

Arriving at a Destination

“Lucy, we are getting closer to Lisa’s home!”

Sequence the next steps for the child by saying them aloud:

1. When we get to the building gate, Lucy will stay beside Mommy and the stroller [see Note 1].
2. Lucy and Mommy will go on the elevator.
3. Lucy will stay at Lisa’s front door while Mommy parks the stroller.

“Now we will go inside to visit Lisa and Auntie A”

Sequence the next steps for the child by saying them aloud:

4. Mommy and Lucy will go inside together.
5. Lucy will sit on the mat to take off outside clothes.
6. Mommy or Auntie A will take off Lucy’s outside clothes.
7. Then, Lucy will go to the bathroom to wash hands.
8. Mommy will help Lucy even if she is crying. Mommy will kiss Lucy’s owies after washing hands [see Note 2].

Praise compliance with each step:

- “Thank you for sitting on the mat!”
- “Thank you for helping take off mitts”
- “Thank you for walking to the bathroom”

Use distraction and motivating statements and questions to gain compliance:

- “Who’s going to sing the ABC song?”
- “We’ve finished washing hands, let’s go play!”

Note 1: This transition was difficult because the child wanted to run around on the stairs of the building instead of coming directly into Lisa’s house. However, Mommy had a broken ankle and a stroller and neighbours were not pleased with a “loose” child during the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, I would encourage a child to “play” on the stairs to learn about going up and down and to get it out of their system. My daughter spent many minutes just climbing up and down the stairs of our condo building pre-COVID. However, sometimes, we need to set non-ideal limits and this transition script is for that case. I would try to find another acceptable “stair-play” outlet for the child to engage with frequently so that compliance in this restrictive case is more likely to occur.

Note 2: This statement was specific to the child for whom I wrote this script. She used the complaint “I have an owie. Kiss my owie!” to stop the routine during transition periods. Behaviour modification strategies like ignore/praise suggest that you ignore these complaints so as not to encourage them and eventually the child will stop making the complaint. However, I have found that acknowledging the complaint as legitimate but putting limits on when and how Mommy will respond to be less severe and a more pleasant experience for parent and child. The assumption that the owie is fake/a procrastination method is still just an adult assumption. Your child may very well have an actual owie. So, I feel that it is better to acknowledge that what they say is true (to them), but that Mommy can still set the limits as to how she will address the issue. I think that this method fosters a more trusting relationship where it is no longer Mommy’s responsibility to figure out if the child is lying about an owie. Mommy does not need to engage in that power struggle.