



Support. Education. Local Events.
for Adoptive Families



In this Issue:

**Why is Transition
so Hard?**

**Navigating Tough
Transitions**

**Michigan Alliance
for Families**

**Events, Training,
and Family Activities**

**Bethany Locations
& Counties Served**

Websites

The PARC newsletter is published quarterly.
Please direct questions and comments to
parcnewsletter@bethany.org

Bethany Christian Services is a nonprofit,
private social services agency with more
than 115 offices located in 36 states. In
addition, Bethany offers social services to
children and families in 15 countries.

If ever there was a season that represented change, it would be autumn. Nature has a unique way of showing off her special version of change in Michigan with the most beautiful colors! Fall brings cool nights and busy days as schools open their doors again, buses start up, and families move back into a predictable pattern once again. For many, it's an easy and welcome transition.

For adoptive families, transition or change is often not so easy. There are a few of us with kids who resist change at all costs, and that can make transition an unwelcome houseguest.

Woodrow Wilson once said, "If you want to make enemies, try to change something."

He probably wasn't thinking of our kids when he said this, but for some of us this can feel like an accurate description of our challenge! With children who have a history of complex trauma, transitions can be a feared enemy—both by parent and child.

In this issue, we'll talk a little bit about why transition is so hard for our children and then explore some practical ideas that parents can try to make the process of transition a little bit easier. Whether it's educating your child's new teacher, facing the IEP meetings, hoping for good (and kind) friendships this year, or simply getting your child out the door on time each morning, the Post-Adoption Resource Center is here to support you, and we want you to know that we are always just one phone call or email away.



www.Bethany.org

*This program is funded in part by the Michigan
Department of Health and Human Services.*

Quotes to Inspire You

"All kids need is a little help, a little hope,
and someone who believes in them." —*Magic Johnson*

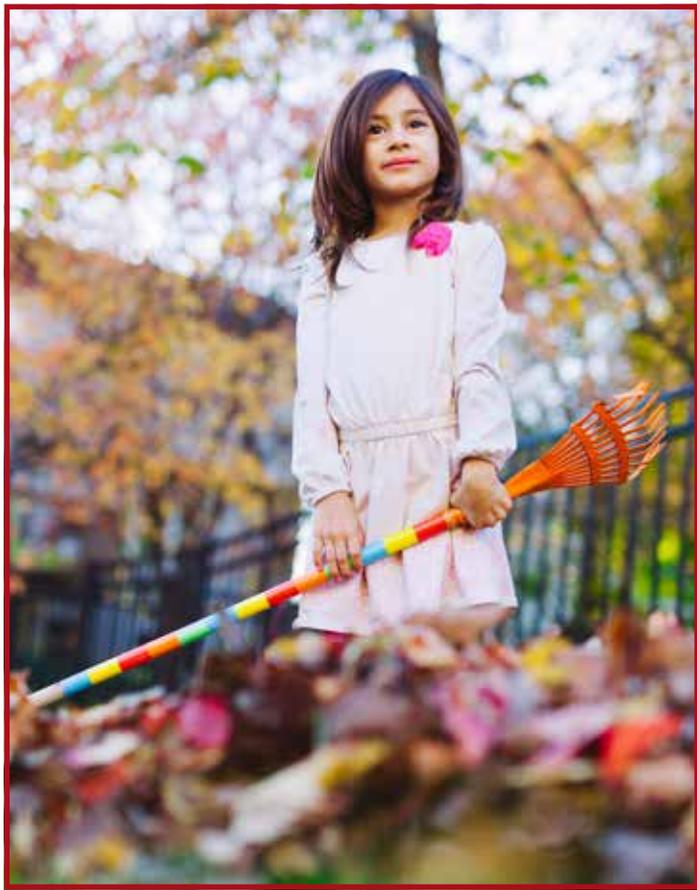
When we think about the word transition, many descriptors come to mind:

Rocky transition. Transition time. Transition process.

Even the descriptors sound unpleasant!

In the article, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," Drs. Karyn Purvis & David Cross talk about three different types of transitions that are especially difficult for children from hard places:

- ✓ **Daily transitions.** These are the common, daily transitions such as getting a child into bed, putting down the video game, etc.
- ✓ **Major life transitions.** This would be something like starting in a new school, moving to a new house, etc.
- ✓ **Developmental transitions.** These are the transitions that come to all kids developmentally: changing from an infant to toddler, a child to a teenager, etc.



What's the Problem?

For kids, *daily transition* can mean having to cope with the unexpected. Unexpected interruptions to otherwise enjoyable activities, or even activities that they are simply more comfortable doing. Few of us naturally like changing to things that make us uncomfortable (Martinelli, 2019)! Drs. Purvis & Cross, in their book, "The Connected Child," speak of the challenge of moving a child from a comfortable, rewarding activity: "*Her brain is awash in excitatory neurotransmitters, and she can't easily put the brakes on.*" The unexpected, abrupt start and stop of activity can cause a child to lose their ability to self-regulate, and once they lose it, it can be difficult to regain.

