

Separation Anxiety/Transition

Transitional object

An object that can go between home and school (comforter) can often help children due to having home smells and grounded positive feelings within it. Can be something plastic and cleanable during Covid times.

Lanyard

A Lanyard with a picture/pictures of the favourite people so they can look at them throughout the day. This could be metaphorically charged with cuddles/hugs/kisses each morning.

Drawn heart/star

A heart/star can be drawn on the wrist of the child and the parent. Each morning just before separation put the hearts/stars together and charge with love. This can then be touched, and a positive feeling felt when the child needs that extra bit of reassurance throughout the day. "If you feel sad touch the heart/star and it will give you a big cuddle from me". Parent can also say how they will be doing the same thing when they miss the child.

The invisible string (book)

This is a good book to go through with children feeling separation anxiety and it explains how we are all connected. Can also be used for grief.

A strong morning routine

A very swift morning routine that is as similar as possible on a morning will create a feeling of security. Lining up in the playground is often tricky for children with separation anxiety so it is useful to have an alternative for these children if that is the usual start to the school day.

Special job

Give the anxious child a 'special job' on a morning. This could be anything at all such as tidying books, sorting papers, getting out supplies for activities. It needs to be a job only they do and preferably the same one each time so that they will feel responsible for this and have an invested interest. They will feel they need to be in the classroom so that they are there to do the job.

Language

The language used towards the anxious child needs to be carefully chosen (and preferably scripted so there is a similar response from everyone). Distraction is a very good method. Empathy, understanding, reassurance and validity are vital. To a grown adult, separation anxiety might seem insignificant or a passing phase, but to that child it feels like the end of the world. See it from the child's perspective.

A trusted mentor

Have an adult who the child has a good relationship with to greet the child on a morning. The transition from primary caregiver needs to be to an adult they trust and are familiar with.

Breakfast club/Before school club

It can be very useful for an anxious child to attend one of these clubs especially if they find the transfer from primary caregiver difficult in a busy environment. It gives a more informal calm start to the day and they are already in the setting so have done the most difficult transfer before the school day starts. They have the period of time in club to decompress and regulate their emotion before they enter their learning environment.