

CHILD'S ADAPTATION IN KINDERGARTEN

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Annation: A child's adaptation to kindergarten is a crucial stage in their development, as this process affects their psychological state, behavioral skills, and further socialization. This article examines the main stages of adaptation, possible difficulties faced by children and their parents, as well as methods that facilitate a smooth transition into a new environment. The role of educators and parents in supporting the child throughout the adaptation period is emphasized.

Keywords: adaptation, preschool education, child psychology, socialization, pedagogical support.

Introduction

Entering kindergarten is one of the first major steps in a child's life, associated with changes in their usual routine, social circle, and value system. For most children, this is their first experience of prolonged separation from their parents, which can cause anxiety and stress. The adaptation process largely depends on the child's individual characteristics, their level of development, parental preparation, and the professionalism of educators.

The main task of adults is to create conditions in which the child feels comfortable and safe. It is important to understand that adaptation is not limited to merely adjusting to a new daily routine but also includes the development of communication skills, building confidence, and emotional resilience.

Main Part1. Stages of Adaptation

A child's adaptation to kindergarten is a gradual process that occurs in several stages. Each stage is accompanied by specific emotional and behavioral changes. Understanding these stages helps parents and educators provide timely support, reducing stress levels and accelerating the child's adjustment to the new environment.

1.1. Initial (Crisis) Stage

This stage begins from the first days of kindergarten attendance and can last from a few days to several weeks, depending on the child's individual characteristics.

Key Features:

- The child experiences significant stress due to separation from parents.
- May cry, refuse to enter the group, and cling to their mother or father.
- Some children become withdrawn, stop talking, or avoid interacting with others.
- Appetite and sleep may worsen, leading to moodiness and frequent emotional outbursts.
- Some children may develop psychosomatic reactions such as frequent colds, stomach aches, or headaches.

How to Help the Child?

- Gradually increase the time spent in kindergarten: start with 1–2 hours, then half a day, and only later leave the child for the full day.
- Explain that parents will definitely come back.
- Give the child a comfort item (a favorite toy, a mother's handkerchief) to help them feel more secure.

- Establish positive goodbye rituals, such as a high-five, a hug, or a kiss, to create a sense of safety.

- Avoid misleading statements like "I'll be back soon" if it's not true. Instead, say, "I'll come after lunch."

During this period, the child needs strong support from the educator. A good relationship with the teacher reduces anxiety levels. Parents should trust the educator and avoid passing their own fears onto the child.

1.2. Active Adaptation Stage

This stage begins after overcoming the acute crisis and can last from 2–3 weeks to 2–3 months.

Key Features:

- The child no longer experiences severe distress but may still feel some anxiety.
- Occasional setbacks may occur (e.g., crying again after weekends).
- Begins forming a connection with the teacher and seeks their help.
- Gradually starts playing with other children.
- Becomes more accustomed to the daily routine but may still struggle with napping at kindergarten.

How to Help?

- Praise the child for their achievements: "You did great! You ate all by yourself at kindergarten!"
- Discuss the child's day: "What did you enjoy?", "Who did you play with?"
- Maintain a consistent daily routine at home to make adaptation easier.
- Help the child develop relationships with peers by discussing ways to share and resolve conflicts.

At this stage, the child is adapting better, but emotional support from parents remains crucial. Some children may become moody at home as a way to release accumulated stress.

1.3. Stage of Stable Adaptation

This stage occurs approximately 2–3 months after the child starts attending kindergarten.

Key Features:

- The child fully accepts the new environment.
- No longer experiences significant stress when separating from parents.
- Feels confident in the group, participates in activities and games.
- Willingly interacts with the teacher and peers.
- Completely adapts to the daily routine.

How to Support Adaptation?

- Maintain a stable daily routine and habits.
- Participate in kindergarten activities, such as attending celebrations and encouraging interest in learning.
- Foster a positive attitude by sharing fun childhood memories about kindergarten.

A child's adaptation to kindergarten goes through several stages—from crisis to full adjustment. Parents must understand that this process requires time, patience, and support. The calmer the parents and educators, the easier it is for the child to navigate this transition.

2. Factors Affecting Adaptation

A child's adaptation to preschool is a complex process influenced by numerous factors. Some children adjust quickly, easily connecting with teachers and peers, while others take longer, Experience of Separation from Parents

Some children face separation for the first time when starting kindergarten, which can be stressful. However, if a child is accustomed to short separations (e.g., staying with a grandparent or nanny), the transition is usually easier.

How to Prepare?

