

## Parent Information: Transitions

Transitions are changes that take place in your child's life that move them from one stage to another.

Some of the universal transitions that children experience:

- Birth itself
- Coming home from hospital
- From milk to solids
- From crawling to walking
- Parents going back to work
- Starting nursery
- Starting school
- Developing new skills
- Key Stage One to Key Stage Two

All of these transitions present your child with challenges that they can be supported, with either by yourself or by their caregiver in school/nursery.

A child's early experience of transitions will have a big effect on how the child handles transitions later on in life.

For example ...

*Bobby is taking his first steps, he stumbles and knocks off a glass which smashes on the floor. His mother shouts at him. "You stupid boy look at the mess you have made. Bad boy."*

*Bobby starts to cry and for the next few days does not seem to want to try and walk again.*

If Bobby continues to get this negative response to his attempts to make the transition from crawling to walking, then his development could become delayed. His confidence could also be damaged and he could be unwilling to attempt later transitions.

### Building up Your Child's Resilience

In order to support your child to have the confidence and skills necessary to successfully move through transitions you can help them to build up their resilience.

Your child will be more resilient to stressful life events if they have a secure attachment relationship with you.

Resilience develops in children who experience:

- Exposure to some demanding situations but do not have their abilities over stretched.
- Strong social support networks
- At least one unconditionally supportive parent or caregiver
- Positive experiences at school
- A belief that their efforts make a difference
- The chance to participate in activities outside school and the home
- The opportunity to make a difference by helping others

### Suggestions to settle your child into a new Environment

- 1) Help your child to choose a transitional object to take with them to nursery/child minder. This is anything that reminds the child of home/parents/things that are familiar to the child. It can be a picture of mum, a favorite toy, a reminder of a holiday or a day spent together with the family.
- 2) Calm your child's fears. Lots of anxiety about going to an unfamiliar environment like school or nursery might seem silly to an adult. A child may fear that mummy might disappear and not come back when they are at school/nursery. Explain to your child that it is normal to miss someone that you love. Explain to the child that they will have fun at school and that the school can contact mummy. Always end the conversation with "you know I will come back".
- 3) Use a goodbye routine. You could read your child a quick story and then pass her over to her caregiver for the day. Use a reassuring phrase that will become familiar to the child eg "I love you and you love me, you are going to have a great day and I will be back at three o'clock to pick you up". Stick to the routine every day and resist the urge to extend it or cut it short. It will help your child to know exactly what to expect.
- 4) Support your child to understand what is happening. Talk through the day's routine with your child and emphasize that you will be coming back. Try not to focus on the separation but on all the things that they will be doing during the day.
- 5) Do not be tempted to sneak away. This will make your child's separation anxiety worse in the long term. If your child becomes distressed, try to remain calm as this will reassure them that everything is fine. Go through your goodbye routine as normal, and leave. Wave to your child from outside and try to resist the urge to run back to give comfort. It may take a couple of weeks for your child to start waving back to you, but you should always wave and hide your own distress and signal that things are fine by remaining 'matter of fact'.

- 6) Discuss in advance with the care giver what specific things she can do to comfort your child. Is there a particular song or game that will distract him?
- 7) Do not be late picking your child up. If your child is expecting you to be there and you are not it will make things harder in the future. Your child may develop the feeling that you do not always follow through on your promises.
- 8) Help your child learn that people return. Playing games like Peek-a-Boo, or hiding a loved object; "Is teddy under the bed? No, he isn't under the bed. Is teddy on the chair? Yes, there is teddy!", or playing hide and seek and hiding in an easy place for your child to find you.
- 9) Make time to take part in activities with your child that can support them through transitions or separation. For example, making a '*Lots of People Love me Book*' with your child. Put together a small child sized photo album with pictures of the people who are important in your child's life. You and your child can read through the book together and take it into nursery so it can be used to comfort your child when s/he is missing you.