



Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

Active Times – Quiet Times: Making Transitions Easier

Professional Development Code K2C1
Child Development Associate CDA 5

Active Times – Quiet Times: Making Transitions Easier

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Making Transitions Easier
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Assignments & Required Forms

Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
 - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
 - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will not return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.

5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Penn State Better Kid Care
Distance Education Program
341 North Science Park Road, Suite 208
State College, PA 16803

Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
 - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Keystone STARS professional development
 - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
 - Act 48 hours for certified educators
 - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Please be aware that some contact information may have changed.
- Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>

Active Times, Quiet Times: Making Transitions Easier

Transitions are times of day when children are moving from one activity to another: coming to child care, moving from playtime to snack time, finishing lunch and moving to rest time. These times can be difficult for children, causing tears and misbehavior. When you understand why children sometimes have trouble with transitions, you can better support them.

Young children don't understand ideas about time—yesterday, today, tomorrow, hours, and minutes—in the same way that adults do. Give children a clear and predictable routine to help them feel secure and begin to understand time. While they might not understand “We will be going outside in an hour,” they can understand “We will be going outside after snack time.” Set up a good daily routine that includes snack and meal times, free play, outdoor play, and rest. You can include other activities, such as circle time, when you have a group of children who are ready for such activities.

While you want to have a balance of activities, try to keep things simple to keep transitions to a minimum.

Have you ever felt annoyed by having to stop an activity you're really enjoying or interested in? Children are the same way. They don't want to stop playing when they are hav-

ing fun. You can help them by telling them five minutes ahead of time that they will need to finish up. While children might not understand the concept of five minutes, they will come to know that it means you are moving to the next activity. You might need to ask, “How are you going to finish up your play?” and talk with the children about ways they can finish up. Many children will want to finish when they know what the next activity will be.

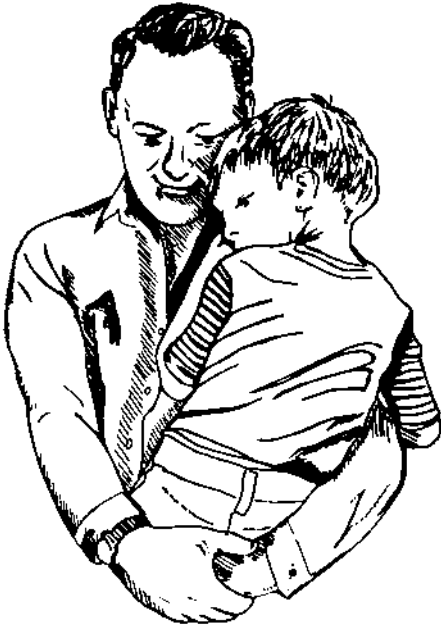
Transitions are times when children miss home, especially at meal and snack times. It is natural that children would think of home during these times. These strong feelings can come out in misbehaviors. Talking about family members during these

times can help children feel better. Talk about what mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, and brothers and sisters are doing during this time of day.

You may not want to talk about family because you don't want the children to be sad, but not talking about strong feelings doesn't make them go away. Sometimes just labeling the feelings—“You're missing your dad”—can help children cope. When children are just beginning to adjust to child care, or are facing troubled times at home, they may not want to talk about family members. You will need to judge carefully based on each child's needs. On the whole, children benefit from talking about these strong feelings with the support of a caring adult.



Smoothing Transitions during the Day



Getting off to a Good Start

Being dropped off at child care is the first transition of the day, and it can be a tough one for young children. As children are adjusting to child care, they might cry and cling to their parent. This difficulty separating from the parent is a natural and normal part of child development.

Encourage parents to say goodbye and not to sneak away. Some adults think it's best to wait until the child is involved in play, then sneak away without saying goodbye. But this can backfire, making the child more clingy the next time rather than helping her become better adjusted.

Encourage the parent and child to make up a good-bye ritual that they always do before the parent leaves, like three kisses or a special bear hug. You can start a ritual yourself with the child. Take the child over to the window to watch mommy leave, then tap and wave. Reassure the

child that mommy will come back. Ask for photos of family members and post them where the child can see them. It is good to have a soothing sensory activity available at this time of day, like play dough, sand, or water play. These are relaxing and calming activities.

Sometimes a child who has been coming to your child care program for quite some time will begin clinging to a parent when it is time for the parent to leave. Although surprising, this is normal. The child might be entering a new developmental stage. For example, at eighteen months, children can have new difficulties with separating from a parent or guardian.

Sometimes it can be a reaction to changes at home or in child care. You can help by offering a regular routine good-bye and reassurances that the parent will return. Talk with the parent. Together you may be able to figure out some of the reasons for the changes.



