Using Routines to Help Children Adjust After COVID Closures and Other Disruptions

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About Me

2001

2016

TODAY!
Objectives

Explore the impact of COVID on young children

Provide strategies to support children's adjustment in school that can be shared with parents

Impact of COVID on Children

- multiple losses
- frequent and unexpected changes in routine
- absence of socialization and learning through play
- mental health concerns

Impact of COVID on Children

Trauma Responses that include:

- developmental regressions
- anger and aggression
- non-compliance
- apathy and withdrawal
- anxiety
Challenges to Parents in the Age of COVID
Loss of structure in the household
Frequent changes in routine
Balancing work responsibilities while facilitating children’s learning
Job loss and financial stress
Social isolation
90% of children's brain development occurs before age 5

Objectives

Strategies to Support Children Returning after COVID
- Implement a Daily Visual Schedule
- Structure Transitions
- Child-Led Play
- Choices
Implement a Daily Visual Schedule: Why

- Developmentally Appropriate
- Internalize Routine
- Supports Coping Skills

Daily Visual Schedule
Create a list of visually represented activities
Review each morning and throughout the day
Note changes
Acknowledge when completed
Parents: Utilize a travel schedule

"He goes to school in person Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday to work with me, and Thursday and Friday he's home with his grandmother. His schedule goes everywhere and helps him cope with all the change."
Pair visual with verbal warnings

- 5 minutes
- 2 minutes
- 1 minute
- End of activity
- Reinforce expectation

Children of early childhood age should receive no more than two hours of screen time per day.

American Association of Pediatrics
How to Use Play to Support Expression and Emotional Coping Skills

Why Play?
- Most natural means for expression and social-emotional learning
- Skills acquired through natural, unscripted interactions
- Rapport and Relationship

Play-Based Strategies
- Allow the Child to Lead
- Describe their Play
- Frame their Play Behavior as a Choice or Decision
Choices: How to Generalize at Home

Video: Child-led play, Describe Actions, Frame Play Behavior as a Choice/Decision

"Me and Christian in the room of toys."
"The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agent of change, and the most powerful therapy is human love."

Bruce Perry, MD

Summary
- Developmentally appropriate, best-practice strategies support adjustment and coping skills
- Implement a daily visual schedule
- Structure transitions
- Engage in play at child's level, allow them to lead, describe their actions, frame play behavior as a choice or decision
- Give developmentally appropriate choices
- Share strategies with parents