

11 Ways to Conquer Separation Anxiety in Children

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 him about what it will be like. Let him know that you won't be staying with him and how the drop off process goes.

Read Children's Books – The Kissing Hand is a classic book and can be wonderful for young kids going to school for the first time. The Invisible String is also wonderful. It's a great way to teach the concept of being connected even when we are physically separated. **

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. I like, "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!

Wear A Special Bracelet or Carry a Special Token– One thing that might help is if your child wears a bracelet for her parents to remind her that they are thinking about her. Some kids like to carry a token in their pocket, or a handkerchief sprayed with mom's perfume. They may also like to carry a picture. For some children, this is comforting.

Plan "3 Special Steps" – On the show "Special Agent Oso", James Bond-type friendly bear uses 'three special steps' to solve problems and do basic tasks, such as getting dressed or making a salad. The 3 special steps is something you can use and adapt it for just about any situation that causes anxiety. Talk about the situation before it happens, and then give small tasks to focus on while it is happening. 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 positive as possible during drop off, too. Kids definitely sense parents' anxiety and sadness, and this can make the transition into the classroom even more difficult for the 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. Make sure they walk into school; when they are carried in it might send the message that you are hesitant.

Don't Go In the Classroom – It helps if parents don't walk into the classroom during the first few weeks of school. It helps delineate home from school. It also really helps with separation for both parents and children and makes the transition so much easier for the children. Yes, there are tears sometimes, but not nearly as often when parents walk into the classroom the first week or so of school. Likewise, it may be easier to have the child get on the bus.

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. And if your child is crying, know that 99% of the time kids are feeling better and actively engaged in the classroom within moments.

Give Praise – Rewards! Try a "No Cry Goodbye" Punch Card or Sticker Chart for your child and reward them! Not only do things like ice cream or a special toy work for making it to the car without tears, to the classroom without tears and through the day/week, but VERBAL rewards. Silly celebrations and top of your lungs 'YOU DID IT's' ☺

Try A Transition Activity - In situations where all other tricks and tips have been tried, 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 in focusing on rather than dreading the separation.