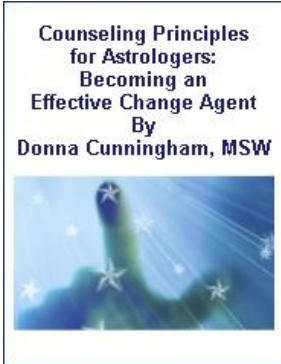


## A Responsible Approach to Clients' Tough Transits

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Note: This is a chapter from my ebook, *Counseling Principles for Astrologers*. This chapter is a free offering to the astrology world, so feel free to pass it along to anyone you think would find it helpful. A sampler of the ebook can be downloaded here: [Sampler–2014 Counseling Principles for Astrologers](#). You can order the ebook here: [My Books](#).

We live in very difficult times, and the world at large is in turmoil. The transits are difficult ones, too. Many astrology clients are fearful about their future but hope for good news, while astrologers struggle to make helpful predictions.

Sometimes, however, the things we say can leave them even more anxious than they were before. What, then, would be a healing and empowering perspective on the concerns they bring to a session?

It's extremely important that astrologers and their clients both understand astrology's limitations. Natal chart features and transits to them may *suggest* what's going on, but they *do not* set the outcome in stone. Any given placement or combination has many expressions—some challenging, some positive, yet all related. There's no way of predicting precisely how people will express those features, for much depends on their character, history, spiritual evolution, and choices. What a consultation *can* do is to help them become aware of their options.

Most of us work from the heart and do the best we can to help our clients. As in any service field, the better prepared we are to understand their emotional responses—and our own—during the session, the better we can serve. Newly professional astrologers, unlike many practitioners of mainstream helping professions, receive little training and support in the often-difficult transition from student to pro. Uninformed but with the best of intentions, we can make mistakes in predicting and cause needless problems for our clients. Let's explore three approaches to forecasting: two common ones that aren't helpful and one that is.

### Irresponsibly Negative Predictions and Their Long-Term Consequences

For 20 years, I wrote a Dear Abby–type column for *Dell Horoscope* magazine. Readers asked about their problems, and I answered, based on their astrology charts and my background in social work. Part of the job description seemed to be putting out fires that other astrologers had started. Many of the letters were from people who were devastated by a prediction so dire that they came away with a sense of doom.

Astrologers who present an extremely negative or biased picture as though it were The Truth can do a great deal of harm. A self-fulfilling prophecy can result if, believing these pronouncements of doom, the client loses hope and the willingness to try. It's all too easy to underestimate how impressionable and vulnerable clients can be. Many of them believe we have a direct pipeline to

God and that we know their destiny. Fallout from irresponsible forecasts can affect the rest of their lives. We'll see examples below, with identifying information removed for confidentiality.

Some astrologers glory in exaggerating and dramatizing the worst possible outcome of a transit. Here's what one reader wrote: "An astrologer told me I'd be institutionalized if I didn't leave this location and my husband right away. Like that very week! In the middle of winter! I was traumatized for years, expecting to end up on a mental ward! It was so not fair!"

Nothing upsets me more than astrologers who make grim forecasts based on an infant's chart, as they're prone to do when the outer planets are strong. In my *Dell Horoscope* column, I heard from any number of terrified young mothers who were told awful things about their babies' charts. The all-time worst was a very old-school astrologer who gave a young and vulnerable first-time mom a reading of her newborn's chart, which contained an 8<sup>th</sup> house stellium. The astrologer gleefully informed her, "Your baby boy is going to grow up to be a sex maniac!"

Devastating predictions about an infant's adult life can cause tremendous damage, both to the parents, who suffer undue pain and worry throughout the child's growing years, and to the child, who may wind up living out the chart's worst potential in response to the parents' fears. Parents need to get to know their little ones by observing them, rather than by having preconceptions imposed on them by an astrologer.

Please exercise extreme caution and empathy if you decide to interpret children's charts. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, I personally wouldn't do their charts until it's time to think about schooling, for then a consultation can give the parents important information about the child's learning patterns and relationships with siblings and peers. It's also good timing to give parents an idea of talents and abilities the child can begin to develop.

