

11 Ways to Help Children Say Goodbye

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Young children need support as they say goodbye to parents and family and start their day at child care. Use these tips to help your child transition into the classroom.

1. Ask about how your program makes children feel comfortable as they start. Many programs have a system in place for sharing about the beginning of school and gathering information from families before the start of the school year. Ask for the name of your child's primary caregiver and how you can share information about your family, routines, caregiving choices and culture.

2. Review the daily schedule with your child. Tell your child what will happen next using their posted daily schedule: Pictures of the day's routine help your child "tell time." If your child's classroom does not have a daily schedule posted, ask if the teacher could share one. You could even offer to make one.

3. Help your child get to know the primary caregiver first before you leave: Taking the time to introduce your child to the new caregiver and join the caregiver and your child in play will pave the way to a strong

relationship between them.

4. Establish a predictable goodbye routine: This will let your child know what will happen next, making it easier to cope with the transition. Wave from the window, watch the pet fish, play with a favorite toy, share a hug, read a book, or sing a goodbye song.

5. Give your child tools to use when missing family: A special lovey, a photo of your family, or an item like your watch can help your child cope. If the lovey can't be shared with other children, ask your child's teacher if it can stay in the cubby and come out when your child is sad.

6. Share at least a few words of your home language with your child's teacher: Hearing that "mama or papa will come back" in your child's home language makes a bridge between home and school, and helps your child feel understood. A word list that contains phrases that your family or your child uses for eating, diapering, sleeping and family members can help a great deal.

7. Share your child's favorite things to do with the teachers: When your child is ready to play, the teacher can point out similar things in the classroom.

8. Make homemade books: Books that you make for your child about the daily routine including the transition from home to school can promote coping for children who need to rehearse the day's plan to cope.

9. Talk about feelings: It's ok to cry and miss a parent. It's ok to feel

angry at parents for leaving. Don't be offended if your child is upset at you – strong feelings are normal. Don't shame your child for feeling sad and scared; no one feels that way on purpose.

10. Create a reunion ritual, checking in with your child's teacher about the day: Find out what went well and stress those successes to your child. "I heard that you loved playing with the balls!" Talk with your child about the day as you leave.

11. Be timely: Returning at the same time each day prevents your child from worrying if you have forgotten him or her when you are late. This makes drop off the next day easier; your child trusts you will not leave him or her at school forever.

Audience: *Family*

Age: *Early Primary, Infant/Toddler, Kindergarten, Preschool*

Topics: *Child Development, Social and Emotional Development*

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