

Transitioning your child to a new childcare program

Due to any number of reasons, you may have to move your child to a new care setting. How do you make this transition work for your child? Some children will transition easily, while others will be more timid and even fearful. The most important thing you can do during this process is to convey to your child that you are happy and comfortable with the new setting and that you know they will be okay and have a good time. If they think you are worried, they will worry too.

No matter what the circumstance behind moving your child, it is important that your child know that it is not because they did something wrong. Share with your child why you have chosen this new environment by talking positively about it. Explain to them that you need them in a different setting because it's closer to home, nearer work, there's more to do, it's bigger, it's smaller - anything that puts a positive light on the change. Talk about making new friends, playing with new toys and having new activities. Talk about the new teacher and the new setting so that they know what to expect.

To help ease this transition for your child, set a start date with the new child care environment that overlaps the ending date of your current child care environment if possible. This will allow your child to spend a day or two in both settings during their last two weeks in the current environment. This strategy can help ease your child's transition to the new child care environment by allowing them the opportunity to begin developing new bonds while easing out of the bonds they had made with their previous caregiver. It is also advisable to have a shortened first day, just to make sure that your child is comfortable with being left in the new environment. Scheduling drop in visits with the previous caregiver can also help ease the transition for your child. This lets them know that they can still have contact with that person if they want to. Your child benefits from developing strong bonds with their caregivers from a very early age. This process is a healthy, natural and necessary learning experience for your child.

Learning to develop new bonds without having overwhelming feelings of loss, anxiety or animosity will help your child to develop good bonds and long lasting relationships with the many people they will encounter throughout their lives.

Ask your new caregiver if it would be OK for your child to bring a favorite toy, teddy bear, or blanket to help ease the transition. Being aware of the loss your child may have concerning the bonds that they had developed with their previous caregiver can be the key to your child accepting the new environment and starting the process of developing new bonds with their new provider.

If your child has had a couple of weeks to adjust but is still having trouble settling in and letting go in the morning, try letting him or her know exactly what is going to happen when you drop them off. Before entering the building, tell them that you are going to hang up their coat, drop them off with their teacher, give them one last hug and kiss and then go to work. Reassure them that they are going to have a great day and that you will be back to get them later in the day. The most important aspect of this plan is to actually follow through by leaving. In most situations like this, the child stops crying before you get to your car. They may cling to you and make the good-bye as long as possible, this is the time to follow through with a good-bye routine that is comfortable for both you and your child.

In short, by following these guidelines your child should have a successful transition and quickly adjust to the new child care environment!

Information for this article was provided by Early Learning New Hampshire. The organization is committed to ensure that all New Hampshire children have the opportunity to reach their full potential by expanding access to affordable quality child care and early education, supporting the child care industry; building public-private partnerships; and helping families balance work and family. www.earlylearningnh.org