Predicting death is another area where astrologers can create a great deal of alarm—so much so that it's specifically prohibited in most astrology organizations' ethical codes. In discussing negative predictions on my blog, a reader wrote that, 30 years ago, a well-known astrologer told her that she'd be widowed young. She's going on 65 now and still haunted by that prediction. Her husband is very much alive, but the dreaded bereavement is still in the back of her mind.

**Avoid predictions that sound like the outcome is inevitable.** Always stress that each transit has a wide range of possible results. Mention other possibilities, including some positive ones.

**We also need to keep away from negative ways of describing the planets' effects.**

Astrologers often talk as though the planets gang up on us. It's a kind of shorthand, not to be taken literally. However, people may feel powerless if we give them the impression that transiting Saturn is about to put an end to their career, or that slow-moving Pluto will be kicking their keister for the next three years.

**To describe connections between two planets, here are alternate ways that don't imply that the planets *cause* something to happen.** Instead, say that the aspect: *suggests, represents, implies, shows, symbolizes, could indicate that, hints that, can correlate with, goes along with, is*

*associated with, corresponds to, depicts, or portrays* a particular behavior or event. Add frequent qualifiers like *might, may, could, sometimes, and possibly*.

This goes doubly for written forecasts in blogs or newsletters or in published articles. Predictions that appear in print always seem, somehow, to be more authoritative and inescapable.

### Caution: How Astrologers' Agendas Can Lead to Negative Predictions

Astrologer's predictions can be contaminated by control issues, determination to be right, and other conscious or unconscious agendas. **Many negatively-inclined astrologers firmly believe that they know better than a client who is facing important life choices, so they try to terrify clients into doing what they are told.**

That conviction may have been the motive of an astrologer who was asked about a proposed move to a distant location. When she strongly advised against it, the man disagreed and said he was going to move there anyway. She told him emphatically that, if he ignored her advice and made the move, he would die.

We astrologers are often unable to be objective when interpreting charts of people we're close to—family, friends, co-workers, members of our community groups, or even longtime clients we've grown fond of. When the history and nature of the relationship make it hard to be detached, less-than-enlightened agendas are more likely to kick in.

One reader reported that her mother was a closet astrologer who pored over books and cast charts by hand for hours on end. When the teenage daughter asked what she'd be when she grew up, Mom promptly told her that she would be a prostitute. The daughter adds, "No one can fathom what that proclamation did to my heart and mind. At first, my 15-year-old brain was seized with anger, then fear, guilt, and eventually despair ... then I went back to anger."

**Astrologers can cause serious and lasting problems with mindless comments like these. Be aware of how deeply such predictions can wound someone—in many cases, for a lifetime.**

**Here's an appalling description of the effects of an interpretation by an astrologer who appears to lack empathy:**

"An astrologer recently told me that my husband and I are going to get divorced. Our composite Sun is in the 6<sup>th</sup> house and squares our Moon, and he said the combination would be extremely detrimental to our marital success in the long term. He also saw that my natal Saturn is in the 7<sup>th</sup> house and told me that 90% of cases where the person got married before their Saturn return ended in divorce. I'm only now in my Saturn return. Prior to this reading, I had absolutely no doubts about my marriage; now, however, I fear his prediction will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"I am constantly trying to find websites that interpret these chart aspects in a more positive light or trying to find aspects that are more positive. I literally spend hours searching. I can't say that we had no issues prior to the reading but they were minor.

“Prior to the reading I felt confident in us, our love, and our future but now I suddenly feel like this relationship is doomed and there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s inevitable.

“I wish I’d never got that reading. I truly hope that divorce is not in my future but if it does happen I’ll never know if it was because we truly didn’t work out or if it was because I sabotaged it with all my worries about our reading.”

What an arrogant and destructive prediction! And, to make himself seem omniscient, he made up statistics that sounded like he’d conducted a rigorous research study with maybe 100 people who had Saturn in the 7<sup>th</sup> and found that 90% of them had gotten divorced.

**What positive qualities might Saturn have in the 7<sup>th</sup>?** I’d have said she’d probably marry someone with Saturn/Capricorn traits, possibly older, and with a strong work ethic, perhaps given to overwork or possibly in a job that takes up many hours a day. And that she’d be looking for stability and security in her choice of a marriage partner. When I sent her that interpretation and asked if it seemed correct, she confirmed that it was right on target.

