

TIPS TO RELIEVE SEPARATION ANXIETY

BRICKTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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Saying goodbye to the ones that we love is difficult. The process through which we learn to separate from loved ones lasts a lifetime. It begins in infancy as babies around 4-7 months old gradually acquiring object permanence – the recognition that objects, including people, continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, heard, or otherwise experienced. Object permanence becomes intertwined with attachment between the ages of 8-12 months as infants start to experience separation anxiety. During this time in a child's life, it is advisable to temporarily delay any changes in their care, such as switching to a different childcare facility, out of respect for this delicate time in their development.

Our children are as diverse as ourselves, and as such, they may experience separation anxiety in a variety of different ways. Some young children will not so much as bat an eye at the prospect of being dropped off at school, whereas others may become agitated and upset. Some days may be more difficult than others. Children under three years old are in a sensitive period for order, so when something is even slightly different from their usual routine, they can become mildly

unsettled or even distraught. Starting at a new school or daycare can be distressing until a new routine is established. Young children are also still developing the language and the means to navigate an entire spectrum of human emotion. Unfortunately, some of those emotions happen to be rather unpleasant – and that's okay. Finding a program that validates and doesn't distract your child from their feelings, and that supports a respectful transition into daycare will provide them with the opportunity to develop self-regulation skills in a safe and supportive environment.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO EASE SEPARATION ANXIETY:

- Be positive - even if you are feeling quite anxious, don't show it! Being proactive in taking the time for self-care will make it easier to project your best self.
- Create a brief goodbye routine that remains the same every day (even if your child is crying). For example, after your child hangs up their own coat, you can offer them a hug or a high-five and say, "I will see you after lunch!" Involving your child as a participant in the process and not deviating in a difficult moment is the key to success.
- Leave quickly and don't linger. No one wants any child to feel unhappy. When it is your own child, it can be particularly difficult. Linger will prolong the uncomfortable feelings. Your child holds onto the anxiety of your departure the longer that you remain. Children may also learn that they can get you to stay longer by exhibiting such feelings, which can inadvertently encourage more intense and extended upset for your child.

