



FOR STAYERS...

by Ute Limacher-Riebold

This booklet is for you, if your friends move and leave you behind...

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When our friends tell us that they're going to leave, we feel like if our world turns upside down.

We feel happy for them to get to start afresh in a new place, but we also feel left out.

We realize that we won't be part of their life anymore the way we were and that hurts. It hurts because we care.

We like them, we like us being with them and we like sharing our life with them.

It is important not to forget that they probably have to leave for a reason that maybe is not even to them to decide...

First of all, I want you to know that **it is not YOU they are leaving!** They are leaving a particular phase in their life that you happen to be part of.

Your paths crossed, you got to spend time together, to get to know each other, you went through different phases of this friendship and that is precious!

It is not YOU they are leaving:
they are leaving a phase of the life
you shared.

With this guidebook I want to help you go through transition smoothly.

No rush, no "must" or "should": *you* decide what helps you and *you* decide when to take the next step.

Give yourself time to process this all, you owe it to your friend and first of all **you owe it to yourself!**

Ute



Try to make sense of the change

Our friends are moving for a reason.

Accepting these reasons helps us to understand once more that they don't move because they don't want to stay with us, but *because they have to*. – This period is difficult for them too!

They might be talking about what lays ahead with enthusiasm, but they are also sad to leave us behind!