**Have I ever made a dire prediction myself?** Yes I did, though I hope you’ll agree it was called for. One client confided that she was planning to murder her brother. I believed her. She was a tough cookie, and she presented it as cold, hard fact. No joking, no exaggeration, no fantasy.

Though this would certainly not be my usual approach, I used her fervent belief in astrology and in the power of prediction to deter her. Pluto was transiting her 9<sup>th</sup>—the house of legal matters—and about to cross her Midheaven. I told her sternly that those transits meant that if she killed her brother, she’d spend the rest of her life in prison. Shaken, she promised that she wouldn’t do it.

**One other factor to be aware of is that even if we’re not overemphasizing the worst potentials, many clients have a negative frame of mind and will twist what we’re saying or only retain the downside.** This is especially true of those who have studied or read just enough astrology to absorb the worst interpretations. Watch for this during the session, by observing the client’s facial expressions and checking what they’re getting from your words. At the end of the session—which you should always tape so they can play it back—summarize again the ways they can make progress on eliminating the less desirable expressions of a difficult transit.

### How Our Own History and Current Issues Can Skew our Predictions

**We need to practice constant self-awareness, so that our own history, needs, and agendas don’t creep into our work. We all have blind spots and can be triggered into emotion-based responses when clients’ ongoing or current issues are too close to our own.** We may become overprotective and fearful for the client, who can pick up on our fears—spoken or unspoken—and thus become unduly alarmed about upcoming transits.

**This is especially likely when we find ourselves identifying with the person due to similarities in our nature or family background.** In preparing for a session, it’s a good practice to check for contacts between the client’s chart and our own. Even if we’ve worked hard

on ourselves and come a long way, a client's situation that too closely matches our own past might stir up difficult parts of our history and cause us to overreact.

**In addition to contacts in the chart comparison, it's informative to look for shared aspects that suggest shared issues, for we often attract clients with charts like our own.** I have a Venus-Saturn conjunction, and in my early days as an astrologer, I could have sworn that everyone had aspects between Venus and Saturn, because so many of my clients did. With chart features in common, it's easy to conclude that their experiences and their ways of handling upcoming circumstances are cookie-cutter versions of our own. Not always so, but you'll only find out the differences by asking what their experiences with that aspect have been.

### Why Terminally Positive Predictions Don't Help Either

Many astrologers cannot speak to clients at all about the self-defeating ways that difficult planetary energies can be expressed, but paint an unrealistically glowing picture instead. Rose-colored glasses firmly in place, they can't bear to admit that certain natal placements and transits have any downsides. They refuse to even consider that bad things *do* happen to good people under difficult transits to difficult natal positions. Instead, they warble about the wonderfully exciting and transformative opportunities those transits present.

An astrologer who only mentions the upbeat side of an exceptionally rough transit leaves the client open to being blindsided. That would be like a surgeon who didn't warn a patient that a proposed high-risk major surgery could have dangerous side effects, but focused solely on a positive outcome.

Suppose you go for a reading because you're worried about your job situation while Saturn is transiting your 6<sup>th</sup> house planets. The astrologer presents it in glowing terms, saying that you'll be working hard, but that you'll have some amazing achievements and maybe even get a promotion. Relieved by such a positive slant on that worrisome transit, you start planning how to spend the raise you'll surely be getting.

So, on Monday you go to work, only to be told that there are going to be layoffs, and that in addition to your own work, you'll now be handling the job of a coworker who'd been let go. Furthermore, the annual raise wouldn't be forthcoming because sales are down, and there'd be no Christmas bonus this year. You'd probably be contacting that astrologer for a refund.

**Ignoring difficult potentials of a major transit by a slow-moving planet to a natal position—especially a difficult chart feature—can lead the client to make unwise decisions based on our advice.**

Years ago, I had a mentorship program where advanced astrology students who were turning professional sent me tapes of their sessions to critique. One student of the unrealistically upbeat sort had done the chart of a mountain climber who asked for advice on timing for a climb. He'd reached the summits of several major mountains in the Pacific Northwest. Now he was planning to tackle the infamous Denali—the highest and most dangerous peak in North America.

