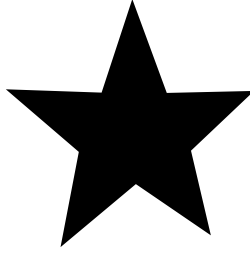


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# Introduction

*Susan and her three-year-old son Michael had been in the waiting room of the doctor's office for almost thirty minutes. Michael, well past being able to sit quietly and look at books, crawled underneath the chairs across from Susan. An elderly couple across the waiting room gave Susan looks that made her feel like she was a terrible parent. Susan was at her wits' end. She had picked Michael up from day care and driven forty-five minutes to the doctor, and now they were sitting and waiting again. She knew they would have to wait still more inside the exam room, and then there was the forty-five-minute car ride home again. She wished she had remembered to bring some toys along for Michael to play with, but he quickly tired of all his familiar toys from home, anyway. There had to be an easier way to help Michael get through these times.*

A child's day is full of transitions. There are transitions outside the home—for example, traveling from home to preschool or day care, from one child care program to another, trips in the car. There are waits at the grocery store, Laundromat, doctor's office, and siblings' sporting events. Children also have to make transitions at home—preparing to leave the house in the morning, getting ready for bed, waiting for a meal, picking up toys, and so on. Changing focus to move from one activity to the next is hard enough for adults, who feel some degree of control over their daily schedules. It can be very difficult for young children, to whom schedule changes often seem random. It's hard on adults to wait for long periods of time, and nearly impossible for young children.

Caregivers know that a child needs quality time with a parent in order to grow up healthy, happy, and secure, and yet parents and children are increasingly busy with activities outside the home, and increasingly occupied by the many tasks of running a household when they are home. Children today have many transitions to manage in a day, and less attention and time than ever from the adults in their lives. Professional

caregivers can use this book to help parents turn those precious minutes with their children into quality family time.

As we wrote this book, we kept in mind all the families struggling with the everyday situations described above. In workshops on our previous books for teachers, *Transition Magician* and *Transition Magician 2*, parents have described their challenges in guiding their children through everyday transitions and routines. In *Transition Magician for Families*, we have written activities for parents and children to do both at home and away from home, not just to survive transition times but to enjoy and make the most of these valuable opportunities for building skills and relationships. We have adapted many ideas for use at home from both *Transition Magician* and *Transition Magician 2*, and added fun new ideas as well. All the activities either can be done without special materials, or use props that can be made easily and inexpensively at home with the instructions given here.

While this book has ideas for parents, it is actually written for early childhood professionals to use in their work of supporting the parents of young children. In the first chapter of the book, we discuss the ways that early childhood professionals can support parents to help their children manage transitions. The next five chapters present a collection of activities to use during everyday transition times. The activities are divided into five categories according to the type of transition time they might be used in and children's developmental needs during transition times. The five transition categories are:

- ★ **Everyday Routines**—activities to help a parent guide a child smoothly through routines at home, such as leaving the house in the morning, picking up toys, or getting ready for bed.
- ★ **Busy Times**—activities for a child to do on his or her own while the parent is busy with household routines and responsibilities, such as preparing the meal, talking on the telephone, cleaning the house, or studying.
- ★ **Together Times**—quality activities for parent and child to do together when they are in between the routines of the day.
- ★ **On the Move**—activities for children to do while traveling, both on the everyday trip to school or child care, and on longer trips.
- ★ **While You Wait**—activities to do while waiting at places away from home such as the doctor's office or laundry, or in quiet places such as religious services.

All the activities are written in a reproducible form so that they may be photocopied and given to parents.

The final chapter shows early childhood professionals how to design and set up two *Transition Magician* workshops (one for parents, the other for parents and children) using the transition ideas and props from this book.

We hope that the ideas in this book will be useful for early childhood professionals in supporting the families they work with. Children grow up so quickly. Parents can do more than just “get through” the hectic busy days of raising children, and people who work in early childhood can help them. The ideas in this book will help you to support parents so that they can cherish every opportunity they have to create memories of fun, special activities with their children each day.

# Parent Pointer

## EVERYDAY ROUTINES

### Beat the Clock

When cleanup time becomes tedious and difficult for your child, set a timer. Children love to play “beat the clock.” Setting a timer for children to race at cleanup time will spur them to move quickly to get those toys picked up. Choose either a bell-type kitchen timer or an hourglass timer that must be watched rather than listened for.

Start by setting guidelines with your child, to encourage putting toys away with care. Set the timer for a realistic amount of time (for example, eight to ten minutes to start with) so that your child can experience success. As your child gets faster, you can gradually cut back on the number of minutes. As with any strategy you try with your child, put the timer away when he or she tires of it and get it out again a few months later.

You can also use the timer to help children get dressed quickly in the morning, or to get ready for bed.

