INFORMATION SHEET



Just 4 Tots FDC

SEPARATION ANXIETY

What is it?

It is natural for babies and young children to feel anxious when saying goodbye to parents/carers. In early childhood, crying, tantrums and clinginess are all healthy reactions to separation and a normal stage of development.

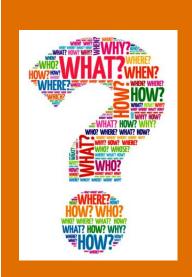
As with all stages of a child's development, the intensity and timing of separation anxiety can be quite different from child to child and it is important to remember that a little worry over leaving mum or dad is normal, even when your child is older.

Separation anxiety can start at around 8 months and reach its peak in babies aged 14-18months. It usually goes away gradually throughout early childhood. From a child's survival point of view this anxiety is justified. if children are crawling or walking away from their parents/carers but were not afraid, they would get lost more easily. Also, babies and toddlers have yet to develop object permanence. This is the understanding that just because they cannot see their parents/carer, does not mean they have ceased to exist completely.

Attending an early education setting such as family day care, long day care or preschool is an important and exciting stage in a child's development. They are given opportunities to interact with other children and educators, and benefit from a stimulating learning environment.

Some children approach this stage with enthusiasm that can leave parents feeling confident and comfortable, (and perhaps even a little left out). For other children it may be the first time they have been in the care of adults who are not part of their family, or the environment could be noisy and crowded compared to being at home, making it all feel a bit too much and leave them feeling afraid, upset, or anxious.

"As long as love is in your heart, the Invisible String will always be there." (Patrice Karst, The Invisible String)



Do you have a question?

If you have a question or would like more information about child development or early childhood education, please feel free to drop us an email at just4totsfdc@outlook.com and we will do our best to provide you with answers!

References

https://www.helpguide.org/article s/anxiety/separation-anxiety-andseparation-anxiety-disorder.htm,

http://www.earlychildhoodaustrali a.org.au/parentresources/separation-anxiety/.

https://raisingchildren.net.au/babi es/behaviour/commonconcerns/separation-anxiety,

What can you do if your child has separation anxiety?

Spend time at the new place with your child before the separation: If you are leaving your child in a new setting – family day care, long day care, preschool, spend some time at the new place with your child before the separation. Your child will be less distressed if they are left in a safe, familiar place with familiar people they trust. While they are there, the educator can also have a chat and find out your child's favourite activities, so that they can have them ready for them on their first day.

Let your child take something she loves from home: Could be a special toy or blanket. At Just 4 Tots family photos on keyrings are encouraged – these can be connected to their bags or carried with them without fear of getting lost or taken by another child – because each child has their photo on it.

Forming a relationship with your educator is key to having a successful transition to care and beyond. When your child can see you and your educator forming a bond and relationship this will make them feel more comfortable in doing the same.

Develop a quick "goodbye" ritual: Say goodbye to your child briefly – do not drag it out. Leave when you say you are going to. Develop a ritual such as a goodbye kiss or a wave through the window. Keep things quick though so you can:

Leave without fanfare: tell your child you are leaving and that you will return, then go — do not stall or make it a bigger deal than it is. Keep a relaxed and happy look on your face when you are leaving. If you seem worried or sad, your child might think the place is not safe and can get upset too. Sneaking out may be tempting, however this can encourage a deeper fear and make saying goodbye the next time just that little bit harder.

Have a consistent primary caregiver: In family day care, this is easy. In long day care, get to know the educators in your child's room so that you can greet them confidently, helping your child feel more confident as well.

Try not to give in: Reassure your child that they will be fine – setting consistent limits will help your child's adjustment to separation.

At home: Read books or make up stories with your child about separation – for example, "once up on a time, there was a little bunny who didn't want to leave his mummy". This might help your child feel they are not alone in being afraid of separating from their parents/carer. A fabulous story is "The Invisible String" by Patrice Karst. (Please feel free to get in touch for more examples).

Play games like peek a boo and hide and seek to encourage your child to understand that just because they cannot see you does not mean you will not ever come back. Hide toys and help your child find them.

Overall, remember that you and your child will move through this stage of development with patience and time.



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