

Transitions and Development in the Early Years:
A Handbook for Practitioners



(Source:Family,2021)

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Aims

The objective of this handbook is to provide guidance about transitions for an Early Years practitioner. This guidebook will cover the meaning of transitions and the various factors we should consider as children are going through these stages. These will include a child's requirements, the value of adult roles and partnerships, if the child's surroundings and environment are suitable, the benefits of play, interventions, and the final outcomes.

Introduction to Transitions

Childhood transitions are a period where children will experience change and development. For example, starting a nursery or being introduced to a new environment is known as a vertical transition. According to Macblain (2014), every child has a unique experience with these key experiences; some may have a favorable experience while others may have a negative one. It is preferable to think of transitions as a continuing process as opposed to an isolated event.

This handbook is intended to serve as a reference for professionals who are assisting children with their transition into a nursery. O'Connor (2017) believes that extreme change for young children creates implications. These could involve exerting pressure and strain on the child while putting them in a state of emotional tensivity. Transitions, while a natural occurrence, frequently lead to uncertainty. It entails deliberate mental processes, such as reasoning and thinking (O'Connor 2017).

Transitions relate to nature and nurture since it examines how a child processes changes in an environment and transition. Most children will feel unsafe when exposed to a new environment and role model, it will take them out of their comfort zone causing them to lose the feeling of security that they may feel when they are with a familiar person, for example, their mother. Therefore, the child needs to be in a well-structured environment and with a practitioner that understands their role. Transitions in the early years are the most important because it will play a role in building their future selves (Dowling 2010).

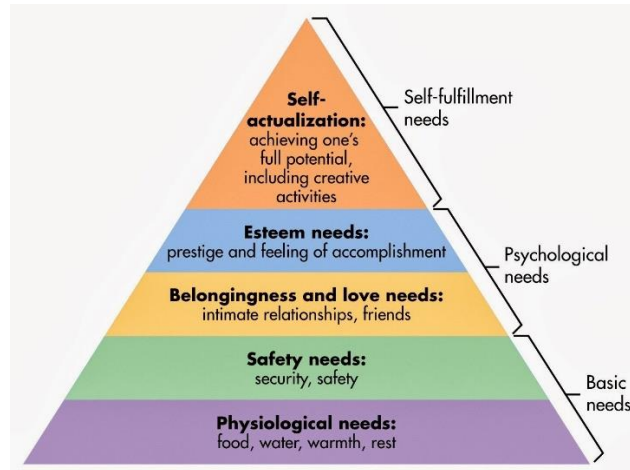
The Needs of the Child

All children are entitled to achieve the best possible outcomes and fulfill their potential. In order to do this, the child's appropriate needs must be met. During the transition stage into nursery, parents and staff will be responsible, they need to work together and communicate effectively to ensure the needs of the child are met. Positive relationships between the key role model, the practitioner and the child are highly important. These role models and relationships will create a feeling of security and safety to form attachments that will teach children how to be confident and self-determined (Johnston and Williams 2009).

Supporting a child should be a main priority because as a parent or practitioner it is crucial to help them develop. The basic needs of a child will include PILES. Physical refers to a child's right to play, access to healthy nutrition, and medical attention to ensure their hygiene. Intellectual, which includes having free access to communication and education. Making sure the child receives support in a variety of ways if they struggle with speech and language. Emotional is to validate attachment, grant them access to resources for a range of purposes, and protect them from violence. For example, according to UNICEF (No Date), article 19 states that children have the right to be protected from all forms of danger and harm from anybody that cares for them. Finally, social, in which the child is allowed to engage in cooperative play to foster relationships with other children, is surrounded by love and affection, and has appropriate role models.

To ensure that these needs are being met, it is important to recognize how the child is dealing with the transition. Consider how they are reacting and if there are noticeable changed behaviours. If this is the case, make appropriate alterations to meet their agency and take time to understand their feelings (The Children and Young People's workforce, No Date).

To illustrate these points, one might refer to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. Maslow claimed that prior to pursuing other, more complex demands, humans are driven to satisfy their basic requirements first. He believed in focusing on feelings and desires, rather than inappropriate doings so that our actions are motivated. However, to do this, the most basic needs need to be met initially.