Transitions can also be *life transitions*, and when you have a history of losing things or people you love, this is where fear creeps in. Bryan Post, in his book "The Great Behavior Breakdown," writes, "*Transition is one of the most difficult areas that children struggle with, and they immediately revert to their fear barrier.*" When big transitions happen, children can unconsciously be returned to that place (or just that feeling) from the past. For the parent, it's imperative to remember perception is reality for our children. Many kids revert to a younger, emotional age during times of transitions.

Developmental transitions are inevitable, so each stage of development means a reprocessing of the past, the present, and the future. It doesn't mean that our past attempts to help our kids heal were a failure. It just means that this new season requires deeper understanding and new tools to help them.

What Can I Do?

Prepare. This is simple, but I can't tell you how many times I've forgotten to do this! Abruptly interrupting them and expecting instant obedience is a recipe for disaster. For the very transition-resistant child, Dr. Ross Greene, in his book "The Explosive Child," suggests increasing the transitional reminders *and* the time it takes for transition to happen. If we forget to give our kids time for their brains to catch up with what we are asking, things can easily fall apart.

Here are some practical ways to do this:

- ✓ Post visual reminders of new schedules, weekly calendars, etc.
- ✓ Make sure you have eye contact and connection before giving instructions (Martinelli, 2019).
- ✓ Charts, timers, or songs can be useful tools to help make the transition less threatening.

Quotes to Inspire You

"Change the changeable, accept the unchangeable, and remove yourself from the unacceptable." —*Denis Waitley*

Whatever you do,
ride the wave of transition
with the knowledge
that this transition time,
like everything else,
will not last forever.

- ✓ **Make the most of technology** to help create colorful lists or schedules (e.g., Visual Schedule Planner—Apple).
- ✓ **Practice.** I once heard a trainer say, “*The brain remembers best what it does.*” If a child is going to be successful, it requires that they practice healthy transitions when they are regulated. If we haven’t practiced this skill or invested in trust-building connections, their brains won’t have what they need to push through when fear sets in. Practice transitions as fun family exercises with as much humor and excitement as possible. Reward their positive transitions during this practice time in creative ways. For kids with sensory processing disorder, consider slowing down the transitions and breaking them down into manageable pieces.
- ✓ **Plan.** As parents, we have the unique task of coaching our kids in how to regulate their emotions and fears. If a child is going to be successful, they need a workable plan. Talk through with your child what they need to be successful, and when they are struggling, coach them through using those tools to help them deal with their disappointment, fear, or discomfort.
- ✓ **Predictable.** In the scary face of transition or change, hold on to whatever family routines you can to keep your child feeling safe. With the busy schedule of activities that school brings, it’s easy to overlook the normal family rituals that are important to a child who is already struggling with safety. If the family needs an evening of ice cream together once a week to stay healthy, stock up on lots of ice cream! If your child needs an extra hug each morning before they leave the house, make a point not to miss this opportunity. Create rituals within your transitions.

Whatever you do, ride the wave of transition with the knowledge that this transition time, like everything else, will not last forever.

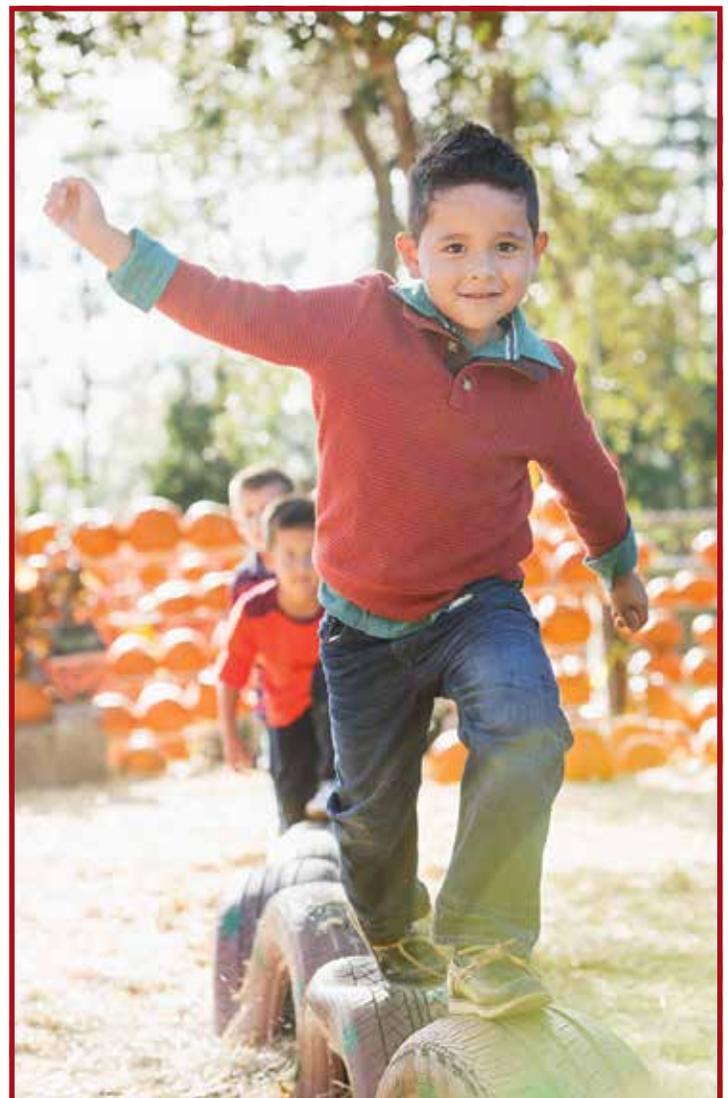
Green, R. (2014) *The Explosive Child*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
Martinelli, K. (2019, June) *How Can We Help Kids With Transitions?* Retrieved from <http://childmind.org/article/how-can-we-help-kids-with-transitions>.
Purvis, K. & Cross, D. (2007) *The Connected Child*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
Post, B. (2009) *The Great Behavior Breakdown*. Palmyra, VA: Post Institutes & Associates.



