

Easing Separation Anxiety in Preschoolers

For preschool aged children, separation anxiety is a natural part of going to school. A child's response to separation is often unique to personality and temperament. Some children easily acclimate to new situations while other children do not.

Preparing children can help them with saying goodbye to you. The following are some suggestions to help ease your child's anxiety:

1. Visit preschool with your child at Open House. Help your child get familiar with the new surroundings. Meeting their teachers, seeing the classroom, meeting their classmates and finding their own coat and backpack hooks are great ways for children to prepare for the school year. All of us, including children, are more positive, relaxed and comfortable when we are familiar with our surroundings.
2. Let them help shop and get their items ready for the first day of school. They might want to try on their backpack and help pack it.
3. Reading is a great leisure activity for everyone, especially children. Books stimulate the brain, encourage creativity, and increase vocabulary. Books can also be used as a fun way to get ready for the school year by addressing expectations and managing the transition. Visit your library or book store. You can find some great books to read with your child about going to school.
4. Before you leave your child at school, be lovingly firm. Give your child a hug goodbye. Let your child know how much you love him and look forward to seeing him later. You might say, "I love you. When I see you after school, I'll be so happy." Avoid saying "I will miss you." Once you say goodbye, returning for additional good-byes can create confusion and make it more difficult for children to settle into the school routine.
5. Begin a School Sleeping Schedule. If your child has spent the past few months sleeping in, the early wake up time for school can be a problem. Gradually start waking your child up earlier so they can adjust to the schedule change. Be creative and plan fun reasons for getting up like a family pancake breakfast or a trip to the park.
6. Talk about school in a positive way. You might say to your child, "I look forward to seeing what you make in school today."
7. Remember that an easy or difficult time saying goodbye is not a reflection of your bond with your child. It's important to remember that separation anxiety is a normal part of childhood development. Children can work through this stage with family and school support.

