

Help Kids with Separation Anxiety at School

Your children have adjusted so well to the transition to their beautiful, new school! Even though September and the start of school is behind us, there will be several days off or ½ days of school coming up in October and November.

1 – Make and Practice a Goodbye Ritual

Plan how you and your child will say goodbye. Maybe it's a big hug followed by a high five. Maybe it's a quick secret handshake. Practice your goodbye ritual for brief separations, like when your child spends the afternoon with an aunt or goes to a drop off playdate so that the ritual is familiar when it's time for school.

2 – Do a Practice Run

If possible, participate in school functions to prepare for Monday or after a long weekend. Send your student to half-day transition opportunities if they're available. If you can make it to in school or after school events, make the walk to the classroom to gain comfort with the building. If not, make the walk or drive to school so that your child can see what the drop off will look like.

3 – Read about It

Pick up some books to talk about the feeling surrounding separation. *Llama Llama Misses Mama* is a great story that illustrates some of the worries and panic associated with separation. *The Kissing Hand* provides a sweet strategy for families to use to help kids with separation anxiety. A kiss on the palm and a palm to the heart can remind kids that families love them even when they are apart!

4 – Stick to a Routine

Regular bedtime routines? Important. Predictable morning routine? Super important. Stick to a routine to give your child a comfortable schedule leading up to school. Make sure your child is on time for school so they can participate in morning routines too. Missing morning structure or instructions can leave your child feeling lost and more anxious. Finally, fill your child in on the daily schedule. Let them know when they can expect to see you again.

5 – Pack a Transitional Object

Pack a small, familiar object to help ease the transition. Tuck a family photo in your child's backpack, leave a lipstick kiss on a sticky note, or small pocket heart in your child's pocket as a reminder that they're still loved and connected, even when you're apart.

6 – Show Excitement

When you talk about Snowden Farm and the changes ahead, show your child that you're excited! Instead of focusing on the separation with statements like, "I'm really going to miss you while you're at school," say things like, "It's going to be so cool to get to do science experiments at school!" or "I can't wait to hear about all the things you learn!" to let your child know that school experiences will be exciting and fun.

7 – Validate Feelings

If your child expresses some sadness or worry about going to school let them know it's okay to feel that way. Redirect the conversation to things they can do if they feel worried at school and the mindfulness strategies they've learned during morning meetings.

8 – Model a Positive Goodbye

Finally, when it's time to say goodbye, do your goodbye ritual and then model a positive goodbye. Give your child a big smile with a confident posture, tell them you can't wait to hear about their day, and then head out! Your child will pick up on your positive energy!

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