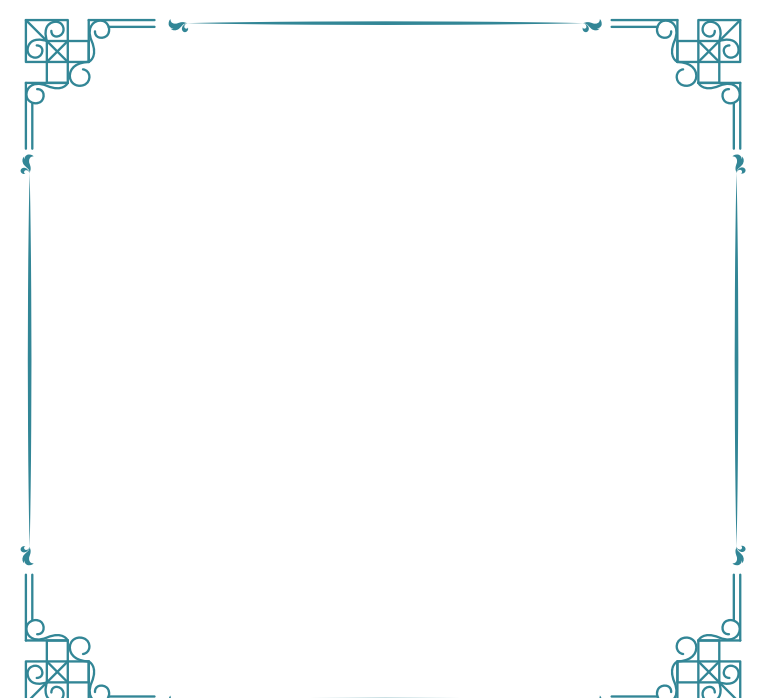
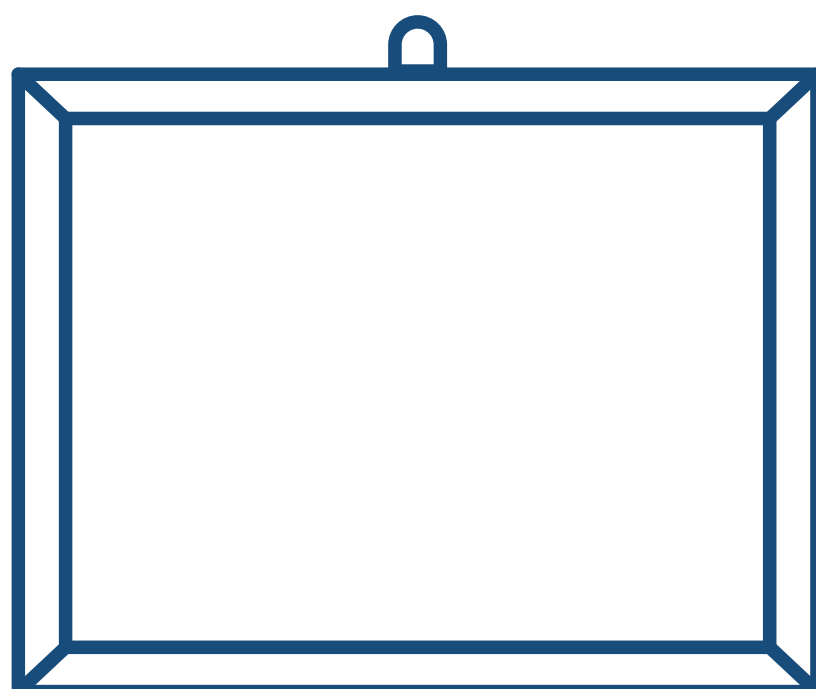
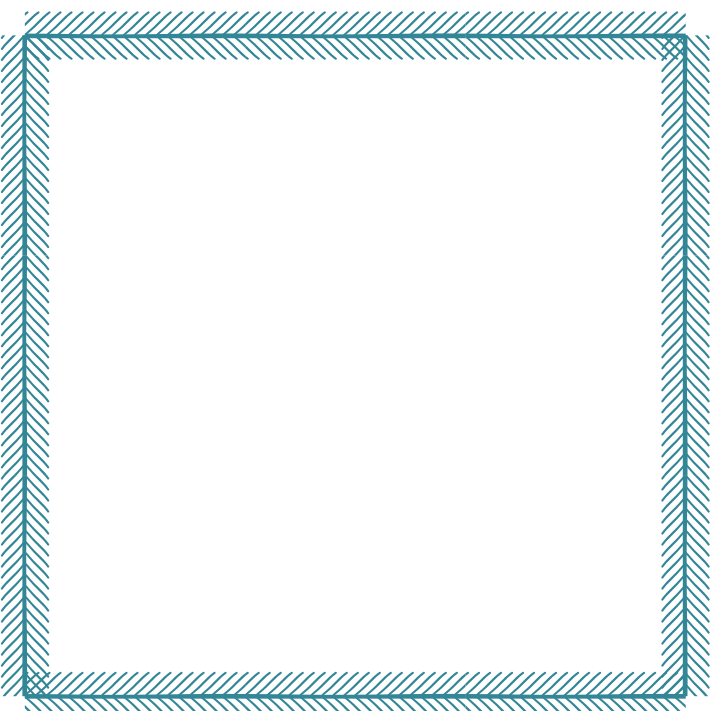
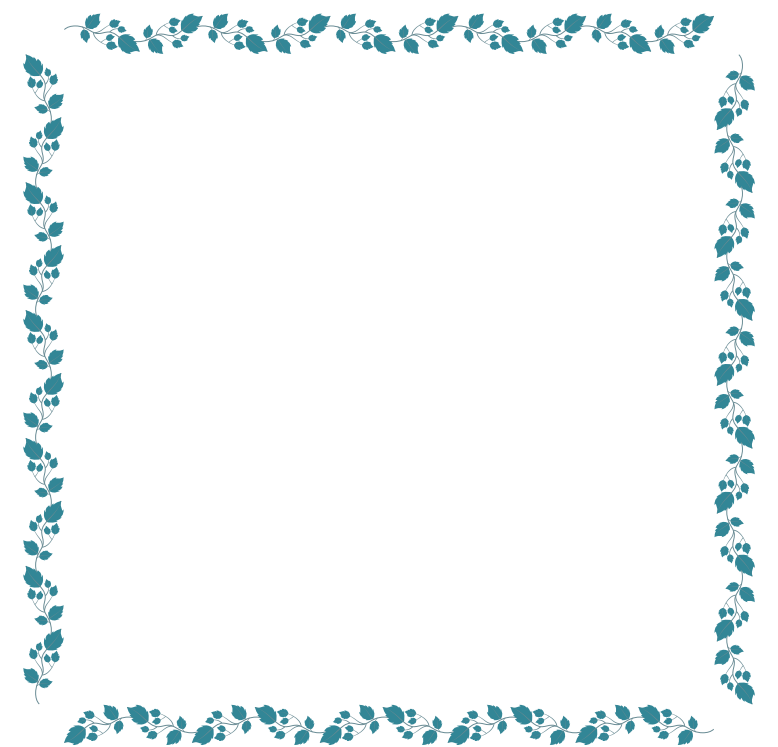
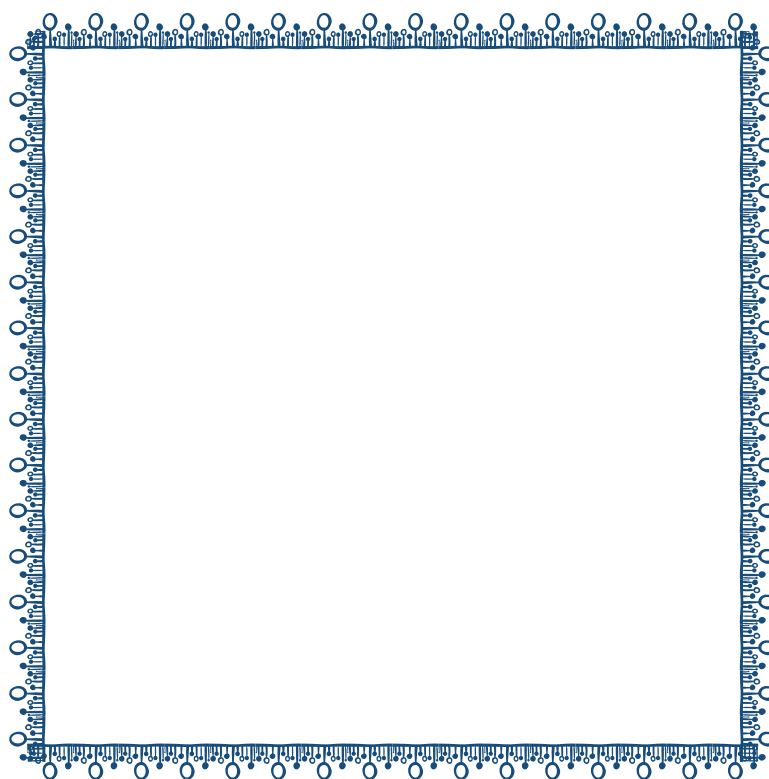
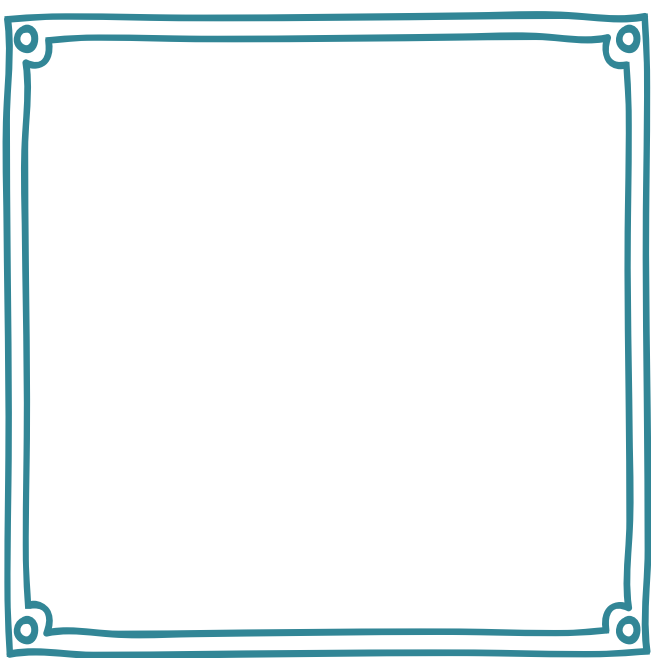
One day we feel "fine", the next day we are angry, resentful: that is perfectly understandable!

