

# Helping Preteens Thrive Through Change



**June 3, 2026**

[OneOp.org/learn/160136](https://OneOp.org/learn/160136)



# Webinar Essentials



Visit the event page to download a copy of the webinar slides and any additional resources.



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.



This webinar has been approved to offer continuing education credit. Stay tuned for more information!



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# About OneOp

*Supporting your work so you can better support military families.*



## Who We Are

A DoW & Cooperative Extension partnership supporting professionals who serve military families.

## Our Mission

Strengthening military family service providers through accessible, research-informed learning.

## What We Offer

Free, online professional development through webinars, podcasts, courses, and more.



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## Today's Presenters

# Learning Objectives

## Webinar Overview

This webinar equips professionals to help students advocate for themselves, keep friendships across distance, and access extracurricular activities soon after a move

1

Apply two techniques to build self-advocacy skills in new school contexts

2

Identify two ways to maintain friendships during transitions

3

Develop a plan to connect preteens to extracurricular activities within 60 days of relocation

# When Development Meets Transition



Identity

Who am I here?



Belonging

Where do I fit in?



Independence

How do I navigate this?

Deployments and relocations can intensify all three.

Effective transitions support security, connection, and confidence.

# Poll

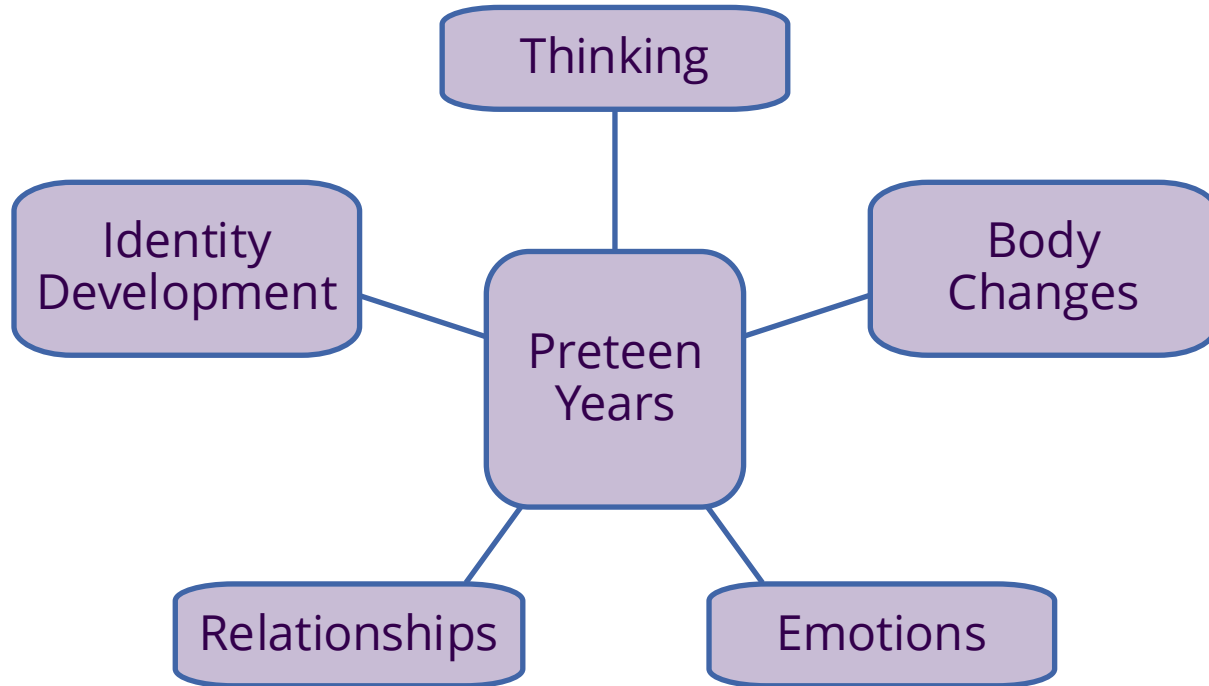
Which area do you think military-connected preteens struggle with most during transitions?

