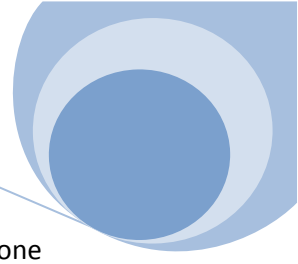


On Saying Goodbye . . .



Separating from parents is a learned skill accomplished and mastered over a lifetime. None of us is born knowing how to do this. This separation process is related to the life skills of managing loss and grief and is essential in developing an identity with good boundaries and healthy self-esteem. Therefore, it is important for us as parents and teachers to facilitate the separation process. It has stages, with infancy and childhood being the first, and is a learning process for both parent and child. Parents must learn to appropriately let go and the child must be ready to venture forth with others. Parents who let go appropriately at each stage are more likely to enjoy a bond of trust with their child in adolescence.

Because separation is such a major and important process, it can be a very painful and stressful issue in families with young children. Therefore, we would like to offer you some tips for coping with early separation anxiety.

1. **DO WHATEVER YOU MUST TO BECOME CONFIDENT OF THOSE WHO WILL BE CARING FOR YOUR CHILD.** Very young children are learning to trust people other than their parents and can learn this trust only if their parents can truly trust the care provider. If you are not confident, your child will feel this and become anxious, thus undermining the separation process.
2. **TELLING IS NOT THE SAME AS CONVINCING.** It is often helpful and important to tell your child what you are going to do. It can be counterproductive, however, to put yourself in the position of convincing your child to do something. For example, saying "I will take you to your class. After my class I will come and pick you up" is very different from suggesting, "Don't you want to go see your friends in Sunday School and play with the toys?" In the second sentence, you are setting yourself up for a struggle as you seek to convince your child of what to do.
3. **GIVE YOUR CHILD OPTIONS - but only ones that move toward your goal.** Rather than, "Do you want to go to class now?" say, "It's time for class now. Do you want to walk to the door all by yourself or shall I carry you?"
4. **ALWAYS SAY "GOOD-BYE"** and tell your child when you will return. From your child's perspective, you simply disappear when you do not say good-bye. In a very young child, this may increase anxiety and watchfulness because the child has no way of knowing when the parent might disappear or if the parent will reappear.



Getting your child interested and involved may be entirely appropriate, but don't forget to say good-bye. Then LEAVE. This will show your child you are consistent in words and actions. Thus your child will be able to depend on you to return just as you have said you would.

5. SOME CHILDREN ARE MORE ANXIOUS ABOUT ONE PARENT THAN THE OTHER. If this is the case in your family, consider letting the other parent be the one to bring the child to the door.

6. FREQUENCY AND REGULARITY SPEED UP THE PROCESS OF BECOMING FAMILIAR AND TRUSTING. If you bring your child to class or the nursery only once a month, it will take longer to adjust than if you bring him or her at least once a week. As you cope with your own parental feelings of grief, remember that you are ultimately reducing your child's pain and grief when you encourage independence.

7. SOME CHILDREN ARE JUST NOT READY YET. Although there are many developmental milestones that occur with reasonable predictability in all children, remember that your child is a unique individual. Your relationship with your child is also unique. Your child may be ready for separation sooner or later than your neighbor's child.

Use child development information as a guide, but remember that your child has his or her own particular agenda. If your child cries or seems particularly upset for more than 15 minutes, we will come and get you. We can also call your cell phone or text you. If there is a pattern of extreme anxiety with your child, consider backing off for a while. Reevaluate the situation; then try again in a few weeks.

Finally, if your family is having difficulty with separation anxiety, please feel free to visit with your child's teacher, caregiver, Pam Coronado, or Lara. I promise we will do all that we can to help you grow through this difficult transition time.

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