A WAY OF BEING
WITH CHILDREN

Effective Transitions
Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience

Children and Transitions

Transitions are simply changes -- from one activity to another, from one place to another, from one level of energy to another, from daytime activities to nighttime sleep, etc. We all make these changes constantly throughout the day, and they tend to come very naturally. For children, transitions can be very challenging. The truth is that making transitions takes a lot of brain function and skills -- skills a child may not yet have developed. There are ways to make transitions easier, however. This, in turn, can make life easier for teachers and families.

Why are Transitions Difficult for Children?

Transitions require the mastery of various skills:

- Flexible thinking
- Coping skills
- Language and communication skills
- Self-regulation

Children may be at a place developmentally where they have not yet achieved mastery of these skills. They need help from adults.

Additional considerations:

- Children live in the moment
- They may be tired, hungry, or confused
- Children don't like fun activities to end
- Transitions may cause anxiety in some children

Questions to Ask Yourself to Ensure Appropriate Transitions

- What is the developmental stage of the child or children?
- What is the temperament of the children?
- How many transitions are appropriate for this age group?
- Is the time allowed for transitions appropriate?
- What is the nature of the activities that follow each other?
- Are the directions given age appropriate?
- What is your attitude as the teacher/parent/caregiver during the transitions?
- Does the environment support transition?

Helping Children With Transitions

- Give clear and age-appropriate directions
- Teach children the expectations for transitions
- Be supportive, attentive, and nurturing
- Provide visuals
- Provide a preview
- Establish routines
- Be prepared for the unexpected
- Limit transitions
- Plan ahead
- Be realistic
- Give a time warning
- Be balanced
- Create rituals
- Encourage success

Remember to prepare for the fact that some children will need more assistance than others.

In the Classroom

- Make a list of predictable and unpredictable transitions
- Re-evaluate and determine if any changes in the flow of the schedule are needed
- Be aware of emotional transitions

Age-Appropriate Transitions

Infants & Toddlers

- Fewer transitions are recommended
- Preparing and guidance are especially important
- Children with limited self-regulation and communication skills may experience more challenges
- Physical closeness and nurturing are very important

Pre-Schoolers

- Informing children about the transition ahead of time helps promote feelings of safety and increased self-control
- Incorporate more songs and movement activities
- Plan slowing down activities

What Do Children Learn as They Master Transitions?

Strategies and calming techniques used during transitions teach children a variety of lessons:

- Helping to prevent negative behaviors by promoting self-regulation
- Developing an understanding of the sense of time
- Assisting children to develop social-emotional skills
- Empowering children to maintain self-control

Get more resources at: www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing

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