

## A circular arrangement of six colorful handprints, each containing a word: love, learn, care, for, fun, play.

# SEPARATION ANXIETY

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.

[illegible]

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/behaviour/common-concerns/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 upon 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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