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September Parenting Tip of the Month...

Separation Anxiety at Child Care



Should I stay or should I go? This is a question many parents ask themselves when their child is crying and clinging to them while dropping them off at child care or preschool. When a child is experiencing separation anxiety, both the parent and child may experience stress and uncertainty. Around 8 months of age, infants are realizing that people and items still exist when they cannot see them. This is why they begin to show fearfulness when their parent or primary caregiver whom they trust leaves. Difficulties with separation can continue into the preschool years, especially when transitioning to a new classroom or child care provider.

Here are 6 ways to support your child's separation anxiety:

1. Give yourself extra time.

Running late in the mornings can add more stress to an already stressful situation for your child. Have everything ready the night before or wake up 10 minutes earlier to lessen the stress.

2. Talk to your child care provider or teacher.

Discuss with your child care provider in advance how they can support you and your child when you leave. This might mean having an activity your child enjoys ready when you arrive or being available to hold and comfort your child when you leave.

3. Explain to your child what will happen.

Use simple language to explain to your child what will happen when you leave and that you will be returning. "First I'm going to help you find your favorite puzzle, then I'll give you a big hug. When I am at work, you will play and read books with Ms. Renee. After nap and snack time, I will pick you up." If your child care provider has a visual schedule of the day, you may use the pictures to explain what will happen.

4. Develop a goodbye routine.

A goodbye routine is a short and positive way of saying goodbye to your child instead of sneaking away. This could be a high five, bear hug, special song or blowing kisses from the window. A consistent goodbye routine will give your child a sense of predictability

by knowing what to expect.

5. Provide a comfort item.

Your child may transition from you more easily if she or he has a favorite stuffed animal or blanket to hold onto during the drop off. Some child care providers may have rules about bringing items from home, so be sure to discuss this with your child care provider prior to bringing the special item.

6. Bring family photos.

A photo of you, your family or pets may bring your child comfort during your absence. Find out if the child care provider collects and displays family photos. If not, bring a photo or create a small family album for your child to look through.



Separation anxiety can be very difficult and frustrating. It is important to remember that this is a sign that your child is attached to you and it is a natural process of their social/emotional development. During this time, remain calm, understand your child's point of view and acknowledge their feelings.

For more information on how to support your infant with separation anxiety, visit the Zero to Three website at <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1236-from-baby-to-big-kid-month-8>

If you are concerned about a child over the age of 6 with excessive anxiety, learn more about separation anxiety disorder on the WebMD website at <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/separation-anxiety#1>

Source: *Helping Your Toddler with Separation Anxiety AHA! Parenting website*, <http://www.ahaparenting.com/Ages-stages/toddlers/helping-your-toddler-with-separation-anxiety>

Looking for child care or parent resources?

Don't forget to contact our Parent Resource Center at 785-357-5171, 877-678-2548 toll free, and select option 1!

Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas supports the development and learning of young children by offering programs and services that improve the quality and accessibility of child care for working families.



To contact Child Care Aware® of Eastern Kansas, call 785-357-5171 or 877-678-2548 toll free. Visit our website at east.ks.childcareaware.org.

