



Families in Transition January 2012

At some time or another, most families experience some type of transition. Whatever the situation or the circumstances, transitions affect families, and the children in the family are no exception. Sometimes, the adults are easily lost in their own transitions and the concerns connected to them, therefore failing to recognize signs that their children are having difficulties, too. Adults should not take for granted that children will adjust easily to the changes.

RECOGNIZE TRANSITIONS: Major events such as the ones listed below, are clearly stressors. And even though these life events are natural and sometimes expected, they may feel like a huge thing to a child or teen. Know what transitions can cause kids to display different behaviors.

- Moving from one residence to another
- Changing schools
- Moving from one town to another
- Puberty
- Loss of a girl/boy friend
- Family illness or injury
- Transitioning from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school
- Moving to a foster home
- Adding or losing a family member (births, deaths, divorce, remarriage, etc.)
- Blending families
- Family member leaving home (military deployment, college, marriage)

WHY ARE THESE TRANSITIONS TOUGH?

- Being the new kid in a school is difficult for many kids. They may feel unwelcome or like they don't fit in.
- Going from the top grade in one school to the bottom in the next school can make kids feel intimidated.
- Major physical changes, while normal, may make children feel uncomfortable or embarrassed by their body.
- When a relationship ends, it feels like the ultimate rejection, which adults may pass off too easily.
- Adjusting to having one parent means taking on more responsibility at home and the child is often worried about the parent who is absent.
- It can be hard to concentrate at school when the student's mind is on a home situation.
- An injured or seriously ill member of the family can mean more responsibilities and learning a new way of life. Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder aren't visible and may be difficult to understand.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Pay attention to the child's feelings, concerns and needs.
- Staying involved in the child's life is the single most important thing a parent/guardian can do.
- Use the following checklist to help:
 - ✓ Am I encouraging open dialogue?
 - ✓ Am I setting aside one-on-one bonding time?
 - ✓ Am I monitoring and communicating more?
 - ✓ Am I discussing the dangers of alcohol and drugs?

TOP 5 REASONS TEENS USE DRUGS DURING TRANSITIONS: Adolescents who have never used drugs are more likely to start during times of transition in order to cope with stress.

1. To combat loneliness
2. To mentally "check out" of family issues or school trouble
3. To ease discomfort in an unfamiliar situation
4. To look cool or change their image/reputation
5. To fit in with a desired group of friends.

The SCIP Team at your child's school can offer a family many resources to help their children adjust to these transitions.

(Source: www.TimeToTalk.org)