

An Early Years Practitioners Handbook: A guide to Transitions



(Source: Clipart.co, 2022)

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Introduction

This handbook has been designed to help and educate early years practitioners on the importance of transitions for a child and how to properly support them. This handbook will cover the role of the adult, the needs of the child, how different environments affect the learning of the child, partnership working, interventions that can be implemented to improve the child's quality of learning and different outcomes.

Transitions can be as big as moving to a new school, or as little as a change in the flavour of toothpaste used.

"Transitions are the moves children and young people make from home to an early learning and childcare (ELC) setting, from there to primary, from stage to stage, from primary to secondary, between schools and from secondary to further education and beyond." (Education Scotland, 2022). Transitions can have a massive impact on a child's development and their well-being, which is why it is important to have a strong support system in place to ensure any sort of transitions in a child's life runs as smooth as possible.

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2014) state that speaking positively about the upcoming change of events can help the child to express their feelings and emotions better and give the child's a more positive opinion and feel more relaxed about the upcoming change which will increase the chances of a smooth successful transition.

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years suggest that planning extra time allows for a more successful transition as it allows the child to form a more secure relationship and be more familiar with their new surroundings.

"Allow time for the gradual building up of secure and trusting relationships between you, the child, and their parents. Once these are in place the child will feel more confident exploring, playing, learning the rules of your setting, and getting the most of the experience on offer." Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2014)

Role of the adult

A child's first support system is their primary care giver, usually the mother, which forms attachment. It is vital a child has secure attachments, which Pacey also states in page 3 a direct quotation from John Bowlby, in his book Attachment and Loss "children who have a secure attachment are more likely to approach the world with confidence and, when faced with potentially alarming situations, is likely to tackle them effectively, or to seek help." This concept is known as attachment theory. They also proceed to say that "children with secure attachments are also more likely to be responsive, helpful, and model themselves as a potentially loveable person". A child relies on that secure attachment when they are feeling stressed, are in need something or when needing reassurance. This is why it is important when being in the role of a practitioner to be fully aware of this as it allows them to fully accommodate and adjust their environment and care giving to ensure the child is enjoying their time and feels comfortable in that setting.

Key person

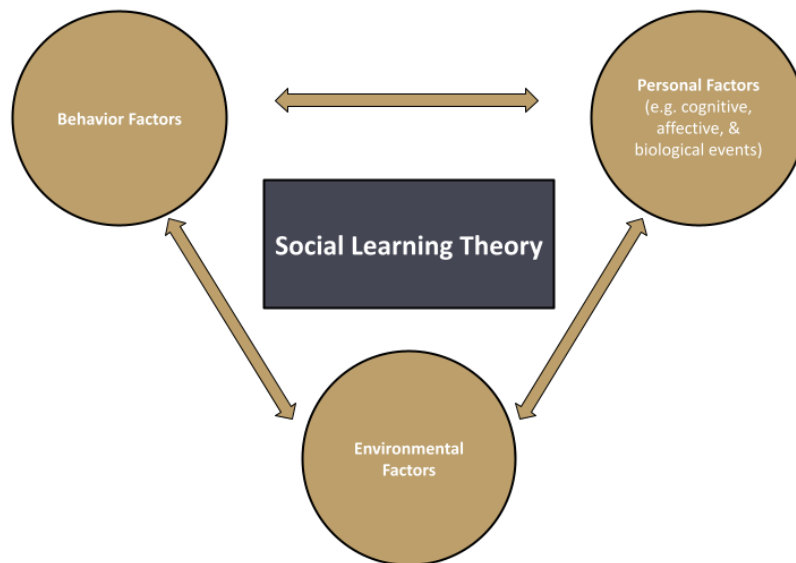
Young children will adjust more quickly if they have a solid relationship with a significant individual. Pacey say that "when children have this bond, they will be more likely to enjoy being in settings and the activities on offer". They also advise that a key person must be designated for each child as "this bond is like an emotional safety net and it is essential that it is strong enough to 'catch' the child in the absence of their parents." Children that have this connection are more likely to enjoy the environments and activities offered. It is advised that each child is observed carefully and closely to assess if they are struggling with settling and whether they have formed a secure connection with an adult in that setting. Pacey state ways in which we can identify if the child has formed a secure bond with an adult is if the child:

- Seeks comfort from this particular adult?
- When this adult arrives, do they acknowledge him or her and smile?
- Do they look where the adult is?
- Do they enjoy spending time with this adult?

Role model

Practitioners have to certain degree, an influence over the child or children they are assigned with. Which means it is extremely important to be a good example in front of children as this can have an affect on the way a child develops. The social learning theory of Bandura offers a useful foundation for comprehending how someone learns

through modelling and observation. Jeremy Sutton (2021) says that “Cognitive processes are central, as learners must make sense of and internalize what they see to reproduce the behaviour. Psychological processing is required to match cognition and behaviour between the observation and the performance (Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018).”