(Source: Blogger, 2014)

Pyramids are a common way to represent Maslow's hierarchy of requirements. The most fundamental requirements are found at the base of the need pyramid, while the most complex demands are found at the top.

The Role of the Adult

Role Modelling

To be a good role model for a child, it requires setting acceptable examples because the child will imitate these actions. For example, acceptable examples an adult can demonstrate may be, showing respect, being honest, kind and caring to others, using correct language, being actively fit and healthy and creating a secure attachment with the child. Williams and Wilkins (2014) carried out an assessment that points out that adults should maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to avoid future obesity for children. An adult's intake of food influences a child's consumption.

Lev Vygotsky claimed that a child is impacted by their families, culture, and socioeconomic standing. According to Vygotsky, children's cognitive talents are developed through difficult and purposeful tasks that adults in society provide for them. He also believed that a child's learning is first learnt from a role model and then through independent practice (Kurt 2022).



(Source:Google,2014)

Parents

Macblain (2014) says that a child learns about the world around them by the experiences they have with their parent; a parent and child have a joint life. High-quality learning is provided by parents who are more accessible and have more time to interact with their children. A close

relationship helps a child's growth in many ways, and when parents ask their children questions, it makes them feel important. A parent who handles their child's transition into the nursery with caution and respect will be viewed as a positive role model.

Bowlby's attachment theory stated that the primary attachment was un-matchable, there will be many attachments formed, however, none will be as special as the one created with the birth giver. A mother's example of providing security, protection, and care could be through breastfeeding.



(Source:Pinterest,2019)

Practitioner

It is your responsibility as a successful practitioner to ensure that when a child transitions into nursery, that everything is prepared and runs smoothly. Effective communication skills are important for a practitioner to have in order to share both positive and negative comments with parents. Be an effective organiser to plan interventions and create beneficial routines for the child. Being creative and well knowledgeable will support the role when it comes to knowing what environment and toys are safe and effective in the child's learning and development. Finally, trust makes the child feel comfortable and valued.

Environment

Our surroundings, from the nursery to the workplace, have a profound impact on who we are as adults. When a child enters the nursery, parents should consider whether the setting is appropriate. The practitioner is ultimately responsible for creating the environment. A nursery setting should provide plenty of space to prevent children from becoming frustrated, as well as suitable lighting, a warm, clean, and secure environment to ensure their safety and comfort. In order to draw a child in and make them feel drawn to the classroom, a practitioner should also take into account the colour and inventiveness of the space. Within early years, the environment is viewed as a place for learning, it is fundamental for a child's growth and development so it should be carefully planned, provide high quality toys and opportunities to create fascination and curiosity. According to UNICEF (No Date), article 29 discusses goals of education, one of these goals is to respect children by providing an environment that supports them in reaching their full potential while bearing in mind that a child has the right to cooperate in making decisions.

What a Practitioner should provide:

- Outdoor and Indoor activities
- Story books
- Creative corner
- Comfort area
- Blocks
- Math related games
- Puzzles
- Sand
- Sensory toys
- Nature activities



(Source:Pinterest,2013)

Maria Montessori's theory is based on a method of teaching that allows a child to learn independently. It revolves around the idea that children are spontaneously intrigued (Daily Montessori 2021). She believed the classroom should be a child centered environment that provides toys that demonstrate real life, such as, using real hammers in the construction area. These activities will enable a child to learn to take on responsibilities. Furthermore, to expand this idea, Piaget's theory suggested that a child needs to interact with the environment and there were 4 stages of development. The preoperational stage focuses on ages 2-7, this stage was defined by the growth of speech and imaginative play using objects and the environmental movements (Verywellmind 2023).

The correct environment will help a child develop physically, a parent and practitioner should frequently encourage children to use their physical skills so that they learn to have composure over their own bodies.

The environment also has an impact on brain development. The term "plasticity" describes the brain's capacity to alter in response to environmental changes or as a result of learning. If parents and practitioners do not make an attempt to strengthen brain connections, these learned behaviors and responses will not materialize (UWTSD, No Date).