1. Belonging/social connection
2. Identity/self-confidence
3. Academic expectations
4. Independence/responsibility
5. Emotional regulation



Please respond using the poll pop-up feature.  
If the poll does not appear for you , please leave your answer in the chat.

# Many Changes at Once



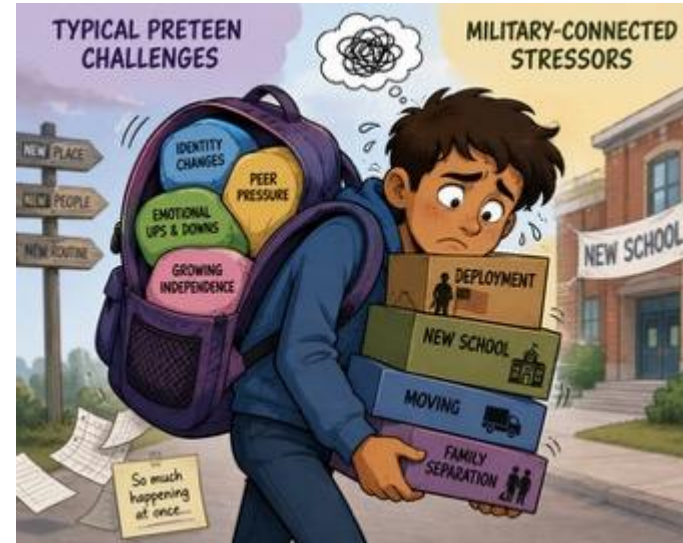
# When Stressors Stack Up

## Typical Preteen Challenges

- Identity changes
- Peer pressure
- Emotional ups and downs
- Growing independence

## Military-Connected Stressors

- Deployment
- New Schools
- Moving
- Family Separation



Multiple transitions can increase stress, uncertainty, and emotional overload.

# Meet Jordan

Jordan, age 11, recently moved during the school year.

He has stopped turning in assignments, spends lunch alone, and becomes irritated when teachers offer help.



# Let's Chat!

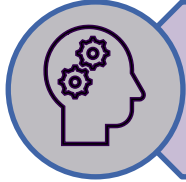


- What could be happening underneath the behavior?
- What would be one supportive response?

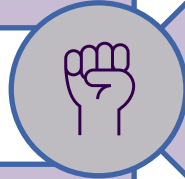


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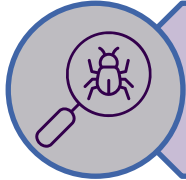
# How Preteens Begin Thinking Differently



