

## Where Is My Mom? Teaching Children to Separate .....Gently

Newsletter 117  
Parent Edition  
August 2008

*This Month's Theme:*  
**Being Quiet**

As the last days of summer approach, we know the days when we can slow down and just be quiet are numbered. Take advantage of what time is left with some quiet contemplative activities.

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**Next Month**

*The First in a Four Part Reading Series*

The month of September always brings with it the subject of separation anxiety. Many children are starting their first day of school or childcare and anxiety issues surface both for you and your child. The key to dealing with separation issues is to understand that they're normal and stem from very real human emotions. A healthy adult has learned to deal with the emotions, so they don't elevate to true anxiety. Your toddler has not yet learned those skills.

The first time your child may experience separation anxiety is between four and ten months. At this stage most children are just developing an awareness of object permanence, which is the knowledge that when something is out of both visual and auditory range, the object still exists. You know your child is currently experiencing this development when he becomes fascinated with peek-a-boo and watching you hide a toy behind your back and then bringing it into view. He may also throw his food on the floor and watch you magically make it reappear. The awareness of object permanence is not an overnight development. Children will be working on this through age two, beginning with no sense of an object's permanence, or believing that when something (or someone) is unseen it does not exist. As this development matures, he

will be comforted by your voice if you separate from him knowing that the sound of your voice means that you are close by. At this stage he will need to see a



portion of an object to realize it's existence. Your child completes this stage of development when he knows to look for an object that is completely out of sight or ask, "Where's my Mom?" when he cannot see or hear you.

Being sensitive in the early stages may prevent problems later. Understand that his fear is real and can cause him great stress if you disappear from sight. If you need to leave the room, continue talking or singing and reappear quickly to decrease the stress. During these crucial months play lots of peek-a-boo games. When your child

is comfortable with these games, introduce him to toys that will continue to encourage this development, such as busy boxes with pop up doors and containers that he can hide things in, close the lid and then find them again. Begin playing hide and seek games, starting with hiding objects in plain sight and having him retrieve them. After a few months, just have a piece of the object showing, such as the corner of a blanket under the pillow. When your child can do that successfully, begin to hide the object out of sight. If he looks at you with a blank stare when you ask him to find the toy, show him where it is and then hide it repeatedly in the same spot. Over time he will catch on to the game increasing his “finding” skills. As he increases these skills, you will find it easier to disappear from his field of vision without causing him stress.

Many children go through this period and develop healthy object permanence skills but still experience great anxiety when separating from their parents. This is usually not so much separation anxiety as stranger anxiety or a mixture of the two. Many parents who choose to start their children in child care at the age of two and one half to three will be shocked at how desperately their children cling to them when they try to leave. It’s very important, when looking for child care, that you leave at least one week before full time care starts to spend time at child care with your child. If separation anxiety is a problem, you will be aware of it because it will be happening at home. If it’s stranger anxiety, it will only happen around new people or places. The best way to deal with this is to make sure your child care provider is not a stranger by the time you’re ready to leave your

child full time. Stay and become part of the child care home for a few hours involving yourself in their routines. Try not to just sit and observe, which can sometimes make your child more uncomfortable. The more at home you feel, the more at home your child is likely to feel. Make sure during the stay that you leave the room often, as your child is busy playing with the other children. Over the course of the week, gradually increase the time until you leave for at least an hour. Assure your child that you will return.

The difference between the separation anxiety experienced under age one and the stress experienced over age two is that at age one the child truly believes his Mom has disappeared and is understandably terrified. After age two, assuming normal development, the child knows the parent exists but would simply prefer her to be close at all times, not breaking her normal routine. Some children deal very effectively with emotions experienced in new places or with new people and won’t blink when you leave. Others, either due to inexperience or personality type, need to be taught what to do when they are frightened.

Teaching your child new behaviors will take time and repetition. Work out a morning routine with your child care provider and repeat that routine everyday. Make sure anyone who would normally drop off your child knows the routine and follows it to the letter everyday. For instance, take your child in the door, remove his coat and jacket, lead him to a play activity, give him a hug and kiss and leave. It’s very important that you leave time in the morning to carry out the plan, not skipping any steps. Make sure everyone

moves through the agreed upon routine, even though your child may be upset. You need to respond to the tears with gentle understanding without getting wrapped up in the emotion. If you become upset, it will only further upset your child. In many cases, in a few days he will develop some coping ability and stop crying once the routine is complete and you are out the door.

If your child continues to cry and cling to you when you are leaving, gently take your child in your arms, lead him back to the activity and re-involve him. Your caregiver will be able to assist you, gently holding and reassuring your child when you leave. You may need to do this repeatedly. Very frightened children may run to the window or door as if they need to escape, and you must be ready to deal with the very powerful emotions you may feel when this happens. Your child care provider, who probably has a great deal of experience dealing with this, will get your child settled. Do not return to check on your child. Instead, wait a half hour and call from work. Almost always, your child will be playing happily with the other children.

