

# Stages of Children's Settlement and Cultural Adaptation

## When parents are present (Stages 1 - 3)

### Stage 1

- Child is distrustful of the new environment, and feels unsafe and nervous
- Very dependent on parents, and stays close by parent most of time
- Avoids eye contact and body contact with teachers and peers
- Accepts only food brought by parents
- Might lose the ability to speak own language

### Stage 2

- Shows strong symptoms of anxiety (i.e., weeping on and off, and staying close to parents)
- Although he/she won't initiate play, might respond to invitations to play from parents
- May have some eye contact with teachers, but usually won't allow body contact
- Speaks with parents in own language

### Stage 3

- Child shows more confidence—will walk around the room
- May occasionally play by him/herself
- Checks frequently to see if parents are still around but also may focus on his/her play
- Will accept eye contact from teachers and minimal body contact
- With encouragement from the parents, the child will try the food provided by program



## When parents are absent (Stages 4 - 10)

### Stage 4

- Feels unsafe and panicky
- May show physical symptoms ( i.e. pale face, trembling body, low body temperature, nausea, vomiting, convulsions, spasms, wandering around, stiff body unable to walk/move easily)
- Shows extreme fear and anxiety when parents leave
- Unaware of teacher's voice or completely refuses touch
- Unwilling to attend any routine activities (i.e. eating, putting clothes on, etc.)

### Stage 5

- Very nervous, uneasy, and/or angry (i.e. might kick, bit, strike, scream, throw things -- might hurt himself/herself, other people or furniture, crying out loud. Occasionally, the weeping may ease off for a period of time.)
- Holds onto all belongings from home and is angry if they are removed
- May allow certain teachers to get close to him/her, or hug him/her
- Does not react well to change

### **Stage 6**

- Continues to show symptoms of anxiety upon separation from parent (weeping on and off)
- When being held (or weeping alone), occasionally will stop weeping and watch teachers and peers
- Willing to accept some toys given by the teacher and play for a brief period of time
- Very dependent on a certain teacher
- Unable to engage actively in games
- Allows teachers to help him/her to use the washroom
- Puts on his/her own clothes
- Might try food provided by the school, or food brought by parents

### **Stage 7**

- Feels more comfortable
- Can stay alone most of the time
- Usually likes to stay at a specific place and watch other children play
- When teacher is close by, the child can actively play with some familiar toys
- They will check often to make sure the teacher is still there
- May still carry belongings from home
- Still reacts negatively to any minor changes. (i.e. weeping, and asking a teacher to hold him/her)
- Avoids any eye contact
- Pushes peers away
- If attacked or disturbed by another child, expresses no anger; usually doesn't react
- Usually willing to eat food provided by the program
- Accepts some routine activities with little or no resistance

### **Stage 8**

- Able to walk around the room feeling relatively relaxed and confident
- Willing to try different activities when encouraged by teachers
- Willing to accept toys given by peers
- Eats food provided by the school
- With assistance, will participate in some routine activities. (i.e. putting clothes on, using the washroom)
- Willing to accept clothes provided by the program
- Unable to handle more significant changes (i.e. when teacher is sick, going on a field trip, etc)

### **Stage 9**

- Can participate in activities in the room
- Able to create a variety of games
- Able to stay at a game for a longer period of time
- May socialize with one or two children
- Able to attend routines voluntarily (based on the child's age)
- Able to put on appropriate clothing according to the season
- Willing to approach or be approached by most teachers and strangers
- Fully accepts new situations that occur

**Stage 10**

- All symptoms of nervousness and anxiety are gone and enjoys being with other people
- Able to appreciate humour and expresses feelings freely
- Able to concentrate for a relatively long period of time during a group game
- Able to get toys from various places in the room and play with them
- Able to anticipate the upcoming routines and ask for certain activities
- Able to handle change under most circumstances

*Adapted from Julie Dotsch, Ontario Welcome House Nursery (now closed). This sheet may be downloaded at no cost from the Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre website. [www.wstcoast.org](http://www.wstcoast.org). The information sheet may be available in other languages.*