

Helping Young People with Separation Anxiety

Young people of any age can feel worried or upset about leaving a parent or carer. This may be for a number of reasons and the young person may not even know why they feel that way. This activity aims to help a young person feel that they have something of their parent or carer with them, even when they are not there in person.

This resource idea can support a young person through a difficult stage or period of time by helping them to feel more secure. The activity aims to provide the child with a visual aid to help them stay calm and content through the day. Often, the frequency of needing to look at the object will decrease until just knowing that their grown-up made the object for them will be enough to remind them that they will be OK until their parent or carer returns.

Hand Prints

You will need:

- paint (in bright colours) for each person
- fabric or material (ideally an old t-shirt or bed sheet)
- a paint brush
- clean water

Instructions:

1. Before you begin, it is important to make sure that your hands are clean. Each person should pick a colour of paint to use.
2. Using the paintbrush, paint the young person's hand.
3. Place the painted hand onto the fabric, making sure that you press down firmly to leave a full handprint. Leave the fabric to dry.
4. While the young person's print is drying, wash off the excess paint and swap roles. The young person can now paint the adult's hand.
5. Again, place the painted hand onto a clean piece of material. You can put both prints on separate pieces of material or put them together.
6. Once the paint has dried, the young person can keep the handprint from their parent or carer and the adult can keep the young person's print.
7. Decide where you are going to keep them, e.g. your pocket, your purse or your bag. Agree that you will keep them with you at all times.
8. Make checking the handprints part of your morning routine and remind the young person to look at the handprint if they feel upset or anxious.