Learning a new pattern of behavior is difficult for everyone, but most children will adjust to the new routine by the end of two weeks. Mondays may be a bit more difficult than Fridays, but soon they will be anxious to play with their friends at child care. Your patience, understanding and ability to control yourself and communicate with the caregiver are the most important tools you have to help your child learn to handle his fear. It may have been difficult, but you’ve helped him conquer his first hurdle towards independence.

# Contemplative Books

## **The End of the Beginning by Avi**

There are many good books published for children every year. It is rare that I come across one that is pure brilliance. There are layer upon layers of ideas that you and your child can talk about after reading each chapter. The most obvious layer is the story of a snail who leaves home only to discover his greatest adventures were right outside his door. Then there are the little stories with their twisted endings (or maybe beginnings) that begin and end in each chapter. Within the paragraphs is word play that will stop you, so you can re-read the passage to make sure it says what you thought, which will give you more cause to look deeply into the seemingly simple stories. This is best read aloud, so you can take part in the conversations brought on by the snail and his very wise ant friend on their amazing adventure. (Ages 3 - adult)

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## **A Tree is Nice by Marc Simont**

So often the things in life which bring us peace are the things we pass by everyday without noticing their presence. And so it is with trees. This book begs to be read under your favorite tree. It will entice you to take a walk in the park and notice the endless number of trees and lie down to look up through their many branches to the clear, blue sky. If your child hasn't thought much about the trees that help provide our fresh, clean air, the peaceful illustrations and the dream-like text will spark the beginning of a thought that will help her notice the miracles in her own backyard. (Ages 2 - 6)

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## **I Will Make Miracles by Susie Morgenstern**

Most children don't know what they want to be when they grow up. And neither does the little boy in this story, but he definitely knows what he wants to do. He is going to make miracles and he describes his miraculous wishes with great passion. "I'd make the world stop fighting! I'd get it down in writing! I'd shout it far and near. And everyone would hear." The illustrations are as large and dramatic as the little boy's fantasies. Like many little boys, he dreams big, but when he comes back to reality lying on the floor with his books, he simply says, "To change the world from dark to bright, first I should learn to read and write." It's a wise little boy who knows how to dream big but live in the here and now. Use this as a springboard to talk to your child about dreams and miracles. (Ages 3 - 10)

## **The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain by Peter Sis**

It's very hard to explain to American children the value of the freedom they experience every day. The Wall is the story of a boy who grew up in Czechoslovakia during the cold war. He was a boy who loved to draw and did so freely until Communists took control of the schools and began to indoctrinate a whole generation of children. He began to draw what he was told until "bits and pieces of news from the west begin to slip through the iron curtain." And then he begins to question. There are two story lines; one is illustrated in comic book form with captions that tell the story of what is happening in his country. Another runs across the bottom of the page and tells the story of what happens to the little boy, the young man who rebels, and the mature man who flees the chains of the Iron Curtain. There is no better way for a middle school child to learn history than to couple it with the personal story of those who have lived it. There is no better way to help children understand the preciousness of freedom than by hearing from those who, for some time, lost it. (Ages 10 - adult)

# Quiet Time Activities

## Tree Collages

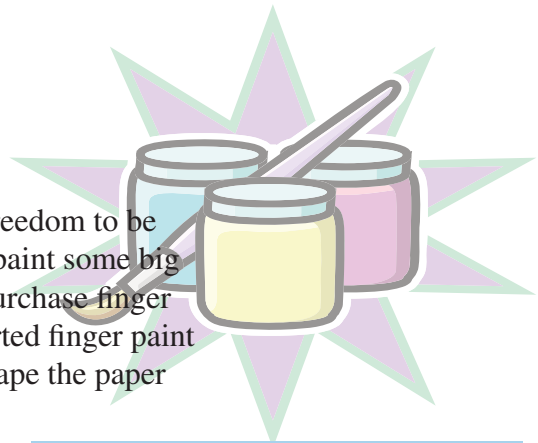
The leaves will be turning before you know it. Capture all their green glory by giving your child a collage box filled with hundreds of green leaves. You can cut them from construction paper, tissue paper, old wrapping paper, cloth, green packaging or anything else green you can think of that can be pasted on paper. In addition, cut 8" by 12" ovals from construction paper. (enough for each participant) and small brown rectangles to use as tree trunks.

On the day of the project you can read *A Tree is Nice* (page 3) or another book about trees. Take some time to go out in the yard or park and lie down under the trees and look skyward. Talk about all the things you can see from underneath.

When you get home, give your child an oval and some paste. Allow her to paste all the green leaves from the collage box freely. When she is done she can attach small brown rectangles to the bottoms to serve as a tree trunk. If your child is very young, you can help her with this. Allow the tree to dry overnight.

## Fingerpaint

Take advantage of your freedom to be outside in the warm sun and paint some big pictures using finger paint. Purchase finger paint paper in a roll and assorted finger paint colors. Use masking tape to tape the paper down to a child size table or the sidewalk. Place the paint in small bowls separating the colors and let your child paint with abandon without worrying about the mess. If you have older children, add paint brushes, sponges and rags, so they can express themselves using different tools. Clean up, using the hose to wash the play area or sidewalk and the baby pool to wash your child. He'll love to watch the water turn colors. When the paintings are complete, find a place that hasn't been soaked with the hose, and dry the paintings.



