

Managing Separation Anxiety

Understanding Separation Anxiety:

While it is normal for children to experience some anxiety when separating from parents or caregivers, excessive anxiety can impact their daily activities and development. Separation anxiety typically manifests as distress or fear when a child is separated from their primary caregivers. Signs of separation anxiety may include; crying or tantrums when caregiver leaves, clinginess or refusal to be separated, physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches, sleep disturbances or nightmares.

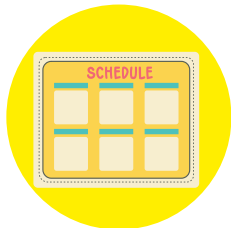
Strategies:



Sensory Processing Support

Goal: Help children regulate their sensory systems to manage anxiety more effectively.

- Calming activities: Integrate calming sensory activities, such as deep pressure input (e.g., animal walks, weighted objects, hugs) or soothing sounds, to help children feel secure and calm.
- Sensory Breaks: Provide sensory breaks throughout the day, allowing children to engage in activities that help them self-regulate, such as swinging or using a sensory bin.



Visual Supports & Schedules

Use visual aids to provide predictability and structure. Create schedules that outline daily routines and highlight transitions, helping children understand what to expect, who will be their 'safe person' and when their parent/guardian will return.



Caregiver Handover

Help your child understand who is their 'safe person' when they are separated from you. Explain how that person will help meet their needs in different situations.

- 'When you are thirsty at school you can ask your teacher'
- 'If you feel sad, you can go and get a big squeeze from Grandpa'
- 'Your teacher is here to play this next activity with you whilst I leave'



Fostering Independence & Self-Advocacy

Encourage your child to develop independence and self-advocacy skills by providing them opportunities to play and problem solve. Don't solve every problem for them! Let them make choices and decisions in their daily routines, giving them the confidence to do these things independently when you are not present.