



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

Supporting Children Through Transitions

Picture yourself thoroughly engrossed working on a project that you are really enjoying, when someone, with no warning, interrupts you and pulls you away from it before you are able to finish. What feelings do you have...frustration, anxiety, confusion? This scenario happens multiple times throughout the day for young children when they experience transitions. Changing or moving from one activity to another is what we will refer to in this newsletter as transitions.

You play an important role in supporting the children you care for through the transitions that happen all day, every day. Some transitions are small, like a diaper change or moving from lunchtime to nap time. Other transitions are big, such as your child being with you all day long -- to now being cared for by a grandma or a neighbor while you go to work. Regardless of the size of the transition, your child needs you and the people who care for him to support him through it.

According to Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, there are three keys to successful transitions:

- ♥ Caring relationships
- ♥ Consistent routines
- ♥ Flexibility that meets the needs of each child

This newsletter will discuss ways to support your child's ability to have successful transitions at each age level — infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and present activity ideas for each age group.



This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Transitions are important opportunities for caregivers to support an infant's sense of wellbeing and belonging. According to Dr. Dan Siegel, when infants experience successful transitions, they feel safe, seen, soothed and, as a result, they feel secure in their environment. For infants, transitions are primarily care routines like diapering, goodbyes, sleeping and feeding times.

Here are some ways to support infants:

- ♥ Consistent rituals give infants a sense of security, as they learn what is going to happen based on the ritual. For example, saying "It looks like your diaper is wet or soiled. I am going to pick you up so we can go and change your diaper." If you say this to him every time you need to change his diaper, he will know and understand what is about to happen.
- ♥ Being flexible with your daily routines, to better meet the individual needs of your infant. For



example, your child may need more time to transition from home to a relative's care. Instead of rushing off, develop a goodbye ritual (e.g., One hug, two kisses, and a tickle). By doing this, you are developing predictability and offering your child a sense of control and order.

Activity for Infants: : *Let's Brush*

What You Need:

A small, soft child-size toothbrush

What to Do:

1. Before your infant's first tooth comes out, wipe his gums with a soft cloth after he eats. Talk about what you're doing and why. For example, "We're cleaning your gums to keep your mouth clean and your body healthy."
2. When his first baby teeth start to come out through his gums, gently brush his teeth with a soft-bristled, child-sized toothbrush after breakfast and before bedtime to prevent tooth cavities. You can say "We're cleaning your tooth and gums to keep your mouth clean and your body healthy."
3. As he gets older, help him hold the toothbrush and guide him through the motions of brushing his teeth. You can say "You are cleaning your teeth to keep your mouth clean and your body healthy."
4. When he is brushing his teeth, brush your teeth too, so he can watch and copy you. You can say "We are cleaning our teeth to keep our mouths clean and our bodies healthy."



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

"Toddlers live in the moment, don't have a real concept of time yet and are only just beginning to understand that separations don't last forever," says Gail Reichlin, Executive Director of the Parents Network in Chicago. They also don't have the language skills to verbally communicate their needs or wants, so oftentimes they resort to tantrums or tears. It takes a lot of energy to switch from one activity to another. Transitions, especially unexpected, can literally be stressful for the toddler brain.

During transitions toddlers need to have cognitive flexibility, working memory and the ability to regulate their emotions. They need to shift focus and attention, first to your instructions, then to the new activity. For many toddlers, they need constant reminders, practice, and a lot of support to help them.

Here are a few ways to support your toddler:

- ♥ Validate feelings - When he expresses frustration about having to stop what he is doing, acknowledge that frustration, for example, "I can see that you were really



enjoying playing with the playdough and you are frustrated because you don't want to stop to eat lunch."

- ♥ Plan ahead - Let him know what the plan is ahead of time. Try not to rush into a transition without explaining to him what is going to happen step-by-step. For example, give a 5-minute warning that you will be cleaning up soon, and after that it is time to wash hands for lunch. This process may take time, but it gives him a sense of security to feel that he is part of the process.

