

Tips for Making Transitions Smoother

Tip – Give your child advance warning about upcoming transitions in the day.

Troubles with transitions – switching from one activity or place to another – are common in the toddler and preschool set. Parent educators Helen Neville and Diane Clark Johnson, authors of *Temperament Tools: Working with Your Child's Inborn Traits*, point out that certain temperaments are particularly susceptible to transition difficulties. Any child who is slow-to-adapt or low in the approach trait will likely have trouble with transitions.

The adaptable child is happy to switch activities, eager to go new places, and has no trouble changing plans. The slow-to-adapt child has great trouble changing gears, doesn't like to stop one thing and go to another activity, and reacts badly to a change in plans. Tantrums during transitions are common. Similarly, a child who is low in the approach trait will be very hesitant about new situations or new activities—this can also lead to transition problems.

Tools – Neville and Johnson say to simply expect all kinds of transitions to be troublesome with a child who is slow-to-adapt—from waking up in the morning to wearing a new shirt. They recommend a few tools as particularly helpful.

Make good use of routines. When you have a routine in place, your child knows what to expect. Get up in the morning—eat breakfast—brush teeth—get dressed. If he knows what's coming next, it doesn't feel so difficult. Talk about your routines and plans for the day. "After breakfast, we'll get in the car and go to the park. After lunch

- **Use a kitchen timer to announce changes.** Set the timer for five minutes or so before it will be time to leave for the park, for errands, whatever you need to do next. Tell your child, "When the timer goes off, it will be time to get your shoes on and get in the car." Your advance warning and the timer will help your child transition to the next activity.
- **Allow extra time for transitions.** Adults get frustrated when certain normal activities, like getting everyone into the car, take a long time. When you have a child who is slow-to-adapt, everything takes longer – especially if she begins to have a tantrum. Make things easier on yourself by scheduling extra time to get from one activity to another. Start ten minutes earlier than you think you need. It may do wonders for your frame of mind not to be late all the time.



The good news is that most children, whether slow-to-adapt or not, find transitions easier as they grow older. Your patience, use of routines and advance warnings in the early years will help them acquire these life skills.

You'll find more practical tips you can use right now in *Temperament Tools: Working with Your Child's Inborn Traits* by Helen F. Neville, B.S., R.N. and Diane Clark Johnson, CFLE.