We may even prefer not meeting with anyone for a while.

That's very natural: we grieve and need time.

There are so many things we wanted to do together!

Let's write them down and share them with our friends and with our family:



Build a R.A.F.T.!



Saying goodbye to friends is the most difficult thing to do, for it is a very emotional process. There is nothing wrong with sharing emotions; feeling overwhelmed and crying is a very natural response.

Emotional tears contain proteins and stress hormones and it is important for our body to get rid of them.

This is why when the levels of those stress hormones are high enough, we have the urge to cry, otherwise our tears would become toxic and affect the body's immune system and our mood. It is a very natural process of keeping our body healthy.

Make sure that you say goodbye to your friends, and make them say goodbye to you too!

In order to do this in a healthy way, we should build a R.A.F.T.

R.A.F.T. is an acronym and stands for

- **R**econciliation,
- **A**ffirmation,
- **F**arewell and
- **T**hink Destination.

Find out here below what building a R.A.F.T. consists in (it will take a while to "build" it, so start early!)

Healthy goodbyes allow happy hellos!

Reconciliation

When our friends move we tend to focus on those who we got along with easily and prefer forgetting or at least not having to deal with those we had some issues with.

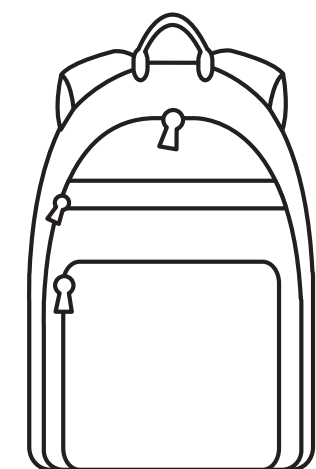
Sometimes we're even glad that these latter ones leave, because this means we won't have to deal with them anymore, right? Once they're gone, we can move on. – Unfortunately that's a wrong assumption.

There's a funny thing about people and situations we struggled with: if we don't face them, find some way to have "closure", the problems we had with them will stick with us later.

It's like filling our backpack with stones: they will weight on our shoulders and with the time become heavier!

We may think that walking away now is the easiest way to do, and it will feel like that,

but at some point we will have to deal with it and it can happen at a moment we don't expect, therefore, **let's not add stones to our baggage!**



When these not-(so-good)-friends leave, we shouldn't let them go without telling them that we wish them all the best.

If we still resent them from things they said or did, and it feels too early to do this, we can at least try to formulate what we feel (e.g. "I am/was upset because you/we..." "I don't understand why you/we...") ...

If it seems too difficult to tell them directly, we can write it down (here below (a)), or talk about it with someone, and after that, write down what we wish for them (b): either way, it will be a huge relief!

Never underestimate the power of words!

Whatever happened between us and that person, we can accuse him and point out what he did wrong – which feels very liberating! – but we can also try to be more precise about what this made us feel:

"what you said to me made me upset/hurt/angry... and I didn't want to talk to you / spend time with you..."

Once we've completed the list, we can add something like "(but now that you're leaving I wish you all the best...".

This is how we can **turn the page and move on**. If we can not forgive (yet), a simple "I wish you all the best" will suffice.

We can also just give or send them a goodbye card or letter, either now or later. What is important is that we **have some kind of closure** in order to start the new chapter without any baggage and unresolved business!

(a)

I want to tell (name) that (reason...)

—
—
—
—
—
—



(b)

Hi (name), I know that you are leaving and I just wanted you to know that what you said.... / what you did....

I wish you all the best, (your name)

Affirmation

Our friends deserve to know that we will miss them.

We all like to know that other people appreciate us, that we mean something to them and being told how we changed their life is priceless!

We can offer a gift that will make them remember the time spent with us – a picture, an object, a letter, a drawing – mention a special moment we were very glad that they are in our life.

Every person in our life helps us to grow and learn, about us, about life in general and it is during moments like these that we are more aware of how precious these moments together are and were.

my friends are:

how they changed my life:

my colleagues/neighbours are:

how they changed my life:

Farewells

- Who would we like to meet with before they leave?
- Where do we want to meet them?
- How do we want to spend time with them?

We need to keep in mind that it is a stressful time for them too, so we should make sure we organize this ahead of time!

I want to meet
.....before they leave.

I want to write to
.....before they leave.

Pictures say more than thousand words... Let's take some more, and add them to those we already have and keep them as a keepsake of this phase of our life.

We may feel like not involving our friends in future plans – they will have left anyways... – but it is hurtful for them to be excluded from the plannings before they even have left.

Talking about our plans and asking about theirs for what will come "after" will keep us feeling part of each others life even if not actively involved.

