

Tips for Helping Your Child With



Separation Anxiety



If your child is showing signs of separation anxiety when coming to school (frequent crying, tantrums, clinginess, school refusal, etc.), try one of these tips!

Make Sure They Know What to Expect – Prepare your child for what will happen so that there are no surprises. Read books about school. Visit the playground. Talk to them about what it will be like. Let them know that you won't be staying at school and how the drop off process will go. It is very helpful to have a consistent drop off routine. If you are not able to follow your routine on a particular day, make a plan with your child in advance.

Use Children's Books – Ideas include [The Kissing Hand](#), [Wemberly Worried](#), [I Am Too Absolutely Small for School](#), [Llama Llama Misses Mama](#), [I Love You All Day Long](#), and [The Invisible String](#).

Sing a Goodbye Song or Have a Goodbye Saying - Another way to deal with separation anxiety is to have a special goodbye song or saying, after which the child knows they have to go to class. You could use, "Goodbye for Now, Hello Again Later!" Or, try "The Kissing Hand" yourself – kiss the palm of your child's hand, and they will know your love is close by! They can kiss yours too in case you start to miss them!

Plan "3 Special Steps" – Talk about drop off before it happens, and then give small tasks to focus on while it is happening.

Example -- Step one: Get in the car and drive to school. Step two: Walk in to class. Step three: Say 'hello' to teacher and start your day!

Check Your Emotions – Parents should try to be as calm and positive as possible during drop off. Kids quickly sense parents' anxiety and sadness, and this can make the transition into the classroom even more difficult for your child.

Let Them Walk In – Act confident and be joyful for your child! If you are hesitant of letting go kids WILL pick up on that. It is best if they walk themselves into the building. Try not to carry them.

Don't Go In the Classroom – It really helps if parents don't walk into the classroom during the first few weeks of school. This helps with separation for both parents and children and makes the transition into the school day so much easier. There will be tears sometimes, but that is normal. Likewise, it may be even easier to have your child ride the bus to school.

Don't Linger – Before departing from the door, give a quick kiss or hug, maybe a silly song or funny handshake to say goodbye, but don't linger. If your child is crying, know that kids almost always calm down and become actively engaged in the classroom within moments of your goodbye.

Give Praise – Try a "No Cry Goodbye" Punch Card or Sticker Chart for your child and reward them! Working toward a special treat or experience (i.e. being able to choose what's for dinner, game time, etc.) may help the child with making it to the car without tears, to the classroom without tears, and through the day/week without tears.

Carry a Special Token – Some kids like to carry a token in their pocket or have a special object from home (i.e. family photo, small stuffed animal, or another comforting item). This reminds them that they are still connected to home even when they're at school!

Try A Transition Activity - If nothing seems to be working, work with the teacher or counselor so that your child has a task/job/privilege to complete immediately upon getting to school. That becomes the transition activity and something to look forward to and focus on rather than dreading the separation.

Have you tried several of these ideas and still need support? Contact your child's school counselor!