



## **Transition of a Child from Early Intervention Programs to the Mainstream Environment**

For children with special needs, transitioning to the mainstream environment can be very stressful. The mainstream environment may be more unpredictable, fast-paced and foreign compared to what they are used to at home. They may struggle with language and communication, social skills, concentration, etc. It is essential to provide children with special needs with the necessary skills that will help them cope with this change in their environments.

In early intervention programs, the first focus is to teach children with special needs daily skills in a more step-by-step manner. Breaking the skills children need to learn into steps can make it more manageable and easier to understand, making it less stressful for them. By mastering daily skills such as personal grooming, toileting and eating of meals on their own, children with special needs can learn to be more independent. At the same time, being able to do things independently also builds their self-esteem.

Another important aspect that is beneficial for children with special needs to learn in order to adapt into the mainstream environment is their work habits. For them, sitting and doing work for a period of time may be challenging at the start. Therefore, in early intervention programs, therapists often use a task schedule to guide children to do the work that they need to do for a period of time. This creates a sense of predictability and makes learning less stressful. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a method using positive reinforcement to encourage desirable behavior in children with autism. Children are rewarded for behaving well (sitting nicely, keeping quiet during work, etc.), and this serves to motivate them to regulate themselves. By improving on their work habits over time, children with special needs are another step closer to adapting to the mainstream school system.

Besides daily skills and work habits, another critical aspect is communication and social skills. Children with special needs may struggle with language or expressing their needs to others. Early intervention seeks to teach children to express themselves more freely so that others will be able to understand them. On top of that, it also guides children with special needs to develop social skills that they would need to integrate into a mainstream setting with their schoolmates.

Armed with these skills from early intervention programs, children with special needs may find it more manageable when transitioning to a mainstream school setting. They may still face problems as they go about in school, but such skills that they learn at a young age helps to serve as a buffer in stressful situations and help them adapt more readily in school. Furthermore, in mainstream settings, there are support available in the forms of teachers trained in Special Educational Needs (SEN), Allied Educators in Learning and Behavioral Support [AED (LBS)], as well as shadow support teachers. These ensure that children would be more readily integrated into the school setting.

Nurture Pods provides various forms of early intervention programs, from home-based to center intervention, social skills classes and shadow support teachers. We focus on the use of ABA to encourage children to behave well. Home-based intervention first focuses on daily skills and work habits. Children then move towards center-based intervention to integrate into a group setting and learn together with their peers. Social skills classes are available to teach children social cognition and language skills applicable in their daily lives. Finally, shadow support teachers provide one to one support in a mainstream setting to help them cope and integrate into the new environment.

For more information for the services available at Nurture Pods, click on the following link: <https://www.nurturepods.com/centre-for-child-development-early-intervention/>



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