

MARCH
2022



DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR
Excellence *in*
Early Childhood



EMBRACING CHANGE



Written by Meghan Pallante, Delaware Stars Technical Assistant

Change is something that is inevitable in the human experience. Some of us thrive on change and others dread it. Both are completely normal reactions! For many of us, learning to embrace change takes time and practice. Think of all we have experienced throughout the past two years while dealing with COVID-19. Both adults and children have adapted time and time again, amidst the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic. Although it may not have been easy at times, we have been able to adjust and continue moving forward. So how does one learn to embrace change? Let's examine some strategies!



Strategies for Embracing Change

- Take a breath- When faced with a situation that requires you to adjust your thinking or your routine, take a minute to digest all of the information. Try not to let initial reactions cloud your thought process.
- Feel all the feelings- Be sure to hold space for all of the emotions you are feeling. All emotions deserve validity and it can be normal to feel some anxiety and sadness when faced with change. It is important to acknowledge all emotions before moving forward with a plan.
- Refocus and reframe- After acknowledging any negative emotions about the situation, try to adjust your thought process. Yes, there may be unavoidable challenges but there may also be some positives. Focus on these “silver linings” first. Focusing on the positives can help reveal strategies to tackle the challenges later.
- Plan- Spend time planning how you will move forward. It can help to do a “brain dump” by writing down all of your thoughts and ideas about the situation. Take these thoughts and ideas and use them to create a strategy for moving forward.



Embracing Change as an Early Childhood Educator

As with many fields of work, change can be expected in early childhood education. Educators leave, children move on, among other things. There are many dynamics to consider in an early childhood education program, including the children, staff, and families. Each part can have an effect on the whole.

When dealing with any challenges that come along with change be sure to turn to those around you for support. For center-based and large family child care programs, this could mean working together with the other teachers on staff. For family child care (FCC) programs, this could mean consulting with other FCC educators. Early childhood education takes a village, don't be afraid to reach out to yours!

It is also important to be proactive when dealing with change. It is helpful to have policies and procedures in place BEFORE situations arise. Although it can be hard to anticipate what changes you may encounter, it helps tremendously to be prepared. This also helps keep things consistent. For example, having a procedure in place for when an educator leaves the program can help make things easier in the moment.

Supporting Children in Dealing with Change

Our job as an early childhood educator is to not only care for and educate our children, but also to help guide them. Children are learning about change every day from the time they are infants. It may seem insignificant to us, but changes in their schedules and routines can be a big deal for them. There are many things we can do throughout the day to help children to adjust to changes.

One of the best ways to help children prepare for a transition is to give them a warning. Let them know in advance that you will be moving from one activity to the next. For infants, chat with them about what you will be doing. Let them know that you will be taking them for a diaper change rather than just picking them up without any words. This helps them to know what to expect.

Another big change for a child is when they start attending an early childhood education program for the first time or transition to a new program. Having a plan can help the child and their family to better navigate the transition. Consider having the family come for a first visit with the child and then a second short visit for the child to come without their family. This helps to ease them into their new environment. The same type of transition can also be done when a child moves to a new classroom within the early childhood program. The child could visit their new classroom throughout a week, starting with an hour and gradually increasing the amount of time.

These are just a few strategies to cope with the various changes we encounter. It is important for us to develop these different strategies because one thing is certain, change is unavoidable. And, though it might not always seem like it, change is a good thing!

Resources

- [Easing Transitions for Children and Families- NAEYC](#)
- [Tools for Leadership: Embracing Change and Thriving with Intentionality- McCormick Center](#)
- [Coping with Change- Zero to Three](#)