

Understanding Transitions In Autism







Transitions are the moments when we move from one thing to another.

For autistic people, transitions can sometimes feel stressful, overwhelming, tiring, or emotionally big – even when the change seems small to others.



1 What Are Transitions?

Transitions happen all throughout our day. They can be big or small.

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|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  leaving home |  moving classrooms |  ending a favourite activity |  bedtime |  changes in plans |  starting school / work |  holidays / travel |  meeting new people |  changing tasks |  sensory or environmental changes |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|

★ Transitions involve change, shifting focus, or moving between activities, people, places or routines.

2 Macro Changes

Big changes that often need lots of preparation.

- moving house
- starting a new school
- changing jobs
- holidays or travel
- family changes
- changing routines long-term
- starting college or university



Macro changes are bigger life transitions that may need extra support, preparation, and recovery time.

3 Micro Changes

Small everyday changes that can still feel big to the nervous system.

- a lesson ending
- plans changing suddenly
- switching activities
- someone sitting in a different seat
- a different route home
- unexpected visitors
- food or brand changes
- a different teacher or support staff
- stopping an activity before feeling ready



Micro changes may seem "small" to others, but they can still feel overwhelming, exhausting, or emotionally significant.

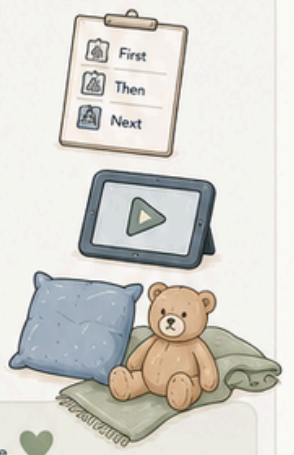
4 Why Transitions Can Feel Difficult

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|--|--|---|---|--|
|  uncertainty creates worry |  needs more processing time |  switching attention is hard work |  emotional preparation takes energy |  sensory changes can feel intense |
|  loss of predictability feels unsafe |  leaving safe or familiar things is hard |  can increase anxiety |  uses up nervous system energy |  can lead to overwhelm, meltdowns or shutdowns |

♥ It's not about being "difficult" – it's about how our brains and bodies experience change.

5 What Can Help?

- ♥ knowing what is happening and when
- ♥ visual schedules and timetables
- ♥ countdowns, timers and transition warnings
- ♥ videos, photos or virtual previews
- ♥ extra processing time before and after
- ♥ familiar people and safe support
- ♥ comfort items or transition objects
- ♥ reassurance and clear information
- ♥ recovery time and low demands afterwards



♥ Preparation, predictability and support help our brains and bodies feel safer during change.



Remember ♥

Transitions can take energy.
 Understanding and support can help autistic people feel safer and more prepared during change.



Small changes can still feel big. Compassion and preparation matter.