



MANAGING TRANSITIONS: A GUIDE TO HANDLING CHANGE

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Every family, at some point, must relinquish total control and manage the transition of their precious ones from the home to an educational environment. Whether you face this for the first time when your baby is very young or whether it is when your child is old enough to beg not to be left, we all experience the same extreme tugs on the heart strings and have numerous doubts and fears. However, these transitions, if managed sensitively, can be positive experiences for all involved.

Home to Day Care

The transition from home to day care can be a daunting and emotional experience, especially as the child may be quite young and it is often the first major transition of their life. Every child is an individual and the emotions they may display when separating can range from tantrums and tears one day to smiling and waving goodbye another. Some of

the most crucial factors to successfully settling your child into day care are:

- Allow them to take a comforting object with them.
- Allow some time to stay and settle them in.
- When it's your time to go, smile, wave goodbye and leave.

Home to Kindergarten

For some families, the first transition is from home to kindergarten. At this point the child is usually clearly able to express their feelings about what they think about this transition. You can almost see their minds ticking over as they try to make sense of this new environment. They need to find a way to adapt, develop a sense of belonging as well as deal with new routines all without

help from their parents. Children are not alone in their struggles during this period. Parents and carers too may experience anxieties. Some tips to help this transition run as smoothly as possible are:

- Children can pick up on your feelings, so be positive and encouraging.
- Establish good communication with the early childhood educators.
- Hug and reassure your child that you will be back to pick them up.
- Help your child to say goodbye.

Kindergarten is designed to develop children's communication, problem solving and thinking skills and to familiarise them with the routines and rhythms of school life. Research from the Child and Family Community Australia (CAFCA) Resource Sheet (November 2011) indicates that children benefit from attendance at early childhood education and that it is important for a successful transition to school.

Starting School

Even for children who have been to kindergarten, starting school can be stressful as the buildings are bigger, there are more rules and new routines, and they are the smallest in the playground. Some children will see this change to school positively and approach with excitement whilst others may be feeling nervous and overwhelmed.

According to the CAFCA Resource Sheet (November 2011), how we manage this transition is very important as research indicates that a successful start to school is associated with future school success and academic achievement, more stable peer relationships, better behavioral and emotional outcomes and better school attendance and/or completion.

We asked Cairns' Trinity Anglican School (TAS) for their advice regarding the transition from kindergarten to preparatory so we could share it with you. They recommended that parents work in partnership with their school to make this challenging time easier on both parent and child. We all lead busy lives, but even with limited time, TAS suggests doing the below things to assist your child:

- Visit your local library and read with your child every day.
- Allow your child to independently pack his or her bag, care for belongings and manage personal hygiene.
- Encourage your child to independently follow a simple set of instructions at home and in a familiar environment, such as the supermarket.
- Encourage your child to play outside and encourage imaginative play.
- Provide opportunities for your child to problem solve throughout the day and always encourage them to work things out for themselves.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for your child to play with other children.

- Allow your child to fail and reassure them that this is part of the learning process.
- Continue to develop a strong relationship with your child so that they start school with a sense of security and trust.
- Reflect on family and community connections using photos, videos and books to develop a strong sense of identity.
- Encourage your child to complete tasks that require a sustained level of concentration.

TAS communicated, "Most parents are in tune with their child's needs, but always remember that activities that help your child to develop self-confidence, persistence and resilience will make the first day of school much smoother for them and for you!"

Primary School to High School

The transitions don't end with starting school, there is still the important transition from primary school to high school. Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns says "This can be an overwhelming time for children and parents alike, and often children will have mixed feelings about starting high school." They suggest the following as ways in which you can help your child adjust and settle in quickly, and give them the necessary support to succeed during this next stage of schooling:

- First and foremost, it is important to build your child's confidence, as settling in is all about self-esteem.
- Listen to their fears. Your child is possibly nervous about making new friends, wearing a new uniform, handling an increased workload or even being bullied. By talking about it, these fears can be alleviated.
- Think about any changes that might need to be made at home so they have the time, space, and resources for homework or study.
- Remind them never be afraid to ask for help, or talk to someone they trust.
- Encourage your child to be organised. Help them to get in the habit of packing their bag the night before, going to bed at a sensible time, and setting an alarm to allow enough time for a healthy morning routine.
- Encourage them to join lunchtime or after-school activities, as this will help in meeting new people. Be encouraging if they want to invite friends home, or join in with outside school hours activities.
- Lastly, encourage them to enjoy it! The transition between primary and secondary school is an exciting time and making new friends and learning new things should be enjoyable!

With all of this in mind it is paramount that we prioritise these transitions. As parents, we are professional "jugglers" of our resources and time but our emotions are one of the hardest things to balance. When we are transitioning our children, the mask we must don is a brave, happy and confident one, no matter what we are feeling on the inside. We can do it! Let's give them the best possible start in life.