

Toddlers' transition to early childhood education and care (ECEC)

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Transitions in general

- Change and reorganization
- Comfortable in a new setting
- Growth and development



Brooker, 2008; Carr, 2001; Duggan & Pearson, 2014; O'Connor, 2018

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Toddlers transition from home to ECEC

- Familiarity with the new environment
- Relationships with caregivers and peers
- Help to deal with separation and negative emotions

Brooker, 2008; www.developingchild.harvard.edu

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Transitions to ECEC may differ

Successful transitions:

- ✓ Positive feelings (strength, competence, happiness etc.)
- ✓ Support and positive stress

Unhappy transitions:

- Negative feelings (frustration, fear, loss)
- Short- and long term problems



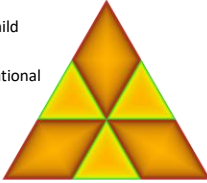
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Transition = establishing «the caring triangle»

- Parent enter the ECEC together with the child
- The key worker becomes an important relational figure
- Strong relationships



Brooker, 2008, 2010

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Research focusing on toddlers' transition to ECEC




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Levels of stress during transition

- Levels of cortisol in saliva samples
 - Helps us to understand the child's experience during transitions
- High levels of cortisol in the morning, and a decline during the day

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A Norwegian study of 121 toddlers (Nystad et al., 2021)

- A1 = second day with parents
- A2 = third day with parents
- S1 = first day without parents
- S2 = second day without parents
- F = follow up after 4-6 weeks

- The youngest children (starting before the age of 14 months) showed higher cortisol levels

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Preliminary findings about wellbeing and stress during the first period without parents in ECEC

100 toddlers in 41 ECEC centers in Trondheim, Norway

- 1= First week without parents
- 2= Second week
- 3= Third week
- 4= After three months

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Other reseach findings about transitions

- Most toddlers seem to adjust during the first month (Nystad et al., 2021; Drugli, 2019)
- BUT: some toddlers need four to five months (Datler et al., 2012)
- Key-person approach seems to ease the transitions (Brooker, 2008; Ebbeck & Yim, 2009)
- Parent anxiety has negative impact on the transition (Swartz et al., 2016)

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How to support toddlers' transition to ECEC?

- It's a process
- Informed parents
- Strong and continuous dialogue

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How to support....

- ECEC invites parents and toddlers to frequent visits before the start
 - Parents and toddlers become familiar = smooth transition
 - Caregivers get useful insight = flexible support

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How to support....

- Establishing caregiver-child relationships
 - The best predictive factor for a positive transition
- Key persons
- Supportive parents
 - May need to stay several days in ECEC together with the child
- Transition objects

How to support.....

- The first three weeks can be particularly challenging
- Toddlers need predictive routines in ECEC and at home and a lot of support
 - Sensitive and stimulating care
 - Peer relationships and play
 - Time with parents in afternoons
 - Enough sleep
- Early wellbeing – reduced stress



Thank you for your attention!