Activity for Toddlers: *Clean Up Time Song*

What You Need:
None

What to Do:

1. Introduce a song to make clean up time fun. Sing this song to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

*Clean up, clean up little star,
Stop and clean up where you are,
Time to put the toys away,
We'll get them out another day, (or later today)
Clean up, clean up, little star,
Stop and clean up where you are!*

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Preschoolers

As preschoolers become more independent, and are able to sustain play longer, they may have more difficulty during times of transition. According to Dr. David Anderson, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, "one of the reasons why transitions may be hard is that we're often transitioning from a preferred activity – something we like doing – to something that we need to do."

Transitions are necessary and unavoidable for every preschooler. Here are some things you can do to minimize transitions and keep children engaged:

- ♥ Use "First..., then..." statements to tell your child what is expected of him and help him learn to patiently wait for a preferred activity. An example of this might be: "First you need to put the books on the shelf, and then we can go outside to play."
- ♥ Use a signal or a cue to let your child know that a transition is coming. You can use a bell and ring it once to let him know he has a few more minutes to play until it is clean-up time. When it is time to begin the transition, you can ring



the bell twice. Let him know in advance what the bell ringing indicates. If you know that your child might have a hard time with transitions, let him know ahead of time that the bell will be ringing soon.

Activity for Preschoolers: *Make it a Game!*

What You Need:

A timer or music

What to Do:

During clean up time or another challenging transition, bring in a little excitement by asking your child to do the task in a new way, for example:

- He can pretend that he is an elephant and pick up toys with his "trunk!"
- When moving from one area to another, incorporate movement! Hop on one foot, walk like a crab, or tiptoe.
- Set a timer and challenge him to clean up before the timer goes off, or play a song and let the end of the song be the target for finishing the transition task. Sometimes adding a time challenge is just the motivation children need to initiate the transition



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn to use his body with intention
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening, and understanding skills



- ♥ Develop his thinking and problem-solving skills

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Pumpkin Pie Smoothie

Adapted from <https://keepingitrelle.com/pumpkin-pie-smoothie/>

Ingredients:

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| ½ cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk | 1 banana, frozen |
| 2 Dried Fancy Medjool Dates | ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice |
| ½ cup vanilla Greek yogurt or plain Greek yogurt | ½ teaspoon vanilla extract |
| ½ cup pumpkin puree | 1 cup ice cubes |

Directions:

1. Add almond milk and dates to a blender. Blend until the dates have been finely diced. By blending the dates with liquid first, it helps break the dried fruit down a little better.
2. Add the remainder of the ingredients and blend until smooth.
3. Pour into a cup. Optionally top with whipped cream, a dash of cinnamon, and ENJOY!



Resources

Moving Through Transitions

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/activities/moving-through-transitions/>

This short article will give you more ideas for helping children move through some of the transitions that you go through every day.

3 Tips for Transition Times with Young Children

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqu9xdtX4_M

In this short video featuring Gryphon House Books author Rae Pica, she discusses 3 additional ways to make transitions fun. She asks questions to make us think about what we are asking children to do and if it is appropriate for the age of the child.



Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Clean-Up Time by Elizabeth Verdick

This book proves that clean-up time can be fun. Toddlers will want you to read this book again and again as they learn the song and join the fun of clean-up time.

Bye-Bye Time by Elizabeth Verdick

Goodbyes are hard for all ages, especially older infants and toddlers. This book will help ease the transition to other caregivers and reinforce that goodbyes are not forever.

Preschoolers

Waiting Is Not Easy by Mo Willems

Did you ever have to wait and didn't like it? That's how Gerald feels waiting for Piggie's special surprise. Gerald waits all day, with Piggie by his side, and finds that the surprise was worth the wait.

My No No No Day by Rebecca Patterson

Bella is having a bad day -- everything is going wrong and all she can do is shout! So many transitions are hard some days. But bad days don't last forever, especially when there's someone special there to hug you and love you anyway.



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