**SMOOTH TRANSITONS**

How to hold boundaries while transitioning from a one activity to the next.

**Background information:**

Providing choice activities for children is important for their sense of control and autonomy, but sometimes you need to direct them to an activity that is not a choice, such as sleep time, or going to school.

Here are some general reminders and a step-by-step guide for holding the boundary while transitioning from one activity to the next.

**General Reminders:**

* When you are needing your child to transition be prepared for resistance by having a script and a plan prepared including; validating feelings and holding the boundary.
* Provide your child at least 5 minutes for transition, especially from a choice activity to non-choice. Your sense of time and your child’s is different, so they often need support for understanding time.
* Start the transition process sooner than later so you can stay calm and are not feeling rushed or pressured if/when big emotions happen.
* Be prepared for your child to resist for example, saying “no” (with their body language or words) and have a prompt/validating statement ready.
* Remain calm throughout the transition process, remember it is hard for young brains to manage big feelings and they need their trusted adults to help them learn how to regulate emotions.

**Step-by-Step guide for smooth transitions:**

1. Countdown timer
* Verbally : “There is 5 minutes left to play”
* Physically: use a timer, watch, or timer app
1. Engage and connect (use proximity) with their activity “Oh wow, I haven’t seen this game before. It looks like fun.”
2. After a couple minutes, remind them about the timer, and add next steps.

“We have 2 minutes left to play, and then we are getting ready to go to school.” If there is avoidant behaviour (not answering you, not making eye contact, hiding, or returning to play), stay calm and try not to ask questions such as, “did you hear me?” Avoid getting involved in negotiations “Dad, can I have just 5 more minutes.” Rather, stay with your boundaries by validating and then repeating your request calmly: “You are having a lot of fun, and you don’t want to go.” Repeat your request: “There is 2 minutes left to play.”

1. Validate feelings (Even if you don’t agree with them) \*remember, no *“buts*” ie: “You want to keep playing, ***but*** you have to go to bed.” Rather, use “***because”***

“You don’t want to go to bed ***because*** you are having fun doing \_\_\_\_”

1. Wait for a response (wait at least 1 minute or 5 deep breaths). If no response, then repeat another validation with a different “because” “You don’t want to go to school because school can sometimes feel uncomfortable and hard.” Provide a follow-up statement if needed: “I know school can be tough sometimes. I also know that you have done difficult things before and you can do this too.”
2. Hold the boundary. Provide your child with the option of your support during the transition. “We are now going to get ready by putting on our shoes together. Would you like to put your shoes on by yourself, or do you want my help.”
3. Use direct language “It’s now time to turn off the Ipad.”
4. Stay with them (max. 2 minutes) if there is a big emotion during the transition (Angry outburst, sadness etc) by validating their emotion. “I know it’s hard to stop playing fun games and it can make us feel \_\_\_\_ (sad, angry, frustrated).” If you stay with them for too long, it can turn into another avoidant technique. For example, if they are crying, stay with them for a minute or so, provide validating statements, give them a hug, and hold the boundary. “I know you are sad, it can be hard to leave fun activities. Would you like a hug before we go?”
5. Avoid bribes or consequences such as “You can have extra screen time after school if you leave now.” Or, “If you don’t leave now, you don’t get any screen time afterschool.”
6. Here you can use physical techniques to indicate the transition is still happening, such as, walking to the door, opening the door, starting to walk out of the space. You can add elements of fun in the transition, create a fun transition game (Can you balance this stuffy on your head while we walk out?)
7. Praise and acknowledgement of the transition. “Good job putting down your Ipad and getting in the car. I know that was hard.”