



## ‘And will you succeed?’

**By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director**

There is a phenomenon that I witnessed firsthand when I was a classroom teacher. Around 1-2 months before the end of the school year, be it April/May in Chandler or May/June in East Harlem, New York or Greenville, North Carolina, children act out. My theory is that children would rather push back against the close relationships they have built with their teachers and even classmates and “be angry” rather than be sad. Sad when the daily relationship ends. Sad when they have to say goodbye. It seems that anger is an easier emotion to understand and one that doesn’t hurt so much.

### **Sadness vs. Anger**

According to [verywellmind.com](http://verywellmind.com), “While people generally associate grief with sadness, anger is also a common reaction to grief ... grief and anger may also be experienced at the loss of other things that were meaningful to the person.”

In her 1969 book “On Death and Dying,” psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross proposed that there are five stages of grief and anger is Number 2. When children need to end that ever important relationship in a classroom, a teacher leaves or it is time to transition to the new class or new school, it is imperative that the adults in the child’s life try and make this as much of a transition as possible; a direct opposite to the idea of “ripping off the bandaid.” Children need to have a slower process to help this be successful.



## **What happens when this isn't possible**

Because, often, it isn't. Think about how you, as an adult, deal with disappointment, sadness, anger. What are your *go-to* activities to help this work in your favor?

## **Explanations**

For me, I thrive on explanations. While I don't always agree with them, it helps me to break down the anger and sadness that I am experiencing when I know the "why." If your child is dealing with the separation and resulting emotions, try and explain the situation so your child understands. Did an adult leave suddenly? What are some possible reasons for their departure that you can share with your child? Sometimes you might not know the real reasons, but do your best to share some thoughts that might make sense in the situation.

## **Whenever possible, try to practice the new 'normal'**

Whether it is visiting a new classroom, spending time with a new teacher, moving from a crib to a "big-boy" bed, it really doesn't matter the what, it is the how. How can your child practice what the "new" looks like? This practice, with a trusted adult, helps them process the potentially scary what ifs.

## **Pictures are worth a thousand words and a good night's sleep**

Transitions can often be scary because of the unknown. What will the "new" look like? What will be my new role in this new place? How will the "new" treat me? As a child and as an adult, these unknowns can be very scary and keep us awake at night. Children might have nightmares while their brains try to process this change. Adults might lose sleep over the change as well, whether it directly affects them or not.



Pictures can make the unknown concrete. If you can do-away with the unknown, then everyone might sleep better.

**But what if your child doesn't like the 'new' normal**

Because sometimes she won't. "Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best. Wherever you go, you will top all the rest. Except when you don't.

Because, sometimes, you won't."

— *Dr. Seuss, Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

**And this is important to figure out as well.**

Dealing with disappointment is a skill that no one has perfected. We all need to learn how to move forward when it doesn't go our way. But with perseverance, understanding, acceptance and a little help from our friends, "*Will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.)*"

#Shabbat Shalom