



Section 3. General psychology

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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE DURING MAJOR LIFE TRANSITIONS: ADAPTATION MECHANISMS AND THE CEAM METHOD

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Abstract

Major life transitions such as immigration, motherhood, divorce, professional change, relocation, and changes in social roles may significantly affect emotional stability, identity, and psychological well-being. Adaptation to such transitions requires not only coping with stress but also the reorganization of emotional responses, personal meanings, and established patterns of behavior.

This article examines key mechanisms of psychological resilience during significant life transitions, including emotional regulation, cognitive appraisal, social support, and identity transformation. Particular attention is given to the Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method (CEAM), previously introduced by the author as a structured approach to emotional adaptation during crisis-related life changes. CEAM conceptualizes adaptation through four interconnected processes: conscious recognition of emotional experience, emotional processing, adaptive reconstruction, and meaning integration.

The article considers CEAM in relation to established theories of stress, resilience, and identity development and discusses its potential application in psychological consulting. CEAM is presented as a practice-oriented conceptual method. Further empirical research is required to evaluate its components and effectiveness.

Keywords: *psychological resilience, emotional adaptation, life transitions, identity transformation, emotional regulation, psychological adaptation, CEAM, Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method*

Introduction

Major life transitions represent periods in which familiar psychological and social structures are disrupted and an individual must adapt to new circumstances. Immi-

gration, motherhood, divorce, professional transformation, relocation, and changes in family or social roles can simultaneously affect emotional stability, identity, relationships, and everyday functioning.

Life changes requiring substantial readjustment have long been associated with psychological stress. Holmes and Rahe (Holmes, T. H., & Rahe, R. H., 1967) demonstrated that major life events may create significant adaptive demands. However, the psychological impact of an event cannot be explained exclusively by the event itself. According to Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of stress (Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S., 1984), individual responses depend substantially on cognitive appraisal: how a person interprets a situation and evaluates available resources for coping with it.

Major transitions may therefore produce different psychological responses. The same event may be experienced as loss, threat, opportunity, or a combination of these meanings.

Identity is also an important component of adaptation. Erikson (Erikson, E. H., 1968) described identity as a developing psychological structure connected with an individual's understanding of self and social roles. When significant circumstances and social roles change, previously stable aspects of identity may also require reconsideration.

In previous research, Chaika (Chaika, S., 2026) examined emotional adaptation and identity transformation among women during immigration, describing migration as a process that may involve psychological reorganization extending beyond geographical relocation. Disruption of familiar cultural, professional, and social structures may require an individual to reconsider established roles and rebuild a sense of stability within a new environment. [artile.pdf](#)

The purpose of the present article is to examine the mechanisms supporting psychological resilience during major life transitions and to further develop the theoretical interpretation of the Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method (CEAM) previously described by the author in the context of crisis-related life changes (Chaika, S. A., 2026).

Psychological Resilience During Life Transitions

Psychological resilience can be understood as the capacity to maintain or restore adaptive functioning under conditions of significant stress or adversity. Resilience does not necessarily imply the absence of negative

emotions. Anxiety, sadness, uncertainty, anger, or temporary emotional instability may represent understandable responses to substantial life changes.

Bonanno (Bonanno, G.A., 2004) emphasized that individuals may demonstrate different psychological trajectories following highly adverse experiences and distinguished resilience from a prolonged process of recovery. This perspective suggests that resilience should not be viewed simply as an absence of distress but as a dynamic pattern of adaptation.

Several psychological mechanisms appear particularly relevant during major life transitions.

Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation allows an individual to recognize and manage emotional reactions without simply suppressing them.

Major transitions frequently involve contradictory emotions. Immigration, for example, may simultaneously produce hope and loneliness. Motherhood may combine attachment and fulfillment with exhaustion and uncertainty. Professional transformation may create both new opportunities and fear of instability.

Recognition and regulation of these experiences can support adaptation by allowing the individual to respond to changing circumstances without being completely governed by immediate emotional reactions.

Cognitive Appraisal

The meaning assigned to a life event substantially influences the psychological response to it.

