

THE TRANSITION STORM

Vulnerable children may feel deeply frightened by the end and start of the school year, Christmas holidays or half term breaks. The change of routine and the inevitable losses and separations may bring back old feelings of abandonment, loss and threat. It's a challenging time for everyone, children and adults alike.

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE TRANSITION TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND TEACHERS ON SUPPORTING AND SURVIVING THE TRANSITION STORM.

ADULTS: GET PREPARED



It's useful for adults to emotionally prepare themselves for the transition storm. Put your seat-belt on and hold tight, the child needs you to be safe, grounded and within your window of tolerance.

Remind yourself that the child's behaviour is a sign of their inside pain and turbulence. They need you to see underneath their behaviour to help them feel safe, secure and loved.

Looking past surface behaviours down to the inside pain can be hard and tiring work. Take good care of yourself and reach out to your support network for extra help.

Remind yourself that punishments, withdrawal, consequences and shaming will make the transition harder for everyone.

Help the child to see the storm coming too. You could try *"The end of the school year can be tricky, I'm here to help you through it."*

Help the child name the sensations or feelings they have no words for. You could try *"I wonder if 'moving up day' feels pretty scary right now?"* or *"When things are different, I wonder if it makes you feel worried in your tummy?"*.

Help make connections between their behaviour and their feelings or body sensations. You could try *"When you run away like that it makes me wonder if you don't know where to be to feel safe?"*.

Words don't always help, sometimes just sitting and keeping a child safe whilst they are experiencing difficult thoughts, feelings or sensations is enough.

NAME IT TO TAME IT



BE CRYSTAL CLEAR



Tell the child the things they need to hear. Don't wait for them to ask you, they might not know what they need or be able to find the words. Let them know:

- How much you care
- That you're not going anywhere
- That they are in your mind even when not at home or class
- That they're safe and protected
- That they will not be taken away

Tell them what is going to happen that day if the routine is different. Use pictures and steps or even videos to prepare them. Remind them throughout the day what is going to happen. Keep as much of the usual routine in as you can.

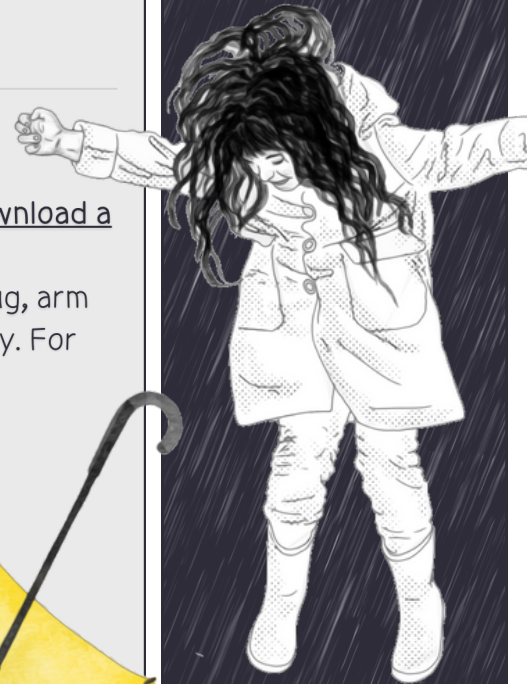
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We feel fear in our body which may send us into our survival modes. Be curious and notice what helps bring the child down from fight, flight or freeze mode or moves them up from collapse mode. You could try:

- Doing short and regular bursts of physical movements. Star jumps, bouncing or running to wake up their body up or wall push ups, crawling through tunnels or a slow walk to calm their body down. [Download a free relational body regulation game here.](#)
- For children who you know can tolerate safe touch, a deep or light hug, arm rub or hand massage can be helpful to bring them back into their body. For those who find touch difficult, you could try asking them to mirror a butterfly hug with you.
- Offer regulating activities little and often throughout the day. Check out our free [brainstem soothers resource](#) for ideas.
- Have regulating snacks handy. Spicy, sour, cold or crunchy snacks for waking up the body, warm, sweet, creamy or chewy snacks for calming the body.

Learn more about our survival modes and our unique window of tolerance by [watching our free animation.](#)

HELP THEIR BODY



STAY CONNECTED



- Use transitional objects to let them know that you are connected, even when you are apart. Parents and carers, try drawing a little heart on your hand and the same heart on your child's hand as they go off to school. Give your child a special stone, gem or even fabric with your scent on to hold onto.
- Teachers, try giving your child a nice transition card or a piece of paper with a special message on that they look after until you see them again. [Download free transition cards here.](#)
- Let the child hold special teddies or (safe) relational objects whenever they need to, even at school.
- Use your phone to connect with adolescents, send photos or gifs that are personal to them without expecting a reply back!

Connection can be really difficult and sometimes frightening for a child who has experienced trauma and for parents and carers who have experienced trauma fuelled violence in the home. Check out our [free connection resource](#) for ideas of ways to connect that are tolerable for everyone.

Remind the child and yourself that the transition storm will come and it will go. You will stick it out together and it will soon be over. Transitions are temporary.



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