

Separation Anxiety for Parents/Carers



What is Separation Anxiety?

Separation anxiety is the worry or distress some children feel when they are apart from their parent or trusted adult. While it's common in early childhood, for some children these feelings can continue as they grow and may cause challenges with daily routines.

It can look like:

- Crying, clinging, or refusing to say goodbye
- Tummy aches, headaches, or feeling unwell when a separation is coming
- Reluctance to join in activities if you are not nearby
- Repeatedly checking where you are or when you'll be back
- Struggling to concentrate because of worrying about being apart

Separation anxiety isn't a sign of "naughtiness" or poor behaviour. It is an expression of worry, often a child's way of saying "I don't feel safe without you."

These feelings can:

- Make everyday routines like drop-offs more stressful
- Impact a child's ability to focus on play, friendships and learning
- Cause physical symptoms like stomach aches or headaches
- Leave parents feeling worried, guilty, or unsure how to help

With the right support, children can learn to manage these big feelings, build resilience, and grow in confidence.

How we talk to children about their worries makes a big difference. Instead of brushing feelings off ("Don't be silly, you'll be fine"), try acknowledging them and offering reassurance.

For example:

- "I know saying goodbye feels hard for you."
- "I always come back, and until then, you're safe with your teacher."
- "Let's take a deep breath together before I go."

This helps children feel understood, while also reminding them that they are safe and cared for.

Your Role at Home

Here are some small, consistent steps that can help your child feel calmer and more confident:

- Keep goodbyes short and consistent. Long or uncertain goodbyes can increase anxiety. Create a short routine (a hug, a wave, a special phrase) that you repeat every day.
- Use a comfort item. A photo, note or small token from home can reassure your child when they miss you.
- Practise calming strategies. Techniques like Happy Breathing can give your child a tool to use when they feel wobbly.
- Celebrate bravery. Even tiny steps like a wave, a smile or managing a shorter goodbye, deserve recognition. This builds confidence over time.
- Stay calm yourself. Children take cues from the adults around them. Keeping your goodbye warm but confident shows your child that they are safe.
- Talk openly. Reassure your child that it's normal to miss people we love and that their feelings won't last forever.

How School Can Help

Your child's school is also here to support them. Staff can:

- Offer calm, predictable routines at drop-off
- Provide comfort items or visuals (like Now-and-Next cards)
- Use gentle reassurance and consistent language
- Help classmates understand kindness and empathy

Your school uses the myHappyMind programme which helps provide support for children with separation anxiety. Because of this, you also have access to a free app which provides you with lots of resources too.

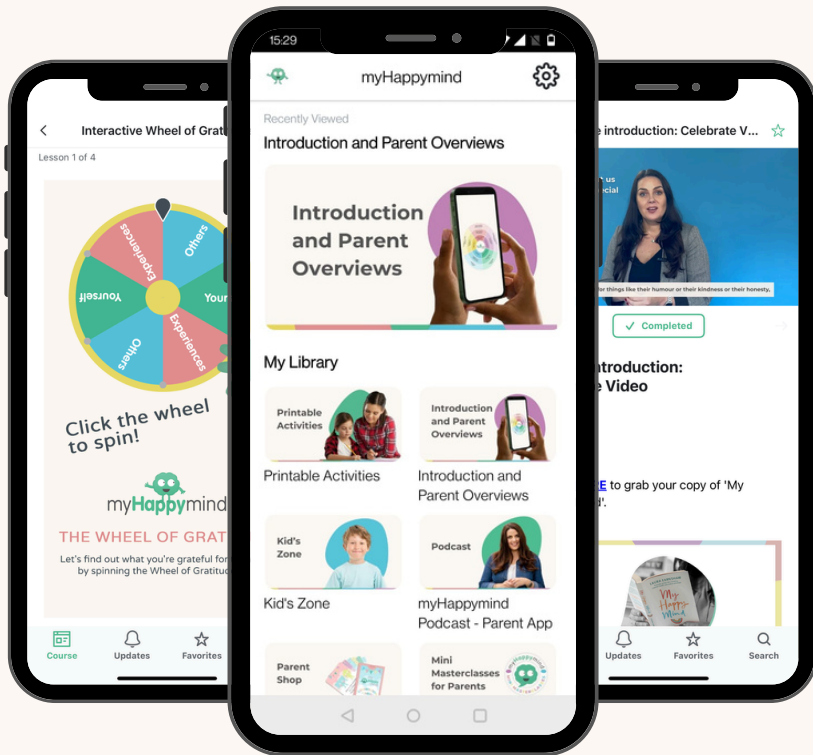
Including:

- Happy Breathing files
- myHappyMind Places- to help support self-regulation
- A Mini Masterclass for you to watch on this topic
- Information about each myHappyMind module



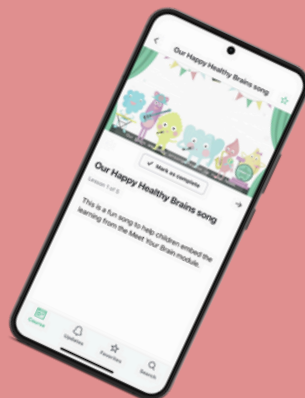
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...An online resource to support you and your family to learn more about how you can use myHappy mind to support your child.



myHappy mind for Parents

Exclusively for parents with children at a myHappy mind School or Nursery.



Learn all about what your children are learning in school



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