The student was impressed by his past accomplishments and excited about this planned attempt. She assured him that transits for the timing he had in mind showed that climb would indeed bring success. I no longer have the chart, but vividly recall the goose bumps when I saw that transiting Saturn was making a difficult aspect to either an 8<sup>th</sup> house or a 1<sup>st</sup> house planet. Because Saturn—like Capricorn—can refer to mountains and to falls, I was deeply concerned.

On the phone, I explained this and urged her to get in touch with him and to ask what happened seven years earlier—the last time transiting Saturn aspected the same natal position. When she did, he told her that back then he had a devastating fall during a climb and wound up in a body cast with many months of recovery from the injuries. Imagine the consequences if he'd taken her advice and attempted to reach Denali's summit during that transit!

**I'm not suggesting that we focus only on the difficult potentials of a transit, but that we look into the person's history before we rave about the possibilities.**

### How the Chart Helps Gauge Clients' Ways of Handling Transits

**An effective astrology session is a dialogue rather than a monologue**, so get comfortable with asking personal questions that relate to the situation involved. The details help us determine how vulnerable the client is in the areas of life affected by an impending transit. Until we know more about long-term patterns, we have no idea how they might handle future transits to that placement. **As Dr. Phil always says, the best predictor of future behavior is the past.**

**To see what's currently at stake, start by analyzing the chart feature being transited—including its sign, house, and aspects.** Someone with Pisces planets in the 6<sup>th</sup> will respond differently to a Saturn transit to those placements than someone with Gemini planets in the 6<sup>th</sup>. In order to assess the situation clear-sightedly, we need the client's history with that chart feature, specific information we can only get by asking. We need to know how the person is using or has used it in the past.

**It's said that wherever we go, we take ourselves along, and that's true of transiting planets as well. Therefore, also consider the natal sign, house, and aspects of the transiting planet.** That is, for a Saturn transit, analyze natal Saturn. With Saturn natively in Pisces, the person might feel helpless and confused by the situation they're facing, although seeking spiritual guidance and giving service. With Saturn in Gemini natively, the person would probably gain all the information they could before deciding what to do. They'd read books on the topic, research it online, and network with others who have overcome the challenges of similar situations.

The Transit Tracker on the next page summarizes yearly movements of Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto from 1990-2020.





## Transit Tracking Table for 1990-2020

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Note: this table summarizes the earliest and latest zodiac degrees during a given year, including direct and retrograde motion. I've rounded up to the next higher degree when the position is beyond the halfway mark of the degree. That is, if a planet is at 18° SC 45', I round it up to 19°.

<b>Year:</b>	<b>Saturn:</b>	<b>Uranus:</b>	<b>Neptune:</b>	<b>Pluto:</b>
<b>1990</b>	15-25 CP	5-9 CP	12-14 CP	14-19 SC
<b>1991</b>	25 CP-6 AQ	9-13 CP	13-16 CP	17-21 SC
<b>1992</b>	5-18 AQ	13-17 CP	16-18 CP	20-23 SC
<b>1993</b>	16 AQ-0 PI	17-22 CP	18-20 CP	22-25 SC
<b>1994</b>	27 AQ-12 PI	21-26 CP	20-23 CP	25-28 SC
<b>1995</b>	8-24 PI	25 CP-0 AQ	22-25 CP	27 SC-0 SG
<b>1996</b>	19 PI-7 AR	29 CP-4 AQ	24-27 CP	0-3 SG
<b>1997</b>	1-20 AR	3-8 AQ	26-29 CP	2-6 SG
<b>1998</b>	13 AR-3 TA	7-12 AQ	28 CP-0 AQ	5-8 SG
<b>1999</b>	26 AR-16 TA	10-16 AQ	1-4 AQ	7-11 SG
<b>2000</b>	10 TA-0 GE	14-20 AQ	3-6 AQ	10-13 SG
<b>2001</b>	24 TA-14 GE	18-25 AQ	5-8 AQ	12-15 SG
<b>2002</b>	8-28 GE	22-28 AQ	7-10 AQ	14-17 SG
<b>2003</b>	22 GE-13 CN	26 AQ-2 PI	10-13 AQ	17-19 SG
<b>2004</b>	6-27 CN	0-6 PI	11-15 AQ	19-22 SG
<b>2005</b>	20 CN-11 LE	3-10 PI	13-17 AQ	21-24 SG
<b>2006</b>	4 LE- 25 LE	7-14 PI	15-19 AQ	24-26 SG
<b>2007</b>	18 LE-8 VI	11-18 PI	18-22 AQ	26-28 SG
<b>2008</b>	1-20 VI	15-22 PI	20-24 AQ	28 SG-0 CP
<b>2009</b>	15 VI-3 LI	19-26 PI	23-26 AQ	0-3 CP
<b>2010</b>	27 VI-14 LI	23 PI-0 AR	24-28 AQ	2-5 CP
<b>2011</b>	10-25 LI	26 PI-4 AR	26 AQ-0 PI	4-7 CP
<b>2012</b>	23 LI-6 SC	0-8 AR	28 AQ-3 PI	6-9 CP
<b>2013</b>	5-17 SC	4-12 AR	1-5 PI	9-11 CP
<b>2014</b>	16 SC-0 SG	8-15 AR	3-7 PI	11-13 CP
<b>2015</b>	28 SC-11 SG	12-20 AR	5-9 PI	12-15 CP
<b>2016</b>	9-21 SG	16-24 AR	7-12 PI	14-16 CP
<b>2017</b>	21 SG-1 CP	20-28 AR	9-14 PI	16-19 CP
<b>2018</b>	1-11 CP	24 AR-2 TA	11-16 PI	18-21 CP
<b>2019</b>	11-21 CP	28 AR-6 TA	14-18 PI	20-23 CP
<b>2020</b>	21 CP-1 AQ	2 TA -10 TA	16-20 PI	22-24 CP

