



Settling In Strategies

We want children to feel safe and happy in the absence of their parents and to recognise other adults as a source of safety, help and friendship. All children are individuals and while some children will adjust fairly easily to the new environment and new routines, others will take longer to feel comfortable and secure.

Separation anxiety is a healthy and protective emotion. It is the child's way of saying "You are my safe base and I need to develop trust and confidence in alternate carers." Recognising that separation anxiety can sometimes cause problems is a good starting point. It means you can prepare for the event and turn it into an adventure, allowing both you and your child to feel stronger and empowered.

The staff at Cheeky Chimps know how distressing it can be dropping your child off when they are upset and we will do all that we can to help you in this process. We have drawn up a list of strategies that you may wish to use to prepare your child for their transition to preschool:

- ❖ **Talk about Cheeky Chimps.** Before starting at Cheeky Chimps, talk to your child about the setting and show them pictures of their keyworker(s) so that they become more familiar with them. These pictures are included in your induction pack on the Keyworker System information sheet. Let the child ask you any questions about the setting (if able). They may be concerned about what to do if they need the toilet, for example. You can then reassure them.
- ❖ **Know the routines and activities.** Familiarise yourself and your child with the daily routine at Cheeky Chimps (see 'Daily Routine' included in this induction pack). Talk to the child positively about the sorts of activities they will be engaging in during their time at Cheeky Chimps. Like adults, children need reassurance and it is good to talk through the daily routines and let them know when you will pick them up, for example, after lunch time.
- ❖ **Leaving children with family members and trusted friends.** Preparing for separation can involve leaving your child with trusted friends or family members for short periods. This can then be followed by separation periods within Cheeky Chimps.
- ❖ **Establish a good-bye routine.** Young children crave routine and by giving your child something that they can count on, they are likely to come to preschool much more willingly. It is important when your child starts at Cheeky Chimps to let them know when you are leaving. Tell your child you are going and will be back after an activity, for example story time. For some children this will work while others need their parent or care giver to stay until they become familiar and comfortable enough in their new surroundings. These children may benefit from a gentle transition with visits to the centre with the parent/carer followed by increasing periods of separation. Although tempting, slipping away when your child is distracted can lead to the child becoming very anxious and not letting you out of their sight on the next visit.
- ❖ **Staying confident, cheery and positive.** Although you may be feeling as anxious and emotional as your child, try to stay cheery and confident as children will pick up on your feelings of apprehension.

- ❖ **Enlist the help of home.** The most important message to send your child is that you love them very much and that you are thinking of them often. Together, pick out something that your child can bring to school with them that reminds them of home -- a small stuffed animal, a photo, even a smiley face drawn on their hand. It just needs to be something they can look at that will conjure up thoughts of you that also offers comfort.
- ❖ **Trust the staff at Cheeky Chimps.** All of our staff are very experienced and have higher than required levels of childcare qualifications. They know how to calm and sooth a child that is distressed and employ many strategies to do this. Most children settle very quickly once their parent/carer has left the building but in the rare case that we are unable to settle your child, we would always ring you.
- ❖ **Ask a different trusted adult to drop them off.** If your child is struggling to settle, ask a relative or friend that the child is familiar with to drop them off. Sometimes, children react differently with different adults and it may break a negative cycle of separation anxiety behaviours.
- ❖ **Don't be late for pick up.** It's easy to lose track of time when you have a few hours to yourself, whether you are running errands, working or simply taking some time to relax. But no matter who is picking your child up, whether it is you or someone else, make sure you are there on time -- early even. If you are late, it can cause your child anxiety and make dropping him/her off the next time harder.
- ❖ **Be prepared for regression.** Just when you think you finally have separation anxiety under control, along comes a school holiday or an illness that keeps your child home for a few days and -- tah-dah! -- it's back again. This is perfectly normal. While upsetting, it's likely just to last a day or two and your child should go back to his/her cheerful self at drop-off time quickly.
- ❖ **Talk to us.** Remember that the staff at Cheeky Chimps are here to help so talk through any of your concerns with your child's keyworker or the manager.