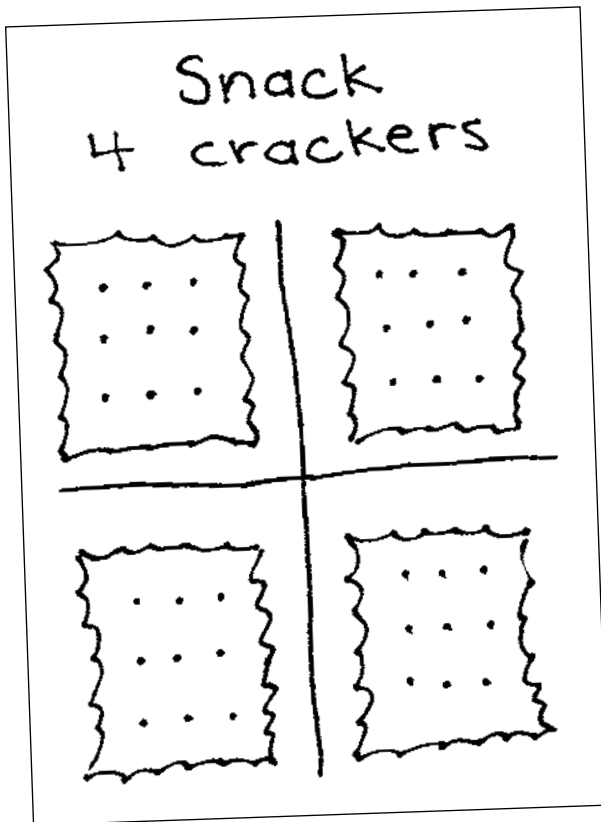
Keep a flexible daily routine

Try to keep to your daily routine. Tell the children about any changes you know about before they occur. For example, moving furniture may seem harmless, and there may be good reasons for moving it. But children often find a change like this stressful. So let the children know what changes you will be making, and try not to make them the same time as other changes.

Sticking to a routine does not mean that you need to time things tightly by the clock. A successful routine allows time flexibility. Giving children ten more minutes on the playground on a day when they are full of energy will make the entire day work better. Use your best judgment about how to best meet the needs of the children.

Give children at least thirty minutes to an hour for free play every day. Children need time to get satisfying play going, and time to conclude it.

Ample time for free play can make transitions easier because short play times are frustrating.



Snack Times

Some child care programs have introduced a self-serve snack table for the children that is open during part of free play time. Children make their own snack according to a picture recipe: For example, ants on a log (count six raisins, spread peanut butter onto a stick of celery, place raisins on the peanut butter). This means there won't be a transition to and from snack time, and it gives children a great opportunity for more independence. Children may choose to go for a snack if they are hungry. While it wouldn't be successful with all groups, this approach can work well.

Clean-Up

Clean-up time is one of the most difficult times of day. Using surprise can make clean-up fun. Ernie Dettore was able to prevent a power struggle by inventing "the human crane" one

day. A child said, "No, I don't want to clean up." Thinking quickly, Ernie suggested the human crane. The child found cleaning up was much more fun when he pretended he was a crane, and several other children were eager to try. This led to the idea of using a chair as a bulldozer to push the blocks towards the block shelf to help with clean-up. These fun approaches worked, keeping the children involved in the work. While Ernie doesn't use these approaches often, he uses them to create fresh interest in cleaning up.

Meal Times

Meals work best if children have some calming activity before sitting down at the table. Some child care practitioners read a story before meal time, and this can work well as long as it is kept short. Sit down with the children at meal time—it will keep them focused on the meal.

Naps or Resting Time

Most child care programs go to rest time right after a meal. Use an after-meal clean-up routine that doesn't encourage too much socializing. Use soft music and lighting to help signal that rest time is coming, and make the transition as calm as possible. Keep your voice low, and move slowly. This will help the children get settled. It helps if you can truly darken the room. Use a night-light or very low lighting to help the children relax. Use your voice and body language to set a restful tone.

The end of the day

The end of the day is a hard time for everyone. Children find it hard to wait for parents and are disappointed when someone comes to pick up another child. It can be a struggle to select good activities for this time of day because children are more tired. Children need engaging activities, but not activities so engaging that it is frustrating to leave them. Outdoor play can work when there is good weather.

Indoor sensory activities like play dough, sand, and water work well once the group is familiar with the rules of keeping the material on or in the table. Try different sensory materials for variety, like potting soil, cups, and plastic flowers. These activities are relaxing for tired children.

Review the day with the children. Ask them to tell you what happened during the day. Write the day's events down on a small white board or chalk board to share with the parents. This lets parents know what to ask their child about later and helps assure parents that good things are happening to their child while they are apart. Whenever possible, take the time to share a story with the parent about what their child did that day. These stories help keep your relationship good with parents and can help parents to better understand their child.