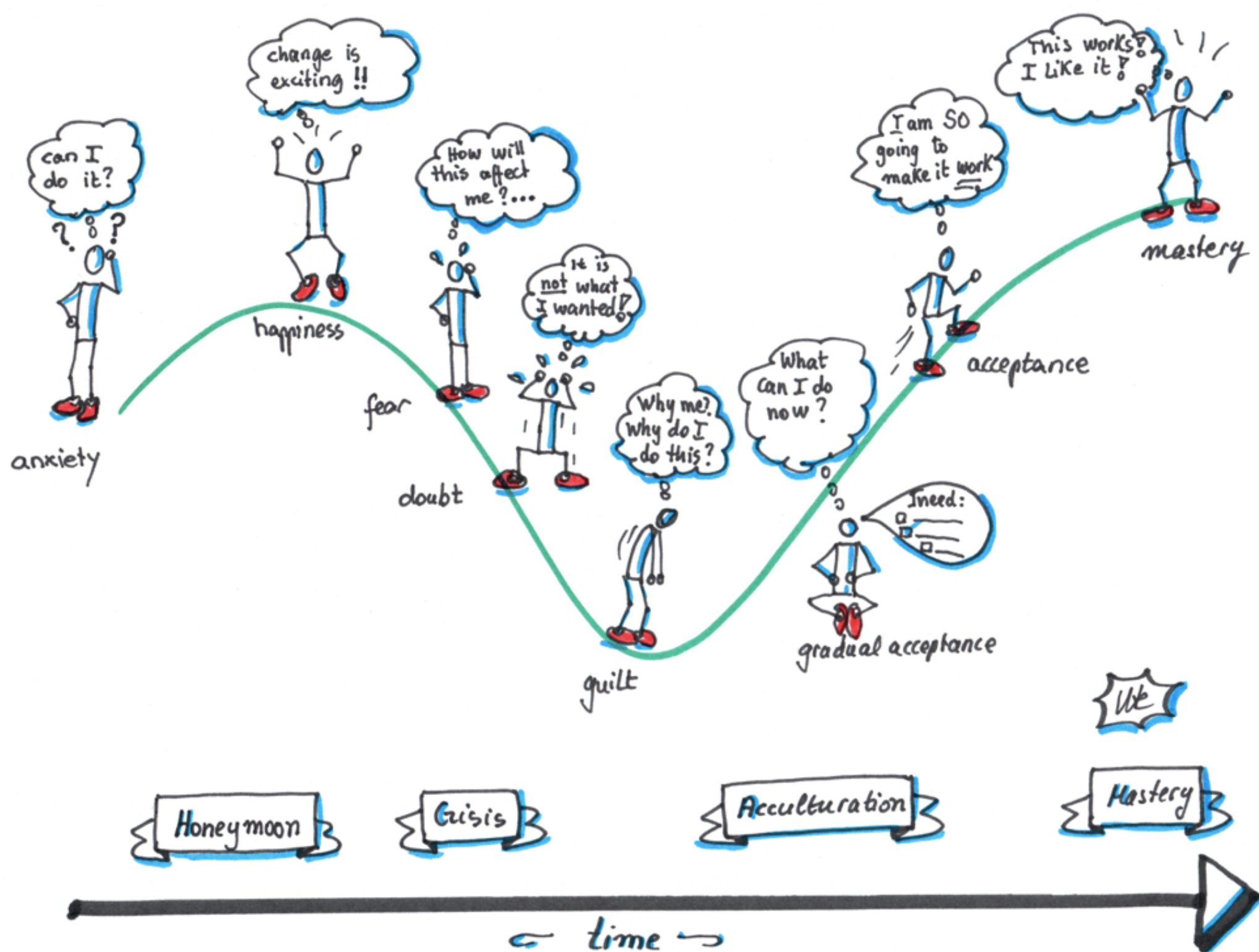


Think Destination: what our life will be once our friends have left...

It is difficult to imagine how our life will look like when our friends are gone.

Our world may seem to fall apart because we are grieving the moments we had together and those we would have liked to spend with them.

It is very normal to be sad, to grieve, to not want to do anything special.



It is time to slow down – taking a vacation would be great now!



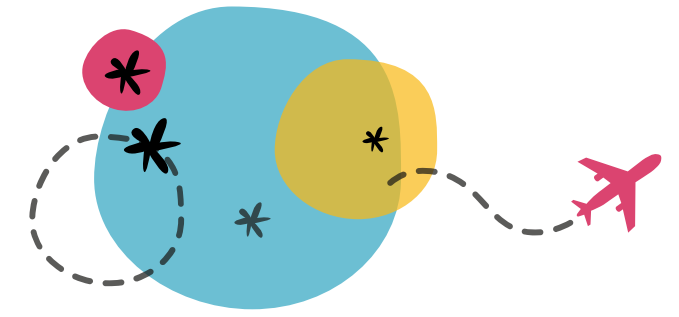
It is important that we do things that make us feel good, that are soothing in a healthy way like doing sports, eating healthy and spending time with family.

It's like when we get the flu: we will feel miserable for a while and weak, but at some point we want to get back to "normal" one step at a time.

If this feels too difficult: family and friends are there to help us.

Once we are ready, we can list up **what will change for us and what will stay the same:**

what will change	what will stay the same



What's next?...

During the last weeks together, we have probably have stopped doing things that we usually did because we wanted to stay closer to our friends.

Let's think ahead of time: **what do we think we could look forward to when our friends have left?**

Is there anything that we always wanted to do or try, but never had the time to?

