



Separation

“Separation opens for new and larger experiences, which will certainly enrich our life.”
- Dr. Silvana Montanaro (one of the founders of Montessori 0-3 training)

Children’s feelings about beginning their time at school will vary, and many children will find getting dropped off at school a challenging task at first. Here are some helpful things to remember about separation. Please share this with any other caregivers who may be supporting your family at drop-off.

1. If walking your child to their drop-off area, allow your child to walk in on their own (holding your hand if desired or needed) and have them carry their backpack on their own back
 - This helps them take ownership of joining the class and avoids the shuffle of handing your child their backpack at drop-off
2. Keep drop-off short and sweet
 - Create a routine to do each day at drop-off
 - This can be something as simple as having a hug and saying the same phrase each day so your child knows what to expect
 - Practicing this routine with care providers before school starts proves to be helpful (dry run)
 - Avoid trying to convince your child they will have a “good time”
 - It is tempting to highlight the positive things about being at school to try to help your child feel excited instead of sad
 - While they likely will find interesting things to do, the process of trying to list all of these things often prolongs the goodbye and will not register with an upset child
 - Highlight reconnection instead of highlighting separation
 - Highlighting separation sounds like: “I’ll miss you!”
 - Highlighting reconnection sounds like: “I will have a big hug waiting for you when I pick you up. I love you, bye!”
 - Fake it ‘til you make it
 - You can pretend you are an actor playing the role of the confident parent dropping off their child at school until you really do feel fully comfortable with goodbyes
3. Allow all feelings
 - It is natural, common, and completely acceptable for a child to be upset at a separation
 - We as their Guides will acknowledge their feelings that it is hard to say goodbye and find a way to connect with each child as they settle in
 - You can support your child by offering them confidence and clear expectations
 - You can show your child respect by allowing them to express their feelings about the transition even if it will not change the outcome
 - Expect a non-linear transition
 - Even when a child seems to have become comfortable with school drop-off, illness, weekends, and school breaks can make separation temporarily challenging upon return
 - Find adult support for you!
 - Speak to a partner, email your Guide, or call a friend or family member; this is often just as big a step for you as it is for your child

Resources

- [Easing Our Children’s Transition to School](#) (podcast/article)
- [How to Talk so Little Kids Will Listen](#) by Joanna Faber & Julie King
- [Attachment Play](#) by Aletha Solter