Transition tips

1. Use mood magic. Change the lights, and use calming or energizing music to set the tone that you want. Lighting and music signal to the children that a change is coming. Keep the chaotic noise level down by using soft music. Some children find loud noises stressful.

2. Keep a regular routine. Tell children about changes ahead of time whenever possible. Develop a routine that avoids unnecessary transitions. Remind children of what is coming next in the routine.

3. Follow the Boy Scout motto: Be prepared. Take time to get ready before the children arrive. This can prevent misbehavior during a transition.

4. Let children save an activity if at all possible. Sometimes you can leave up a block building that the child has created. Sometimes they would like to show it to a family member, or they might want to play with it some more. If the toy must be put away, suggest the child finish up his play by drawing a picture of it. Save the picture to help the child to remember, and possibly recreate it at a later time.

5. Use surprise to avoid power struggles with children. Keep a few ideas at the ready so you can step in with an exciting new way of cleaning up. Have paper bags on hand: "Let's be clean-up kangaroo, and put the toys in our pouches and hop them over to put them away." Or use a puppet to invite children back inside after outdoor play.



6. Deal honestly with children's feelings during transitions: "It's frustrating to have to stop." "It seems like there are too many blocks to put away." "You don't want to put away the fire station you built." Sometimes labeling the feeling for children helps prevent problem behavior. Give some of the control back to the child: "What could you do to finish up this fun play?" "Can we write down your idea to help you remember so you can play it again?" "Can you draw a picture of your fire station so you can make it tomorrow?"

7. Don't insist on lining children up when moving from place to place—they can waddle like ducks or tip-toe like quiet mice.

8. Allow children to do things independently when possible, such as making their own snacks. This reduces the number of transitions and frees you to be more available to the children.

9. One of the best transition tools is a puppet. Children love to do what puppets ask them to do. This is one

of the best ways to prevent a power struggle. Use a puppet to offer clean-up choices: "Do you want to clean up the blocks or the table toys?" Children respond well to having some choices even when neither choice is much fun. Puppets can take a time that isn't fun and turn it into something that children really enjoy.

10. If you are looking for transition ideas, look no further than your own bookshelves. Ernie Dettore used the book *Mouse Paint* (1989, by Ellen Stoll Walsh Harcourt and Brace; New York) as inspiration for a transition. After he had read the book to the children, he was planning an activity in the art center. To help the group move smoothly to this area he said to the children, "Pretend to paint yourself white like the mice in the story." Once the children had finished painting themselves, Ernie suggested that they go to the art center: "Let's see how Ashley tiptoes past the cat. See how quiet she is. Be careful, Ashley—don't step on the cat's tail."

11. Be flexible. Maybe the coats of the children who need help zipping can be zipped outside to make it possible for the entire group to go outside more quickly and easily.



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



Tough Times of Day

This issue of Parents Count is devoted to tips on how to get through the tough times of the day. Does it drive you crazy getting everybody moving in the morning? Is dinner time stressing you out? What about bedtime? These times can be difficult for most families. Try out our time-tested hints for turning those tough times into terrific times.

Morning Madness

Did you ever get yourself and your kids ready in the morning, then just as you're about to go out the door, you discover that your four-year-old has taken off her shoes, and you can't find them? One minute things were running smoothly, and you were actually ahead of schedule, then you find yourself feeling behind again. Getting ready in the morning can be really tough. It can make you and your children irritable to start the day already behind.

How can you make this tough time of day work for you? The secret to a great start to the day begins the day before. Take some time to get things ready for the next day.

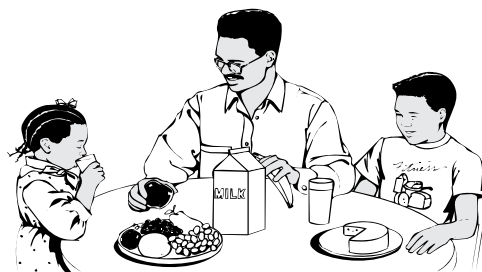
Lunches for the next day can be made while cleaning up the dinner dishes. This is a great learning opportunity for your child. Ask your child



to choose foods from some nutritious choices. A food pyramid poster is a great thing to have handy. Teach children to select foods from the different food groups. Having your child make her own lunch reduces work for you, but more important, your children become more independent when they learn how to make their own lunches. The bonus of your child doing the work is that your child learns about good meal planning as well.

You can make sandwiches that stay fresh longer by including the ingredients separately. Your child can finish putting the sandwich together right before he eats it. Store the lunch box in the refrigerator overnight if necessary, to keep foods fresh and safe.