Creating a *degree list* of birth chart placements is a quick and simple way to spot past, present, and future transits. Sort the planets plus the Ascendant and Midheaven by degree number, rather than by sign. By matching that list to find current transiting placements to the degrees of natal features, you can quickly pinpoint upcoming transits as well as relevant past intervals. For instance, if transiting Pluto is at 18°, consult the degree list for all natal planets within 3° of 18°, plus or minus, as those planets will be affected during the transit.

**Next, look at earlier transits by that planet to see how the person has dealt with its energies in the past.** Knowing their degree of ease or difficulty in managing its plusses and minuses can help you assess how they'll handle the upcoming transit.

Ask what was happening during recent aspects by that planet and find out whether they've grown in using it constructively, or whether they've shown poor judgment. Greater clarity about recent developments would help you guide them through any upcoming challenges

### An Inventory of Ways the Slower-Moving Planets Are Expressed

Below, you'll find a worksheet I developed for analyzing how a person uses the slower-moving natal and transiting planets: Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Done regularly, this tool can be a great boost for learning to use those planets well so people can make the most of the gifts and potentials they represent. The self-awareness they gain can also help them avoid the unwise behavior patterns they could correspond to.

Feel free to copy and paste them into a file and share it with clients, students, and fellow astrologers, so long as you include my copyright.

**Consider both the positive and the difficult traits listed for each planet.**

Keep track of the ones that apply by highlighting or circling them. For a clearer visual clue to strengths and vulnerabilities, use colors of your own choosing to indicate whether they apply *seldom*, *sometimes*, *often*, or *never*. (The category "*Depends who you ask*" covers situations where you need certain qualities in order to fulfill your life plan but others, unfortunately, object to the behavior. Strenuously! )

**Note: Self-Inventories for all the planets can be found in *The Stellium Handbook*.** Also helpful are the Planetary Tests that measure the relative strength of all the planets in the chart, which you can find on my blog, [Sky Writer](#) under the Planetary Tests tab. The higher the score, the more impact a planet is likely to have, both in the natal chart and during transits.



