

# The H-N REACH EarlyON at Home

## FAMILY NEWSLETTER

### READY, SET, RETURN!!

Transitions happen all the time, and reactions to them can be different for each child. As a parent, understanding the impact of any upcoming change will help you manage that transition for your child more successfully. Think about how your child thinks and feels during change, and then use strategies to help ease the transition fears (we'll show you some in this newsletter!). Since children often like to know what's going to happen in advance, don't be afraid to include them in your transition plan so that you can both be ready together. Take some deep breaths, you've got this . . . and we're here if you need any help!



### CHANGE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Change can be a wonderful and exciting experience, but it can also be a difficult one - especially for children. Whether it is a big change like moving to another town (or living through a pandemic), or a small change like moving from one activity to another, transitions can be hard. When your child is involved in an activity that they are enjoying, like staying at home with you, it may be hard for them to get their brain to switch tracks. Difficulties with transitions might even lead to some challenging behaviours, which is why it is important to have some strategies to help children lower their anxieties.

Research tells us that children need a sense of predictability, so being prepared for a big change is key. Here are some ideas that can help kids with transitions:

- 1. Prepare for it.** Prepare your child for the upcoming change. Give them a warning for when it will come and let them know what to expect. You could use a visual timer as well, like a calendar.
- 2. Something special.** Sometimes a special object is helpful. Allow your child to choose something special to bring with them (such as a special blanket or stuffed animal) to help smooth the transition. Bringing a small photo of mom and dad or the family can also be helpful, especially when transitioning into child care or school.
- 3. Co-regulate.** Yes - you've heard us say this before! Children pick up on your energy and frustration if you are rushing. Be sure to allow for extra time for your child to adjust. You will be calmer, which will help your child to stay calm too. It is all about co-regulation!
- 4. Routine.** Children have less control of their lives - they don't make the schedule or choose where they are going or what they are doing. As much as possible, we need to maintain consistency. Having a routine to follow allows for predictability, helping everyone feel prepared for the big change coming.

## SING, SING, SING!!!

Did you know that a chemical reaction happens in your brain when you sing? Singing releases endorphins, oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin – four chemicals that are responsible for happiness. Check out our Facebook page for a variety of song ideas!



## STARTING CHILDCARE AGAIN?

There are many unknowns right now about when we'll be able to open up our child care centres, or what school may look like in the Fall – so many unknowns that it is too difficult to predict. We can, however, admit that there will be changes to what we once knew and what we used to do. There will be emotional and physical changes to manage when we open the child care doors in Stage 2 of Ontario's plan to restart the economy. Furthermore, just recently, Doug Ford announced another extension of the emergency orders in the province until June 9th. So what does this mean to the parents of children waiting to go back to child care?

"Child care is going to look a lot different when it reopens and it's going to take time to gradually return to full capacity, so we're just going to have to be flexible working with families," said Shanley McNamee, General Manager of Children's Services in Toronto (and quoted from a Hamilton Spectator article published May 24, 2020, titled "What will Ontario daycares look like when they reopen?")

Framework for reopening child care centres is expected to come down from the province. That will be translated by each local public health unit and regional funders into the guidelines for each centre.



The Centres themselves will look very different. With physical distancing and above-and-beyond sanitizing practices to keep everyone safe, centres will take on a different look. "You can never completely socially distance when you're working with children," McNamee acknowledged, "but if you see what the rooms look like, they do look very different." The importance for physical distancing may mean that there will be smaller numbers in the child care centres. The silver lining? Smaller numbers means deeper connections and relationships between child care workers and the children in their care.

According to Charles Pascal, a professor of Applied Psychology and Human Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, those lower numbers may be crucial. "When the youngest of our young are going back to these centres, they're carrying with them a whole bunch of very different issues, depending on the home." Smaller numbers will bring more meaningful relationships between those young children and the people that care for them, which will help ease the transitions back to school. Early childhood educators will be able to instill a sense of calm for the children, and will still be able to "provide a great, high-quality environment for kids" (Charles Pascal, 2020).

For more information about child care services in Haldimand and Norfolk, please visit <https://onehsn.com/Haldimandnorfolk/>



# HELPING CHILDREN THROUGH TRANSITIONS

## Be Proactive

Being proactive means starting to prepare for a pending transition that could be difficult in advance of it happening. This may need to be weeks or days before, depending on the change and your child.

Returning to school or starting school for the first time could be very traumatic for some and require extra supports before school starts.

Some children may need to start at the end of July, and others one to two weeks beforehand. It could be as simple as creating a routine of 'early to bed, early to rise', or maybe a social story, or even visiting the school or child care site. The important thing is that it happens prior to the transition, which will help to eliminate stress and will set the child up to succeed.



## Talk to your child.

This may seem very simple, but it is often overlooked and undervalued. One of the main things children need from us is our guidance and reassurance. They may seem like they don't want to talk or say they are fine when really they are just too nervous or don't know how to express what they are feeling. As a parent, we can provide them with a safe format to express themselves and validate their feelings. Sometimes it helps to share similar experiences you have gone through. Feeling a connection to you can help them feel less alone, and when making the transition, it will feel less scary and overwhelming.

## Give choices.

Being overwhelmed can increase children's fears and anxieties, causing them to feel out of control and uncertain. By providing choices, you will be supporting them in regaining control. Some choices you could provide include snack items that they can choose from, outfits they could wear that day, or even what activity they will get to do at the end of the day, like playing a board game together or a storytime. In the end, the choice is meant to give them a sense of control over their situation.

Retrieved from: <https://lifewithasideoftheunexpected.com/help-children-with-transitions/>

## SENSORY BREAKS

Sensory activities can make great transition 'bridges'. They can help your child regulate emotions and you can often do them anywhere and anytime! They can be active or calming activities depending on the child and the situation.



### Active Sensory Breaks

- Walk while balancing something on your head
- Quickly touch something 'red'
- Go for a quick run around the yard
- Play follow the leader
- Do jumping jacks
- Squeeze your hands together
- Do some yoga poses.

### Calming Sensory Breaks

- Tap your head and rub your tummy at the same time
- Wrap up in a blanket like a hotdog
- Hug your favourite stuffed animal
- Take deep breaths
- Eat a crunchy snack
- Close your eyes and think of a happy place

# RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Who doesn't like pizza!! Check out this easy to make recipe that you and your child can do together!

## Simple English Muffin Pizzas

English muffins

Jar of pizza sauce

Grated cheese

Your choice of toppings: pepperoni, mushrooms, peppers, pineapple

1. Cut muffin in two.
2. Spread pizza sauce on each half.
3. Add your favourite topping.
4. Sprinkle with grated cheese.
5. Bake in 425° oven for 10 to 12 minutes
6. Enjoy!!



Change the way  
you look at things,  
and the things you  
look at will change.

Wayne W. Dyer

## WE ARE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

Yes, things have changed a lot over the past month, but we are still here to help! Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is considered an essential service, and even though our sites are closed, we are working at home to stay connected with everyone, and to help those in need during these turbulent times.

**If you or your child are in crisis, our Child and Youth Crisis Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-866-327-3224**

Feel free to find us on Facebook - we are the Haldimand-Norfolk REACH EarlyON Child and Family Centre! We're always posting activity ideas, circle time videos and stories, and tips to stay healthy at home.

Have an idea you'd like to see us try? Email us at [earlyon@hnreach.on.ca](mailto:earlyon@hnreach.on.ca)