greater cause then; there is no greater cause today. Relief Society was not man-

made or woman-made. It was, as President Joseph F. Smith explained, 'divinely made, divinely authorized, divinely instituted, divinely ordained of God to minister for the salvation of the souls of women and of men' " (Bonnie D. Parkin, "Oh, How We Need Each Other!" *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 16).

Those who attend Relief Society may have angels as their associates.

- "I now turn the key in [behalf of all women]. This society is organized, "according to your natures. ... You are now placed in a situation in which you can act according to those sympathies" within you. If you live to these privileges, ... the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates. ... If this society listen to the counsel of the Almighty, through the heads of the Church, they shall have power to command queens in their midst." (*History of the Church*, 4:607, 605.)

How can Relief Society sisters prepare to meet you?

- "All women have the responsibility of helping our young adult sisters recognize that they, too, have a place in Relief Society. We need to become acquainted with each girl, learn her name, learn about her activities and interests, and make every effort to enfold her into our sisterhood before she turns 18.... there's a domino effect that happens when we lose one young adult woman—we're potentially losing her entire future family. You see, if [a young woman] leaves Relief Society before she ever enters, her children are far less likely to be a part of the Church and may become a broken link in an eternal family." Bonnie Parkin
- Make a special effort to welcome our new young adult sisters. Once is not enough. Let them know they are welcome every Sunday. Look around you.
- Learn their names. Learn something about them. Knowing a girl's mother is not the same as knowing her.
- Do your visiting teaching when you are assigned to these young adult sisters – go the extra mile.

How can Young Women prepare?

- Talk about Relief Society with your mother
- Get to know the people you visit teach
- Attend Enrichment meeting
- Talk with your parents, Relief Society President, the RS counselor assigned to transition (me), and your Young Women's president. Share your fears and hopes with them. We are anxious to help you.

What will I do in Relief Society?

- Assigned a visiting teacher
- May receive a visiting teaching route
- May receive a calling in the Relief Society or another auxiliary, like Primary or Young Women's
- Will be invited to attend Sunday Relief Society meetings. Our lesson schedule is very exciting. First Sunday is a Presidency Message, like today. Second and third Sunday lessons are from the *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church* series. Fourth Sundays are Teachings for our Times. On fifth Sundays, we meet with the Priesthood.
- You will be welcome. We love you. We want you here. We can't want to share in your joys and triumphs. We want to comfort you in your grief. We want to learn from your testimony and experience, but our number one goal is that you know how much Heavenly Father loves you and that you will feel his spirit in Relief Society.

I'm stoked! When can I start coming to Relief Society meetings?

- When you and your parents have prayerfully consulted together with the Bishop and decide you're time to come.
- Sunday Meetings:
 - o You and your parents may choose for you to come in immediately upon turning 18.
 - o If you turn 18 well before graduation, you and your parents may decide with the Bishop or Branch President that it's best for you to stay in Young Women until you graduate High School.
 - o There's lots of flexibility about the time for transition to Relief Society, and if you need help figuring out where to go, talk to the Bishop.
- Enrichment Night
 - o You are welcome at any and all Enrichment meetings.
 - o Come with your mother, visiting teacher, or favorite Young Women's leader.
 - o "...transitioning young adult women should enter Relief Society already having older friends who know them, love them, and are ready to receive them." Bonnie Parkin