

TRANSITION IS NOT ALL ABOUT HOLDING PENCILS

Some practical ideas for parents and family

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Supporting your Child's Transition to School is not all about holding pencils correctly. Enabling children to develop **mental resilience, independence and self-esteem** will outweigh the ability to hold a pencil in the early days of starting school.

By using some **simple strategies and empathetic support**, your child will develop the skills to cope. Then, as further change comes their way, all subsequent changes and transitions will get easier and easier!

This practical tip sheet comes from an **emotionally resilient perspective** involving the **voice of the child** and will provide parents and family with some strategies and activities that will make transition to pre-school or to school easier for the child.

The 'transition process' is essentially the ongoing process of change for children and their families.



Predict

Create a **visual daily calendar** with your child. Talk to your child's educator and ask what the routine is throughout the day. Take pictures and create a timeline of the day so your child knows when she will get to see you for pick up. Every morning remind them of the daily timeline.

Some children with **special educational and/or additional needs** can be particularly anxious about making the change. Ask the school to send or post photos on the school website of the school, classroom, toilets, entrances, playground, teachers, and so on. You could use this to talk with your child over the summer.

Read books and tell stories that **promote connection**. For example, Owl Babies by Martin Waddell and The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn. Reinforce the idea that you will come back to collect them.



Talk, Listen and Discuss

Start discussions about **how they are feeling** at a relaxed time. No matter how your child feels, let them know that it is completely normal to feel a mixture of emotions and that everyone will feel like this. **Listen to their perspective and thoughts on this change in their life.**

Provide your child with as much information about their **new routine and school day** as you can. For younger children, it can be really helpful for them to visualise these changes.

Talk with your child about ways they can **stay safe** at school, such as washing their hands before and after eating.

Talk with your child about the **things that they are good at** and all the positive things about starting a new school.



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Establish routine

Establish a routine. To help them get ready for school, try to establish a **morning and bedtime routine** on week nights.

Make a verbal plan the night before – ‘**So lets make a plan for tomorrow, what happens first..**



Reassure and comfort



Send in a **comfort object** with your child. It is important for your child to have something special from home that she can keep with her.

Put a **love note/thinking of you note** in their bag or lunchbox as a reminder that you think of them often throughout the day.

Think about positive things for the future. It is important to help children **develop hope and excitement for the future**. Identifying small things that they can look forward to will help them to realise that the current situation won't last forever and life will get better.

Practice

Enable your child to be independent as much as possible.

This could include for example, putting on shoes and coat, putting on a jumper or cardigan, opening a lunchbox, recognising their own name and using the bathroom independently.



And finally..

Seek support if you need it. Reach out to your child's early childhood setting or school as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges you are facing and work together to support your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health and you think they need professional support, speak to your GP about the best next step.

Give it time. Coping with transition and change takes time. Lots of children will experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort your child as they settle into a new routine.

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