Thinking More Deeply  
*Why does this matter?*



Wanting More Independence  
*Let me try.*

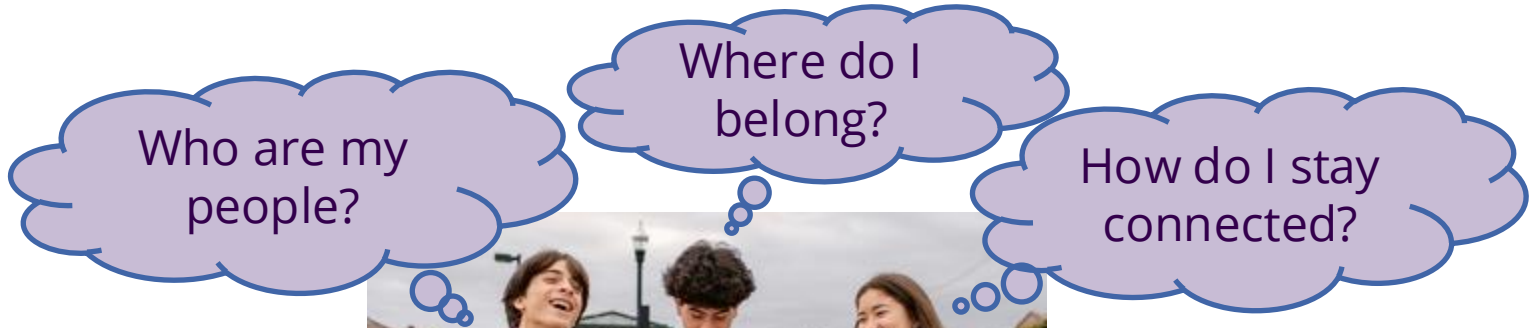


Discovering Interests  
*What am I passionate about?*



Forming Identity  
*Who am I becoming?*

# Navigating Friendships & Social Worlds



Peer relationships  
matter more

Social awareness  
increases

Friendships become  
more complex

Digital connections  
expand

# Learning to Navigate Emotions

<p><b>Emotions Feel Bigger</b></p> <p><i>Why do I feel this way?</i></p>	<p><b>Stress Increases</b></p> <p><i>School – Peers - Expectations</i></p>
<p><b>Independence Grows</b></p> <p><i>I want more control.</i></p>	<p><b>Relationships Matter More</b></p> <p><i>Connection and belonging become important</i></p>

# Changing Bodies, Changing Awareness

## Physical Changes

- Rapid growth
- Puberty begins
- Increased self-awareness

## Relationship Awareness

- Interest in relationships
- Stronger peer influence
- Social media shapes perceptions

Preteens may become especially sensitive to appearance, belonging, and peer acceptance.

# What Support Matters Most?



## **Connection**

Helping preteens  
feel seen and  
included



## **Stability**

Creating  
predictable routines  
and support



## **Confidence**

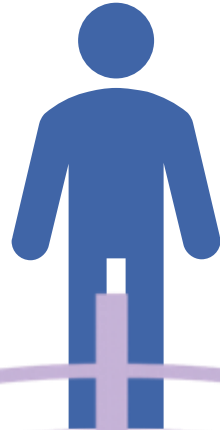
Building self-  
advocacy and  
belonging

Small supports can make unfamiliar environments feel safer.

# Helping Preteens Stay Connected

## Maintain Old Connections

- Video chats, gaming, texting
- Shared online activities
- Letters & postcards



## Build New Connections

- Clubs & extracurriculars
- Peer introductions
- Structured social opportunities