The Importance of Play

Hut (2022) points out that play for young children has been made a policy by the government to meet their needs. In areas such as physical, mental and social, the government sees play as being highly beneficial and a key element of early childhood because it creates a healthy blossom for a child. Play is the most important activity for children, especially those starting nursery school, and should be valued above all else by parents, educators, and other caregivers, it allows a child to experience different sensors including sound, touch, vision, smells and thoughts. It is an act of freedom and decision making for a child that will provide skills for later life and education.

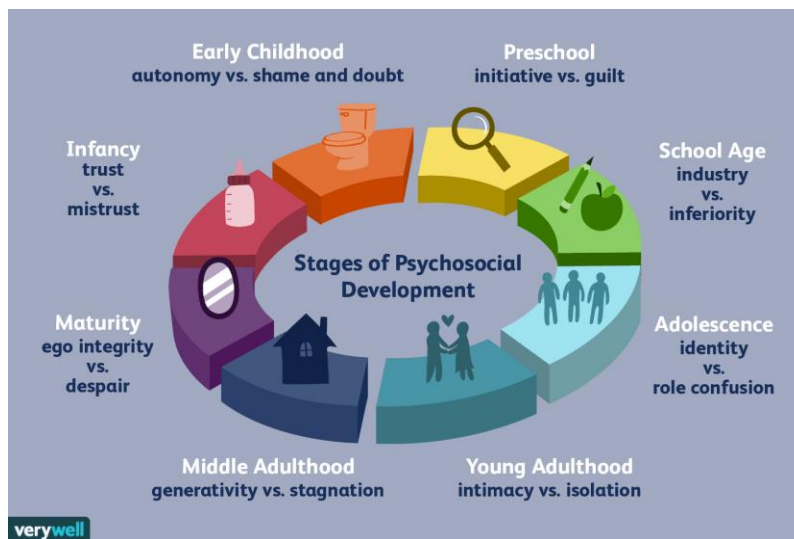
UNICEF (No Date), article 31 states that every child has the right to play.

Murray (2018) suggests that, in places where play is reduced by parents at home or by practitioners in the nursery setting, there is a lack of trust and communication between adults and children causing an issue within creating relationships. In the twenty-first century, there was a list of places where play was seen as un-necessary, children from these places did not just show lack of trust but also demonstrated a recurring pattern, no play led to an increase in weight, poor brain and motor development and disorders such as, psychological.



(Source:CreativeMarket,2017)

Erik Erikson's theory focused on psychological development. His theory involves eight phases, but the most applicable to this guide is stage 3, which examines children between the ages of three and five. At stage 3, Erik implies that this is where children start to maintain their ability and command over their world through acts of play and how they interact socially with practitioner's and friends. Additionally, Pestalozzi theory slightly expands on this because he discussed how play doesn't just test a child's ability, but it also allows them to investigate new schemes. It gives them the opportunity to experiment and discover different paths and directions.



(Source:CertifiedNLPTraining,2021)

Parents and family are often the people who prepare their children for the transition into nursery, although, practitioners will also play a huge role in supporting this. When a child begins nursery, the professional needs to establish a routine and strategy that includes meaningful play on a regular basis to satisfy the children's truthful longings (Murray 2018). Consider what play choices the children are making and if they are interested in the activity.

"Play is indeed the child's work and is the means whereby the child grows and develops". (Isaacs, 1992, p.1235).

Partnership Working

Practitioner and Parent

An important factor in a child's transition to nursery is partnership. In a partnership, the parent and the practitioner collaborate to meet the child's requirements; this calls for efficient communication to achieve an aim. Effective communication is essential because it broadens the practitioner's understanding of the child, enables them to communicate ideas more effectively, and supports one another in seeking any concerns.

World of Work (2021) says that the 7 c's checklist is highly beneficial to ensure successful communication. These include;

- Clear (Both parent and practitioner will have an easy understanding)
- Correct (Avoid any false or misleading information)
- Complete (Discussions are acted upon)
- Concrete (To be specific and precise, no vague conversations)
- Concise (Quick and important)
- Courteous (Involves both communicators being polite and positive)
- Consider (Take into account both opinions)

This checklist will help to build relationships between the parent and practitioner, it will reflect their respect for one another due to honesty, trust and goodwill UWTSD (No Date). These qualities will then reflect onto the child transitioning into nursery and perform in progressing their development throughout.