PositivePsychology.com
(2021)

Jeremy Sutton (2021) says “The SLT demonstrates that humans learn and imitate behaviours observed in other people. The people observed are called models, and the process of learning is described as modelling.”

It is said Bandura three fundamental model types used in observational learning were identified:

- “Live model
An individual is observed acting out or showing the behaviour.
- Verbal instruction model
The behaviour is explained or described.
- Symbolic model
A real or fictional character displays the behaviour online, on TV, in a book, etc.” Jeremy Sutton (2021)

Meaning a child will imitate what they see and learn. Therefore it is crucial we are demonstrating good behaviours in front of children.

The needs of the child

Every child has a basic due of care and needs that need to be fulfilled in order to flourish when developing. Every child is different, which also means their more advanced needs will need to be more specific too. Kendra Cherry (2022) says, "Abraham Maslow first introduced the concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper, titled "A Theory of Human Motivation," and again in his subsequent book, "Motivation and Personality." This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfil basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs." Maslow thought that everyone has the natural desire to realize their full potential and become the best version of themselves they can be. However, a number of more fundamental demands must be satisfied in order to reach this ultimate goal. Among them are the requirements for food, safety, love, and self-worth.



Simply Psychology (2007)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Psychological needs

Among the physiological demands are those required for survival. Several instances of physiological requirements include:

- Food
- Water
- Breathing

Physiological demands also include the need for food, shelter, and clothes in addition to the basic need of air, temperature regulation, and nourishment.

Safety needs

In Maslow's hierarchy, the next need is safety. Examples of this are:

- A safe and secure home
- Financial stability
- Healthcare
- Suitable car seats

Using plug safety covers, stair gates, and have access to a gp surgery would be ways in which we can provide a safe environment for children.

Love and belonging

The next is need in Maslow's hierarchy may not be seen as physical important, but it vital to a healthy mind. Love and belonging include love, affection, friendship and socializing. Some things what satisfy this need are:

- Friends
- Family relations
- Play group
- Secure attachments

This need is extremely important in order to prevent anxiety or depression, in which practitioners must be mindful of.

Self esteem

Once the first three needs have been met, self-esteem is then focused upon. Kendra Cherry (2022) identifies "esteem needs include such things as self-esteem and personal worth" which will help build the child's confidence in their new setting and builds trust when they feel they are being listened to and respected.

Self-actualization needs

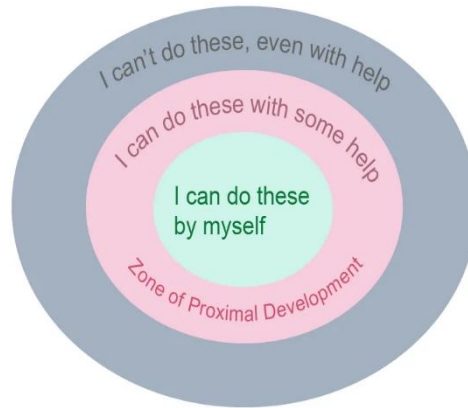
The top and final need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs are the self-actualization needs. This is where people are less conscious about what others are thinking and feeling about them and are more focused on how they can perform better or improve in a certain aspect. Kendra Cherry explains Maslow's definition is "It may be loosely described as the full use and exploitation of talents, capabilities, potentialities, etc. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best that they are capable of doing. They are people who have developed or are developing to the full stature of which they capable."

This hierarchy of needs should be considered when we think about school settings and ways in which we communicate with children in order to form a healthy and successful relationship with the child/children and must be mindful all of the needs within the hierarchy and treat them as equally as important as each other.

Observations should be done regularly to make sure the needs are consistently met and constant communication is fundamental in order to assess how the child is feeling and where they are at. Children struggle to communicate in stressful and anxious situations, which is why it is just as important for us as practitioners to notice subtle changes in behaviors and routines.

Continuing on from Malow's hierarchy of needs, and how it has an impact on a child's development depending on how each need is met, "Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development proposes that cognitive abilities such as learning and problem solving are developed through social interaction with others during childhood. According to Vygotsky, culture and environment play a large role in cognitive development" (Study smarter, no date)

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development



The psychology notes
HQ (2022)

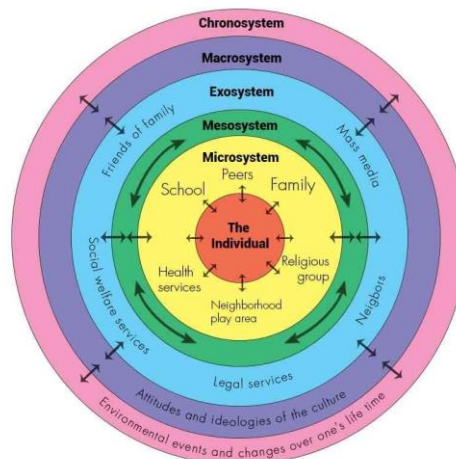
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This theory is executed in "**Article 6** of the UNCRC which recognises that all children and young people have the right to survive and the right to develop" (CYCS). According to article 6, children and young people should be able to grow up in environments that don't have a harmful impact on their physical and emotional welfare. By providing more support for children it reduces stress which will minimise the negative effects of hardship on health and wellbeing and will make it simpler for adults to provide young children with protective bonds. (Harvard university) We as practitioners are able to help with this by communicating with parents and the child.

