



# A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN

## Separation Anxiety

Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience



### What is a Separation Anxiety?

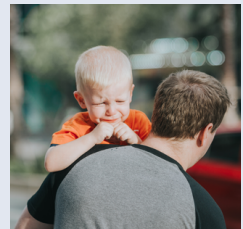
The normal apprehension experienced by a young child when away (or facing the prospect of being away) from the person or people to whom he or she is attached (particularly parents).

- American Psychological Association

Separation anxiety is an appropriate developmental milestone, and one that most children overcome with support, guidance and coping skills.



*Separation anxiety, though challenging for a child, can also leave a parent or caregiver feeling a variety of emotions: sadness, guilt, a sense of feeling overwhelmed. Keep in mind, that the unwillingness to leave you, also indicates a healthy attachment. With support, coping skills and self-regulating techniques, the child will soon learn that you will return and be there for them.*



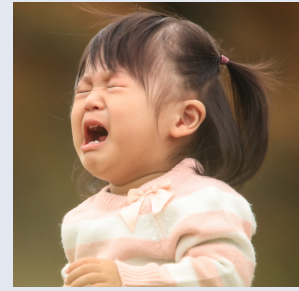
### Signs of Separation Anxiety

- Crying
- Clinging onto the caregiver
- Throwing tantrums
- Resisting other caregivers
- Fear of being away
- Wanting caregiver nearby



# Separation Anxiety Disorder

- Not a normal stage of development
- Extreme distress that interferes with functioning
- Constant worry and fear of something terrible happening to caregivers or themselves.
- Refusal to go to school
- Insomnia/nightmares
- Physical symptoms



## Ways to Ease Separation Anxiety

- Address the anxiety
- Cuddle and comfort the child
- Practice brief separations
- Play games such as peek-a-boo
- Foster the child's independence
- Provide a daily routine and visual of routine
- Introduce new caregivers gradually
- Explain what is happening/process
- Provide a specific timeframe for your return
- Don't sneak away
- Keep good-byes brief
- Create a good-bye ritual
- Provide a transitional object for the child
- Have a calm and positive demeanor
- Communicate with the teacher/new caregiver
- Schedule separations after naps and feedings
- Encourage the child's efforts
- Give choices when possible
- Don't push the child to interact with others



## When to Seek Additional Support

- If the child is still distressed regardless of caregiver using all the techniques discussed
- If the distress impacts the child's daily functioning
- Sufficient time has passed for adjustment to change and child is unable to overcome separation challenges

Trust your instincts as a parent/caregiver - you don't need to resolve this on your own and through additional support can learn techniques and approaches to best support the wellbeing and resilience of you and your child.



Contact the child's pediatrician or mental health agency for support:

Treatments include:

- Play Therapy
- Family Counseling
- Dyadic Play Therapy
- School-Based Counseling

Scan for Resources



[www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing](http://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing)

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