Lazarus and Folkman (Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S., 1984) proposed that stress depends partly on an individual's appraisal of environmental demands and available coping resources. Consequently, psychological adaptation may involve a gradual reinterpretation of the transition and development of new strategies corresponding to changed circumstances.

An experience initially perceived primarily as loss may eventually acquire additional meanings connected with autonomy, personal development, new roles, or changes in life priorities.

Social Support

Social support represents another important resource during periods of significant change. Research has associated supportive interpersonal relationships with resilience under conditions of stress (Ozbay, F., Johnson, D. C., Dimoulas, E., Morgan, C. A. III, Charney, D., & Southwick, S., 2007).

However, life transitions may themselves disrupt established support systems. Immigration may physically separate individuals from relatives and friends. Divorce can change social networks. Motherhood can alter patterns of social interaction, while professional change may remove familiar colleagues and sources of recognition.

Adaptation may therefore require not only receiving support but also rebuilding a social environment appropriate to new circumstances.

Identity Transformation

Major transitions can also influence the individual's understanding of self.

Professional status, family structure, cultural environment, relationships, and social roles often form important elements of personal identity. When these structures change, a discrepancy may emerge between the person's previous understanding of self and current circumstances.

Adaptation therefore may involve not simply restoration of previous functioning but the integration of new experiences and roles into an evolving identity.

The Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method (CEAM)

The Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method (CEAM) was previously presented by Chaika (Chaika, S. A., 2026) as a practical method of emotional adaptation intended for work with significant life changes and identity crises.

The published description of CEAM conceptualizes adaptation through four interconnected processes:

– conscious recognition → emotional processing → adaptive reconstruction → meaning integration.

The method is based on the premise that adaptation after a major life transition does not necessarily mean returning to the psy-

chological state that existed before the transition.

Some life experiences substantially alter external circumstances and social roles. Immigration changes a person's social and cultural environment. Motherhood introduces a new role and responsibilities. Divorce may reorganize family relationships and expectations. Professional crisis may require reconsideration of established professional identity.

In such circumstances, adaptation involves integration of change rather than simple restoration of the past.

Conscious Recognition

The first component of CEAM involves conscious recognition of emotional experience.

During significant life changes, individuals may experience anxiety, grief, anger, guilt, uncertainty, emotional exhaustion, or loss of stability. Within the CEAM framework, the initial task is not necessarily to eliminate these reactions but to recognize them and identify their relationship to the life transition.

Conscious recognition allows emotional experience to become an object of reflection rather than remaining an undifferentiated reaction to stress.

Emotional Processing

The second component involves emotional processing.

After emotional reactions have been identified, attention can shift toward understanding the psychological meaning associated with them. This may include recognition of perceived losses, fears, unmet expectations, conflicts, or changes in personal needs.

Emotional processing is therefore connected with the development of a more organized relationship with difficult experiences. Instead of relying primarily on avoidance or suppression, the individual begins to interpret emotional responses within the broader context of the transition.

Adaptive Reconstruction

The third component is adaptive reconstruction.

Significant transitions may make previous strategies, routines, or social roles less effective. Adaptation consequently requires

the development of patterns of behavior that correspond to current circumstances.

Adaptive reconstruction may include establishing new routines, reconsidering personal boundaries, rebuilding social support, changing coping strategies, redefining professional goals, or integrating new family and social roles.

The central question shifts from “How can I return to the way things were?” toward “How can I function effectively within the circumstances that exist now?”

Meaning Integration

The fourth component of CEAM is meaning integration.

Major life changes frequently influence the way individuals interpret their personal history, current identity, and future direction. Experiences initially perceived primarily as disruption may gradually become integrated into a broader life narrative.

Meaning integration does not require assigning a positive meaning to every difficult experience. Instead, it involves developing a coherent understanding of how the transition relates to personal values, identity, decisions, and future goals.

In this way, the experience becomes integrated into the individual’s psychological narrative rather than remaining an isolated period of disruption.

CEAM can therefore be represented as:

Life Transition → Conscious Recognition
→ Emotional Processing → Adaptive Reconstruction → Meaning Integration

These components should not necessarily be understood as a rigid linear sequence. Individuals may move between them repeatedly as circumstances, emotional reactions, and personal interpretations change.