Organize children's clothes into outfits: top and pants kept together. Include a sweatshirt or sweater for the colder months. Teach your children to put their clothes away as outfits. Even matching socks can be included. Then you won't be running around looking for a piece of clothing that is missing. Organizers that hang in the closet with shelves labeled with the day of the week are available, but any set of shelves can help you organize children's clothes in this way. As children get older, they can



help you put away clean clothes and with a little help from you, can match their own outfits.

The best secret for making the morning successful is an early bedtime. Young children need about ten hours of sleep a night. This is important for healthy growth and development. Children who get the right amount of sleep do better in school. They cooperate better in the morning and control themselves better when they are not tired.

Make some morning rituals that are fun. Sing while you are getting ready. Make up a special kiss to say goodbye when you drop your child off at child care. A little fun in the morning will send everyone off with a smile.

It is normal for children to sometimes cling when you take them to child care, even if they have been going to the same place for a long time. You can make this easier for your child by making up your own special way to say good-bye. It doesn't help to sneak out while your child is playing. In fact, it tends to make things worse—children cling more the next time. Remind your child that you will be back to get her. A note with stickers on it in your child's lunch box can make her feel loved while you are apart.

Dinnertime Doldrums

No one is at their best when they are hungry and tired. This time of day can be especially hard for young children who don't understand how to tell time well enough to know when food will be ready. Even though it is tempting to just feed each person when they are hungry, it is best to feed children during a family dinnertime. Children need to learn how to eat and behave at the table. Also, dinnertime can be an important part of the day for talking and listening as a family.

Having meal times does mean that children must wait until a meal is ready to eat. One way to help the waiting is to first make fresh vegetables or fruit that can serve as a healthy snack while you're making the rest of the meal. This reduces whining, and also you'll find that when they're hungry, kids will eat nutritious foods that they might otherwise refuse.

The best way out of the dinnertime doldrums is to make a work schedule with jobs for everyone. This makes dinner preparation quicker, and also gives children a chance to learn important jobs like setting the table and filling water cups. These help everyone share the

work, instead of just one family member taking all the responsibility. It is a good idea to rotate the jobs to keep children more involved. This adds a little variety, and the children learn how to do all the jobs. Take the time to sit down with your child, talk with her, and listen to her every day. Dinnertime nurtures more than children's nutritional needs—it can nurture their hearts.

Bedtime Blues

Are you crying the bedtime blues? Are your children having trouble going to sleep at night? Make bedtime work by setting up a relaxing bedtime routine. Television can excite and frighten children, so if you want a calm time it is best to not include TV as a regular part of your bedtime routine. Bath, story, and bed is a time-tested routine that works for most children.

A warm bath at about the same time every night helps children calm down. The next step is putting pajamas on and

brushing teeth. Do this before story time so that children are all set for bed if they fall asleep during the story reading. Story time can be one of the best parts of the day, and a great time for some cuddling. The secret to solving the bedtime blues is to stick to the routine. Children are more relaxed when they can count on the same things happening every day. Everyone falls asleep more quickly if they go to sleep at the same time every day.

Let your routine do the work for you all day long. In the morning it can help you get everyone ready for a good day. At dinnertime it can bring your family together. At bedtime it gets everyone relaxed and ready for a restful night and another great day.



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This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director • Lyn Horning, Assistant Director of Programs

Discussion Questions

1. Why are transitions often hard for young children?
2. What are the most difficult times of day for the children in your care or at home?
3. What transition ideas have worked well for you?
4. What can you do to make drop-off more successful?
5. What can you do to make cleanup time successful?
6. What can you do to make nap time in child care or at home successful?
7. What can you do to make the end of the day successful?
8. Why is consistency the key to successful transition?
9. Sometimes waiting is unavoidable. What can you do to make waiting times go more smoothly?
10. What is the most valuable thing you have learned from this video?



Assignments

Name
Address
City/State/ZIP
County
Phone Number

BKC OFFICE USE ONLY

1. What is the most difficult transition of the day for the children in your care? Tell us about it.

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Try something new at that time of day. What did you try? Describe what happened.

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2. Try making a transition that is related to a book you are reading. Just as Ernie Dettore used *Mouse Paint* as a great starting point for developing a transition idea, you can, too.

Name of Book

Transition Idea

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3. Ernie Dettore stressed the importance of using a consistent signal, such as a song or a bell, to signal that it is time for the next activity. What consistent signals can you use in your child care program?

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Assignments

Name

4. Cleanup is often a problem. Try an idea from the video or one of your own and describe what happened.

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5. Describe a transition activity for children using a puppet or stuffed animal.

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6. What do you think children can learn during a well-planned transition?

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Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I provide child care in my own home
- I provide child care in someone else's home
- I work in a child care center
- I'm thinking about becoming a child care professional
- Other, please describe

2. How long have you been a child care professional? _____

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- Birth to 12 months
- 13-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9 years and over
- Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you
and for being part of our program!**



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