

Routines and Transitions in Early Childhood and Care Services

Within the Early Childhood Education and Care setting routines and transitions are an integral component to the delivery of quality child care. Routines and transitions are patterns of behaviour that once learned are incorporated automatically into the daily life.

Routines enable young children to anticipate what happens next and gives them a great deal of control over what they do during each part of the day.

Transitions can be classified as a passage, a change from one place, a state, an act or a change in one set of circumstances to another.

Routines and transitions work together to give children a sense of knowing, adds to the predictability and can be used as valuable learning opportunities for children to explore and experiment in a safe and secure environment. Routines and transitions help children to develop self control, independence and decision making. Consistent daily routines support active learning.

All human beings like some sense of predictability and routines help create this. As adults we all have specific routines which we follow to assist in getting on with our day to day lives.

Routines and transitions can be used effectively to meet individual children's needs and challenges. Appropriate routines and transitions welcome children, connect the daily activities and help keep children focussed.

Because a major part of the child care day for young children is spent in routines and transitions, these times need to be planned to optimise valuable learning opportunities. Learning opportunities can occur through experience during nappy changing, morning tea as well as making the most of routine times for one on one or small group experiences.

Routines and transitions throughout the day can include but are not limited to:

Arrival time, self selected activities, meal breaks, rest time, packing away and farewell.

Children's times are valuable and they need purposeful experiences during routines and transitions as well as in planned activities.

Strategies to Consider for Routines and Transitions

Each service will have its own philosophies and practices which include aiming to meet the individual needs of the child and their family. It is important to work closely with the parents in supporting the services implementation of routines and transitions. The following strategies are just some examples which may be applied to support sound consistent routines and transitions. This list is only the start and it is dependant on a variety of factors such as environment, length of time children are in care, children's interest, likes, dislikes and skills already achieved.

Involve children in the transition/routine rather than directing them.

- Establish a routine for each transition; stick with it as doing so will reduce conflict.
- Consider each routine and transition in terms of what children are learning.
- Actively engaging children in routines/transition eliminate wasted time and increases learning opportunities.
- Warn children before transitions occur.
- Use songs, sensory cues, for warning e.g. getting ready to go to the bath room before lunch.
- Consistency in routines and transitions support appropriate behaviour and a sense of independence for the children.
- Avoid moving children in large groups through routines and transitions.
- Think about the number of transition times your service utilises.
- It is important to consider what staff want to happen at these transition/routine times.
- Explore the real nature of routines and transition within the program.
- Do staff want children to develop independence and have control over their own behaviour or continued adult domination?
- During transition times, be aware of the waiting times as this can be stressful for both child and adult and create inappropriate behaviour.
- Rather than seeing the routines and transitions as a means to get to "learning experiences" utilise these times for learning.
- Routines and transitions provide ample opportunities for social development including turn taking, empathy and respect for others.

Examples of Routine and Transitions Experiences

The following examples are just a few thoughts to reflect on how your routines and transitions occur. This list is only a start and each service will have a myriad of ideas to add to the list.

Routines

Arrival time: Consistent greeting, using sensory cues such as step by step pictures.

Acknowledge each child as they enter acknowledging that they have arrived and letting other children know that the child is here and that you are happy to see them. (*Social skills*)

Morning Tea: Involve the children to assist in preparing for morning tea, setting the table, getting the cups ready. (*Social and Language development*)

Bathroom: Allowing children to go to the bathroom to prepare for morning tea/ lunch can be done in pairs, colours, names beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. (*Social, turn taking, language and daily hygiene practices*)

Packing up: Establish a process that makes packing up enjoyable. Have containers ready for easy packing, utilise language interaction to talk about what goes where, sizes, shapes. Ensure that the packing away is not too big to make the task a chore. (*Social, helping skills, maths, language*)

End of the day: Provide small individual experiences for each child to prepare to go home. Remember to include individual farewell to each child including looking forward to seeing them the next time. (*Winding down, relaxation, memory*)

Transitions

The following examples are some ideas to use during the transitions times and are available in a number of resources referenced below.

Move your body Cube (Used to assist children to move from one activity to another)

Follow the light (used to gather children to go inside)

Pass the bean bag (Used for children to go to the next activity or bathroom)

Excuse me Photo cube (used to excuse children at the end of the day)

Bubbles on the Go (to gather children together)

Place mat sit upons (used to assist children into group time)

References:

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