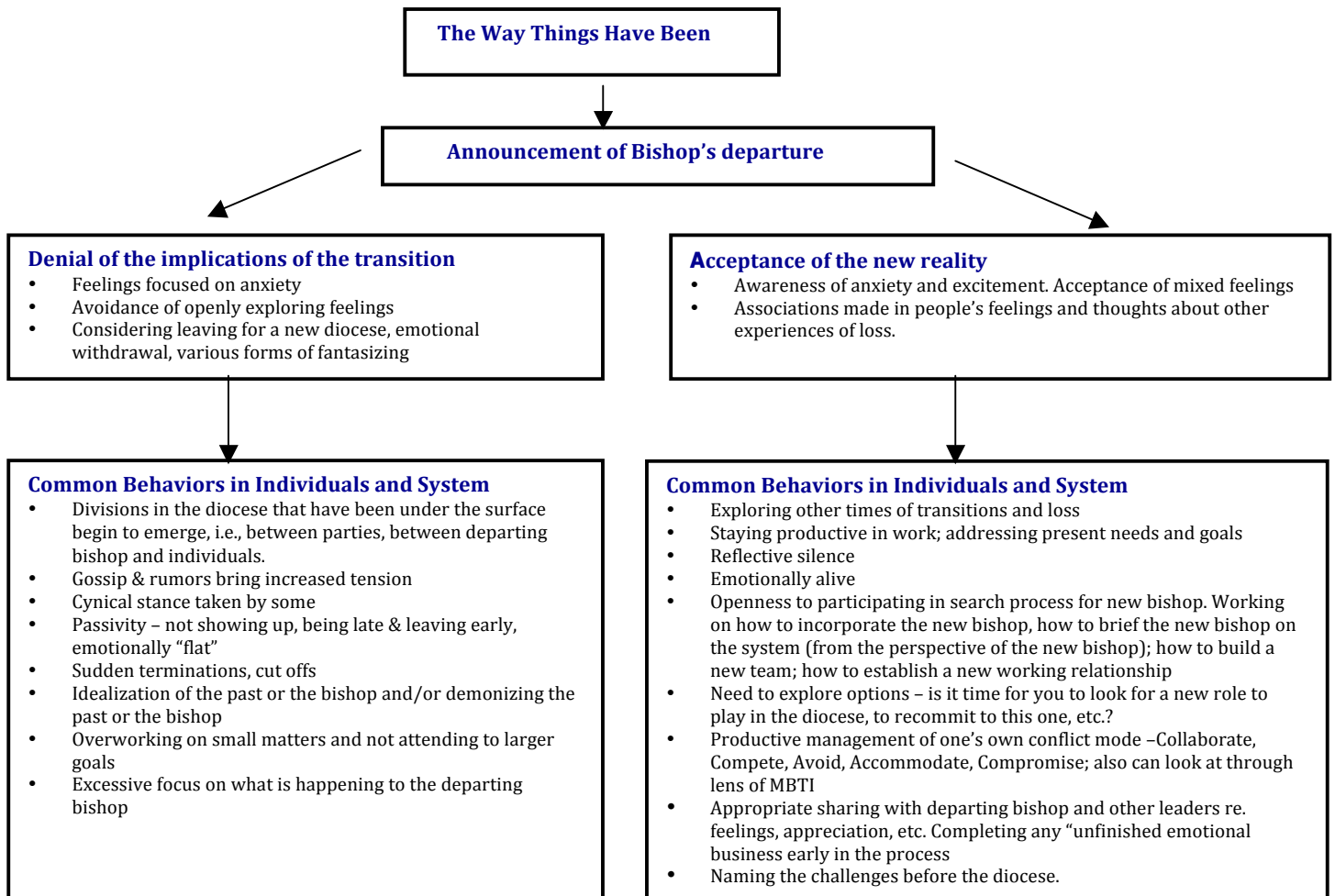


Transition Dynamics: The Bishop

Here are some of the common dynamics among diocesan leaders that emerge when a bishop leaves and the process to select a new bishop begins. The assumption is that the Bishop has been in-place long enough to have had a significant impact on the diocese and to have established deep working relationships. The Bishop may be moving onto a new position, retiring or leaving because of illness or changes in life circumstances. The ways of working that had been created will change. The nature of relationships will change. Leaders in the diocese will begin to experience concerns and hopes about the basic ways of working that have been in place and about their place in the organization. New choices will present themselves.



During the transition it's important for leaders to create a space of hospitality for themselves and others in the diocese. This might include offering opportunities to reflect on the past, the “here & now”, and the possible futures. Doing any such reflection in a manner that provides adequate emotional safety and distance from the pressures of the diocese. Such opportunities can be initiated by the departing bishop, an interim or provisional bishop, a transition team or other group. Both the bishop and the other diocesan leaders need to “let go” of one another. Behavior that shows intimacy and openness will diminish, the existing patterns of control and influence will weaken, and even the customary signs of inclusion will fade. This can be managed in a way that is graceful. It can also be ignored or poorly done; in which case there will be emotional problems that will haunt the departing bishop and the diocese.

It's also important for the departing bishop to:

- Allow the other leaders to struggle; avoid attempts to “save” them; do not create detailed plans for what is to happen after departure; also do not accept a “lame duck” position; do not leave before you have left.
- Identify work and goals that are significant “unfinished business” for the diocese. Write a few pages that identify 3 or 4 major challenges before the diocese.
- Focus on his/her own departure process. The bishop needs to experience the death of what has been and his/her excitement about the future.