

Creating Calm. . . Where to Begin?

By Susan Weber

We all know the feeling – things are moving too fast, I'm behind the stream of my own life – and my child is reacting!

What to do, how to understand children's response in these times?

One short thought. Children thrive on predictable, boring sameness – over and over the same story, the same lullaby, the same walk. . . and in times of extra stimulation, these things often fade into the background, leaving our children without their anchors of familiarity. They have few skills, as yet, for managing these moments, but have plenty of ways of communicating when the world is not working for them.

Here is a simple picture of meeting young children's needs. When all is well, this is usually an expression of predictability and rhythm, form and structure being in balance, and sensory stimulation being within the child's capacity for digestion and processing. A little more stimulation within the predictable routines and structure of life can still be digestible for many children. But when the stimulation rises significantly and the predictable rhythm and structure dissolve away – this is beyond most children's ability for coping.

So – a simple concept is that when the sensory stimulation unavoidably rises beyond or near a particular child's limits, it is also important to strengthen our rhythm, hold fast to it — the rhythm, predictability and structure of life. When the predictability and rhythm of life must of necessity, decrease, for whatever reason, (a family vacation away from home, unexpected situations that arise from day to day, the need to be away from the house at nap time, for example) it is helpful to *especially* decrease the sensory stimulation. Then our children can use the reserves that they have to meet the changes arising out of the change in rhythm and predictability in their lives, with less sensory stimulation to digest.

Do a little observing, try this out, and share what you discover!

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