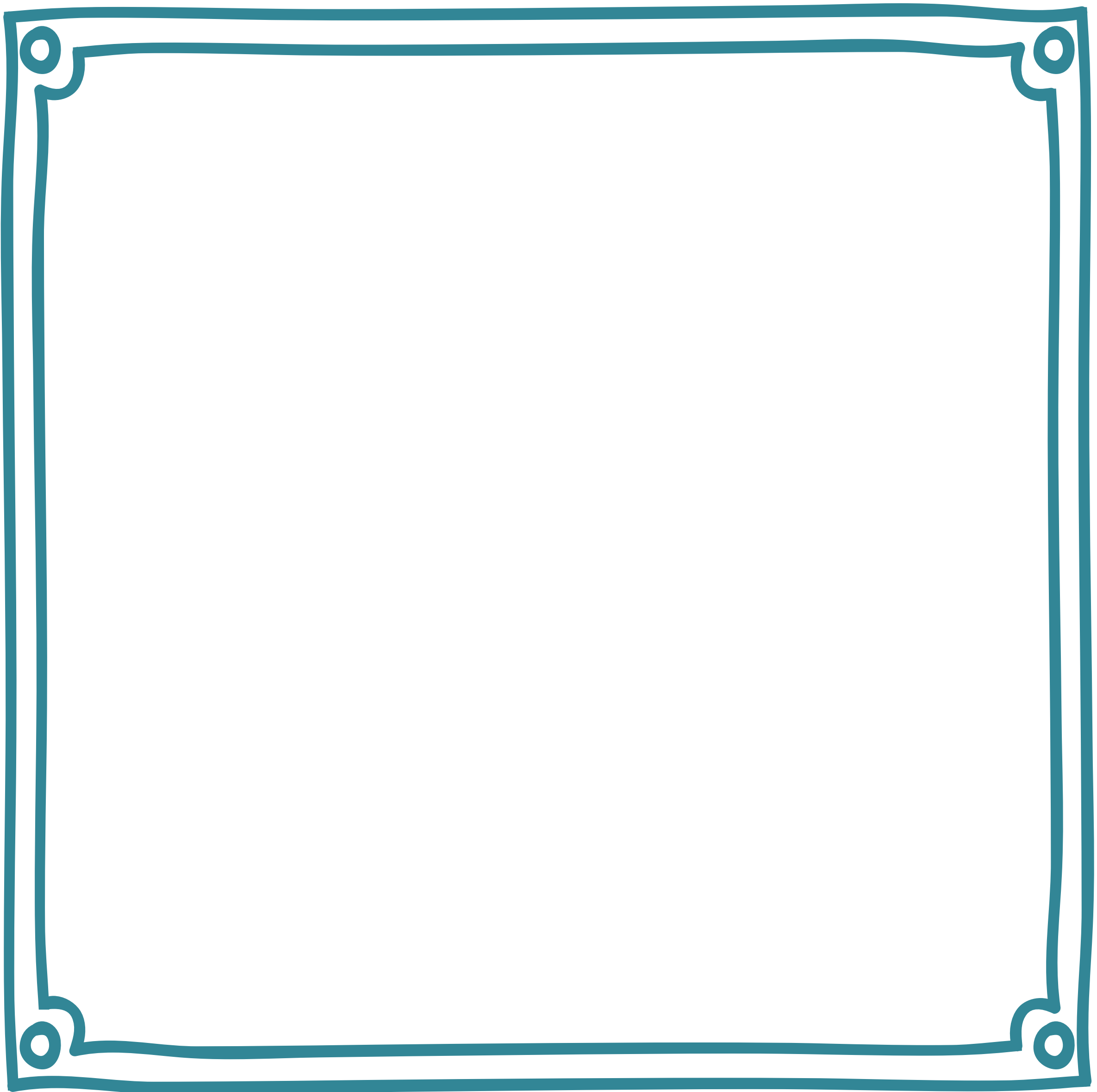
A large, empty rectangular frame with rounded corners and decorative corner pieces, intended for writing. The frame is drawn with a thick teal line.

Who among our friends are also stayers ?

We are not the only ones being left behind!

Let's find out what our other friends are doing, how they are coping with the situation.

Who among these other friends would we like to call, ask to come for a visit, meet?



Change the narrative

We all have that little voice inside our head that tells us things like "I can't make this", "You can't do that", "You're not good at..." etc.

Writing down what this inner voice tells us is very helpful because it helps us find out what is making us feel the way we feel and we can work with it and change the wording.

For example, instead of "I can't...", "I don't want to...", "I need to...", or "I should..." we can start sentences with "I want...", "I'm looking forward to...", "I can't wait to...". – Try to say them out loud and notice the difference!

for example:

"I can't ask Marc to join me..." => "I want Marc to join me"

"I don't want Anne to sit next to me" => "I want Sarah to sit next to me"

Your inner voice says	complete with your words	What you can say instead
<i>I can't</i>		<i>I can...</i>
<i>I must</i>		<i>I want...</i>
<i>I should</i>		<i>I want...</i>
<i>I need to</i>		<i>I want...</i>
<i>I don't want to</i>		<i>I want...</i>

What do we like doing? What are we good at?

Our friends know what we like and what we are good at.

If we want to make new friends, we want to be clear about what we like, dislike, what we are good at and what not. And we might want to ask them about themselves too. Let's think about activities, sports, films, animals, food etc.

I like	I dislike

I am good at	I am not good at

After a few weeks or months, things will have changed.
We will have changed: our perspective on things, our routine,
the things we miss (or don't miss).

