

The Greeting, Safekeeper, and Goodbye Rituals Tip Sheet

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Rituals

Children and adults cannot learn if they don't first feel safe and connected.

Rituals are interactions between two people designed to build connections for each person in the interaction. This sense of connection optimizes brain function in children and adults. Connection builds self-confidence and provides a sense of belonging, which strengthens relationships. Connections on the outside with others build connections on the inside of the brain, wiring us for cooperation, impulse control, teaching, and learning.

The 4 Components of Connection

Connection with others requires intention. An intention to connect with the other person. An intention to focus on the other person despite distractions or obligations. An intention to prime the brain to access executive functioning skills, to teach, and to learn.

Connection requires 4 components:



Eye contact

Look all staff and family members in the eyes.

Be conscious of those this is uncomfortable for either for personal or cultural reasons.



Touch

Offer touch in your greeting.

Be conscious of those who aren't ready for this level of connection yet or are not feeling it today.



Presence

Make your presence felt by focusing on the person you are greeting (not your phone or other obligations)



A playful situation

Make the ritual fun! This can be through having fun greeting choices or even just through a genuine smile.

The Greeting Ritual

Transitioning from home to school is hard, for adults and children. The Greeting Ritual is one of the most important parts of the day. It sets everyone up for success by providing a sense of safety through connection to allow access to the higher parts of our brains.

For the Center and the Classroom

Administrators (for the center) and teachers (for the classroom) each day perform the Greeting and Ritual with families and staff as they drop off their children. All entries into the school should have an administrator there to greet children, families, and staff. As families and staff arrive, they get to choose how they would like to be greeted. Include the 4 Components of Connection. Respect everyone's right to pass but encourage everyone to participate next time.

- **Materials Needed:**
 1. Family and Staff Communication – to be sent out prior to starting the Greeting Ritual
 2. For Staff and Families with older children - Visual that includes 3 greetings, including at least one that does not include touch (more greetings can be added as time goes on). Make sure that you are comfortable with all the choices you are presenting.
 3. For Families with younger children (classroom only) – Consider providing an anchor item for each child that they enjoy (i.e. a toy) that can help the child transition from home to school.
- **Steps to Success:**
 1. Send out family and staff communications prior to starting, or changing, your center level greeting ritual. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. Check your body language. Are you conveying safety and an intent to connect? If you are having a difficult day yourself, remember to smile and breathe. This ritual will make your day better by connecting you with others.

3. Check your intention. Are you there to connect with your families and staff? If you are just trying to get this chore done, remember to smile and breathe. This ritual will make your day better by helping everyone to be calmer and more willing to work together.
4. Focus on the 4 Components of Connection:
5. For families of infants and toddlers:
 - a. “Good morning __ (parent/guardian name) __. I see you’ve brought your precious __ (child name) __ with you and __ (child name) __ has brought his/her __ (elbow, toes, etc.) __!” Give the named body part a squeeze and lift the child from the parent/guardian’s arms.
6. For Staff and Families with Older Children:
 - a. As families and staff arrive, ask them, “How would you like to be greeted?” and have them choose from your visual.
 - b. Include the adult when greeting the family at the center and classroom level.
7. Combine the Greeting Ritual with the Safekeeper Ritual for greater success.

The Safekeeper Ritual

Transitioning from home to school is hard, for adults and children. The Safekeeper Ritual is one of the most important parts of the day. It sets everyone up for success by providing a sense of safety that will allow access to the higher parts of our brains.

The Language of Safety

An integral part to the Safekeeper Ritual is incorporating it throughout the day through the Language of Safety. The Language of Safety removed judgement from interpersonal interactions and allows individuals to learn from their mistakes and missteps.

The Language of Safety involves replacing the words “bad/good” or “right/wrong” in your vocabulary with the words “safe/unsafe.”

For the Center and the Classroom

The Safekeeper Ritual is often best combined with the Greeting Ritual at the center level. There are a couple of different formats that can be done at the center level.

- **Materials Needed:**
 1. Family and Staff Communication – to be sent out prior to starting the Safekeeper Ritual
 2. Area to post the safekeeper commitment (i.e. bulletin board)
 3. Safekeeper box) (box, personal item for each staff or child) for the center and each 3 and 4-year-old classroom.
- **Steps to Success:**
 1. Send out family and staff communications prior to starting, or changing, your center level Safekeeper Ritual. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. For Families - Use a bulletin board, or other large posting, to write, “I commit to help keep it safe so everyone can be safe.” This is placed where all can see it easily. Depending on how staff come into the building, and how families drop off their children, this may need to be posted in several different spaces (by the car drop-off line, near the time clock, etc.)

