

## **Are You Ready For Change?**

**Is your child starting preschool or are you starting a new activity, such as gymnastics or dance or Moppets?**

**Regardless, anytime there is a change in a preschooler's or young child's routine, there is often stress and strain felt by the parent(s). No matter how minor that change seems to you, it could be dramatic for your young one. Here are a few helpful hints to ease the transition for your child.**

**Keep your morning routine the same. If you always eat breakfast together or take a morning bath or watch a favorite cartoon, continue to do so. Even if it means getting up a little earlier to be prepared your child will appreciate the "normal routine." Prepare snack bags or special items they need to take the night before.**

**PREPARE your child. When you are out of your comfort zone, you need to know ahead of time in order to adjust well. For days ahead, build anticipation. Talk about all of the positive aspects of the new activity: the new teachers, new friends, crafts, playtime, etc. Take him/her shopping for some small new item to take to this new place. Build it up to be an exciting place. There are very few kids who are told they are going to Disneyland who are disappointed. If your attitude is positive, most of the time your young child's will be as well. Also, explain that she/he will be dropped off and you will return to pick them up. Let them know you will not be staying with them. Otherwise, they may see that as an option.**

**On the first big day, make a special breakfast; tuck a little note or surprise in their snack bag. Do something special that lets your toddler know you are thinking about them and excited for them. BE POSITIVE! The most destructive thing you can do as a parent when a child is dropped off is to act apprehensive. If your child sees you are having a hard time leaving, they will think "There must be something wrong with this place," and they will have a hard time letting you leave. Often times, our body language and actions reflect what we believe our child is capable of. In a new**

situation, your child will look to you to see how to react. If your body language says, 'you are not capable' of separating from me, then they will truly believe and behave as if they are not capable of this separation. Do them a favor and kiss them goodbye and do not look back. Remember, you are leaving them in hand perfectly capable of caring for them and you are only a phone call away.

Ask your child how she/he is feeling about the change. Often, we assume that we know how our child is feeling. At times, anxiety in children can be disguised as physical symptoms. If you have an introverted child, they will often not relate anxiety or negative feelings verbally. Feeling of uncertainty and nervousness may instead be manifested by physical symptoms such as stomach pains or headaches. These are usually first thing in the morning. They do not normally disrupt a child's daily activity. Although the child may complain of discomfort, they usually sleep ok, eat ok and play ok. It never disrupts FUN activity. The pain is very real to your child, but it is a symptom of repressed feelings. Discussing openly with your child that it is ok to talk about feelings (whether good or bad) or having them draw pictures about how they are feeling, will allow them a release for the negative energy. Stress must get out one way or another.

Have fun and remember 'this too shall pass'. You will look back fondly at this time.