



Separation Anxiety

As you transition into our preprimary classrooms, in the beginning you and your child may experience separation anxiety. Separation anxiety is a normal reaction to separating from a parent and actually shows a healthy attachment. The anxiety will present itself as crying, tantrums and being extra clingy when it is time to go to school. These symptoms usually only last for three to four minutes after you leave, then the child is able to become calm and engage in an activity.

New Students may not be the only children to have separation anxiety in September. Returning students, who have spent the entire summer at home, may also have some anxiety about being away from their parents for the first few weeks.

Children tend to experience separation anxiety the most during the beginning of the school year. Children are leaving their parents and entering a new environment, many of them for the very first time, but separation anxiety can also happen at other times. When there are changes in a child's life, such as illness in the family, moving into a new home, the birth of a sibling, or the loss of a classmate, can make a child feel anxious about being away from their parents.

Below is a list of suggestions provided by Cathryn Tobin MD, author of *The Parents Problem Solver*, to help your child through these times.

Do: Keep your good-byes short, sweet and consistent, letting your child know you are confident in their ability to cope.

Don't: Hover around. Your child will sense your anxiety, and this will make it difficult for her/him to calm down.

Do: Develop loving good-bye routines that are consistent.

Don't: Take your child home. It sends the message that if your child cries enough; he/she won't have to stay at school.

Do: Believe in your child to make positive changes.

Don't: Be surprised if you solve the problem and it reoccurs after holidays and sick days.

In addition to using these tips, we also recommend a consistent drop-off schedule. Class starts at 8:45 a.m. and to help both child and parent, our school offers a morning drop-off service. Morning drop-off is between 8:35 and 8:45 a.m. During this time teachers stand at the curb and as you drive up, the teachers help your child out of the car. We, as a school, have seen less separation anxiety with this method, due to the fact that the child is leaving the parent. This directly produces more confidence in your child and proves to him/her that they are able to cope with separation. Indirectly, your child feels your confidence in the school setting.

Please feel free to discuss separation anxiety further with your child's classroom teacher.