What is *different* now compared to before:

What is *better* now compared to before:

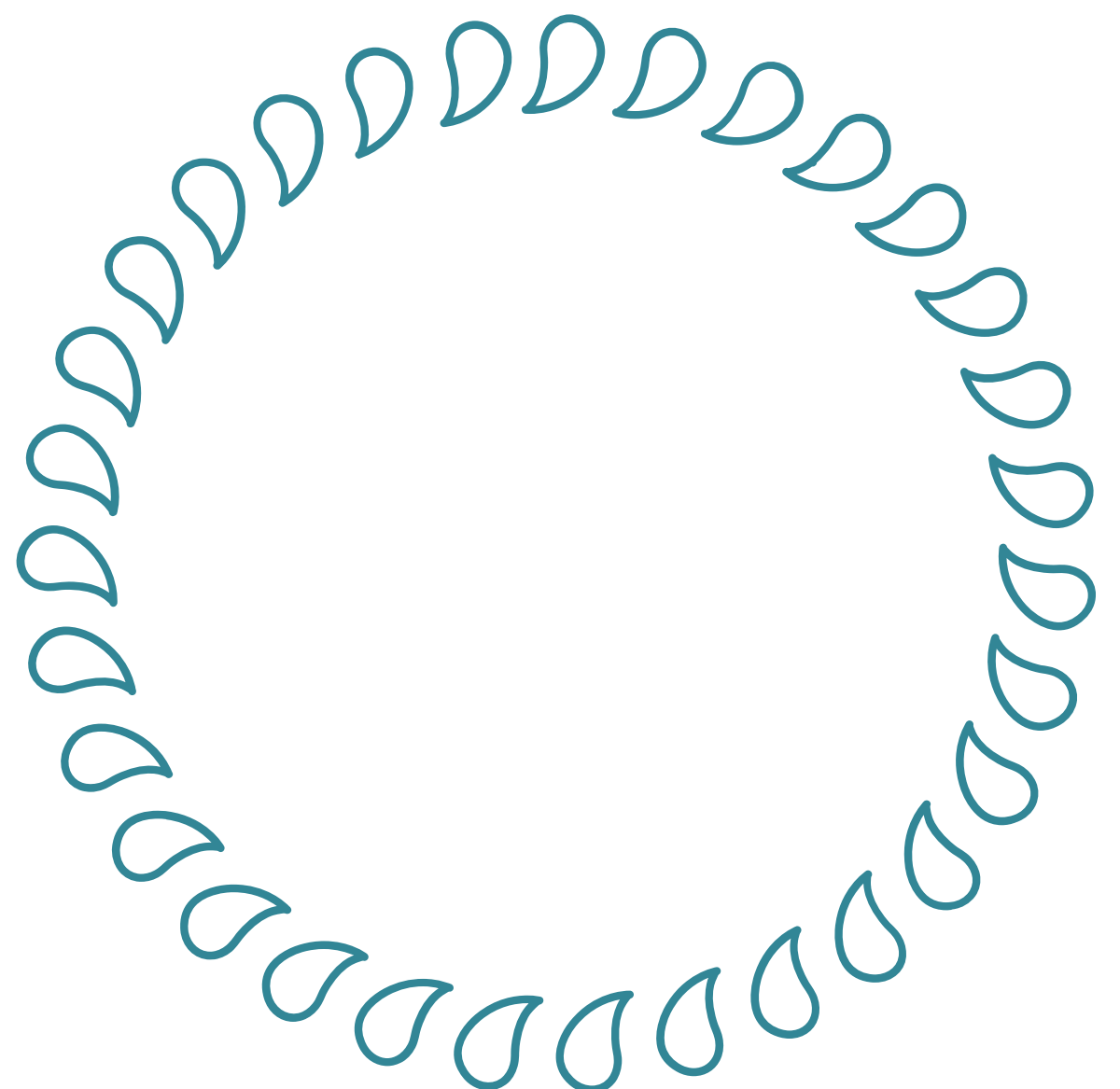
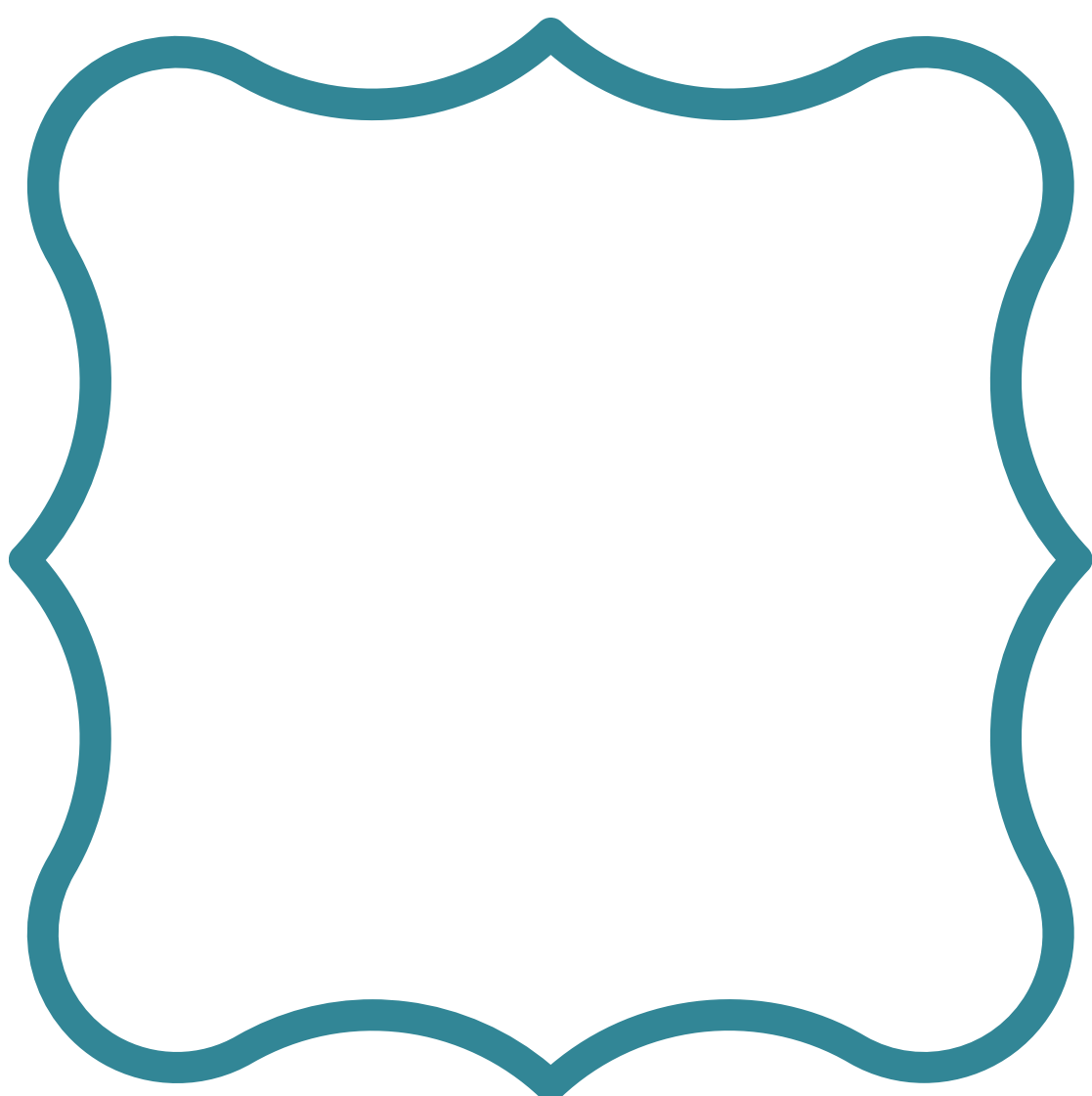
