



Dear Parents,

During periods of major change or stress, it is not unusual for children to have difficulty transitioning between environments or important relationships. To assist children in these areas, We recommend that you use the following procedures:

1. Children are very perceptive of the feelings of the people they love. They often wish to please parents by fulfilling their parents' expectations.
2. Help them to get ready for their visit or contact with the person they are about to see. Support them in choosing what they want to wear and anything they may want to take with them to use during the visit/contact or to show to the other person. Let the visits become a normal part of the weekly routine.
3. Tell them their destination. If they cry or say they don't want to go, tell them you're sorry they are having a hard time and that they can talk about their feelings with the person they are about to see, if they want to. Clearly tell them that this is not their choice. It is an adult choice (like attending school) and that you will see them after their visit or session. Tell them that you would like them to try to enjoy their contact with the other person, and assure them that you will be there when they return.
4. Since this is an adult choice, it is not helpful to engage them in discussion of why they don't want to attend or to support them in telephoning third parties to discuss the issue. This only perpetuates and escalates the behavior and also causes additional stress to them.
5. Help them to exercise the choices they do have within each setting - e.g., which activities they would like to request during a visit, whether they want to use the stairs or elevator to get to where they are going.

6. Support their autonomy and coping ability by setting limits with regressive or developmentally inappropriate behavior (I.e., tearfulness, tantrums). Calm, limit-setting and consistent encouragement can be remarkably effective in helping a child to calm down and complete a task successfully. Conversely, bargaining or giving in to such behavior generally guarantees that the difficulty will occur again.
7. Scheduling conflicting activities implies that a child has a choice. Avoid scheduling activities that conflict with their other parent/guardian visits, therapy, etc. When scheduling conflicts occur due to recognized activities, make direct contact with the other adults involved and attempt to adjust the schedule to allow for both the visit and the activity. Do not involve them in discussions or negotiations. Only tell them the end result.
8. Make the transition on a positive note. Send them off with a statement such a “have a good time with Mom/Dad!” I’ll see you after your visit.
9. It is more supportive to a child’s therapy if the parent accompanies her to the session and, in most circumstances, waits in the outer office.
10. Take care of yourselves - it’s clear that you both have strong feelings about the current situation. I encourage you to make use of the adult supports available to you, such as your own therapists, so that your feelings can be addressed in an appropriate setting and will not impact on their visits or treatment.

“A Bright Future is dedicated to providing safe, reliable and healthy visits”