Practitioner and Child

John Dewey theory states that children learn best when they begin to interact with others. When children transition into nursery, they begin to interact with new role models, in this case, practitioners. The practitioner can form a relationship with children in many ways. It could start with something so small as having a conversation with them. When attention, honesty and time is given to a child, it creates a bond that involves trust and comfort. However, Scharer (2018) said

that professionals need to separate their personal lives from their work lives to avoid getting too close to a child. In a nursery and all other educational settings, all children should be treated equally. Therefore, it is not the responsibility of a practitioner to become overly attached to a child, as this could result in the practitioner developing "favorites" and becoming more lenient toward some children over others. This fairness ensures an equal partnership between all children and the practitioners.



(Source:DassaultSystems,2018)

Interventions

Hawthorne (2023) says that interventions within education are where practitioners from the setting will seek to provide extra support for those children who have shown a lack in progress. In this case, when children are transitioning into nursery, consider spotting barriers such as, additional learning needs, hearing or listening impairments so that as a practitioner, they can think about communicating this information with parents and other professionals as soon as possible so that strategies can be put into place.

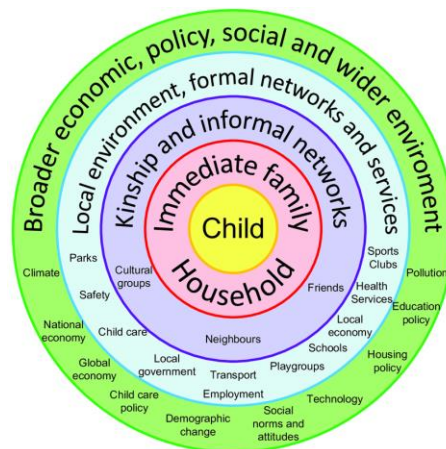
These strategies may include schemes before starting the nursery or during the nursery transition. For example, UWTSD (No Date) suggests settling in sessions, digital tours or home visits are an effective way of helping a child transition more smoothly because they will help to provide a feeling of safety and create familiarity between the child and practitioner and the child and the setting. Other effective strategies may include circle, story or song time. This will help the child feel more involved with other pupils, helping them to socialise and build their confidence.



(Source:ASQ,2021)

Coles, E. et al (2015) implies that when discussing early years interventions, Pawson's five-stage iterative realism methodology was important to consider. However, since every child is different in some manner, this approach will work for some children and not others. Nevertheless, there are numerous programs that may be implemented, and it has been discovered that employing these intervention strategies throughout the early years benefits the child in the long run.

Early childhood environments should reflect a culture, social status and be a place where children, parents, and practitioners come together. Bronfenbrenner believed that a child's development is influenced by a variety of contexts throughout their life, such as social, biological, cultural, and interpersonal elements. According to Bronfenbrenner, environments that are more supportive and nurturing promote better developmental results.



(Source:ResearchGate,2018)

It is your responsibility as a practitioner to see that all parents and children receive equal treatment when interventions are necessary. A practitioner will stand out for their professionalism and civility if they have involved every family, taken the time to listen, and took the child's agency into consideration. For example, UNICEF (No Date) article 23 focusses on children with disabilities. It discusses that the government must provide disabled children and their families with high-quality support so they can live their lives as fully as possible. To illustrate, depending on the child's difficulties, alternative learning methods and therapies such as speech, physical, sensory or occupational will help to meet certain children's needs (Brooks, 2019).

Proposed Outcomes

Gould (2012) believes children who are supported throughout early years often react positively when experiencing change, however, few children will experience change negatively. It is then the practitioner's responsibility to observe if these children have transitioned into nursery successfully. A child has transitioned successfully when they have adapted to the routine in the setting, built relationships with other children and practitioner's, arrive at class contented and smoothly, learned to enjoy and feel comfortable in the environment and have gradually developed a sense of self, such as becoming more aware of their surroundings and experiencing a wider range of emotions.



(Source:

Every child's developmental stage is evaluated in relation to 17 early learning objectives covering all 7 learning domains. Professionals are responsible for determining if a child is developing at the required level; if not, they will be assessed as "emerging" (Department of Education 2023).

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