

TRANSITIONING

What is this developmental skill?

Transitioning is the ability to move from one activity, place, person, or expectation to another. Successful transitions require flexibility, emotional regulation, attention, and planning.

How does this normally develop?

Children gradually learn to handle transitions through predictable routines and repeated practice. As they mature, they become better able to stop one activity, prepare for what comes next, and adjust without becoming overwhelmed.

How can neglect interfere with its development?

Children affected by neglect often experience transitions as stressful because change has frequently been associated with uncertainty or loss. Moving from one activity to another may activate anxiety, making even ordinary transitions difficult.

What might this look like?

A child may:

- Become upset when play ends.
- Refuse to leave preferred activities.
- Melt down before bedtime or school.
- Need repeated reminders to change activities.
- Become anxious before schedule changes.
- Resist moving between caregivers or environments.

These reactions often reflect difficulty regulating emotions during change rather than stubbornness.

Parenting Implications

Use consistent routines, visual schedules, countdowns, and advance warnings before transitions. Allow extra processing time when possible and acknowledge that changing activities can be difficult while maintaining predictable expectations.

From Understanding to Attunement

Instead of asking, "Why are transitions always a battle?" ask, "What support does my child need to move from one experience to the next?" Predictability and preparation help children navigate change with greater confidence.