- Gradually increase separation time: start with 30 minutes, then extend to 1–2 hours.
- Play games like “I left – I came back” to help the child understand that parents always return.

Habit of Following an Organized Routine

Kindergarten has a strict daily schedule, and children who are used to a free routine may struggle to adjust.

What to Do?

- Introduce a structured routine for sleep, meals, and outdoor activities 1–2 months before kindergarten.
- Encourage participation in group activities, such as reading books together or drawing with other children.

3. Possible Challenges and Ways to Overcome Them

A child's adaptation to kindergarten is a complex process with various difficulties. Some children adjust quickly and easily, while others require more time and support. These challenges can appear on physiological, psychological, and social levels. Identifying and addressing them promptly is crucial.

3.1. Emotional and Psychological Challenges

Manifestations:

- The child cries when separating from parents and takes a long time to calm down.
- Refuses to communicate with the teacher and other children.
- Fears the new environment and shows signs of anxiety.
- Becomes withdrawn, avoids playing or participating in activities.
- Displays behavioral changes such as aggression, tantrums, or resistance to attending kindergarten.
- Experiences nightmares, fear of the dark, or needs to fall asleep only with parents.

Causes:

- Fear of separation from parents.
- Insecurity in an unfamiliar environment.
- Lack of communication skills with peers.
- Changes in daily routine (e.g., early wake-up, nap time).
- Lack of trust in the teacher.

How to Help a Child?

Preparation Before Kindergarten:

- Occasionally leave the child with relatives or a babysitter to get used to separation.
- Explain that kindergarten is a fun and exciting place.
- Role-play kindergarten scenarios at home with toys to familiarize the child with daily activities.

- **Support in the First Weeks:**

- Say goodbye calmly and avoid long farewells.
- Start with short stays and gradually increase the time spent at kindergarten.
- Allow the child to bring a favorite toy or comfort object.

Helping with Emotions:

- Praise the child for achievements at kindergarten.
- Talk about their feelings: "I understand you feel sad. Let's think together about what can make you feel better."
- Avoid punishing the child for tantrums or tears—this is a natural reaction to stress.

- **Role of the Teacher:**

- The teacher should be patient, kind, and create a trusting atmosphere.
- Provide support and help the child integrate into the group.

Important! If a child struggles significantly with adaptation (e.g., severe tantrums, anxiety, sleep, and appetite disturbances), consulting a child psychologist may be beneficial.

Adaptation of a Child to Kindergarten

1.3. Stage of Stable Adaptation

This stage occurs approximately 2-3 months after the child starts attending kindergarten.

Characteristics:

- The child fully accepts the new environment.
- Does not experience severe stress when separating from parents.
- Feels confident in the group, participates in activities and games.
- Willingly interacts with the teacher and peers.
- Fully adapts to the daily routine.

How to Support Adaptation?

- Maintain a stable daily routine and habits.
- Participate in kindergarten life: attend celebrations, support interest in activities.
- Maintain a positive attitude: tell stories about how fun kindergarten was in your own childhood.

Adaptation to kindergarten occurs in several stages—from a crisis period to stable adjustment. Parents should understand that this process requires time, patience, and support. The calmer the parents and teachers are, the easier it is for the child to adapt.

2. Factors Influencing Adaptation

Adapting to kindergarten is a complex process influenced by various factors. Some children adjust easily, quickly finding common ground with teachers and peers, while others experience anxiety, tears, and stress. Understanding these factors helps parents and educators create conditions for a smooth transition into the group.

2.1. Individual Characteristics of the Child

Each child is unique, with their own temperament, personality, emotional intelligence, and innate nervous system traits. These factors significantly impact how easily or difficultly a child adapts to kindergarten.

Temperament and Nervous System Type

Temperament is an innate psychological trait that determines reaction speed, emotionality, and activity level.

- **Sanguine** – cheerful, active, quickly adapts, easily interacts with children and adults.

- **Choleric** – energetic but emotionally unstable, may react strongly to separation from parents, requiring extra attention from the teacher.
- **Phlegmatic** – slow, reserved, and cautious. Adaptation takes longer because the child adjusts gradually.
- **Melancholic** – sensitive and prone to anxiety, finds separation from parents difficult, requires special support.

The more flexible a child's nervous system, the faster they adjust to changes.

Emotional Intelligence Level

Children who can understand and express their emotions from an early age adapt more easily. If a child can verbalize feelings like sadness, longing, or fear, it becomes easier for them to cope with stress.

How to Develop Emotional Intelligence?

