

## Transitions Tip Sheet

A transition occurs when a child is required to change location, activity, environment or position. Transitions are often difficult for many children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

### Why are transitions difficult?

**Transitions are often difficult for children with ASD.**

- Due to their neurological differences, children with ASD have a hard time maintaining and shifting attention.
- It may take them longer to physically move themselves from one activity to another.
- It may be difficult for them to understand the need to change activities.
- It may be difficult for them to manage their own behaviour during the transition.

**Anxiety is often associated with transitions.**

- Anxiety may be a by-product of resistance to change.
- Many children experience anxiety over the possibility that they will not be able to complete a routine.
- Anxiety may take many forms. The child may ask perseverative questions about upcoming events or engage in other stereotypical behaviours.

### Transition Tips

- Prepare for all transitions ahead of time. Give ample warnings (i.e. 5 minutes left, 2 minutes left, 1 minute left, time to switch).
- Once children are at the next activity, they should not have to wait for “setup”; circle time should begin as soon as the children are seated.
- Use a transitional object to help the child remain calm during the transition. It may be a calming toy (squeeze ball) or an item related to the next activity (paint brush to move to the paint centre).
- Use transitional signals such as a sign, a noise or song. Eventually the child will learn to associate the signal with change and will understand that the signal means to stop what they are doing.
- Use a visual schedule to indicate what will happen next.
- Give one clear direction at a time.
- Use a specific relaxation strategy.
- Remain calm even when the transition appears chaotic.

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