



Transitions for Changes in Family Dynamics

Navigating Minor and Major Life Transitions

Brenda Ursel & Kimberly Mouriquand
Alaska Center for Resource Families

Objectives of Transition Preparation

- Helps families cope with stress
- Gives child sense of control
- Eases child's adjustment
- Assists child's understanding
- Builds new relationships and maintains connections to established relationships

Tend to the Transition

It helps to think like a gardener.

When you move a growing plant and want it to grow someplace else, you need to follow some guidelines.

The following slide lists some recommendations from an actual gardening site that talks about transplanting plants.

These recommendations surprisingly translate to transitions for children as well.



Never Ever “Pluck and Drop” because...



- It Causes Root Shock
 - Or for kids, confusion & anxiety
- It can damage root connections
 - Or for kids, it hurts relationships
- Might impact growth
 - Or for kids, disrupts their development
- It takes a long time to put down new roots
 - Or for kids, it takes a long time to settle in
- It causes withering, hurts whole plant.
 - Or for kids, it may cause them to become withdraw or depressed.

The FIVE Ws

Preparing Your Youth for Change



- **Who** are these people?
 - Introduce new relationships (friends, teachers, partners, etc.) This helps minimize stress, fear, and anxiety.

- **What** is going to change?
 - Help children understand what will be different and what is going to stay the same.

- **Where** am I going?
 - Pre-teaching and visiting places that will change can help reduce fear. If visiting isn't an option, how about pictures?

The FIVE Ws continued

Preparing Your Youth for Change



- **When** will this happen?

- Providing a youth with time frames and as much information as possible will help them feel the situation is predictable. Use visuals, like calendars or creative countdowns.

- **Why** is this happening?

- Don't assume your child knows why the change is happening. Talk to them about the reasons for the change. Children are ego-centric, they may take blame for the change even if not their fault or has nothing to do with them.

6 Skills to Use When Working with Preparing Children for Transitions and Change



1. Engage the child in the process.
2. Listen to the child's words and the feeling/emotion behind the words.
3. Speak the truth.
4. Validate the child's experience of the change, allow them to feel happy, sad, or angry.
5. Allow the child time and space to process (this is an ongoing process).
6. Tears, grief, and anger are part of the process. You cannot avoid it.

Tools to Assist with the changes



- Transition plan when moving
- Saying Hello and Goodbye
- Transition DVDs /books
- Identifying important connections/relationships

Unexpected Changes

such as sudden illness, death, accidents, natural disasters

- Focus on calm and safety for ALL family members.
- Keep information short, simple, and matter of fact
- Tell child what will happen next, in a calm and direct manner
- Meet basic needs for yourself and your children
- Once safety is established, remember the 5 Ws: who, what, when, where, why
- Give time to ask questions
- Repeat story as needed

IM IN A VERY CRABBY MOOD, SO EVERYBODY JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! I HATE EVERYONE!!



NOBODY RECOGNIZES MY HINTS TO SMOTHER ME WITH AFFECTION.

