

**School-to-Home Transition Strategies**

Transition from school to home might present some difficulties for young people and their families. This can be for many different reasons, some which may be easier to determine than others.

Below, we have tried to include some different considerations and strategies that you could try to ease this transitional period of the day:-

***Sensory and Physical Considerations***

Communication is behaviour! It is always worth considering if your child’s behaviour and/ or responses are related to a basic need. For some young people, they may be thirsty and/or hungry having not eaten since lunch. Taking a healthy snack for them to eat on pick-up may be a quick fix. The snack can also be used as a transitional activity that happens at the end of school and the start of the afternoon/evening at home.

If your child appears overly energetic and unsettled it may be worth injecting some physical activity on the walk back or when you get home e.g. getting them to run to a given point – ‘Run to the lamp-post, run to the post-box’, bouncing on a trampette in the garden.

Equally, incorporating period of ‘calm time’ into the after school routine may support with this. This could be done by providing a calm space (play den, bedroom), listening to music, having a cuddle and sharing a book, doing some colouring / doodling.

***Communication***

As caring and invested parents, we are often keen to show an interest in our child’s day. Even though this is done with good intent, it can often present as a barrage of questions as soon as we see them. Considering the time in which you ask your child about their day, may have an impact on the response and level of interaction that you get.

An effective alternative to asking about their day, may be to start a conversation where you talk about your own day, focusing on the areas that you wish them to talk about. Listening to you talk about your day might encourage them to share aspects of their own day, it may trigger memories and thoughts and it will also provide them with a model.

It may also be worth considering different questions and conversational prompts when enquiring about your child’s day to refresh the after-school conversation. Please see some possible examples below:-

What made you feel proud today?

What did you do today that made you feel brave?

Who was kind to you today?

Who did you help today?

What was tricky for you today?

***Routine and Structure***

Routine and structure provides children (and adults!) with a sense of security and stability. It also helps to establish a sense of confidence and independence.

This structure can be created by having a number of key activities or tasks that need to be carried out on arrival home e.g. put shoes by the radiator, hang coat on peg and put drink bottle / lunchbox next to the sink. This will only take a couple of minutes, but it provides a routine, and again, offers a transitional activity to signify arriving home.

You may choose to provide some structure and routine across the week by signposting each day with a particular activity e.g. Wednesday – a walk, Thursday – arts and crafts, Friday – film night etc.

Some children may even benefit from having a visual schedule to follow at times. This could be in the form of a written or pictorial tick-sheet.

***Managing the Use of Technology***

For all of the many benefits of modern technology, managing your child’s access and use of computers, i-pads and gaming devices can sometimes be somewhat of a challenge. Below are some support strategies that you may wish to explore:-

* ‘Time limits’ can cause stress for some children and in turn can be a trigger for behaviour. Time limits mean that they may be cut off half way through a programme or a game, or creating a specific thing. This can cause a sense of incompletion, which in turn can lead to feelings of frustration or anxiety. It may work to ask them to finish at a specific point instead of assigning a time slot to it e.g. you can watch 2 programmes and then the i-pad will be going away, you can complete Level 2 and then the X-box has finished for today.
* Alternatively, if time limits do work for your child, it may help to cue them in when their time is coming to an end e.g. You have 10 minutes left, you have 2 minutes left. Also, representing the time visually may support with this e.g. using an on-line visual timer on another device such as your phone (<https://www.online-stopwatch.com/eggtimer-countdown/full-screen/>), or a timer that you use for cooking (that physically show the dial moving around). Using a visual representation of the time left means that your child can check in themselves to see how long they have left and manage the time accordingly.
* For those children who become fully immersed in their ‘virtual experience’ it may help to provide a transitional period between their virtual worlds back into reality. This can be done by going and sitting with them and slowly showing an interest in what they are doing and asking questions. This conversation can then continue for a short period as they stop engaging with their i-pad, device etc. and then the conversation can gradually move away from the topic onto other topics.
* It may also be useful to give them experiences linked to their areas of interest in terms of their virtual world but apply it to alternative activities e.g. designing Minecraft worlds or a particular characters by drawing / written descriptions/ using recycling materials, writing a quiz linked to a game or programme.

***Emotional well-being***

For some children, being away from you all day may be difficult. When they are then back with you they can sometimes feel quite overwhelmed emotionally and this can present itself in lots of different ways. Having a period of reconnection can really help with this. Some dedicated time together, even if it is only for 5 minutes – Watching a programme together, reading a book, having a cuddle. Physical / tactile input will also support this reconnection, hugs and embraces , holding hands, a rub on the back – however, be mindful to your child’s responses to this, some children might not seek too much of this from a sensory perspective.

Providing emotional validation is also a key way to support your child’s wellbeing. Noticing how your child is feeling, helping to name the emotions and providing the message that all emotions are valid, natural and serve a purpose. Their emotional development will also benefit hugely from you navigating their emotional responses with them e.g. anger itself is not a problem, but strategies need to be considered about how to deal with the anger in an appropriate and healthy way.

Children need predictability to feel secure and safe. This predictability can be provided by clear and consistent boundaries. Provide realistic and fair expectations and if you say you are going to do something try your best to always follow through with it! Whether it is when you have said something nice is going to happen or equally when a consequence has occurred.