

Parenting Pointers

Parenting Tips on: Summer Transitions

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Summer is here and for children it means a time of transition and change from the everyday school routine. Even for very young children, family routines and child care schedules often follow a school year model with transitions in June or September. The end of the school year often means the move to a new classroom or new school in the fall. For some families, summer involves camp or recreational programs and vacation travel to visit friends and family. Whatever the case, summer is a time of transition for children.

Some children will be uneasy about the changes ahead. Parents may notice changes in children's behavior and anxiety levels. Try to think about each transition as an opportunity to teach your child how to handle new situations. Adults know that change is a constant, inevitable part of life. Talk with your child about the changes. Knowing what to expect and getting support from you can help your child gain the confidence to manage the road ahead.

For some children summer will mean changes in their regular child care program. There may be more outdoor play and exploration. There will be new faces as familiar staff take vacations and substitutes join the program for the summer. Check with your child's program about the changes so you can help your child anticipate them. Even very young children need explanations and reassurances about changing routines.

For some families, summer means time for family trips. Planning ahead can make your trips more fun for everyone. Let children know in advance what to expect in terms of travel plans, meals, activities and bedtime routines. Blending familiar things with new experiences helps create an enjoyable vacation. Help small children pack their own travel bag with toys, books, and games and snacks. For long road trips, a picnic or a stop at a restaurant with a playground gives children a chance to exercise and recharge. Balance your eagerness to get to the destination with your children's needs for breaks.

For many parents, the end of the school year can leave you scrambling for care and activities for children. Think about your older child's growing skills and needs. Summer care options for school age children are available at several licensed child care centers. Numerous children's activities are available through the Recreation District, Library, National Park and Art Center. Meet your children's needs for summer by blending interests and talents with a planned schedule for care and activities. If you need help finding resources call EVICS.

Sometimes families will consider self care as an option for summer. Although this may be a satisfactory arrangement for a short period after school, the long days of summer require additional consideration. Find a balance for your older child between the responsibility of some hours alone and meaningful programs and activities. For middle

school children who are too old for care and too young to work, look for volunteer opportunities. These years are an important time for building self-esteem, learning new skills and broadening a child's understanding of the world.

A summer calendar, placed where everyone in the family will read it, is a wonderful way to organize new routines and schedules. Children gain a sense of control over their own activities and parents can troubleshoot potential problems. The calendar takes over the task of daily reminders and can also serve as a family message center.

Whether your family takes a summer vacation or not, remember we live in a vacation paradise! On your days off, take advantage of the many great activities our area offers. Children will get more out of a day hike or camping trip with mom or dad than an expensive trip to Elitches. The summer months are a great time to give kids new experiences that build confidence and strengthen family relationships.

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