**Connection creates belonging during transitions.**

# Creating Stability During Change

## Ask for Support

- Trusted adults & peers



## Maintain Routines

- Predictability creates security



## Healthy Coping Strategies

- Movement  
Music  
Creativity



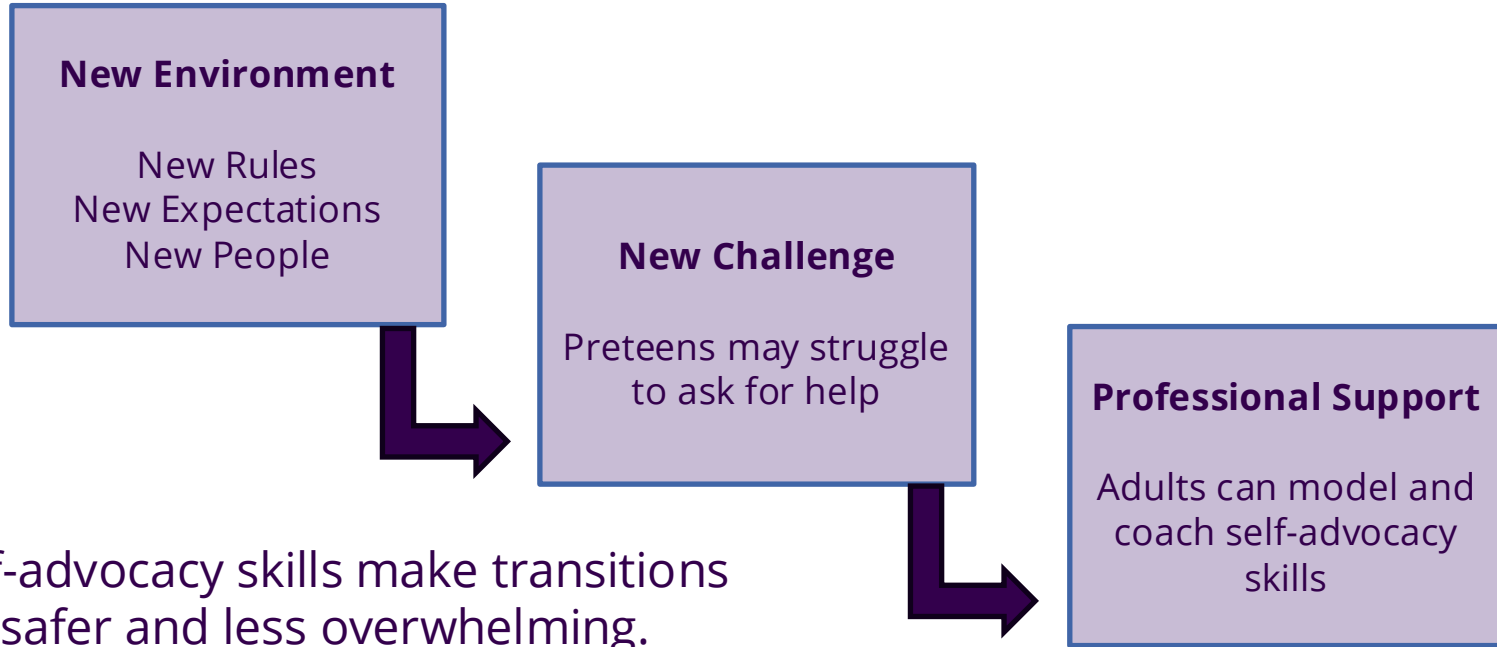
## Positive Self-Talk

- Encourage confidence & resilience



**Small routines and supportive relationships can reduce transition stress.**

# Speaking Up in New Environments



Self-advocacy skills make transitions  
safer and less overwhelming.

# Meet Gabby



Gabby understands the material academically.

However, she won't ask questions in class because she is afraid of looking different or "new."

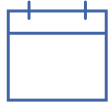
# Let's Chat!

- What barrier to self-advocacy do you notice?
- How could an adult scaffold support without taking over?



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

# Self-Advocacy in Action



## Stay Organized

- Calendars
- Routines
- One step at a time



## Process Emotions

- Journaling
- Reflections
- Self-awareness



## Get Involved

- Clubs
- Teams
- Activities



## Manage Stress

- Breathing
- Movement
- Relaxation

# Coaching Self-Advocacy Skills

## **SHARE Model**

Helping students practice asking for support

## **Choice Mapping**

Helping students think through decisions and next steps

Professionals can model, coach, and rehearse these skills proactively.

# SHARE: Practicing Self-Advocacy

## **Script It**

- Sentence starters & planning

## **Practice It**

- Role-play real situations

## **Reflect & Adjust**

- Explore what worked best

# Choice Mapping: Navigating Decisions

**Explore Options**

*What could I do?*

**Make A Plan**

*What's my first step?*

**Identify the Challenge**

*What's the problem?*

**Reflect**

*How did it go?*

**Think Through Options**

*What might happen next?*

**Follow Through**

*Let's do this!*



The full video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeY4lfj6Bbc>

# Supporting Preteens Through Transitions

## Create Predictability

- Clear routines & expectations

1

## Support Learning

- Identify gaps & provide support

2

## Strengthen Connections

- Support old and new relationships

3

## Stay Consistently Present

- Check-ins, encouragement, reassurance

4

# Building Confidence During Transitions

## Focus on Strengths

- Help preteens recognize what they do well

## Reframe Challenges

- Support hopeful and flexible thinking

## Build Problem-Solving Skills

- Encourage decision-making and persistence

## Encourage Involvement

- Activities create belonging and confidence

Transitions may increase the need for reassurance, structure, and support.

# Support Starts with Trust

01

## Intervene Early

Address concerns with care and support

03

## Protect Dignity

Avoid embarrassment or public criticism

05

## Stay Present

Consistency and availability matter

## Know Their Stage

Adjust conversations to their level and needs

02

## Listen with Respect

Validate thoughts, feelings, and experiences

04

**Trust and emotional safety strengthen resilience during transitions.**

# Meet Titus

Titus tells his afterschool club sponsor that he hates his new school and wants to go home.

