



## Separation anxiety

### What is separation anxiety?

This is a feeling your child may experience when being separated from you this may be when you leave them somewhere without you, take them to school or when they go to bed. Your child may feel fear, worry, sadness, anger or confusion. They may not feel safe or wonder if they are missing out at home on something. Ask your child to verbalise and label their feeling, for example “I feel scared because...”

#### Feelings

Anxiety can lead to fast breathing, tummy ache, nausea, shaking, headache, dizziness amongst other overwhelming feelings. These feelings are due to an adrenaline response and make their bodies react through fight, flight or freeze. This can feel very intense and scary to your child.

#### Make a plan!

Create a plan which can be stuck on the fridge and referred to frequently, for example:

1. Quickly get ready for school.
2. Hold hands on the walk to school.
3. Smile, hug and kiss as we say bye.
4. Walk into school independently.
5. Look back, wave and smile.

If they don't manage the plan, just try again!

#### Behaviour

These feelings can result in a change in behaviour such as being clingy, crying, running away, having trouble sleeping or having nightmares. Children may use delaying tactics such as eating breakfast very slowly or walking slowly to school. Try to remain calm and reassure them it is ok to feel this way, everybody feels like this at some point in their life. Listen to what your child has to say and inform school so that we can help to address the issue in school and reassure your child that they are safe. We can also give your child a job or responsibility to distract them.

Things to try – asking another adult to bring your child to school, bedtime routine, be consistent and firm, celebrate achievements if they manage time away, keep talking about reasons why, read *The Invisible String* or colour a heart, cut it in two and keep half each.