

Daytime Separation Ideas-When Saying Goodbye is Hard

Young children can find separation from their caregivers difficult. This is a normal developmental experience. With the right support, children can gradually build confidence and feel secure even when apart.

Why Separation Can Be Hard

- Children are strongly attached to their caregivers
- They may not understand time or when you will return
- They can feel anxiety, fear, or frustration
- Their imagination can make separation feel bigger than it is

Helpful Ideas to Support Separation

1. Create a Goodbye Routine

- Keep goodbyes short, warm, and consistent
- Use a simple ritual (hug, kiss, wave, special phrase)
- Predictable routines help children feel safe

2. Stay Calm and Confident

- Children take emotional cues from adults
- Show confidence that they will be okay
- Avoid showing worry or hesitation

3. Let Them Bring a Comfort Item

- A small object from home can provide reassurance
- Examples: toy, photo, or special item

- Helps maintain a connection to home

4. Talk About What Will Happen

- Explain the day in simple terms
- Let them know when you will return
- Keep explanations clear and concrete

5. Acknowledge Feelings

- Let children express sadness or worry
- Use simple language: "You miss me"
- Avoid dismissing or ignoring emotions

6. Build Connection Before Separation

- Spend a few minutes connecting before leaving
- Read a book, play briefly, or talk together
- A strong connection makes separation easier

7. Keep Routines Consistent

- Regular schedules help children feel secure
- Predictability reduces anxiety
- Remind them of familiar routines

8. Encourage Relationships with Caregivers

- Help children build trust with teachers or caregivers
- Positive relationships make separation easier

- Children feel safer when they are connected

9. Practice Short Separations

- Start with brief separations and gradually increase time
- Helps children build confidence step by step
- Reinforces that you will always return

10. Reconnect After Separation

- Greet your child warmly when you return
- Show interest in their day
- Reinforces trust and security

Important Reminders

- Separation anxiety is normal in young children
- Children learn over time that separation is temporary
- Consistency, connection, and patience are key
- With support, children develop independence and confidence

Source: Adapted from Preschool Personality Infographic
Dr. Deborah MacNamara - Excerpt from the book Rest, Play,
Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts like
one)