

RAISING YOUR SPIRITED CHILD

Lesson #6 Adaptability to Change

Introduction

Introduce Topic	A transition is a change from one place, action, mood, topic or thing to another. It can be as simple as changing from pajamas to everyday clothes or as significant as moving from one house to another. Spirited children adapt slowly to most transitions. A change or surprise triggers a stress reaction.
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Identifying Transitions

Activity List responses on a flip chart. Turn to pages 198 & 199 of your workbook for more examples.	You can help your children adapt more easily if you can identify the most common transitions they face each day. Some of the big transitions include getting out of bed, getting dressed and coming to meals. Let's list some other transitions that can trigger your child. Possible answers: diaper changes, putting on a coat, a new blanket, washing hands, getting out of the bath tub, getting in a car seat, being woken from a nap, getting dropped off or picked up at day care, new teacher, going to the doctor/dentist, daylight savings time, field trips, changing clothes for a different season.
Discuss	In addition, we need to teach our children to identify the transitions that trigger them and give them the words they need to express their feelings about them. If they can express their displeasure or discomfort with words, they are less likely to misbehave. "I think you're upset because you were surprised." "You like to know what to expect." "Take your time. I can wait for an answer."

Strategies For Effective Transitions

Discuss Ask for personal examples for each option.	If the transition is <u>expected</u> , you can: 1. Choose to avoid it (i.e. pack a lunch rather than stop at fast food restaurant) OR 2. Work through it (getting child ready for day care)
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If the transition is unexpected, you must first **bring down the intensity** (calm them down). Then, you can decide to:

1. Avoid it. (“I didn’t realize the Mickey Mouse spoon was so important to you. Lets wash it.”)
2. Work through it. (“It looks like they are out of chocolate chip ice cream. I know how much you were looking forward to it, but lets think about what other flavors you might enjoy.”)
3. Just do it. (Take child to emergency room for illness.)
 - Try to slow down and plan soothing activities for the rest of the day.

Effective transitions include four steps:

1. Forewarning
 - Allow your child enough time to prepare for the upcoming transition (how much time depends on the child; some children become overly anxious if you tell them too far in advance)
 - Use kid-friendly terms or examples (i.e. We need to go to the grocery store after you add five more blocks to your tower.) Small children can’t tell time, which makes changes in routines especially difficult. They don’t understand 7:00 or five more minutes, but you can make time more understandable by telling them one more time down the slide or after your bath.
 - Leave some room for negotiation (i.e. Do you want to clean your room before you watch your movie or after?)
 - One forewarning is usually not enough.
 - Might need to allow them a “transitional” object. (i.e. let them bring a toy with them)
2. Adjusting
 - In order to help your child adjust you need to:
 - ✓ Read cues (Is he deeply engrossed in a project? Is she focused and unaware of other things around her?)
 - ✓ Acknowledge feelings (I can see you’re having fun with the new puppy. It’s going to be hard to leave him here while we go to Grandma’s house.)
 - ✓ Acknowledging feelings doesn’t mean your child won’t be upset, it simply helps to reduce the intensity of their emotions.
 - ✓ Solve the problem together. Let them have input.
3. Refocusing
 - Help your child refocus to the next activity by including something he enjoys (“It’s time to go. Do you want to drive past the lot with all those big tractors?”)
 - Use your imagination to help young children refocus.
 - Refocusing is not bribery – bribery involves a power play.
 - Refocusing assumes cooperation – working together and simply talking about what comes next.

<p>Ask for other times the “What if...” activity might be helpful.</p>	<p>4. Help Them Move Through It (Allow time for closure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expect slow-to-adapt child to need your help moving through transitions. ▪ If you recognize slow-to-adapt child is struggling and needs help, you won’t feel as frustrated. ▪ Transition will go more smoothly and quickly. ▪ Slow-to-adapt child will learn to manage transitions on her own (will just take longer). <p>Help them with disappointment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disappointment is actually a transition. ▪ Use “What if...” activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ “What if you don’t get a bike for Christmas?” ✓ “What if they don’t have ice cream at the restaurant?” ✓ “What if Grandpa can’t take you to the park?” ▪ Teaches them to be good problem solvers.
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Scenario

<p>Activity</p> <p>Read the following scenario and ask group for responses on how to forewarn, adjust, refocus and help move through.</p>	<p>You are the parent of a very persistent, slow-to-adapt six year old. He has just started to build a barn out of Lincoln Logs. He loves to build with his Lincoln Logs, but you need to leave for church.</p> <p>Possible responses:</p> <p>“We have to leave in half an hour; when the big hand is on the six and the little hand is on the nine. You might not have time to finish building your barn, so think about where to stop in case you have to quit.” (forewarning)</p> <p>“We’re leaving in five minutes. You have time to add five more logs.” (forewarning)</p> <p>“One more minute, or two more logs.” (forewarning)</p> <p>“It’s hard to stop when you’re in the middle of a project. When we come back you can finish the roof.” (adjusting)</p> <p>“Do you think we’ll see Grandpa and Grandma in church?” (refocusing)</p> <p>“Where should we put your barn so somebody doesn’t step on it? I can help you move it right now.” (helping move through)</p>
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Establish Routines

Discuss	<p>Routines provide a sense of control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ When they feel in control they can transition more quickly.▪ Surprises really upset them.▪ Routine reduces their anxiety and allows them to use their energy for other things.▪ Rushing will always trigger children who are slow-to-adapt, so allow enough time.▪ Keep routines simple.▪ Slow-to-adapt kids are often hard to get out of bed in the morning, so it is tempting to let them sleep. Remember, rushing causes their intensity to rise and pushes them over the edge.
Summarize	<p>As kids get older you can expect them to take more responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ You might say, “Tomorrow is your fieldtrip to the science museum. What do you need to do to get ready?”▪ Eventually they will be able to prepare themselves for the transitions and cope better with any surprises.▪ Appreciate their flexibility and celebrate their successes.