CEAM and Psychological Resilience

CEAM approaches psychological resilience as a dynamic process of adaptation rather than exclusively as a stable personal characteristic.

This perspective is consistent with research demonstrating substantial variation in individual responses to adversity (Bonanno, G.A., 2004). Adaptation may depend on interactions among emotional regulation, cognitive appraisal, social resources, coping

strategies, and changing environmental conditions.

CEAM places particular emphasis on the relationship between emotional adaptation and identity transformation.

An individual may achieve partial emotional stabilization while continuing to experience uncertainty because a previous understanding of self no longer corresponds to current circumstances. Emotional regulation alone may therefore be insufficient when a transition has substantially altered the individual’s social roles or personal identity.

For this reason, the CEAM framework extends from recognition and processing of emotional experience toward adaptive reconstruction and meaning integration.

This principle is also consistent with the author’s previous work on women’s experiences of immigration, in which emotional adaptation was considered together with changes in identity and social belonging (Chaika, S., 2026) [artile.pdf](#)

CEAM may therefore be particularly relevant to transitions involving substantial changes in identity and social roles, including immigration, motherhood, divorce, relocation, and professional transformation.

Practical Application of CEAM

In psychological consulting, the CEAM framework may provide a structured way to organize work with individuals experiencing major nonclinical life transitions.

At the stage of conscious recognition, attention is directed toward identifying what has changed and which emotional reactions are associated with those changes.

During emotional processing, the individual explores the psychological meaning of these reactions and their relationship to losses, expectations, needs, or perceived threats.

During adaptive reconstruction, the focus moves toward the present circumstances: which previous strategies remain effective, which need to change, and which new resources, relationships, routines, or behaviors may be required.

Finally, meaning integration involves connecting the transition with the individual’s evolving understanding of identity, personal values, and future direction.

The framework therefore combines immediate emotional adaptation with longer-term reconstruction of functioning and identity.

At its current stage of development, CEAM should be considered a conceptual and practice-oriented method rather than an empirically validated clinical intervention. It is not intended to replace clinical assessment or evidence-based treatment when severe or persistent mental-health symptoms are present.

Discussion

The theoretical analysis presented in this article suggests that psychological adaptation to major life transitions extends beyond reduction of immediate stress.

Significant changes may simultaneously affect emotional regulation, perceived control, interpersonal relationships, established behavioral strategies, personal meaning, and identity. Psychological resilience therefore emerges from the interaction of several adaptive mechanisms rather than from a single characteristic.

CEAM organizes this process through four interconnected components: conscious recognition, emotional processing, adaptive reconstruction, and meaning integration.

An important feature of the method is its emphasis on the idea that psychological adaptation does not always require restoration of a previous state. When life circumstances have changed substantially, effective adaptation may instead require the development of new psychological and behavioral structures corresponding to the individual's current reality.

The present article further develops the conceptual interpretation of CEAM while maintaining continuity with its previously published description (Chaika, S. A., 2026).

However, the theoretical coherence of a method does not itself establish its empirical effectiveness. Further research is required

to operationalize the four CEAM components and examine their relationships with established measures of resilience, perceived stress, emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and identity functioning.

Future studies could also evaluate CEAM in specific populations experiencing major life transitions, including immigrant women, mothers undergoing role transitions, individuals experiencing divorce, and people undergoing significant professional change.

Conclusion

Major life transitions can affect emotional stability, social relationships, established behavioral patterns, personal meaning, and identity. Psychological adaptation to these experiences therefore involves more than simply reducing stress.

Existing psychological research emphasizes the importance of cognitive appraisal, emotional regulation, social support, resilience, and identity processes in adaptation to significant change.

The Chaika Emotional Adaptation Method (CEAM) integrates these processes within a structured framework consisting of conscious recognition, emotional processing, adaptive reconstruction, and meaning integration.

The central principle of CEAM is that adaptation does not necessarily mean returning to a previous psychological state. When circumstances and social roles have substantially changed, adaptation may require integrating those changes into a coherent and sustainable understanding of self.

CEAM therefore provides a conceptual and practice-oriented framework for examining emotional adaptation during major life transitions. Further empirical research is needed to evaluate its components, effectiveness, and potential applications within psychological consulting.

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