

let's talk about SEPARATION ANXIETY

© Counselor Collab

WHAT IS SEPARATION ANXIETY?

The fear, worry, or panic a child feels when separated from a caregiver. It often happens when starting school, attending new activities, or experiencing significant life changes.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SEPARATION ANXIETY?

- Crying or clinging during goodbyes
- Physical complaints (i.e. stomachaches, headaches)
- Difficulty sleeping alone
- Reluctance to go to school or other activities

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP:

1. **Prepare your child for the separation:**
 - Talk about what to expect ahead of time
 - Visit the new place together before the separation
2. **Create a goodbye ritual:**
 - Develop a short, consistent goodbye routine
 - Avoid lingering or sneaking away, as these can increase anxiety
3. **Be positive and confident:**
 - Show enthusiasm about the upcoming event
 - Avoid displaying your own worries in front of your child
4. **Encourage independence gradually:**
 - Allow your child to practice short separations, (i.e. playing at a friend's house, attending a short class)
5. **Provide comfort items:**
 - Let your child bring a small comfort item, such as a favorite toy, photo, or note from you
6. **Stay consistent:**
 - Stick to routines to create a sense of predictability
 - Arrive on time for pick-ups to build trust and reduce fear
7. **Teach coping skills:**
 - Practice deep breathing exercises
 - Teach positive self-talk. Offer phrases like, "I can be brave" and "My grown-ups always come back."

