



# NEWSLETTER

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## Dear Caregivers,

Welcome to the first SYC Newsletter! I'm very excited to get these up and running. Now that we're a month into the school year I'm sure all the talks from the orientation have been wiped from your mind, so I wanted to talk about separation again now that you have an idea of what it actually looks like for you and your child. It's really important to remember that every child is unique in how they deal with separation. Some kids might separate easily, where it may take others a longer time to feel comfortable in a new environment. Some kids might separate easily but meltdown when you're reunited because they've used all their emotional energy to hold it together while you were apart. While still other kids keep you on your toes, having no separation issues until out of the blue, they do. It's also important to remember that illness or breaks can throw things off, and that children, just like us, have off days. At SYC, we know that the only way forward is through and we have confidence that both you and your child can do this HARD thing! In this newsletter are tools to help create a successful separation and some collective wisdom from SYC teachers. Let me know if you'd like to talk more about this or other child development related things!

## Things to do at home to practice separation

- Develop a goodbye ritual
  - These should be short, predictable, & positive
    - The most important part is that the caregiver projects confidence & reassurance that they will be back
  - Use the same goodbye ritual at all separations so that each goodbye is predictable & positive
  - Need a script? Try, **"I love you, teachers will keep you safe, I will be back"**
- Role- Play Separation
  - brainstorm with your co- parent possible questions and pitfalls that might come up for your child, before you role-play so you will be prepared
  - Role- playing allows you to practice separation using your child's language (play!)
  - Play it out using toys or real people - whatever feels most comfortable to you!
- Read books involving separation: *The Kissing Hand*, *Owl Babies*, *Our Day at SYC*
  - Check out more ideas: <https://www.readbrightly.com/kids-books-help-separation-anxiety/>

## Things to do on a school day:

- Use simple language like- "Today is a school day"
  - This avoids the power struggle of whether or not they get to control whether they're going to school or not.
    - Remember you are there to guide them, allowing them to make the decision on whether or not to come to school is not developmentally appropriate and gives them too much power. Giving kids too much power creates fear and anxiety, children need guidance and predictability
  - Allow them to have any feelings they want about school, but stick to "Today is a school day"
    - Ex: I hear that you feel (-----) about going to school but today is a school day
- When you're ready to leave them in the classroom be LOVINGLY firm
  - Since children are constantly observing and responding to the behavior and energy level of their caregivers, it is important that caregivers project confidence in the teacher's ability to keep their child safe and secure, even if it's just a fake it til you make it moment. Kids need to see both teachers and parents as leaders who work in partnership with each other.
- Leave when you say you're going to even if it feels hard or uncomfortable for one or both of you-
  - This may look like having a decisive goodbye and leaving your crying child with us, we are absolutely not judging that you have left your child crying but rather we feel empowered by knowing that you trust in us and trust in the process.
    - If you need help- ask a teacher to tag in. We got you : )

## Pitfalls

- Asking for permission!
  - “Are you ready for me to go?”, “Can I go now?”, “Is it okay if I leave?”, “I’m leaving now, ok?”
    - remember if you ask a question, and they respond “NO” what will your plan be? In this moment they need your guidance and reassurance. Asking them for permission puts them in a developmentally inappropriate position and it can lead to a power struggle
    - warning: once you notice you’re asking for permission, you won’t be able to unhear it
  - Script: “It’s time for me to say goodbye, would you like to give a wave or a high five?”
- Lingering too LONG
  - Remember the goal is for the goodbye to be short, positive, & predictable
    - lingering too long can give kids mixed messages about your confidence that they can do this hard thing
    - try not to get sucked into one more hug or one more plead.... this can become a never ending cycle
- Our own perfectionism
  - REMEMBER AT SYC WE BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES– a great way for children to learn this is to witness adults making a mistake and seeing how they problem solve and give themselves grace.
  - Parenting is a HARD THING

## Collective Wisdom

**Here are some wise words from SYC teachers. This advice is good for any kid in any age group!**

Tips from the 2s Teachers–

- “I think it’s important for any parent to recognize the issue of anticipatory anxiety. Prolonging the drop off or staying until a kid is settled often backfires hugely. The not knowing when they are going to leave is super hard for so many kiddos.”
  - anticipatory anxiety defined here: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJ1lIKsq14Q/?igsh=enU5dzJveDFiZWZO>
- “home visits help a ton [with separation]! Goodbye rituals and confidence from the grownups. I think when grownups are confident with the plan and stick to it...it’s a smoother transition”

Tips from the 3s teachers–

- “Let your child bring a comfort item to school. This can be a blankie or favorite stuffie, but also a toy car or a favorite book we can read together. Caregivers can ask their child at home what they might want to bring that makes them feel better when they miss their grown-up. It’s a good idea to tell a teacher about that item so they can remind the child and to label the item in case it gets misplaced or lost!”
- “Avoid ending goodbye rituals with a hug. Instead, end with something that physically separates you from your child (i.e. fist bump, wave, blowing a kiss, etc.). If you end with a hug, the child’s instinct may be to just hold on as tightly as possible in an attempt to keep you there. It may become impossible for them to choose to let go of you and the only thing a teacher can really do at that point is pull your child away, which is harder on everyone. Build in the physical separation as part of the ritual to make the emotional separation easier.”

Tips from the 4s teachers–

- “Call the office if it a hard drop off. Know we will reach out to you if they seem to need more... If it’s a pattern, we will try to help find a way to facilitate that transition with your child.”
- “it’s a lot easier to help a kid separate with a quick goodbye (and crying!) than after a parent has lingered using language like, “I’m gonna go, okay?” when you say you are leaving, leave. Even if you simply say Love you, teachers will take good care of you, I’ll be back.”

## Beyond SYC

- Separation from our loved ones is just a part of life. We can use all of these tools to make every separation more successful and grow in our ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings
- Reflect with your co-parent and then your child throughout the year. Notice the areas of growth, get curious about times when separation is a continued struggle, celebrate the progress you’ve all worked hard to make!
- Remember progress & growth are not linear– backslides, huge leaps & tiny steps are all growth

Have any questions, comments or topic suggestions? Let’s chat! e-mail me at [alicia@syccolumbus.org](mailto:alicia@syccolumbus.org).