

## The importance of predictability... and how to support change.

### Why is a predictable environment important?

Many children benefit from safe, predictable environments and relationships to help them feel calm and able to learn. Within the early childhood setting these can include consistent routines, relationships, and responses to situations. Research has shown a lack of predictability and change are the primary sources of anxiety in children. Autistic children may especially benefit from predictable routines and strategies that increase their understanding of what they are to do, what is coming next, and how long they are able to do something.

### How can I create a safe, predictable learning environment?

- Strong routines.
- Prepare children for transitions and changes in advance of them occurring.
- Using visuals with verbal instructions.
- Strong connections between adults and children.
- Offer children opportunities to co-regulate with consistent adults.
- Children are seen as competent and capable.
- Each child's sense of identity is valued and encouraged.
- A child's agency is valued within the environment and children have opportunities to make choices, allowing them to have some control within routines and transitions.
- Consider how the environment can help a child know what is expected.
- Educators are aware of children's individual learning preferences and individual processing times, and they are supported within the context of routine.

Morning  
Tea




### How can I support a change in my environment?

- Give children time to adjust to a planned change, for example *“tomorrow we are going to eat outside.”*
- ‘What To Expect’ stories. A story about the change in routine.
- Use visuals, e.g. the visual timetable could show a photo of the new eating area.

- Show, don’t tell e.g. adults can show children where the new eating area will be.

Example visual schedule:

<b>1.</b>	 <p><b>Group time</b></p>	 <p><b>Finished</b></p>
<b>2.</b>	 <p><b>Morning tea</b></p>	 <p><b>Finished</b></p>
<b>3.</b>	 <p><b>Outside play</b></p>	 <p><b>Finished</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	 <p><b>Lunch</b></p>	 <p><b>Finished</b></p>

- Provide individual support. This might include saying ‘remember we are eating morning tea outside today’ to the child when they arrive.
  - Use less words – keep it simple.
- Use a child’s interests. e.g. *“we could take the dinosaurs outside with us.”*

- Offer a choice, e.g. *“Could we put the bin here, or here?”*
- Give specific positive feedback.

- Show a ‘something is different’ visual.

