



Toddler Transitions

Understanding 3 Key Behavioral Profiles

Toddlers are full of energy, curiosity, and individuality, which makes each one a unique person. However, certain patterns of behavior tend to emerge during a toddler's transition to Children's House that can help you better understand and support them during this exciting transition.

Below are descriptions of three common behavioral profiles often seen as toddlers enter into the Children's House community.

1 Pick Up-Isle 7
Do To vs. Do With

2 Thoughtful Watcher
Engagement through Observing

3 Budding Believer
Cautious Explorer

This guide is designed to help you recognize these patterns, understand their underlying needs, and respond in ways that encourage growth, confidence, and connection. Whether the toddler is bold and adventurous, reserved and cautious, or somewhere in between, this handout offers practical insights to meet them where they are and recommendations on how to prepare your self and your environment to receive these unique children into your community.





“Pick Up -Isle 7”

DO TO VS. DO WITH



CHARACTERISTICS

- Everything in the new environment is exciting. Attention is focused on everything. Attention span is short.
- There is a strong drive to explore tactilely and this is how they orient themselves to new environments.
- The child can be overstimulated and overly excited by this new environment.
- This child hasn't yet crossed the bridge to consciousness, so they haven't made the connection that they can be in relationships with the environment.
- They are focused on what they can DO TO the environment vs. what they can DO WITH the environment.
- This child is most confident with big movement energy and will use big movements confidently when exploring. Expect to see climbing, running, banging, etc.
- Language may be evolving but the child prefers to communicate through actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Movement as Communication

- Toddlers use movement as a form of exploration and expression, not with the intent to harm but to understand the world around them. Movement reflects curiosity in action.

Proximity Tether Technique

- Stay close to the child to establish a boundary that promotes safe exploration and success.
- Adjust proximity based on the child's growing independence and comfort in their environment.

Watch with Me Technique

- Model observing others at work.
- Invite the child to join you as you engage with others.
- Turn exploration into opportunities for language development and modeling
- Scaffold refinement of movement activities allow the child to continue to refine motor movements starting with bigger movements first.

Bring Me Game

- Practice matching objects to areas in the environment.
- Incorporate early language lessons through naming and describing.
- Partner with a "Three Period Lesson" to teach the names of classroom parts.

Building Relationships

- Utilize planned conversations, question game or story cards to help build relationship
- Use small group lessons to introduce grace, courtesy, and classroom protocols.
- Teach "how-to" skills, such as observing others, shelving items, rolling rugs, and participating in classroom routines to increase independence.

Immersion in Core Areas

- Guide the child toward practical life, sensorial, and cultural activities to support hands-on learning and independence.

Positive Language

- Use more "yes" language to encourage exploration and autonomy, reducing the focus on "no" to create a more positive and supportive learning environment.



Thoughtful Watcher

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OBSERVING

CHARACTERISTICS

- This child incorporates into the class in a quiet manner. Doesn't fully engage with the environment and may seem like they are disengaged.
- Quiet observation is their preferred method of orienting themselves to new environments.
- May not engage when directly asked by the guide but can be observed quietly picking materials at their own pace.
- May often stand by other children who are working and watch
- Use of language is limited/controlled and adults may be driven to ask "20 questions" as a way to connect.
- This child's preferred communication may be to sit and wait or to use nonverbal communication strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sideline Supporter

- Be a sideline supporter letting the child know what you are available when they are ready to learn something new or would like to explore something in the classroom
- Use "proximity" and "non-verbal" check-ins with the child through early parts of the day
- Encourage and reinforce they are going to be a great addition to the class, how many different things they are going to experience etc. Keep inviting them to join.

Early Language Work

- Even if the child isn't using language provide them with language. They are watching and observing so this work will provide them with the confidence they need when they are ready.

Watch with Me Technique

- Model observing others at work.
- Invite the child to join you as you engage with others or ask them to be a part of group lessons with older children.
- Stay persistent with giving lessons even if the child isn't ready for repetition. They are observing

Building Relationships

- Utilize planned conversations, question game or story cards to help build relationship
- Use tools small group lessons to introduce grace, courtesy, and classroom protocols.
- Teach "how-to" skills, such as observing others, shelving items, rolling rugs, and participating in classroom routines to increase independence.

Immersion in Core Areas

- Guide the child toward practical life, sensorial, and cultural activities to support hands-on learning and independence.

Power of Observation

- Through your own observation, identify the areas where the child is gravitating to independently and build this into your planning.
- Integrate your observations into your planned conversations with the child to further support building a relationship with them and building confidence.



Budding Believer

UNSURE EXPLORER



CHARACTERISTICS

- This child is unsure of the new transition. Their optimism in this new environment hasn't bloomed and they want to be a part of the community but feel overwhelmed with the newness of it all.
- This child may be highly emotional, "clingy", and unable to initially function without significant help and support.
- They use emotional expression as the main form of communication, and they will often say "no" using verbal and nonverbal language.
- This child's understanding of the environment is still centered on the adult and they are tethered closely to the adult. This strong connection to the adult is how they orient themselves to the new environment.
- The use of "No" verbal or nonverbal is used to avoid the uncertainty of trying something new. The power of this word will often remove an expectation.
- The psychological environment is more important to this child than the physical environment.
- The child may benefit from having someone designated as "their person" who will be a constant presence and in close proximity until their optimism blooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grow Optimism and Confidence

- Be a sideline supporter letting the child know what you are available when they are ready to learn something new or would like to explore something in the classroom
- Use "proximity" and "non-verbal" check-ins with the child throughout the day to provide reassurance.
- Encourage and reinforce they are going to be a great addition to the class, how many different things they are going to experience etc.

Proximity Tether Technique

- Stay close to the child as you are considered the center of their environment.
- Adjust proximity based on the child's growing independence and comfort in their environment.
- Use verbal and nonverbal communication to make your close proximity known.
- Have the child join you as you engage with others.

Early Language Work

- Even if the child isn't using language provide them with language. They are watching and observing so this work will provide them with the confidence they need when they are ready.

Building Relationships

- Utilize planned conversations, question game or story cards to help build relationship

Immersion in Core Areas

- Guide the child toward practical life, sensorial, and cultural activities to support growing optimism and confidence

Watch with Me Technique

- Invite the child to join you as you engage with others or ask them to be a part of group lessons with older children.
- Stay persistent with giving lessons even if the child isn't ready for repetition. They are observing