



Separation Anxiety in Children: A Parent's Guide



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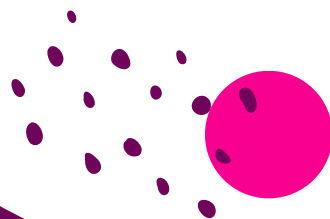
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What is Separation Anxiety?

Separation Anxiety is a common developmental emotional phase that many children experience. It typically occurs when children fear being separated from their parents or caregivers. This fear can manifest as intense distress and worry when they are apart from the people they are attached to, leading to impacts on social, emotional, academic and occupational functioning.





Checklist for

Parents:

Characteristics of Separation Anxiety

If you suspect your child may have Separation Anxiety, here's a checklist of characteristics to look for:

- ✓ Excessive distress when separated from parents or caregivers
- ✓ Fear or refusal to attend school or leave home
- ✓ Difficulty attending events away from attachment figures
- ✓ Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- ✓ Frequent stomach aches or headaches when separation is anticipated
- ✓ Clinging behaviour and excessive need for reassurance
- ✓ Nightmares about separation
- ✓ Fear that something bad will happen to their loved ones when they are apart
- ✓ Selective mutism

Diagnosing Separation Anxiety

A mental health professional, such as a Paediatrician, Psychologist, or Psychiatrist, can diagnose Separation Anxiety. They will typically use interviews, questionnaires, and observations to assess the child's behaviour and emotions to determine the level and appropriateness of separation anxiety.



Steps to Take if You Suspect Your Child has Separation Anxiety

1. Talk to your child about their feelings and concerns.

2. Consult your child's Paediatrician for an initial assessment.

3. Seek a referral to a child Psychologist or Psychiatrist to discuss concerns and observations and receive strategies and support.

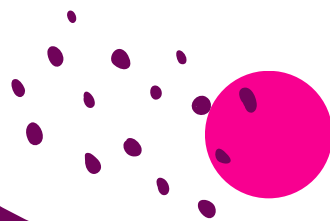


Supporting a Child with Separation Anxiety

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- **Create a routine:** Consistency can provide a sense of security.
 - **Gradual exposure:** Slowly expose your child to situations that trigger anxiety.
 - **Positive reinforcement:** Praise and reward bravery and independence.
 - **Relaxation techniques:** Teach deep breathing or mindfulness exercises.
 - **Parent involvement:** Stay involved and reassuring without being overprotective.
 - **Social skills:** Help your child develop social skills to build confidence.
 - **Therapy:** Consider Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or play therapy.
 - **Medication:** In severe cases, medication may be prescribed by a doctor.
 - **Support groups:** Connect with other parents facing similar challenges.
 - **Gradual separations:** Start with short separations and gradually increase them.



Remember that each child is unique, and it may take time to find the strategies that work best for your child. Please reach out to Inspire Allied Health and Education Group to find out how we can support your child and family.





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