



# DOES YOUR CHILD STRUGGLE WITH SEPARATION ANXIETY AND SETTLING IN?

Here is what you need to know

**FACING SEPARATION IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPACTFUL OF ALL HUMAN EXPERIENCES.**

**- DR. DEBORAH MACNAMARA**

Young children, especially under the age of 3, have a great need for connection and closeness. This is the way attachment, "that drive or relationship characterised by the pursuit and preservation of proximity (Dr. Gordon Neufeld)", works. They depend on their attachment figures to survive, to make sure they will be taken care of. So, it's developmentally appropriate for young children to fear and protest separation.



**DR. GORDON NEUFELD SAYS THAT JUST AS A TREE CANNOT BE TOO ROOTED TO THE EARTH, A CHILD CANNOT BE TOO ATTACHED TO THEIR PARENTS.**

What can you do to help your child?

## MATCHMAKING

Make sure to introduce new figures of attachment through already existing ones. Children need to know they can trust someone to take care of them. It's your responsibility to cultivate a good relationship between care provider and child. Firstly, it's important that your child gets to see you interacting with their care provider. You can also encourage attachment by pointing out similarities between them to help them connect.

## BRIDGE THE SEPARATION

When separated, your child needs something to hold onto you. For example, a picture of you, a lovey/comforter that you can "load" with hugs and kisses in case your child misses you. Any item can help bridge the gap as long as the child associates it with their parent.

During the first year of life, children attach through senses. So, wearing their lovey/comforter; sleeping on your child's cot sheets for daycare so that these smell like you can also help.

Focus on the next connection. Talk to your child about something exciting you'll do together once you see each other again. It could be reading their favourite book or cooking together.

## DEEPEN YOUR ATTACHMENT

A deep and strong attachment helps bridge the physical distance between you and your child when apart. It is only through the experience of deep dependence that children get to be independent later on in life.

Attachment research demonstrates how the expression of delight, enjoyment and warmth builds strong relationships.

So don't be afraid to hold, kiss, touch, love your child as much as you want. They are this little for a while. They grow up way too quickly.

**PLEASE NOTE DAYTIME SEPARATION MAY IMPACT NIGHTTIME SLEEP, OFTEN RESULTING IN BEDTIME BATTLES AND NIGHT WAKENING.**

### SOURCE

- Deborah MacNamara, PhD, Kid's Best Bet – Dr. Deborah MacNamara is a counsellor in private practice and on faculty at the Neufeld Institute. See [www.macnamara.ca](http://www.macnamara.ca) or [www.neufeldinstitute.com](http://www.neufeldinstitute.com) for more information.

Found this information helpful. See [www.mysleepykoala.com](http://www.mysleepykoala.com) or follow me on Instagram – My Sleepy Koala for more information.

Copyright My Sleepy Koala 2021 - Sleep coaching services that empower parents by helping them understand biologically normal infant sleep. Personalized sleep plans to help parents get more sleep WITHOUT sleep training.