

TRANSITION

Sounds of transition: You are probably familiar with the sound of a whistle at a ball game, the sound of wedding bells, the alarm clock in the morning. All of these sounds and more represent transitions: time out, marriage, wake up. Adults tend to think of transitions as well defined events. Transitions might be thought of as positive or negative: graduation, job change, illness, death. Sometimes parents are oblivious to how certain transitions affect their children, transitions like divorce, the birth of a sibling. Children often feel scared, sad, angry, when their world around them changes, when they don't understand why or what's going to happen to them. Explanations to children often fall short of helping them with their feelings. However, paying attention to changes in a child's behavior, listening for questions, and talking about feelings can be reassuring. In addition to being faced with changes in family, and the world outside of themselves, children are faced with their own developmental changes, changes that they all go through as a part of growing up from infancy to adulthood. These developmental changes are sometimes not thought of by parents with the same significance and meaning as they are felt by the children themselves. Developmental changes or stages include infancy, toddlerhood, early preschool, kindergarten, latency, adolescence, and adulthood. Developmental transitions include, giving up the bottle or the breast, walking without falling, diapers to toilet, using words, dressing oneself, starting school, separating from mom or other caregiver. Aside from these developmental stages and transitions, there are everyday changes in a child's life that could be overlooked by even the most attentive, the most conscientious parent: change in parental work schedule, new babysitter, bedtime schedule. You can probably think of many other changes, big and small, that you and your children face. Empathy, feeling with yourself and your child in the face of changes is most important, along with preparation vs surprise, along with certainty vs inconsistency, and talk of feelings vs silence. How would you feel if you were your daughter or your son, in any given transition, either externally or developmentally based? Think back to when you were growing up, going through some changes, such as learning to tie your shoelaces, riding your bike without help, starting school, or external changes such as the divorce of your parents, the birth of your brother or sister. There are many more. External factors interface inevitably with where a child is at developmentally at any point in time. How much a child understands is dependent upon their developmental stage and how their environment influences them at the time. Feelings might include, fear, sadness, anger, guilt. Perceptions might include: will mommy and daddy love me, did I do something wrong, will mommy leave me and not come back? In the instance of success during transitions, children are likely to show how happy they are, how good they feel about success and pleasing mommy and daddy, how good it feels to make friends, follow rules. Overall, paying attention to your child's feelings and perceptions will help your child with mastery of any transitions he or she faces. Your thoughts?

Margaret Zerba, Ph.D.

Psychologist

All Age Groups; Psychoanalyst, Children and Adolescents, Psychologist, Child Psychoanalyst