Partnerships

“Working in partnership with parents and carers is central to the early years foundation stage (EYFS)” (Gov)

During this enormous transition, it is important to remember there are lots of different influences within the child's life. This is why it is important to have strong links for communication to positively support a smooth transition. In Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory, we are able to see different environmental factors which can influence and have an impact on a child's development. Practitioners are able to make use of this model to see where they fit into the child's life and what links are most important to maintain.



Pinterest

While parent-child ties are vital, young children can also gain a lot from connections with other capable caregivers both inside and outside the family. The strength of a young child's primary bond with his or her parents does not interfere with close ties with other loving and frequently present people. In fact, young children's social and emotional development might be aided by having various carers. Nevertheless, frequent care interruptions, significant staff turnover, and low-quality interactions in early childhood program settings can impair children's capacity to form reliable expectations about whether and how their needs would be satisfied. (Harvard University)

Gov suggests “meet parents and carers to decide how best to sensitively settle a child. Put them first, asking them to share all they can about themselves” which will help to strengthen the link between all communicating parties. Plans for induction

should take into account a child's passions. For instance, if you are aware of their enthusiasm for pirates, provide some toys for their first visit. If at all feasible, bring the parents or caregivers along when you settle the child to help you establish trust and personalise the experience. (Gov)

After a child has settled in, remain in contact with them, their parents, and any other caregivers. You'll feel more comfortable discussing developments you've seen.

Interventions

To support the child and ensure a smooth transition, we can put in place interventions. These can be activities for the child or to form and strengthen links with family or care givers of the child. This will allow us to establish certain extra needs if be within each child and to create a suitable environment to promote a positive transition.

Taster days

Taster days are an important part of transitioning over to a new environment. As Little angels (no date) say “familiarise your child with the nursery. New surroundings can at first seem strange and scary to pre-schoolers, but before long they’ll feel happy and comfortable”. Building familiarity with the new environment makes it less scary and gradual visits will make the child feel as though it isn’t a big dive into something new and scary. Taster days also allow for the child to become familiar with new faces and plant new connections with who they feel; comfortable with. Taster days also allow for practitioners to develop secure partnerships with care givers/ parents by making sure “to find out all we can about your child from you” (Little angels).



Clipart Library

Welcome pack

A welcome pack home to parents will give a better understanding to each parent of what their child’s daily routine at school will be like and will help familiarize them with regulations and staff. By doing so this can help ease tension for both parent/ care giver and child. It can also ease the nerves of the child by including photos within the welcome pack to familiarize them with their new surroundings so they will know what to expect.



Creeksidepts

Family board

By allowing a child to create a family board which includes, photos of their loved ones, pets, and friends, it allows them to feel more comfortable and as if they have a piece of home in their new setting. This allows the child to form a secure relationship with a preferred practitioner as it lets the child discuss a personal and comfortable topic. “Allow children to approach and observe their own board as much as they want. Supporting them to talk about their special people. This reassures them, while prompting ongoing chat that deepens the relationship between a child and their key person” GOV.



GOV

Establish routines

Little angels identify that establishing a routine can “help your little one feel safe and secure”. A morning routine could be getting up, brushing your teeth, getting dressed and eating breakfast. But by familiarizing your child with this routine it creates expectation so there are surprises to throw your child’s confidence. Little angels even suggest “Saying goodbye to your child can be difficult for both parties however it’s important to have this routine established to minimise anxieties, such as having a special place to say goodbye”, this enforces familiarity as the child will be expecting



Clipground

Proposed outcomes

Following this guide and becoming familiar with ways in which we can settle and make a child feel comfortable should result in a settled and happy child. Ways we can tell a child has settled successfully is they are less dependent on their key person for assistance and comfort, become more confident and independent. And through use of the Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory, we are able to establish strong links with parents within the child's life which is vital in order to understand the child's current abilities and development (Harvard university).

"Research shows that involving parents and carers in their children's learning is the most important factor in enabling some children to do well regardless of background." GOV.

Loris Malaguzzi theory consists of "Children being encouraged to develop their own theories about how their environment works through discovery." And to engage and socialise with other students to build and sustain on new relationships. Which will help to form confidence within the child by making new friends.

Observing the child throughout the whole transition phase and communicating with parents will allow practitioners to identify early on any issues or extra attention a child may need.



WordArt

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