

## Guide to the Settling-In Process at Our Daycare

Following our initial meeting—and surely after visiting several other facilities as well—you have decided to entrust the care of your child to our Kinderladen. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank you for the confidence you have placed in us. Especially with a first child, parents often feel a great deal of uncertainty regarding how to make the right choice—what truly matters, and what is merely secondary. Furthermore, it is often unclear whether "handing over" your little one will prove as easy as you might hope, or how best to navigate the mix of emotions that can arise for both you and your child during this time.

For this reason, we would like to provide you with a guiding thread—a brief overview further describing the acclimation process here at our facility.

Our approach is based on the "Berlin Adaptation Model," which provides for an individualized settling-in process for each child—a model we have enriched with our own experience and the unique characteristics of our childcare center. As parents, you will accompany your child during the first few days, serving as a "safe harbor" for them.

This settling-in period is designed to foster relationships between your child and the educators, as well as with the other children. Without a strong, reliable bond, your child cannot feel secure enough to separate from you without distress. Furthermore, as parents, you need to be able to develop the confidence that your child is truly in good hands with us. Consequently, this period is also of vital importance for building relationships between the adults involved. During their time with us, your child must form new relationships and learn to let go of you—just as you, too, must learn to let go of your child. This takes time. Therefore, on a day-to-day basis, we will reassess the situation from our perspective, discuss it with you, and ask for your own impressions. You know your child best; you will quickly sense how they are feeling and can provide feedback on how they fared both before and after their initial visits to the childcare center.

Consequently, a rigid, fixed schedule for the settling-in period is ruled out.

Experience shows that, on average, a period of approximately four weeks is necessary before a child can truly spend their scheduled day with us in a relaxed manner. However, we have also witnessed significantly shorter—as well as longer—settling-in periods. This sometimes depends on whether a child is currently teething, is going through a phase of particularly strong attachment to a parent, or is having to cope with other health-related, organizational, or emotional hurdles. Therefore, the duration of the settling-in period does not reveal a great deal in itself and should not be judged in terms of quality. Every child is unique and takes the individual steps necessary for them—steps that are neither "good" nor "bad"!

There are a few points that can help facilitate the settling-in process:

- Please try to arrive at the daycare center with your child at the agreed-upon time whenever possible. We make sure that our staffing levels are optimized at those times so that a staff member can be available to assist you.
- During the settling-in period, it is important that—ideally—only one specific caregiver (parent) accompanies the child, and that it is the same person every time. For one thing, the presence of new faces or strangers in the daycare center can be exciting for the other children; for another, consistent, recurring routines make it much easier for your child—in particular—to find their bearings! You should also avoid planning a vacation during the first few weeks, if at all possible.

## The Stages of the Settling-In Process

### Initial Phase (usually Days 1–6):

On the first day, you and your child will participate in the group activities for approximately 1.5 hours. The educators will ask you a few questions, and you will have time to tell them about your child and your daily routines. During this time, your child may move freely through the rooms—looking at, picking up, and showing you various objects—without yet being able to fully engage in a specific play situation; there is simply too much that is new! Your child will seek your involvement, cuddle up to you, want to be held, and perhaps even boldly explore the new rooms. Initially, the other children often do not play a major role; sometimes, the sheer number of children can even be intimidating, in which case your child will turn to you for support.

The child is the driving force in this process. It is helpful if you find a suitable spot to sit and allow your child to come to you whenever they need you. This gives the educators the opportunity to present themselves as new attachment figures. It is quite possible that the other children will seek your attention—perhaps bringing you a book to read aloud or building blocks to play with. To what extent you choose to engage with them is entirely up to you.

The educators will observe and inquire about your child's preferences. Perhaps your child already has a favorite toy, or a particular fondness for certain songs? The educators will specifically offer these very things to your child. The activities and objects that your child enjoys most within the daycare setting serve as the starting points for the subsequent steps of the settling-in process.

Once "the ground has been paved," your child will begin to move through the group environment with increasing independence—finding joy in and interacting with the other children, accepting the educators' assistance when difficulties arise, and seeking eye contact with them to share moments of joy or to look for affirmation.

Then the first separation can take place:

- You will remain together with your child in the daycare center for a while longer, until the child has found something that captivates them and they have truly "settled in." At a signal from the educators, you will say a clear goodbye to your child and leave the center fairly promptly for approximately 30 minutes.

It is absolutely essential that you leave a phone number where you can be reached at that specific moment!

It is possible that your child may cry at first... If a trusting bond with the educators has already been established, your child will allow themselves to be comforted—distracted and cheered up by an interesting game, a song, or something similar.

Under no circumstances will we allow your child to cry uncontrollably if they perceive the situation as too distressing; in such a case, we will call you, and a new attempt will be made a few days later. This, too, is not a catastrophe; rather, it simply shows us that your child was not quite ready yet. The timing of this first goodbye is determined based on our interpretation of your child's signals combined with our professional experience—and occasionally, we may misjudge the moment.

- Following a successful first separation, the duration of your presence in the center will now be reduced quite rapidly. Alternatively, your child might switch on their "Mom-Radar," in which case the right moment for your departure will require careful consideration. However, what worked once will work a second time! Though it may perhaps require one more day of your presence before it succeeds again.

Please also take the opportunity to change your child's diaper before you leave the daycare center for the first time, so that the changing area does not feel unfamiliar to them. For both this activity and feeding, an educator will remain with the child while you attend to them; as the settling-in period progresses, the educators will gradually take over the tasks of changing and feeding.