*There is always  
music among the  
trees in the  
garden, but our  
hearts must be  
quiet to hear it.*

*Minnie Aumonier  
18th Century Poet*

## Great Audio Books for Children

Some children can sit for hours listening to audio books. They are great escapes and can be of great assistance to parents and caregivers while driving or distracted by another activity. Here are just a few selections from audiobookone.com. Visit the web-site for hundreds of children's books read by talented casts.

*Thumbelina and Other Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Anderson

*Amelia Bedelia Audio Collection* by Peggy Parish

*Tom on Robot Island* by Ann Twig

*Revoltin' Rhymes and Dirty Beasts* by Roald Dahl

*A Bear Called Paddington* by Michael Bond

*Frog and Toad Audio Collection* by Arnold Lobel

Jim Weiss or Odds Bodkins also record dramatic and entertaining CDs for children that are available from Chinaberry.com.

# Quiet Time Activities

## Learn a Little Poem

### Hey Diddle, Diddle

Hey diddle, diddle,  
The Cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon.  
The little dog laughed to see such a sight,  
And the dish ran away with the spoon.

### Clouds

White sheep, white sheep  
On a blue hill,  
When the wind stops,  
You all stand still.  
When the wind blows,  
You walk away slow.  
White sheep, white sheep.

### The Bird

If I were a bird, I'd sing a song,  
And fly about the whole day long,  
And when the night came,  
Go to rest,  
Up in my cozy little nest.

## Write A Little Story

Give your child a personal journal so he can dictate stories to you during a quiet time. They can be stories from his imagination, stories about what happened during the day or something he wants to write down to share with his friends. These journals can be very intimate and precious keepsakes. Every year start a new one, and you'll document your child's development from his point of view.



## New Vaccine Requirements for Child Care

Starting September 1, 2008, children enrolling in, or attending licensed child care centers or preschools will have two new vaccine requirements- Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV7) and Influenza Virus Vaccine (flu).

Every child from two months through eleven months of age must receive a minimum of two age-appropriate doses of PVC, and every child twelve months through 59 months of age should be given at least one dose of PVC on or after their first birthday. The pneumococcal vaccine, or PCV, helps prevent childhood diseases caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, also known as *Pneumococcus*. *Pneumococcus* is the most common cause of blood infections, such as pneumonia, meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and ear infections in young children under the age of five.

The new influenza requirement states that every child six months through fifty nine months of age attending a child care center or pre-school on or after September 1, 2008, should receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine annually, between September 1 and December 31 of each year. The reason for the new requirement for the influenza vaccine is that children between the ages of 0 to 4 are hospitalized every year with rates of hospitalization ranging anywhere from 100-500 per 100,000 children per year with complications from the flu.

Hopefully, by following these new vaccine requirements, our children will stay healthy and avoid serious complications from preventable childhood diseases.

# Remember Your Child's Vaccinations

As September approaches many schools will be checking student health records to confirm that new students have been vaccinated properly. Unfortunately, since 2007 the trend has not been good. Many children of the working poor are not getting vaccinated on schedule or at all (Us Department of Health 2007). Childhood vaccinations have saved countless lives and freed children from the devastating side effects of many diseases. But the more insurance companies raise the price of premiums, the more small businesses have to reduce benefits or sometimes just stop offering group coverage. If you are without health care, or financial means, you can still get your child vaccinated. Follow the steps below until you get what you need for your child.

1. Call 211. Tell them what you need and they will direct you to the appropriate social services office.
2. Find a neighborhood health clinic. Tell them you are without insurance or ability to pay. Ask for help for your child. If they can't help you, ask for a referral.
3. Call the Public Health Nurse in your town. You should be able to get the phone number from your town's Department of Health. He or she may refer you to an FQHC (Federally Qualified Health and Migrant Centers) clinic in your area. You can also find a listing of these clinics at [www.njpca.org/FQHC](http://www.njpca.org/FQHC). If you don't have a computer, use one at your local library.
4. Be on the lookout for mobile health units that may visit your neighborhood and take advantage of any health services they offer. If they don't offer vaccinations, ask them for a referral.
5. If you get no satisfaction, call the WARMLINE at Programs for Parents. (1-800-713-9006)

When you do get your child an immunization, get a receipt for the visit. Ask the nurse for an immunization record, and a vaccination schedule. Make sure she fills in your record and take it with you. If you are not visiting one doctor on a regular basis, it will be your responsibility to keep this card and any other medical records in a safe place and bring them with you every time your child gets a vaccination. This will be the only record you have to show that you have vaccinated your child properly and on schedule. **You need to show proof of vaccinations.** Your word will not be enough.



WARMLINE

Providing you with practical, accurate information on health, behavior issues and regulatory information relating to the children in your care.

**1-800-713-9006**



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August 2008  
Newsletter 117

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### Published by

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Montclair NJ, 07042  
973-744-4050

Childcare Matters is a monthly newsletter published for Registered Family Child Care Providers and parents using their services.