**Natal Planets: Highlight Colors: Often Sometimes Seldom Never Depends Who You Ask**

<p><b>Saturn's roles:</b> planner, supervisor, parent, troubleshooter, organizer, manager, authority.  <b>Possible Constructive traits:</b> hard working, disciplined, patient, ambitious, businesslike, serious, realistic, foresightful, prudent, structured, reliable, responsible, painstaking, high standards. <b>Possible Difficult Traits:</b> perfectionistic, pessimistic, negative, fearful, depressed, inhibited, rigid, cold, unimaginative, demanding, authoritarian, conservative, stingy.</p>
<p><b>Uranus's roles:</b> inventor, scientist, tech support, trendsetter, maverick, activist, adolescent.  <b>Possible Constructive traits:</b> avant-garde, futuristic, state-of-the-art, leading edge, genius, quirky, humanitarian, thinking out-of-the-box, idealistic, innovative, brilliant, detached, free.  <b>Possible Difficult Traits:</b> willfulness, knee-jerk rebel, saboteur, agitator, maverick, provocative, eccentric, cold, contrary, elitist, erratic, undependable, explosive, stubborn.</p>
<p><b>Neptune's roles:</b> spiritual seeker, dreamer, visionary, poet, artist, dedicated helper, martyr.  <b>Possible Constructive traits:</b> creative, compassionate, intuitive, imaginative, empathetic, idealistic, spiritual seeker, willing to serve, forgiving, accepting, devoted, meditative, non-materialistic. <b>Possible Difficult Traits:</b> hazy, lives in fantasy or denial, easily fooled, codependent, unstable, chaotic, unrealistic, impractical, addiction-prone, deceitful, doormat.</p>
<p><b>Pluto's roles:</b> psychologist, healer, occultist, magician, renovator, analyst, hospice worker, genealogist, banker, financier, medium, magician, shaman, seer, researcher, detective.  <b>Possible Constructive traits:</b> deep, perceptive, psychologically astute, insightful, empathic, transformative, persevering, resilient. <b>Possible Difficult Traits:</b> suspicious, mistrustful, loner, resentful, vengeful, unforgiving, possessive, obsessive, compulsive, spiteful, enmeshed in power struggles, manipulative.</p>

### Risk Assessment: Is the Client Heading for Trouble?

[Wikipedia](#) notes, “*Risk assessment* is the determination of the amount of risk related to a concrete situation and a recognized threat or hazard—including the magnitude of the potential loss and the probability that the loss will occur. “

In potentially dangerous situations, risk assessment is routine with corporations, industries, governments, and armies. Criminal justice personnel use it when making decisions about potentially harmful individuals. Therapists are trained to evaluate suicide threats from deeply depressed clients. (See [Why Astrologers Cannot and Should Not Predict Violence or Suicide](#).)

**Shouldn't we astrologers do our own version of risk assessment in determining how concerned to be about extremely difficult transits,** especially ones that impact the more troublesome features our clients' natal chart? As described above, knowledge of their past performance during similar transits to the affected areas of life would provide valuable clues.

Again, I'm not recommending a negative approach, but rather a realistic and balanced one. With the mountain climber, we've already seen an extreme example of the necessity of looking closer at potential hazards. He was literally risking life and limb. Even if he was rigorous about strength

training, had the finest equipment and plenty of experience in using it, and had networked with those who had already climbed that peak to find the best ways to get there, the hazards are huge. Denali has killed more than 120 climbers, and there are factors that he cannot control. There could be an avalanche, a crevice hidden by drifts, or a terrible storm that arises suddenly.

Confronted with a situation like this, I would have advised him to delay the climb until the chart aspects were better—Denali isn't going anywhere. Then I'd look for better transits from Saturn or from Pluto in Capricorn, because they're both associated with mountains. A trine to the Ascendant, Midheaven, or Mars could work, but check all the transits going on then too.

Let's look at another example of a high risk factor. Suppose that a client has a Mars–Uranus conjunction in the 1<sup>st</sup> natally, near the Ascendant, and that transiting Uranus and Pluto are about to set it off. The terminally positive astrologer might miss the point entirely and phrase the interpretation in terms of “transformations that bring about an exhilarating new freedom of expression.” To me, this transit to the first house conjunction on the Ascendant could mark a period when the risk of serious injury is high.

**What factors signal danger? It's usually a combination of chart features, not just one. The wise astrological elders who taught my generation stressed that nothing would happen under a transit that wasn't promised in two or more ways in the natal chart.**

**When a transiting planet repeats a natal aspect in some form, it heralds particularly important eras and events. In this instance, transiting Uranus setting off a natal Mars–Uranus conjunction can have life-changing implications.**

A person with Mars on the Ascendant can be seen by others as provocative or even aggressive. People with natal Mars–Uranus conjunctions often have a volatile temper and are prone to taking dangerous risks. Wouldn't you be derelict in your duty if you didn't explain the potential consequences of a window like this?

