

Tips for Combatting Separation Anxiety

If this is the first time that your child has attended school, you may be experiencing some anxiety about the possibility of separating from your child or may be anxious about how your child will handle the separation. If this is the case, there are several steps that you can take to minimize the separation anxiety for your child.

1. Begin to talk about school. Describe what will happen in simple, positive language: "Daddy/Mommy/Nanny will take you to school. You will stay and play with your new friends and teacher while Daddy/Mommy/Nanny work/get groceries/etc. Daddy/Mommy/Nanny will come back to get you right before lunch." This gives your child a framework for understanding that the time before lunch will be the time that he/she can expect to see you again. Remember that the words that you use should be positive. Do not tell your child that you will be sad to be apart from him/her as this communicates your own anxiety about the separation. Be upbeat.
2. Practice separating from your child. If you haven't yet used a babysitter, consider doing so to give your child some practice in being away from you. At the very least, make sure to leave your child with the less preferred parent as practice separating from you. Leave your child for short periods. When you return, always say, "I told you that I would come back. Here I am." Using this language upon your return reinforces with your child that he/she can trust you to return.
3. Visit the preschool. Play on our playgrounds. Point out to your child that this will be his/her school. Give him/her ownership of the space. Make sure to participate in all of the orientation events.
4. Read books from the library about going to school or separating from a parent. Two good books are [Tom Goes to Kindergarten](#) and [The Kissing Hand](#). These books deal with separation gently and with humor.
5. When school begins the parent with whom the child has less trouble separating (often Daddy) should bring him/her to school for the first few days. Children often react better to the separation this way. In addition, do not linger at drop-off. Lingering at drop-off does not minimize the separation; it only lengthens the anxiety.
6. Shop with your child for a backpack and snack box and talk about how he/she will use these for school. Children take great pride in picking out school accessories so involve them in the process. Consider laminating a picture of your family to include in your child's snack box.

While following these suggestions may lessen your child's anxiety, he/she may still have trouble separating. As you leave the classroom your child may be crying. Please know that the teachers are all experienced in dealing with separation anxiety and will work closely with you and your child to make the transition into school as smooth as possible. If you have any concerns about this issue or any other, please bring them to your child's teacher or to the Director.