

Transition Rituals – Goodbye and Hello

Transitions can be challenging for all children. They are particularly difficult for children who have been exposed to trauma or have insecure attachment. When you choose a ritual with your child, and repeat it every time they experience the transition it creates consistency. The consistency helps them know what to expect, helps them feel safer and makes the transition easier. Over time it grows the part of the brain that helps your child with self-regulation, stress reduction, and the development of causal (if/then) thinking. Most importantly it will gradually grow their belief that someone cares...that they really matter to you. The belief that they really matter to another person makes them more resilient for the rest of their life.

On the back is a list of possible transition rituals for when your child has to leave your family and when they are returning home. Involve your child in deciding which ritual they would like to use. It is helpful to have a separate ritual for leaving the family and one for returning back to the family. It can be the same idea, like a chant or clap, but with different words.

The message when kids are leaving is: "I love you. Have fun. I will be thinking about you and look forward to being with you again."

The message when returning is: "I'm so glad you're back. I love you and missed you. You are a part of our family."

Choose one and try it for a month. Consistency is important. Doing the ritual every time your child leaves and returns (repetition) is what will help create security and build new brain connections.

Transition Rituals

- Care bag – Morning – snack and stuffed animal (that is important to child)
Afternoon – new snack *set up for surprise
- A note or drawing from you
- Shirt parent slept in (something that smells like you)
- Picture (of your family with the child or something special in the house)
- Family Drawing
- Looking forward to plan for when you get home
- Family Handshake
- Music – special or favorite song to sing or listen to
- Snack (ritual) same thing/place eat together share
- Clapping – rhythmic chant
- Finger Play
- Snuggle Time
- Lotion – mutual hand massage
 - Gentle touch
- “Goodbye/Hello Elbow” Touch and say hello or goodbye to different body parts
- Row, Row, Row Your Boat with motion
- Ring a Round the Rosie...circular movement
- Slow Dancing
- Stone or small object (w/kiss or I love you message)
- Positive Nursery Rhymes
 - “You’ve been gone and you’ve been missed. Here’s an angel for a hello kiss.”
(Use a stuffed toy to give kiss)
 - “A wonderful woman lived in a shoe. She had so many children she knew exactly what to do. She held them, she rocked them, and tucked them in bed. I love you, I love you is what she said.”
 - “Twinkle, twinkle, little star; what a wonderful child you are! With bright eyes and round cheeks, talented person from head to feet. Twinkle, twinkle little star what a wonderful child you are!”