

Why Transitions Are So Difficult for Children With ADHD

Practical guidance for understanding what may be happening underneath behavior and helping families move forward.

“Five more minutes.” “It is time to leave.” “Turn it off.” “Come eat.” “Get ready for bed.”

And suddenly there is a battle. Transitions require more executive functioning than adults sometimes realize.

Why Shifting Can Be Hard

The child must stop something, disengage attention, tolerate disappointment, mentally shift to the next activity, organize what happens next, and initiate something new. For a child with ADHD, that can be a significant demand.

Make Transitions Visible

Instead of relying on surprise instructions, create predictable signals: 10 minutes → 5 minutes → 2 minutes → transition.

Timers and visual schedules can help because the transition is not coming only from the parent’s voice.

Tell Them What Comes Next

Instead of only saying, “Turn off the game,” try, “Two more minutes. Then we are turning off the game, putting shoes on, and heading to Grandma’s.”

Knowing what comes next can reduce uncertainty and make shifting easier.

ETHOS SHORELINE REFLECTION

Predictability reduces the amount of executive functioning a child has to generate on the spot.

Related Ethos Shoreline pathway: Chaos to Consistency™

A Note for Parents

Behavior makes more sense when we understand what is happening underneath it. Ethos Shoreline resources are designed to help families build practical structure while protecting connection, responsibility, and belonging.

Educational Disclaimer: This resource is for general educational purposes and is not a substitute for individualized mental-health, medical, educational, or emergency services. Consider consulting an appropriately qualified professional when concerns are

persistent, worsening, affecting daily functioning, or creating safety concerns.

