

Tips for Leaving a Young Child With Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is a normal stage of development in infants; crying, tantrums and clinginess are positive reactions to being separated from their primary care giver. It is quite common for such reactions to begin before a child's first birthday, and last for up to three years. All children are different and their reaction to separation will also differ both in its extremity and frequency.

Here are some tips for helping your child if they suffer from separation anxiety:

1. Stay calm and be patient - their reaction is normal and they need to see you stay in control.
2. Schedule feeding or nap time before a separation so that your child is relaxed and not feeling tired or hungry.
3. Develop a routine around saying goodbye. Build up to the separation slowly. Do not let it come as a shock to your child.
4. Commit to leaving. Do not hesitate or return if your child is upset; this will simply confirm to the child that their reaction can influence you.
5. Keep things familiar for the child, even if you can't be there. If possible, let them be looked after in their own home.
6. If you are leaving the child somewhere other than their home, take them there in advance and spend time with them. Suddenly being thrust into a new environment with new people can be a traumatic experience for a young child.