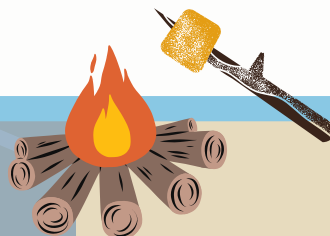




# *Guide*

# TRANSITION TO SUMMER

*Neurodivergent  
Parents & Kids*



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## Why are transitions so hard?

Whether you're a neurodivergent parent or a child or young adult, the end of the school year disrupts your well-oiled school-year routines.

Routine and predictability reduce anxiety and provide regulating feelings. They can provide a sense of control over one's life. For you or your neurodivergent offspring, transitions from routines with high predictability (e.g. school/work) to situations with low predictability (vacations, summer, etc.) can result in increased stress, anxiety and resistance. Without predictability, a sense of control over the situation may decrease.

You or your child may experience changes in sensory stimuli and different kinds of social pressure, such as:

- **SUMMER CAMP:** new, busy, loud environments with new, unknown peers, and new people for mom, dad, or caregiver to navigate (sign-ups, drop-offs, pick-ups, etc.).
- **SUMMER VACATION:** talk about new, unpredictable, and unfamiliar, with a barrage of new sensory and social stimuli! (Unless you're lucky enough to go to a quiet cabin in the woods).
- **SUMMER SOCIAL EVENTS:** expectations of social participation often increase in the summer (BBQs, weddings, parties, visiting friends and family).
- **NOTHING TO DO:** in the absence of external demand, under-stimulation can be as big a problem as over-stimulation.

The outcome of these new or higher expectations may be more frequent meltdowns or shutdowns, an increase in masking, or the desire to hole up inside until the weather cools and life goes back to 'normal'. Lower expectations and under-stimulation, on the other hand, can lead to excess reliance on social media, boredom, and loneliness.



## What can you do to move through the transition from school-year to summer with grace?

- 1 Create a summer routine:** Get the whole family involved. Create new routines and write them on the calendar. Write the dates of all social events so that everyone can predict social demands.
- 2 Communicate:** Talk about upcoming opportunities and challenges. Your kiddo hates visiting Aunt Marg. What can they do while they are there to reduce the demand? Can the whole family agree to a three-hour cap on the visit? You're excited about flying to Vancouver for cousin Shana's wedding, but also uneasy about what will happen once you arrive. Create a video tour or photo book about what you will do besides the wedding that can be used to increase predictability and a sense of control. Take a tour of the airport or use the internet to explore the airport and hotel you will be staying at. Have your child plan one activity and play tour guide for the family.
- 3 Create a sensory toolkit:** Explore and plan to use sensory preferences to calm you or your child down. Everyone has their own hacks, from stress balls and noise-canceling headphones to sunglasses and suckers. Think about incorporating all the senses, sight, taste, touch, sound, smell, and movement. For an in depth exploration of sensory differences see Aide Canada's [Sensory Processing Differences Toolkit](#).



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**Take lots of breaks for self-care, mom, dad, or caregiver, too:**

The best way to reduce meltdowns and shutdowns is to stop and take breaks before things get overwhelming. As much as possible, space out and reduce demands on yourself and your family members. Put breaks and other forms of self-care on the calendar and make sure that every social and sensory demand is **preceded** and **followed** by self-care breaks.

If you're not sure how to put together a sensory tool-kit for your kiddo, talk to an Occupational Therapist! Scattergram's new child and youth Occupational Therapist, Kim Hanson, would be happy to help you put together a summer transition plan that works for your family.

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