



Tips for Tots



Tip #2: Support Children with Transitions

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Infants and toddlers gain much of their sense of security from familiar adults, items, and routines. They are especially sensitive to change – even the smallest changes can cause stress. Throughout their childcare day, children this age experience multiple changes: drop-off and pick-up, diapering, transitioning between activities, caregivers changing shifts, etc. While many changes are unavoidable, it is important to consider the impact they may have on very young children and to plan ways that will help them learn to cope.

Preschool:

Though preschoolers are slightly more adaptable to changes in schedule and routine, most children benefit from knowing what to expect. A full day of preschool demands that children adjust to many transitions. It is important to remember that **reducing** the number of transitions as well as **informing** children of the upcoming change helps them feel safe and in control. When children feel safe, they learn better and are more able to control their behavior.

Infant/Toddler:

- Try to plan your day with as few transitions as possible. Limiting the number of transitions reduces stress and allows for more free play and exploration. Individualize transitions as possible, based on the specific needs of the children in your care.
- Prepare and guide children through a transition by telling them what is about to happen and explaining what is happening as it is occurring. This includes diapering, feeding, napping, and with any changes in caregivers.
- Infants and toddlers are learning to soothe themselves. Allow access to blankets, stuffed animals from home, family photos or pacifiers during transition times to help them learn this important skill.
- Because toddlers do not understand the reason for changing activities, they often become resistant. The best approach is to give one direction at a time, expect them to only pick up one or two items at clean-up, and use encouragement, redirection and modeling to teach them the skills you would like them to learn.
- Provide extra physical closeness, hugs and holding to help comfort children during times of change.

Preschool:

- To create a “Hello” and a “Good-bye” ritual, use a phrase, rhyme or song to greet each child at drop off and again at the end of the day. This may help parents with such transitions too.
- Create a large picture schedule with each of the day’s activities and post it on the wall at **children’s** eye level. For children who have difficulty transitioning, remind them to go to the schedule and tell you what is next.
- Prepare children before every transition by telling them what activity will be next. Then give a 5 minute reminder and then 2 minute reminder before making the actual transition.
- Use visuals, movement activities and songs to signal transitions. Ex. Lights off; hands in the air; sing a clean-up song; pretend to be mice walking in line; use guessing games to help children wait, etc.
- Plan slowing down activities to help children shift from active to quiet activities. Use a slow song with movement, lowering the volume, dimming the lights, and sharing expectations for the quiet activity.

Resources:

Transition Magician 2, by Mary Henthorne, Nola Larson, & Ruth Chvojicek, (2000).
 Routines and Transitions A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals by Nicole Malenfant(2006)
 Momma Always Comes Home, by Karma Wilson
 The Kissing Hand, by Audrey Penn

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