- The naptime situation may present a new hurdle, as it is once again a completely novel experience for the child. Please be prepared for the possibility that the first (and perhaps even the second)

midday nap may not go smoothly at the daycare center. Even then, you must remain reachable by phone and, if necessary, come to pick up your child.

Once your child successfully completes a full day at the daycare, the settling-in period is—officially—concluded.

For everyone involved, the settling-in process entails a great deal of effort, and you can rightly be proud of yourselves and your child for having successfully navigated this journey together.

It is particularly important to clarify any questions, uncertainties, or "strange feelings," as your child possesses extremely sensitive antennae for such things and would otherwise be unable to fully embrace a wonderful time at our daycare.

What else does your child need for the daycare center?

- Non-slip slippers or socks are particularly useful for the little ones; however, it remains up to the parents to decide whether or not their children are required to wear slippers. As a rule, the children tend to have very strong opinions of their own on this matter. For most, wearing slippers in the warm indoor rooms feels like "too much"; furthermore, we cannot spend the entire day chasing after them to put their slippers back on if they do not wish to wear them. Incidentally, walking barefoot or in socks is extremely beneficial for a child's overall development, as it allows them to better sense and feel their own bodies.

- Please place two complete changes of clothing in your child's basket, appropriate for the current season, weather conditions, and the child's size. The clothing should be practical, durable, suitable for rough-and-tumble play, and sturdy enough for the playground... Additionally—depending on individual circumstances—you may wish to provide extra items of specific clothing types; for instance, if your child is currently practicing drinking independently from a cup, shows a particular enthusiasm for playing with water or splashing in puddles, or tends to "wet through" their clothes despite regular diaper changes.

- A rain jacket, rain pants, and rain boots should be kept at the daycare center at all times—we go outside in all kinds of weather.

- If needed, please send along a pacifier, your child's usual bottle, or a sippy cup. Comfort items such as stuffed animals, security blankets, and other sleep aids are also welcome. However, all other toys can safely be left at home, as the other children do not tend to respect the personal ownership of these items in the same way they do for the comfort items mentioned above. A general rule applies to all toys brought from home: once they are brought into the daycare center, they become "shared property." It is nearly impossible—without shedding tears—to make the children understand this concept, or conversely, to enforce individual property rights over such items. Furthermore, there is already plenty of engaging play material available here. • We kindly ask that you bring along any items your child requires—for instance, due to allergies—such as specific creams, diapers, or similar products, particularly if these are not items we can easily procure ourselves. We are permitted to administer urgently needed medications only if they are clearly labeled with your child's name and accompanied by the package insert as well as specific administration instructions from your pediatrician. As a general rule, we are not authorized to administer medications; therefore, a prior consultation is absolutely essential in any such instance!

In light of the last two points mentioned, we also very strongly urge you to refrain from bringing in sweets or treats for pickup time. If, however, you still feel a strong urge to bring in sweets for all the children, please consult with the educators before distributing them—and bear in mind that, as a rule, all the children will then want to get a share...

Finally, a few "organizational notes":

- As a general rule, the children here have breakfast between 9:00 and 9:30 AM. If possible, please arrive by then if you would like your child to join in for breakfast, to ensure things remain calm and settled at the table.
- All children should be present at the daycare by 10:00 AM; alternatively, you should have notified us of a late arrival or let us know if your child will be absent. This allows us to know whether or not we are still expecting someone, enabling us to plan and structure the day accordingly.
- Sick children may not be cared for at the daycare! A sick child must stay at home and, if necessary, be examined by a pediatrician. In cases of contagious illnesses, the pediatrician must also provide a medical clearance certificate to be submitted to the daycare. We reserve the right to request such a certificate on a case-by-case basis. If your child begins to show the first signs of illness while at the daycare, we will call you immediately. Please ensure that we always have your current emergency contact numbers—or those of a trusted contact person—on file. On the following page, you will find an information sheet regarding the Infection Protection Act, which we are required to provide to all parents. Please read this sheet carefully.
- Currently, the daycare organizes two joint cleaning weekends per year. Naturally, we cannot compel anyone to participate on a specific date; however, please bear in mind that a clean facility benefits your child as well, and these weekends offer a great opportunity for you to get to know the other parents better and exchange views on parenting and other topics. During these parent cleaning sessions, particular attention is paid to areas that often get overlooked during our daily cleaning routines. Checklists detailing what needs to be cleaned in each room will be posted on the notice boards.
- All current information is posted on the parents' information board. Parent evenings are held regularly—approximately every 6 to 8 weeks—and you will be invited to these well in advance. In addition to these general information sessions, we also want to ensure there are times when we can speak with you exclusively about your child's development; therefore, we invite you to a dedicated parent-teacher or developmental conference once a year. Should the need arise, we are also happy to schedule additional individual appointments with you on short notice; furthermore, for acute or immediate matters, we remain available for brief "doorway chats"—provided, of course, that the current supervision situation within the facility allows for it.
- The folders and portfolios created for your child will become their personal property upon their departure from the facility. You are welcome to view these materials at any time; however, we ask that, for the most part, they remain at the facility until your child leaves, as they are continuously being updated.
- In the event that your child is to be picked up by someone other than yourselves, we require a written authorization from you.
- A personal note from us: We educators also have commitments to attend to after our shifts end—commitments we wish to fulfill punctually—and prior to our work with the children, we are often out handling shopping or preparations. We therefore kindly ask that you strictly observe the designated drop-off and pick-up times.

We wish us all a wonderful time together!