You'd first need to explore whether that client has a pattern of taking dangerous physical risks or attracting dangerous people—and a history of unwanted consequences—in those situations. Let's say they were heavily into extreme sports or prone to fistfights. Discussing why they take those risks could increase their understanding of their own responsibility for the consequences.

**During the session, it would be important to find out what happened previously when a transiting planet aspected the natal planet in question.** That information is crucial when unwise past patterns might be triggered by the transits. Increasing the client's self-awareness is the point of tracking related past intervals and events. With self-defeating patterns clarified, the client can work toward using current and future transits more constructively.

**If the client has done some self-destructive things under past transits to that same combination but has now learned to use these transits for growth, that's more hopeful.** Acknowledge their efforts, but explain that there's another interval coming when, under heavy pressure, it could be very tempting to go back to the old pattern. Tell them that they'd be wise to exercise prudent judgment and to pay attention if an inner voice tells them that danger is near.

## What Can You Do for Desperate Clients?

**Those who come to us in a desperate state need hope for the future.** With severely depressed or anxious people, I tend not to do long-range forecasts. The client can find it terribly discouraging to hear that the same astrological conditions accounting for this current emotional black hole are going to repeat themselves several times over the next two to three years. Instead, look for trines and sextiles natively and by transit, as they show where help can come from.

Also, look at various houses of the chart for clues to support for the client the way of personal or social agency resources. Support is essential because the astrologer, working alone, does not have the resources, the training—or the legal standing—to handle people in crisis.

Flower essences, also known as flower remedies, are an inexpensive and gentle boost to insight and growth. They're an excellent addition to an astrology practice. If you're not familiar with them, download the introductory chapter from my essence book at [flower essence information-ch1](#) and read the instructions for how to use them. (Find ways of matching astrological factors with essences here: [A Treasure Trove of Articles about Combining Flower Essences and Astrology](#).) *It should be understood that flower remedies alone cannot cure serious emotional difficulties, but they can be a source of comfort and strength while clients find the professional help they need.*

Two Bach flower remedies that may be relevant in a crisis are Sweet Chestnut, which can alleviate the condition that is called The Dark Night of the Soul, , and Cherry Plum, for those who fear they will lose control and harm themselves or others. You could also recommend Rescue Remedy to such clients. (See: [Hope for Those in the Dark Night of the Soul](#).)

### A Key to Balanced Forecasts: A Best Case/Worst Case Approach

I doubt that many of you who are reading this would make forecasts like the worst examples given above. However, during the session, **clients can pick up on your unspoken fears about their transits through your voice, facial expressions, or body language.** They can become worried about what you're *not* saying.

This is why it's essential that you conquer your own fears about the transiting planet and become fluent in explaining both the constructive and the self-defeating ways each planet can be expressed. The self-inventory sheet for the slower-moving planets seen earlier can help.

Neither extreme—unrelentingly negative or terminally positive—is good practice, for both are destructive in their own way. The important thing is how the news is delivered. An ethical way to do this is to present an evenhanded interpretation. The potentially difficult expressions should be explained but countered by positive ways the same planetary energies could manifest, if the person works to upgrade their expression.

**When making predictions, I take a best case/worst case approach. I describe the possible outcomes of a transit while also exploring whether the person is currently using the aspect**

**in a self-sabotaging way.** *That* is astrological counseling. Presenting an outcome as fated—whether unrealistically positive or devastatingly negative—is fortune telling.

I then recommend resources or healing approaches they could use to shift the outcome to a more positive one. **Astrologers need to know about resources or healing tools that clients can turn to.** If you were the person with the natal Mars–Uranus conjunction under siege by transiting Uranus, wouldn't you welcome suggestions for how to bring out the positive potential of a difficult natal Mars like that one? Here are some actions the client could take that could catalyze change in the ways they use that aspect:

- Read everything they can get their hands on about their Mars sign and aspects.
- Analyze what their triggers for anger are, and work on them.
- Consider martial arts/self-defense classes; they can be empowering.
- Take self-assertiveness training or read books about it.
- Take leadership training classes or workshops.
- Look into flower essences like Vervain, Holly, Centaury, and Cherry Plum.

### But Nothing Happened! Why Big Transits Can Sometimes Be a Bust

A longtime reader wrote to ask a question that had been bothering her for quite a while. She said that despite predictions of big changes in her life, major transits had often produced little or no effect in the way of happenings. I understood what she was saying about big transits and nothing happening. I have observed such things with myself and others, too--clients and friends or loved ones.

