

Avoiding Transition Time Tears

“But, Daddy, I don’t want to go!”

Moving from one event to another are difficult parenting and teaching situations. Our children are involved and concentrating on an activity, then life gets in the way. It’s bath time. It’s bedtime. Preschool is over. Daycare is closing. It’s time to get in the car. Resistance emerges. Tears start, and a dull throbbing begins behind our eyes.

Is there some way to make this easier? I’m hear to tell you, yes! There are a few tips to make transition times easier.

Give a five-minute warning. When it is five minutes before you need to move on to the next thing, simply tell your child that it’s five minutes to the next event. Set a timer. Show on the clock how long that will be. Tell your child what they have time to do in those five minutes. “In five minutes we need to leave for school. That gives you enough time to finish your toast and brush your teeth. I’ll set the timer.”

Show and tell. Some children do better with transitions if they have a picture. If your child is a strong visual learner take a few pictures of an activity sequence to help your child be able to visualize what is going to happen. “Jennifer, five-minutes until bed time. When the timer goes off you’ll need to brush your teeth, put on your pajamas, and get into bed.” Showing Jennifer a sequence of pictures of her brushing her teeth, in her pajamas and snuggled in bed can help make the going a little smoother.

Singing the story. If you meet resistance, sing the story of how to get from Point A to Point B. Pick a familiar song and change the lyrics a bit. Have fun and be silly. To “The Itsy Bitsy Spider”:

*Itsy Bitsy Tommy
Climbed into the car seat
Down came the seat and covered Tommy’s feet
Out came the buckle and clicked around his tummy
And Itsy Bitsy Tommy was ready to go again.
Not perfect, but I hope you get the idea.*

Hold your horses. My daughters went through a period where they would unbuckle their car seats after we were on our way. Click. Click. They could both be out of their car seats in a jiff. Trying to use logic with a 12 and 30 month-old didn’t get my point across. I finally told them that our car would only run if they were buckled safe and sound in their car sets. If I

heard a click, I'd say, "Oh, no! The car is turning off!" I'd steer into a parking lot, turn off the engine, and then wait for them to rebuckle. Sometimes I'd have to wait for 15 or 20 minutes. But in a week or so, I wasn't dealing with my little mechanical engineers unbuckling.

Avoid transition headaches by giving your children a five-minute alert. Use pictures to tell the story of what is happening next. Use songs to help them understand what to do next. Finally give your self plenty of time. Sometimes the slow road is the fastest.

Kids Talk™ *deals with childhood development issues. Maren Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over twenty-five years experience working with children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. She is author of Building Cathedrals Not Walls: Essays for Parents and Teachers and Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her at maren@kidstalknews.com or visit www.MarenSchmidt.com. Copyright 2010.*

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