**Tips for separation**

* **Always say goodbye**

When we worry about the reaction of our child when we leave it can be really easy to sneak off when they are settled and calm. The problem with this is when your child comes to look for you and you are gone it can be really distressing. This takes away trust and can make them clingier when you are around. They won’t ever know if they start playing and relaxing will their parent or carer just sneak out.

* **Don’t make goodbyes drawn out**

Whilst saying goodbye is important dragging this out can be really detrimental to the separation process. Make a ritual, remember we spoke about the 3 breath hug earlier, that is a nice strategy to use as you are equipping your child with a breathing strategy which will lower the heart rate and help them feel calm. Once you say goodbye go. Don’t stand around chatting to friends or teachers, don’t keep looking back or coming back for one last hug.

* **Practice separation to build trust**

 This one has been particularly difficult over the last few months as the guidance has been clear to stay at home. If you know that you are going back to work or your child is going back to school start practicing this. You can do this either by leaving the room and building a ritual in (for example the three breath hug or a high five).

* **Don’t focus on the separation** but the fun your child will have without you
* **Sometimes children are worried about you as a parent.**

Show them pictures of your work place or where you will be. Talk about what you are doing to keep safe. Give them timings if their old enough of where you will be. Or for little ones say that you will be eating lunch at the same time as them so you can think of each other.

* **Always turn up when you say you will.**

There are some occasions where this is unavoidable but the majority of the time we can get there on time. At least while your building trust something at work might have to wait. It won’t take long but it will make all the difference in the long run.

As children get older it is natural for them to start worrying more. They begin to understand that the world is not permanent and can be scary. It’s through these stages that parents feel at a real loss of what to do next and that they’ve tried everything and it just doesn’t work. It can take children a few months to fully grasp new coping strategies, one of the best things you can do is keep a routine in place and make practicing them fun. Offer your child reassurance that the way they feel is ok and normal and that they can look for fun ways to help. Everyone worries at times we don’t want to take anxiety away but instead we want to teach healthy coping strategies. If you want to know more about this next week’s session will have a focus on overwhelming feelings and why they occur. Give stories and play a go for younger and older children to help with feeling anxious. Time tables and social stories can help all children who worry about what’s going to happen next. Attached is an example of a school story and a blank comic strip to make your own. Look on individual school websites to find more specific resources for your child from their setting.

Below is a blank ladder for setting goals. Your goal may be that your child can separate from you. You can break this down into small steps and link a reward to each step. It’s great if that reward is time with you. This helps your child to learn that by being independent it gives you as a parent more quality time to spend with them.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlUxXexjhYI> – The Invisible String 