**When I examined their lives more closely, it became clearer that the long outer planet transit correlated with internal changes that moved them.** Eventually and only gradually, under internal and/or external pressure, did they take action to change their approach to life and to significant others. It's often something like a realization that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

**These inner shifts come first in most of the slow transits. Only then does something take place that the world can see.** For instance, the gradual development of health issues can be one of those internal processes, especially if slow-moving transiting aspects to the Ascendant or planets in the health houses (6<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, or 1<sup>st</sup>) are involved. How astrology is an asset is that knowing about potential health risks in advance can prompt people to change their lifestyle and take better care of themselves.

**As an aside, why do I include the 1<sup>st</sup> house as a health house, you may wonder.** The 1<sup>st</sup> can represent your physical vehicle and conditions or limitations you were born with that are a part of your appearance. Transits to the 1<sup>st</sup>, and especially to the Ascendant can represent the outer manifestations of conditions that were slowly developing while the transiting planet was moving through the 12<sup>th</sup>. (And, yes, the Sun is part of your physical makeup as well, but this is not an article on medical astrology, nor am I a medical astrologer.)

## How the Internal Process Affects External Developments

Years ago, I taught astrology classes as a volunteer in an alcohol treatment center. Neptune was traveling through Scorpio then (yes, that long ago!) and one of my students was a Scorpio, with several planets in that sign. I predicted many things happening for him during those transits. To my embarrassment, NOTHING, but NOTHING happened, at least on the outside.

Eventually, I realized that most of the change was happening for him on the inside. After drinking himself into devastation and intermittent homelessness for many years, he was sober and totally committed to his recovery and to service to other alcoholics. Enough was enough, and the Phoenix had risen!

We need to learn to examine the internal process during big transits by Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, or Pluto, because that's the underlying impetus for external events. A shift in your feelings toward others and toward conditions in your life, even if you're not talking to them about that shift, can catalyze changes.

**Astrologers: Keep this principle in mind when you make predictions to clients, to avoid their disappointment if nothing happens like you predicted. Examine the inner process thoroughly first.**

## How We Can Make the Session an Empowering Experience

**When a client is stressed out and facing tough transits, I save predictions about transiting Jupiter until the end of the session.** We engage in a dialogue about using those good aspects to the hilt in the year to come. We explore the house where it has taken up temporary residence and some ways the associated areas of life might benefit from improvement or expansion. Then we brainstorm about realistic projects designed to capitalize on the transit. An upbeat ending helps clients gain a more hopeful perspective on the future.

**Words of encouragement and faith in the person go a very long way.** I've always held close to my heart something that my teacher, Richard Idemon, said when he read my chart in my early days in astrology. I'd struggled with my weight and felt hopeless about it, and he told me, "With Pluto in the 1<sup>st</sup>, you have the power to totally transform your physical body." Talk about a life-affirming statement!

Another instance where astrology helped me believe in myself and realize my potential was in the way astrologers and their students responded to my stellium of four planets in Gemini. I was told, over and over, "You've GOT to write!"

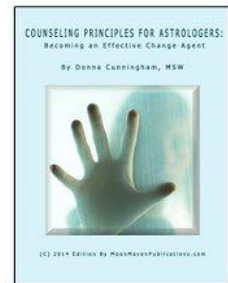
At first, I disregarded what they were saying, because I was a lousy poet, knew it, and had been barely tolerated in New York's poetry circles. Eventually, the excitement about my stellium convinced me to try writing about astrology, then my very first efforts led to publication, and the rest is history. Without that enthusiastic encouragement, I might never have believed in my writing ability—and you might never have been reading this.

**Related articles on my blog, Skywriter:**

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*Note: This chapter is from the 2015 edition of Donna Cunningham's ebook **Counseling Principles for Astrologers**. Donna is a long-time contributor to *The Mountain Astrologer* and *Dell Horoscope*, and the author of numerous astrology books, including *Stellium Handbook* and the recently released essay collection, *New Insights into the Astrology Chart*. To see her newest work or order the books, visit her popular blog at [Skywriter.wordpress.com](http://Skywriter.wordpress.com).*





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