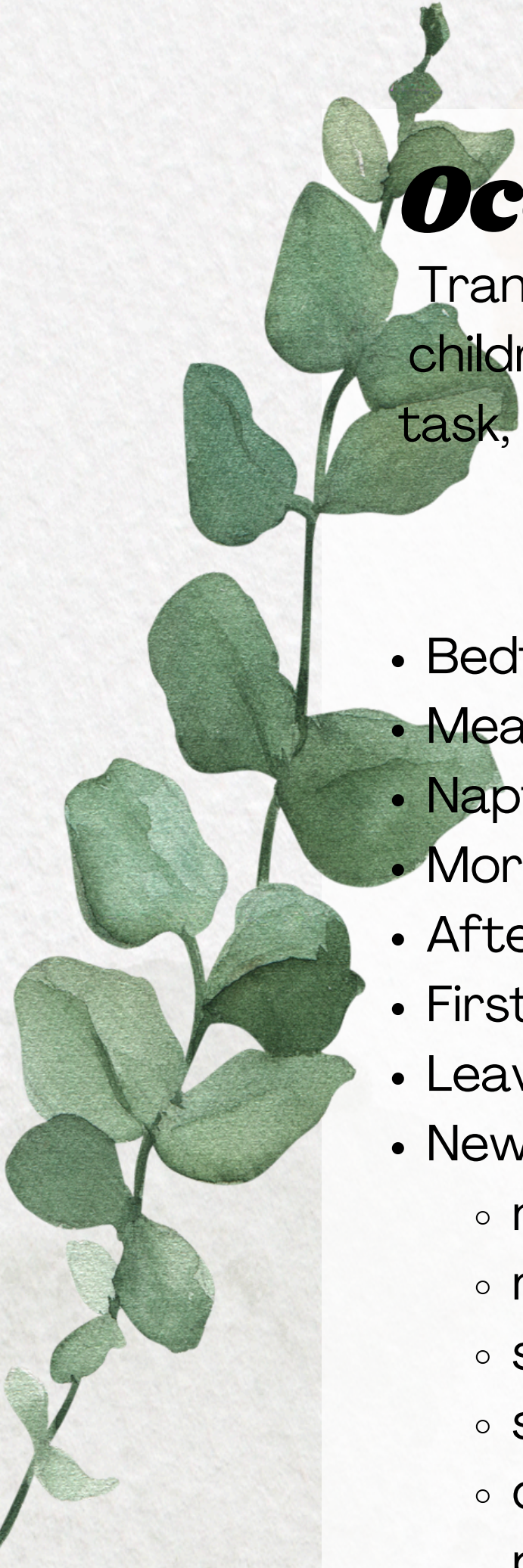




Occupational Therapy: Transitions

Transitions are when we change from one activity to another. When young children struggle with transitioning between activities, stopping a preferred task, and beginning a non-preferred activity, a transition struggle can occur.

Transition Periods Include:

- Bedtime
- Mealtime
- Naptime
- Morning routine (getting to school, daycare, etc.)
- After mealtime
- First day of school or a special day of school (field trip, class assembly, etc.)
- Leaving a preferred activity or space (playground, etc.)
- New life component:
 - new sibling
 - moving to a new home
 - starting a new school or daycare
 - starting a new classroom
 - changing teachers or acquiring a new personal aide or therapy practitioners, medical provider, etc.
- New skill component: Moving from a toddler bed to a big kid bed, starting toilet training, teething, losing teeth, medical changes, etc.

Why are Transitions Challenging?

The challenge with transitions is that when one preferred activity or event is happening, the child doesn't want to stop/change because there is a sense of unknown about what will happen next.

Transitions can be Especially Difficult for:

- Those with communication challenges:
- Autism
- Delayed verbal skills
- Other childhood diagnoses
- Individuals with sensory processing challenges
- Those with auditory processing considerations
- Children of younger age: infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and even kindergarten aged children
- Children with experience of previous difficult transitions
- Children without a stable home situation
- Those with executive functioning needs

Transition Strategies for Kids

Visual Schedules

To help give children concrete expectations, use a visual schedule and auditory cues. Give children a multi-sensory approach to directions using:

- A timer paired with a visual schedule
- First, then visual boards



Allowing Extra Time



Children tend to put their whole self into an activity, so it is important to give plenty of time to finish what they are currently doing.

Give a 5 minute and 2 minute warning (paired with some audio and visual cues). This will give a child plenty of time to finish what they are currently working on.

Deep Breathing Techniques

The use of deep breathing techniques is effective for older children as a tool for self-regulation. When the child presents with being in a stuck or anxious state, they can regulate and calm themselves by stopping and focusing on breathing.

This period of reset lets them restart and move onto the next task, even if they initially felt overwhelmed by the change.



References

- AOTA. (n.d.). Transitions. American Occupational Therapy Association. <https://www.aota.org/-/media/corporate/files/practice/back-to-school/transitions.pdf>
- Beck, C. (2023, August 28). Transitions for children. The OT Toolbox. <https://www.theottoolbox.com/transitions-for-children/>