



## Separating From Your Child

Separating from your loved ones is a lifelong process. If you think of separation in the broadest terms, it begins at birth and ends at death. In a more limited way, it happens every day as we say goodbye to various members of our family when we, or they, go to work, school, child care or to the corner store.

While each family handles these daily separations in its own way, it is the act of leaving our young children in the care of another that seems to cause the most stress. Adjusting to such a separation may take on an individual meaning for each parent.

Separating may also be a different process with different children or child care providers. The sadness or anxiety caused by separating can resurface as children grow older and can be triggered by certain situations such as travel, illness or the birth of a sibling.

### Tricks of the Trade

- Begin to separate before you have to separate.
- Always say goodbye. Goodbyes are important even to very young children.
- Always come back when you say you will or call if you are going to be late so the provider can tell your child.
- Tell your child when you will be back by referring to some daily child care activity. "I'll pick you up after story time" will mean something when the child is older or more accustomed to the routine of the care.
- Don't linger...once you've said that parting phrase, leave.
- Give yourself time to make a transition. Get up a little earlier those first few days and weeks so you don't feel frantic when you drop your child off at care.
- Separating may be harder on the parent than it is on your child. Don't be disappointed if your child has less trouble saying goodbye than you do. Just remember, your child is making new friends but you can never be replaced.