

Who gets

How long

does it

How do

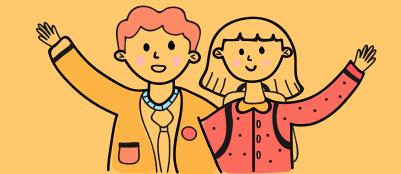
kids

react?

it impact

sleep?

Understanding Separation Anxiety: A Guide for Parents





Many kids experience sadness or fear when they separate from their parent. It can be hard for parents to know what's age-appropriate and what's cause for concern



What is Separation Anxiety?

Separation Anxiety is the experience of children becoming upset or afraid at the thought or experience of separating from parents. Children may become unusually nervous or clingy when needing to separate from parents and may try to avoid being alone or with new people. It is most common in children under three years of age and typically resolves with time and experience.



Who does it affect?

While many children experience some separation anxiety, certain factors may make children more likely to experience separation anxiety disorder, including:

Environmental factors, like experiencing a natural disaster or health event

Recent grief or loss

Recent change in routine or environment (e.g., moving, changing schools)

Family history of anxiety disorders

especially before or during

What does it look like?

Tears, crying, and/or screaming

Excuses to avoid leaving parent; pleading for parent to stay

Running away or hiding to avoid separation, following parents like a "shadow" at home

Greater parental guilt and

More parental time off

Lower parental social

frustration

connection

work

What is Separation Anxiety **Disorder?**

Separation Anxiety Disorder occurs when fears about separating from parents become severe and negatively impact the lives of children and their families. Children with separation anxiety disorder worry excessively about separation from parents in ways that are not typical for their age. Children's fears about separating from parents are persistent and intense.

12 months – 3 years

"Typical" Separation Anxiety

Nearly all children, typically between

Will usually resolve on its own as

children adjust to the new situation

May be upset for a short time, but

distracted by something fun!

usually adjust quickly - especially if

For most kids, separation anxiety will

not significantly interfere with sleep



Approximately 5-10% of youth will develop separation anxiety disorder



Separation anxiety disorder is the most common anxiety diagnosis in children under 12

Separation Anxiety Disorder

diagnosed at any age, including adulthood

Approximately 1 in 10 children develop

Must be ongoing for at least 4 weeks in

order to receive a diagnosis. Without

intervention, can last months or years.

Can be upset for hours and struggle to

Kids may refuse to sleep alone, may have

nightmares about separation, and may

adjust, even with distractions.

separation anxiety disorder. It can be

1, 2, 9, 10, 15, 16

What are the worries?

Separation Anxiety

When will my parent come back?

Am I safe?

What's going to happen while they're gone?

Separation Anxiety Disorder

Everything above, and.... Fear of being separated from a parent due to parental injury, illness, or death Fear of an event that would result in separation (e.g., natural disasters) Fear of becoming lost or kidnapped

Potential Impacts

Most kids get through separation anxiety without long-term impacts. However, when anxiety is very high, it can impact children and familie



- Poorer academic outcomes
- Greater Ioneliness
- Missed 'milestones' like sleepovers and field trips

Frequent headaches,

especially before or during

separation

Clinging to parents,

shaking hands/feet

Frequent stomach-aches,

separation

Academic & Social

- Lower feelings of independence
- Reduced sleep quality
- Greater risk for anxiety and depression
- Higher risk for some physical health concerns
 - Reduced sleep for parents Impacts on Health **Family Impacts**

Impacts

& Wellbeing

Tips for Parents

Prepare in advance. Help children adjust by navigating new

experiences with them. If starting a new daycare, make some parent-child visits together before their first day.

Keep a routine. Develop a

consistent goodbye routine that's short and upbeat. Practice this routine in lots of different settings to help kids adapt.

Return on time. Tell kids when you'll be home in a way that they can understand ("I'll be home after you have dinner but before bedtime!"). Come home on time to help build trust.

Practice makes perfect. Start

small to help kids adjust to separating. Consider having a familiar adult babysit for short periods of time and scale up experiences as kids adjust.

Know when to seek help. If your child's anxiety is impacting the wellbeing

of themselves or others, it may be time to get help. Psychological interventions like cognitive behaviour therapy are highly effective at treating separation anxiety

Resources

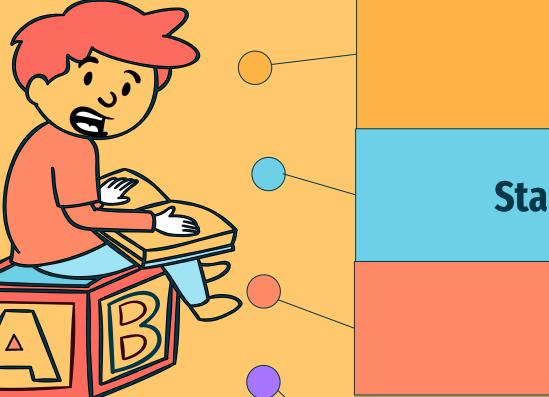


Scan me for extra resources for parents, and to see all the citations for this poster!

When does it happen?

Kids with separation anxiety and with separation anxiety disorder have difficulty when being left at home without a parent, or when being dropped off somewhere unfamiliar without a parent.

Babysitters



Daycare

Starting School

Bedtime

Strangers & Crowds

months

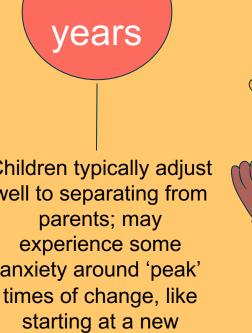
years Most children experience some

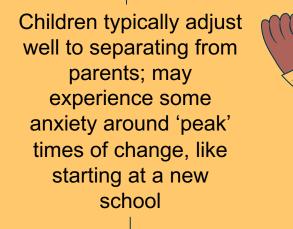
leave them with new

caregivers

years parents; may anxiety and become experience some upset when parents leave the room or

experience bedwetting





Some separation anxiety is a normal part of children's development



1, 2, 9, 11, 15