The club sponsor responds:  
“You’ll adjust eventually.”



# Let's Chat!



- What message might Titus hear?
- How could the adult respond differently?

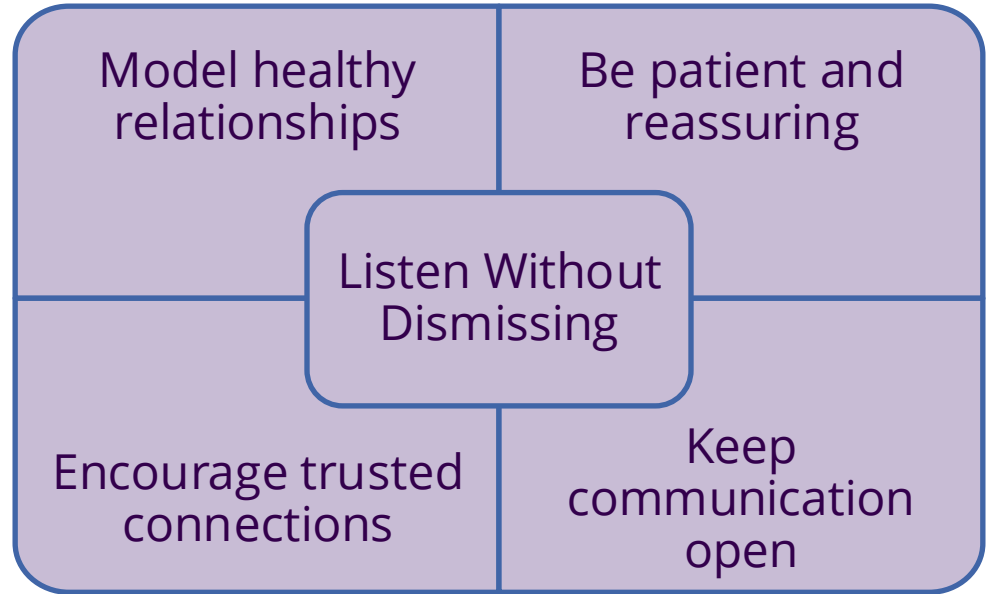


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# Supportive Relationships Matter



Feeling heard and supported helps preteens navigate transitions more successfully.



# Helping Preteens Connect After a Move

## Weeks 1 - 2

### Explore Interests

- Identify activities
- Meet support staff
- Learn local options



## Weeks 3 - 4

### Try New Connections

- Attend trial activities
- Meet peers in structured settings



## Days 30 - 60

### Build Belonging

- Commit to one activity
- Establish routines
- Encourage participation goals



# Let's Chat!

What is one concrete thing a school, youth program, or caregiver could do within the first 30 days to help a preteen feel connected?



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

# Resources That Build Connection & Belonging

4-H Military Partnership

- Leadership & life skills

Anchored4Life

- Peer support through transitions

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

- Connection & belonging

Military Child Education Coalition

- Resources for school and family transitions

Tutor.com

- Academic support anytime

# Connection Creates Stability

**Preteens are not just adjusting to new schools. They are rebuilding belonging, identity, and confidence.**

Consistent support  
matters

Communication builds  
trust

Patience and empathy  
strengthen resilience

Sometimes the most powerful support is simply helping a preteen feel seen, safe, and connected.

# Let's Chat!

What is one insight from today that changed how you think about supporting preteens through transitions?



Select ***Everyone*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

**Any  
Questions?**

# Contact Info

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## **Launching Teens for Life After High School**

July 9, 2026

# **Upcoming Webinar: Register Now**

Teen years are a key time to prepare for adulthood while balancing continued support and guidance. For military families, frequent moves and changing roles can complicate this transition. This session shares practical strategies to support postsecondary planning, employment, independent living, and military-specific transition needs.

 [OneOp.org/learn/160132](https://OneOp.org/learn/160132)

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- National Council on Family Relations
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Practicing  
Connection

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- Mental Health & Resilience
- Financial Disruptions
- Parenting & Child Behavior
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