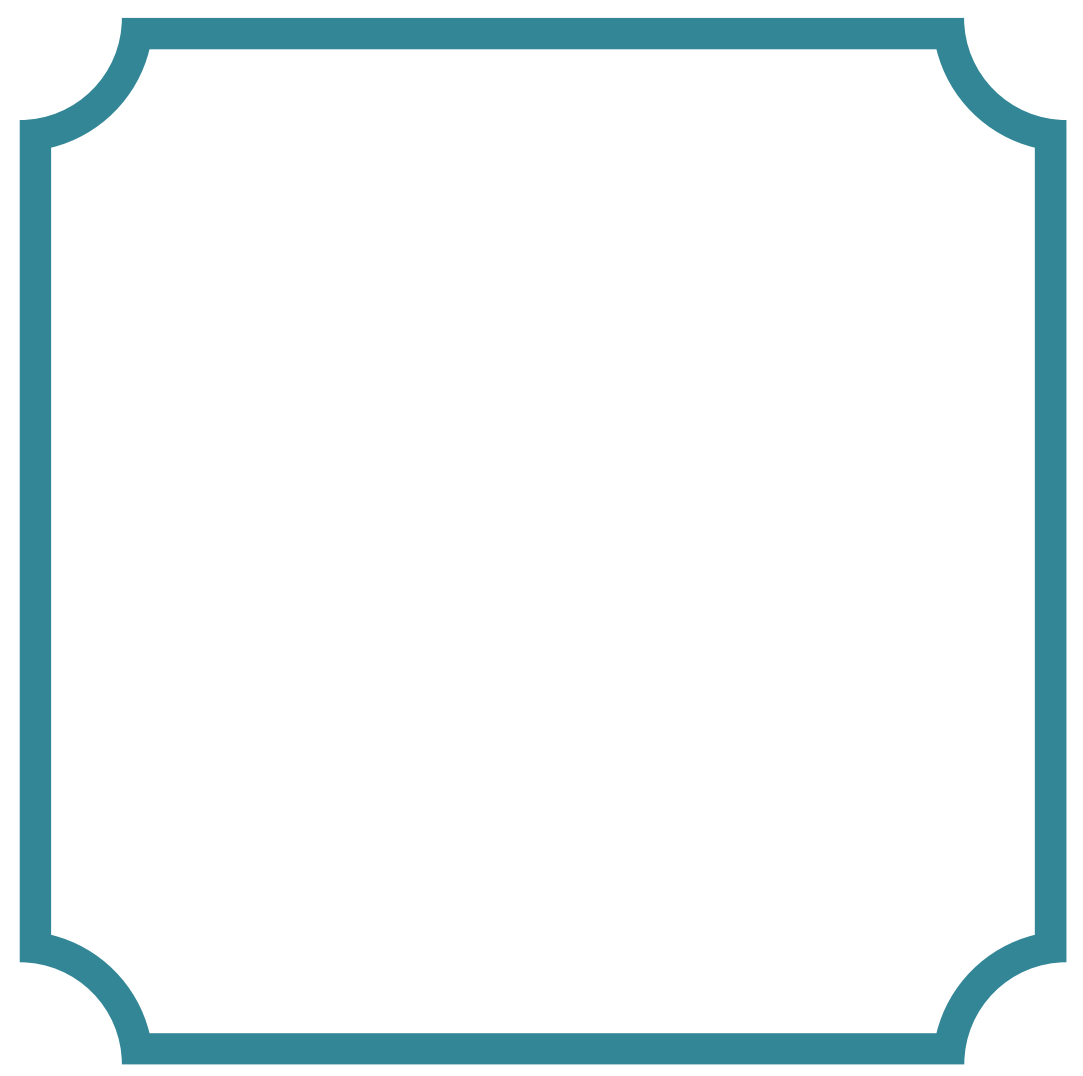
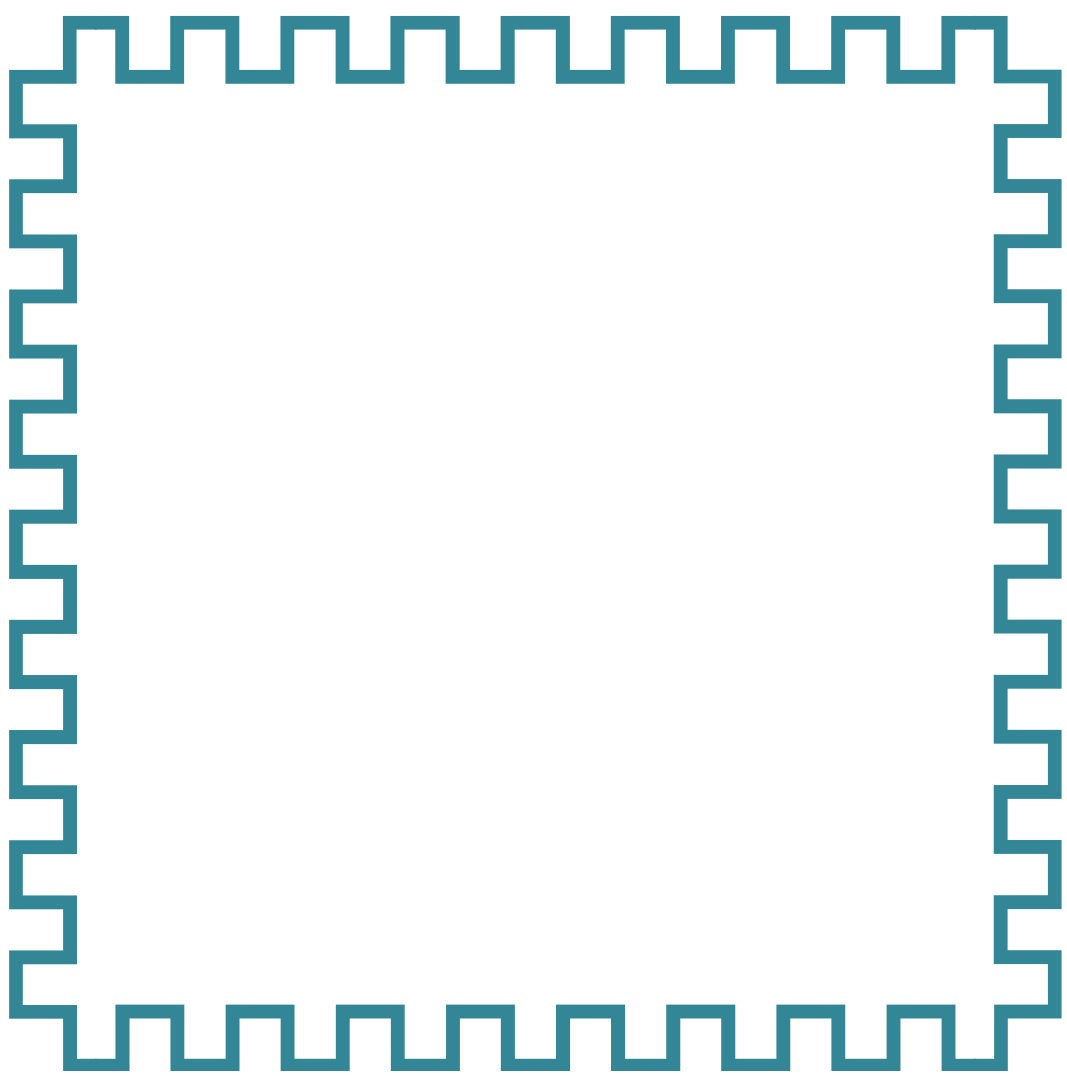
During transition we need our family more than usual.

