

Easing Childhood Separation Anxiety

This playbook provides a structured approach for parents to handle separation anxiety in young children. It outlines various techniques and supportive strategies to comfort children and ease their anxiety during times of separation.

Step 1: **Preparation**

Begin by explaining to your child in a simple, positive manner about where you will be going and that you will return. Use a calm and reassuring tone. Prepare them for the upcoming separation by discussing it ahead of time and establishing a goodbye routine.

Step 2: **Consistency**

Maintain a consistent routine for times of separation, such as drop-off at daycare or school. Consistency provides a sense of security and predictability for the child.

Step 3: **Goodbye Ritual**

Create a brief and loving goodbye ritual that you perform each time you leave. It could be a special hug, a wave, or a loving phrase. This helps the child anticipate the separation and provides comfort.

Step 4: **Calm Departure**

Keep your goodbye brief and cheerful. Prolonging the departure can make anxiety worse. Convey confidence in your child's ability to handle the separation.

Step 5: **Transitional Object**

Give your child a transitional object, like a toy or a piece of your clothing, to hold onto while you are away. This provides comfort and a physical reminder of your presence.

Step 6: **Practice Time**

Practice short separations to build tolerance. Start with a few minutes apart and gradually increase the time. This helps the child learn that you will always return.

Step 7: **Stay Connected**

If possible, during longer separations, arrange ways to stay connected. This could include a scheduled phone call or a note left for the child to read while you are away.

Step 8: **Positive Reinforcement**

Praise and reward your child after a successful period of separation to reinforce positive behavior. Focus on their bravery and how well they managed the time apart.

Step 9: **Consistent Pickup**

Make sure to always be on time when picking your child up after a separation. This reinforces the trust that you will return as promised.

Step 10: **Review and Adjust**

After the separation period, talk to your child about their experience. Listen to their feelings and provide reassurance. Be prepared to make adjustments to the routine if necessary.

General Notes

Professional Help

If the child's separation anxiety seems severe or persists, consider seeking the help of a child psychologist or therapist who can provide more specialized guidance and strategies.

Patience is Key

Understand that easing separation anxiety is a process that takes time. Be patient with your child and yourself as you work through these steps.