

# Tips for Smoother Transitions

## with kids under 5 years old

### First, Take a Deep Breath



- Before you do anything else, take one slow, intentional breath for yourself.
- Transitions can be chaotic, and our calm is often the anchor our children need most.
- Regulating yourself first sets the tone for the rest of the interaction.

### Use Statements (Instead of Questions)



"It's time to clean up!"

instead of

"Are you ready to clean up?"

- Most of the time transitions & routines are not optional, so let's make sure we communicate that to them with clear language.

### Make it Musical or Move it Out



- Singing a cleanup song or turning transitions into a silly movement game helps everyone stay regulated—and makes it more fun.

Try: "Let's hop like bunnies to the car!" or "Which song should we sing while we get our pj's on?"

### Give a Heads Up



- Let your child know what's coming. A simple heads-up helps prepare their brain for the shift.

Try: "In two more minutes, we'll put on our shoes"

### Try a Visual Schedule



- Instead of repeating yourself again and again, show them what's next. Visual schedules help build predictability and reduce power struggles by making the routine more concrete.

Try: "Let's go see what comes after snack time!"

### Recognize the Successes



- Share with them when you notice they DO follow through with transitions.
- "Thank you for getting your shoes on, now we can go to the park!"
- Celebrate the wins! This makes it more likely they will do it again.

### Use a Visual Timer



- Visual timers are wonderful because they show the passing of time in a way that makes sense to young children. For toddlers, I love using a visual animal timer and saying things like,

"When we get to the frog, it's time to clean up!"

### Bring in a Helper Friend



- Sometimes a stuffed animal or toy friend can make all the difference. It adds playfulness, which can ease resistance.

Try: "Looks like piggy is ready to put on shoes with us!" "Will puppy or baby doll help you clean up your toys now?"

### Offer Playful Choices



- Giving your child some control and choice during a transition can reduce pushback.

Try: "Do you want to fly like a bird or stomp like an elephant to the bath?"