- Teach the child to name their emotions: *"I feel sad," "I am happy," "I am angry."*
- Use emotion cards so the child can show how they feel.
- Encourage the child to verbalize their feelings: *"I am scared because Mom left, but I know she will come back."*

Physical Health

Children with weaker immune systems get sick more often, making adaptation harder. Frequent absences disrupt the child's ability to adjust to the group, daily routine, and teachers.

How to Help?

- Strengthen immunity through hardening, proper nutrition, and physical activity.
- Introduce a gradual attendance schedule (starting with 2-3 hours a day).
- Maintain a consistent sleep routine, as fatigue worsens adaptation.

Level of Independence

Children who can dress themselves, use a spoon, and wash their hands feel more confident in kindergarten because they don't have to ask for help constantly.

What to Do?

- Develop self-care skills in advance.
- Teach the child to ask for help when needed.

2.2. The Child's Social Experience

If a child has been exposed to other children and adults from an early age—attending playgroups, development centers, or socializing on playgrounds—they adapt to kindergarten more easily.

Experience with Peers

- A child used to playing only with parents may struggle to join a group of children.
- Children who have attended play areas or development groups are quicker to build relationships with peers.

How to Prepare a Child for Social Interaction?

- Take them to playgrounds and introduce them to other children.
- Teach sharing, turn-taking, and negotiation skills.
- Encourage cooperative play: *"Let's build a tower together," "Ask the boy if you can play with his car."*

Experience of Separation from Parents

Some children face separation for the first time when starting kindergarten, which causes stress. If a child is accustomed to brief separations (e.g., staying with grandparents or a nanny), transitioning to kindergarten is easier.

How to Prepare?

- Gradually increase separation time: start with 30 minutes, then 1-2 hours.
- Play "Mom Left – Mom Came Back" games to help the child understand that parents always return.

Familiarity with a Structured Routine

Kindergarten has a strict daily schedule, which can be difficult for children who are used to an unstructured day.

What to Do?

- Introduce a fixed schedule for sleep, meals, and walks 1-2 months before kindergarten.
- Gradually adapt the child to group activities (reading books together, drawing with others).

3. Possible Difficulties and Ways to Overcome Them

Adapting to kindergarten is a complex process that can involve various difficulties. Some children adapt quickly, while others require more time and support. Challenges can arise on physiological, psychological, and social levels. It is essential to recognize them early and find the right solutions.

3.1. Emotional and Psychological Difficulties

Signs:

- The child cries when separating from parents and takes a long time to calm down.
- Refuses to communicate with teachers and other children.
- Feels anxious and afraid of the new environment.
- Becomes withdrawn, refuses to play or participate in activities.
- Behavioral changes: aggression, moodiness, resistance to kindergarten.
- Nightmares, fear of the dark, needing to sleep only with parents.

Causes:

- Fear of separation from parents.
- Insecurity in the new environment.
- Lack of social skills.
- Changes in routine (early wake-up, nap time).
- Lack of trust in the teacher.

How to Help?

Preparation Before Kindergarten:

- Leave the child with relatives or a nanny to get used to separation.
- Explain that kindergarten is fun and interesting.
- Role-play kindergarten scenarios with toys.

Support During the First Weeks:

- Say goodbye calmly and briefly.
- Start with shorter kindergarten hours and gradually extend.
- Give the child a comfort item (a small toy or blanket).

Emotional Support:

- Praise the child for their progress.

- Talk about their feelings: *"I understand that you feel sad. Let's think about what can help you feel better."*

- Avoid punishing tantrums or tears—they are a natural reaction to stress.

Role of the Teacher:

- Show patience, kindness, and create a trusting atmosphere.
- Support the child in integrating into the group.

Important: If adaptation is extremely difficult (severe tantrums, high anxiety, sleep and appetite disturbances), consulting a child psychologist may be necessary.

Conclusion

A child's adaptation to kindergarten is a multi-stage process influenced by individual traits and environment. Adjusting to new conditions requires restructuring daily routines, adapting communication styles, and changing the child's perception of the world.

One of the key factors in successful adaptation is **preparing the child** in advance. The earlier parents introduce the child to the new environment and explain the rules, the easier it is to adjust. Parents' **positive attitude** plays a significant role in shaping the child's perception of kindergarten as a safe and enjoyable place.

Both **teachers and parents** must work together to ensure a smooth transition. With patience, understanding, and support, children will feel comfortable, confident, and secure in their new kindergarten environment, setting a solid foundation for their emotional and social development.

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