With the new school year comes new challenges in navigating the services that are available for our children. Michigan Alliance for Families is a statewide resource to connect families of children with disabilities to resources to help improve their children’s education. They can help facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving educational services and outcomes for students with disabilities. Michigan Alliance for Families can assist you in knowing your rights, effectively communicating your child’s needs, and advising how to help them develop and learn.

Each Michigan Alliance staff member is a parent or family member of an individual with disabilities and has first-hand experience with the aspects of the special education system. Every staff member is trained in listening, communicating, and problem-solving. Families can connect directly to a regional parent mentor. Parent mentors can assist you in navigating the educational system and are knowledgeable about state and local resources.

For more information, visit
www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org.



Local Events, Training & Family Activities

All three Post-Adoption Resource Centers have many family fun events planned, as well as support groups and trainings. Please check your Post Adoption Resource Center region's Facebook page, watch for monthly calendars, or give us a call to find out what is available near you.

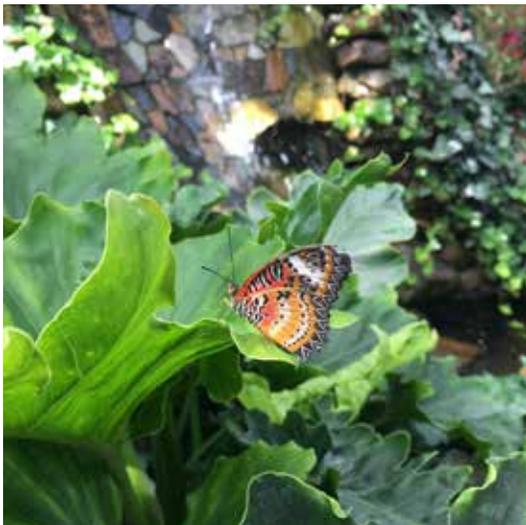
REGION 2:
Northern Michigan
231-421-6500
parctc@bethany.org
[www.facebook.com/
PostAdoptionResource
CenterOfNorthernMI](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterOfNorthernMI)

REGION 3:
Central Michigan
231-924-3390
parcfr@bethany.org
[www.facebook.com/
PostAdoptionResource
CenterCentralMichigan](http://www.facebook.com/PostAdoptionResourceCenterCentralMichigan)

REGION 4:
Western Michigan
616-224-7565
parcgr@bethany.org
[www.facebook.com/
PARCRegion4](http://www.facebook.com/PARCRegion4)



We enjoyed time among the trees with adoptive families at Whiting Forest in Midland!



Region 2 families spent time learning about butterflies and other insects at the GT Butterfly House & Bug Zoo in Traverse City!



Summer time in Region 4 is better with snow cones!



Bethany is committed to supporting adoptive families through the lifelong, rewarding journey of adoption.

REGION 2
Bethany Christian Services
1055 Carriage Hill Dr, Ste 2
Traverse City, MI 49686
231-995-0870
www.bethany.org/traversecity

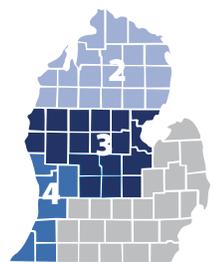
Charlevoix, Emmett, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Otsego, Montmorency, Alpena, Leelanau, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Crawford, Oscoda, Alcona, Manistee, Wexford, Missaukee, Roscommon, Ogemaw, and Iosco counties

REGION 3
Bethany Christian Services
6995 West 48th St
Fremont, MI 49412
231-924-3390
www.bethany.org/fremont

Mason, Lake, Osceola, Clare, Gladwin, Arenac, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Isabella, Midland, Bay, Montcalm, Gratiot, Saginaw, Ionia, Clinton, and Shiawassee counties

REGION 4
Bethany Christian Services
901 Eastern Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-224-7565
www.bethany.org/grandrapids

Allegan, Berrien, Cass, Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, and Van Buren counties



postadoptionrc.org