

Calming the Fears of Separation: 16-36 Months

Your child may feel anxious when separating from you. Short separations teach your child:

- He will be safe if you're out of sight
- He can try new things
- He can trust you to be there if needed

Ideas to try with your child:

- **Play Hide and Seek together when at home.** Your child will discover that "out of sight" doesn't mean gone forever.
- **Talk about what will happen:** "I am going to sit and visit with grandma while you play outside with your cousins."
- **Encourage his participation.** Help him get settled in an activity playing with a toy or another person, and then tell him where you will be.
- **Tell him if you must leave.** Give your child a hug and kiss, tell him when you will return, and then go. Don't stall or give in to crying, and never sneak out.

If your child is struggling:

- A very shy or young toddler may need to check in with you regularly. That may be a hug, a quick wave across the room or just making eye contact.
- Let your child bring a favorite toy or photo from home in his pocket to be a comfort when you're away.
- If you must leave, help him connect with a trusted adult.

Going further:

- Books to look for: *Oh My Baby, Little One* by Kathi Appelt, *The Blushful Hippopotamus* by Chris Raschka, or *The Kissing Hand*, by Audrey Penn.
- Check this link for an excellent list of separation tips: <http://www.ahaparenting.com/ages-stages/toddlers/helping-your-toddler-with-separation-anxiety>

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children's best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children 16 to 36 months** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: "Separate from main caregiver when in familiar settings outside the home" About Me and My Family and Culture." Ages 16 to 36 months, pg. 43.