



# inspiring play

child & family play therapy

## TIP SHEET: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety is a common and natural part of childhood development. It can be challenging for both children and parents to navigate these emotions. This tip sheet is designed to provide you with practical, compassionate strategies to support your child during times of separation.



### STEP 1: PREPARE FOR SEPARATION

**Parent/Carer:** Hey [Child's Name], I want to talk to you about something important. Tomorrow, you'll be going to [kindy/daycare/school]. It's a place where you get to play and learn with your friends. Sometimes, it might feel a little hard to say goodbye, and that's okay. It's normal to miss Mummy/Daddy when we're apart."

**Child:** "But I don't want you to go."

**Parent/Carer:** "I understand/know. It's really tough to say goodbye, isn't it? It's okay to feel sad or worried. Your feelings are important and it's good to talk about them. Do you know what helps? We can have a special goodbye routine. Maybe a big hug, a special handshake, a high-five, and/or a special phrase like, 'See you later, alligator.'"

**Child:** "Will you come back?"

**Parent:** "Absolutely. I will always come back to you. While you're at [kindy/daycare/school], I'll be doing [activity], and when I'm done, I'll come right back to pick you up. We can do something special together after that. You can even think about something fun we'll do when we're back together."

### SPECIAL ITEMS TO EASE TRANSITION

A special item can help your child feel connected to you and provide comfort during times of separation, making the experience more manageable for both of you:

- **Comfort Object:** A favourite stuffed animal or blanket that provides a sense of security.
- **Family Photo:** A small photo of the family that the child can keep in their pocket or backpack.
- **Transition Toy:** A small toy or trinket that the child can take with them and return to you at the end of the day.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS TO REMEMBER

Validate Feelings - Be Consistent - Empower your Child  
Offer Reassurance - Try to Focus on the Positives



# inspiring play

child & family play therapy

## TIP SHEET: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SEPARATION ANXIETY

As parents, it's natural to feel a range of emotions when supporting our children through separation anxiety. It's important to acknowledge and honour these feelings while also prioritising self-care. Remember, you are your child's most significant role model, and taking care of yourself allows you to better support them.



### STEP 2: AT THE TIME OF SEPARATION

**Parent/Carer:** "Alright, [Child's Name], it's time for our special goodbye. Remember, it's okay to feel sad or even a bit scared. Your feelings are important, and I'm here to help you with them."

**Child:** "I don't want you to go."

**Parent:** "I know, sweetheart. It's hard to say goodbye. Let's do our special goodbye routine. A big hug, a high-five, and our phrase, 'See you later alligator!' And look, here's a picture of us together that you can keep with you. Whenever you feel sad, you can look at it and know that I'm thinking of you too."

**Child:** "Will you really come back?"

**Parent:** "Yes, I promise. I will always come back to you. And while we are apart, you'll be having fun with your friends and teachers. You are so brave, and I'm so proud of you."

### STEP 3: WHEN YOU REUNITE

**Parent/Carer:** "Hey [Child's Name], I missed you so much! How was your day?"

**Child:** "I missed you too. I felt sad when you left."

**Parent:** "Thank you for telling me. It's really important to share how you feel. I missed you too, and I'm so glad we're together now. Did anything help you feel better while we were apart?"

**Child:** "I looked at the picture you gave me."

**Parent:** "That's wonderful. I'm so glad that helped. It's okay to miss each other. What was something fun or interesting that happened today?"

**Child:** "I played with [friend's name] and we built a tower."

**Parent:** "That sounds amazing! You are so strong and brave for getting through the day. Every time we have to say goodbye, remember that we always come back to each other."

## WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Engaging with your child's teacher can be a valuable step in addressing separation anxiety. Teachers have extensive experience and insight into how children adapt to new environments and can offer tailored strategies to support your child.



# inspiring play

child & family play therapy

## TIP SHEET: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SEPARATION ANXIETY

By recognising and managing your own emotions, you can provide a stable and nurturing environment for your child to navigate their feelings. So, take a moment to check in with yourself, practice self-compassion, and remember that it's okay to ask for support when you need it. Your well-being matters too.



### STEP 4: NIGHTTIME REFLECTION

**Parent/Carer:** "Goodnight, [Child's Name]. I love you so much. I know saying goodbye can be hard sometimes. How are you feeling about tomorrow?"

**Child:** "I'm a little scared about saying goodbye. I'm going to miss you so much."

**Parent:** "It's okay to feel that way. Remember, your feelings are always welcome here. It's tough to say goodbye, but we have our special routine, and you have your picture to keep you company. What can we do together to make you feel better?"

**Child:** "Can we read an extra story tonight?"

**Parent:** "Absolutely. Let's pick a favourite story and have some extra cuddle time. And remember, no matter how far apart we are, my love is always with you."

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS TO SUPPORT SEPARATION ANXIETY

This list of books can be a valuable resource for both children and parents, offering comfort, understanding, and strategies to manage separation anxiety.

- "Owl Babies" by Martin Waddell
- "The Invisible String" by Patrice Karst
- "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn
- "Llama Llama Misses Mama" by Anna Dewdney
- "First Day Jitters" by Julie Danneberg
- "I Love You All Day Long" by Francesca Rusackas
- "When Mama Comes Home Tonight" by Eileen Spinelli

### KEY TAKEAWAYS TO REMEMBER:

These tips focus on validating your child's feelings, fostering secure attachments, and nurturing their emotional resilience. By using these scripts and strategies, you can help your child feel more secure and confident, aiming to make separations a little easier for both of you. Remember, your empathy, patience, and consistency are key to helping your child navigate their emotions and build resilience for the future.