3. For infants and toddlers – combine the Safekeeper Ritual with the Greeting Ritual when greeting families at drop off in your classroom.
4. For Older Children –The Safekeeper Ritual should be combined with the Greeting Ritual at drop-off in the classroom, and also done with the children during the morning meeting. During the morning meeting, children are asked to make a personal commitment. For younger children, have everyone make the same commitment. Older children may make their own commitment from the choices. Children then place their personalized item into the Safekeeper Box to indicate their willingness to keep the commitment.
 - a. Common commitments for children
 - i. Gentle Hands (2 and up)
 - ii. Walking Feet (2 and up)
 - iii. Big Voice (3 and up)
 - iv. Listening Ears (3.5 and up)
5. For Staff –
 - a. Incorporate the Safekeeper Ritual into your staff meetings in much the same way as you would for older children.
 - b. Daily, post a commitment in an easily accessible place (i.e. by the time clock). This commitment can be, “I commit to help keep it safe so everyone can be safe” or “I commit to working on my personal commitment today.” Each staff member has a personalized item (craft stick with name and photo, etc.) that they place in the Safekeeper Box to indicate their willingness to keep the commitment daily.

The Goodbye Ritual

Transitioning from school to home is hard, for adults and children. The Goodbye Ritual helps not only ease this transition but set up connections to make the next school day even better.

For the Center and the Classroom

The Goodbye Ritual looks very similar to the Greeting and Safekeeper Rituals in the morning. Administrators (for the center) and teachers (for the classroom) each day perform the Goodbye Ritual with families and staff as they pick up their children. For 3s and 4s classrooms, part of the Goodbye Ritual can also be done in a Closing Meeting at the end of the school day.

- **Materials Needed:**
 4. Family and Staff Communication – to be sent out prior to starting the Goodbye Ritual
 5. For Staff and Families with older children - Visual that includes 3 goodbyes, including at least one that does not include touch (more greetings can be added as time goes on). Make sure that you are comfortable with all the choices you are presenting. This can be the same as your Greeting Ritual visual.
- **Steps to Success:**
 6. Send out family and staff communications prior to starting, or changing, your center level Goodbye Ritual. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 7. Check your body language. Are you conveying safety and an intent to connect? If you are having a difficult day yourself, remember to smile and breathe. This ritual will make your day better, and set you up for a better tomorrow, by connecting you with others.
 8. Check your intention. Are you there to connect with your families and staff? If you are just trying to get this chore done, remember to smile and breathe. This ritual will make your day better, and set you up for a better tomorrow, by helping everyone to be calmer and more willing to work together.
 9. Focus on the 4 Components of Connection:

10. Look all staff and family members in the eyes. Be conscious of those this is uncomfortable for either for personal or cultural reasons.
 11. Offer touch in your greeting. Be conscious of those who aren't ready for this level of connection yet or are not feeling it today.
 12. Make your presence felt by focusing on the person you are saying goodbye to (not your phone or other obligations)
 13. Make the ritual fun! This can be through having fun goodbye choices or even just through a genuine smile.
- For families of infants and toddlers:
 1. "Hello __ (parent/guardian name) __. Thank you for bringing your precious __ (child name) __ with you today! Give the child a hug and say, "You are valued. I'm glad you were here today," and pass them to their parent/guardian's arms.
 - For Staff and Families with Older Children:
 1. As families and staff arrive for pick up/get ready to leave, ask them, "How would you like to say goodbye?" and have them choose from your visual.
 2. Include the adult when saying goodbye to the family at the center and classroom level.
 3. Incorporating a commitment check into your daily Closing Circle or Staff Meeting will help set everyone up for success tomorrow. During the circle, check in with each child (or adult) on how they did with their commitment today. If they succeeded with their commitment, encourage them to say, "Yay, I did it." If they need to continue to work on their commitment, encourage them to say, "Oops, I'm working on it." Don't dwell on the mistakes, simply frame them as lessons to learn from for tomorrow. Children (and adults) can't learn when they are in their emotional state from feeling put down or like a failure. If we want them to learn from their mistakes, we must frame them in ways that focus on the learning.

Resources

- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 3 – The School Family
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-3-school-family/>
 - Chapter 4 – Composure
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-4-composure/>
- Greeting Ritual –
 - Shubert’s School - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/drop-off/greeting-ritual/>
 - Shubert’s School - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/entrance/greetings/>
 - Sophie’s Classroom - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/greeting-ritual/>
- Safekeeper Ritual –
 - Sophie’s Classroom - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/safekeeper-ritual/>
- Commitments –
 - Sophie’s Classroom - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/commitments/>
- Goodbye Ritual –
 - Sophie’s Classroom - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/goodbye-ritual/>