We might not admit it, but knowing that they are with us and there for us is comforting.

It is important to tell them what we need and expect in the different phases because with their help we can solve problems quicker and find easier solutions.

This is also the right moment to start new routines (list some up here below).

In our family for example we have Friday evening picnics in the living room and special Sunday mornings with home made scones, special pancakes etc.



I like to add another "T" to the R.A.F.T. and it is the T for **Time**. We need time to adjust. Of course we want to feel like our old self as quickly as possible, we want to find new friends, figure out how everything works without our old friends in our life, but we shouldn't feel guilty or stressed if it takes some months.



**Let's stop and smell the roses –
look back to how far we've gone,
celebrate what we've achieved and
enjoy what we've got.**



If you have completed all the tasks you should feel a bit better.

Please remember that transition takes time and although we might feel perfectly adjusted in some areas of our life, others might need a bit longer.

If you feel too overwhelmed or sad, share it with your family and friends, and with others who are in the same situation: you're not alone!

Find ways to **stay connected with others** – doing sports, being actively involved in activities – and **write down your story!**

What you are experiencing is worth to be remembered and shared with your dear ones and your new friends!

I wish you all the best and am looking forward to hearing how you are doing!

Remember: I'm only an email away
info@UtesInternationalLounge.com

Ute



And you are always welcome to share your experience in my facebook group **here**.