MAKING TRANSITIONS EASIER

A Quick Guide for Educators and Families

Transitions can be difficult for young children, especially when they're asked to stop something they enjoy or move into something unfamiliar. Preparation, connection, and flexibility can make a big difference.

BEFORE THE TRANSITION

- **Give a heads-up.** Use simple words, pictures, or familiar cues to explain what's next.
- **Connect first.** Get close, use a calm voice, and make sure the child understands.
- **Allow enough time.** Avoid rushing and unnecessary waiting whenever possible.

DURING THE TRANSITION

- **Acknowledge feelings.** It's okay for children to be upset when something ends.
- **Offer simple choices.** Give children some control within appropriate limits.
- **Make it manageable.** Use playful invitations, small helping jobs, or support when needed.

TRY THIS INSTEAD

Instead of saying...	Try saying...
"Hurry up! We're late!"	"It's time to go. I'll help you get ready."
"Stop crying. It's not a big deal."	"You wanted more time. It's hard to stop."
"If you don't clean up, you won't get to play later."	"Let's put the blocks away together."
"I already told you three times!"	"It's time to wash hands. I'll walk with you."

LOOK FOR THE WHY

When transitions are consistently difficult, ask yourself:

- Are children being rushed or expected to wait too long?
- Are there too many transitions throughout the day?
- Does the child know what will happen next?
- Is the child tired, overwhelmed, or deeply engaged in play?
- Could the routine or environment be adjusted?

Sometimes the most helpful strategy is changing the transition, not expecting the child to change.

A LITTLE REMINDER

A child who struggles with transitions isn't necessarily being defiant.
Young children are still developing the skills to manage changes, emotions, and expectations. Our role is to guide them with patience, connection, and developmentally appropriate support.