

Helping A Child Cope With Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is when a child becomes excessively fearful or anxious when separated from a loved one or caregiver. A child may have separation anxiety disorder when the anxiety is more intense or prolonged, and begins to impact school or other daily activities.

How To Help Kids Cope With Separation Anxiety

- **Create quick good-bye routines**



When you're about to leave your child, try not to stay too long. Kiss them quickly and assure them that you will see them soon. Avoid repeated goodbyes or stalling. Other options are waving or simply smiling.

- **Develop a good-bye ritual**



A special wave or hug, or anything that can leave your child with a positive attitude. Never sneak out while your child is distracted.

- **Be consistent**



When separating each day try to do the same thing at the same time to reduce unexpected events.

When starting a new routine explain where and when you will be picking them up.

- **Leave something that will comfort them**



When a child is stressed, a specific item (e.g., a teddy bear, pillow, toy, etc.) can assist in self-soothing.

- **Comfort your child when they are afraid**



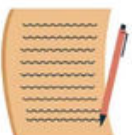
When your child shows that they are afraid, try to comfort them and validate their feelings. Always reply with kindness, and be careful not to dismiss their concerns.

- **Talk about what you will do together later**



Discuss your return schedule. For example, tell them "I'll pick you up later, then we can play a game!"

- **Share information with the person who your child will be with**



Share eating/sleeping habits, fears, likes, or dislikes that may help your child transition.

- **Visit the new setting**



Introduce your child to the person who will be caring for them.

- **Prepare the night before**



Set out clothes or items needed the night before to avoid being in a rush.

When To Get Help?

Consult with your child's doctor, or with a mental health professional if your child is experiencing significant distress due to separation anxiety, or if the anxiety has persisted for longer than a few weeks.