

# Childcare Matters

## Where Is My Mom? Teaching Your Child to Separate .....Gently

Newsletter 117  
Provider 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 child care and anxiety issues surface both for parents and children. 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. Toddlers have not yet learned those skills.

The first time a 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, that object still exists. You know a 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. They may also throw their food on the floor and watch you magically make it reappear. 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 some-

one) is unseen it does not exist. As this development matures, they will be comforted by your voice if you separate from them knowing that the sound of your



voice means that you are close by. At this stage they will need to see a portion of an object to realize it's existence. Children complete this stage of development when they know to look for an object that is completely out of sight or ask, "Where's my Mom?" when they cannot see or hear her.

Being sensitive in the early stages may prevent problems later. Understand that their fear is real and can cause them 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 the 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 your group 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 the children can do that successfully, begin to hide the object out of sight. If they look at you with blank stares when you ask them to find the toy, show them where it is and then hide it repeatedly in the same spot. Over time children will catch on to the game increasing their "finding" skills. As they increase these skills, you will find it easier to disappear from their field of vision without causing them 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 interviewing parents whose children are two to three years old, that you tell them to leave at least one week before full time care starts to spend time at child

care with their child. If separation anxiety is a problem the parent 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 you are not a stranger by the time the parent is ready to leave the new child full time. Welcome the parent in your child care home for a couple of hours. Make sure during the stay that the parent leaves the room often, as the child is busy playing with the other children. Over the course of the week, gradually increase the time until the parent is leaving for at least an hour. Assure the child that his Mom or Dad will return to get him.

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 them to be close at all times and not breaking their normal routine. Some children deal very effectively with emotions experienced in new places or with new people and won't blink when Mom leaves. Others, either due to inexperience or personality type, need to be taught what to do when they are frightened.

Teaching children new behaviors will take time and repetition. Work out a morning routine with Mom or Dad and repeat that routine everyday. Make sure both parents know the routine and follow it to the letter everyday. For instance, the parent brings the child in the door, removes his coat and jacket, leads him to a play

activity, gives him a hug and kiss and leaves. Make sure Mom and Dad know how important this is, so they leave time in the morning to carry out the plan. Make sure everyone moves through the agreed upon routine, even though the child may be upset. The adults need to respond to the tears with gentle understanding without getting wrapped up in the emotion. A parent who is upset, will only further upset the child. In many cases, in a few days the child will develop some coping ability and stop crying once the routine is complete and Mom or Dad is out the door.

If the child continues to cry and cling when the parent is leaving, gently take the child in your arms, lead him back to the activity re-involve him, and have Mom or Dad leave. You may need to do this repeatedly. Very frightened children may run to the window or door as if they need to escape their fear or chase their parents. Assure the child the parent will be back after work and if he asks for them during the day, simply tell him where they are and when they will return.

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 parents are the most important tools you have to help this child learn to handle his fear. It may be difficult, but you will help 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 children 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 reread 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 adults 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 or lie down and look up through their many branches to the clear, blue sky. If children haven'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 them notice the miracles in their own backyards. (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 children 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

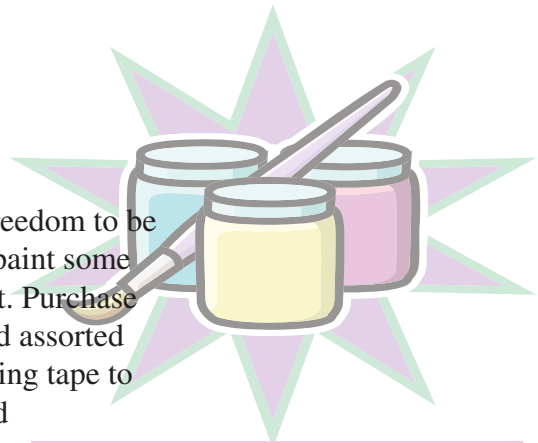
The leaves will be turning before you know it. Capture all their green glory by giving the children a collage box filled with hundreds of green leaves. You can cut them from construction paper, tissue paper, old wrapping paper, cloth, green packaging or anything else green you can think of that can be pasted on paper. In addition, cut 8" by 12" ovals from construction paper. (enough for each child) 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 each child an oval and some paste. Allow them to paste all the green leaves from the collage box freely. When they are done they can attach small brown rectangles to the bottoms to serve as tree trunks. If your group is very young, you can do this for them. Allow them 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 the children 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 the children. They'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 for children 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

## The Quiet Spot

Some children can be in child-care for up to ten hours a day. It's important that they have a place and an activity that they can engage in by themselves. If you don't already have a quiet corner set up, see if you can arrange your child care space so there's a corner of the room where a child can be alone, out of the mainstream of activity, and focus on reading, coloring, listening to a book on CD or any other quiet activity. The whole group should understand that this is a special place where you choose the activity and you can be by yourself. If a child is using the quiet corner and someone else wants to use the space, they will have to wait their turn.

This space is very important to children who are overwhelmed by constant activity or socialization. If they like, each child can also bring a quiet time activity bag from home. This is a bag with their toys or activities that they can play with privately and are not required to share. The toys should be put away after quiet time. As children grow together and become more trusting, they may offer to share what's in their bag, but this should only happen if they volunteer to do so. Their bag functions very much like your desk or locker in a place of business. It's a small safety zone that no one can touch without your permission. That boundary can be very important to a child's comfort and well-being at child care.

## 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 children a personal journal so they can dictate stories to you during a quiet time. They can be stories from their imagination, stories about what happened during the day or something they want to write down to share with their parents or friends. These journals can be very intimate and precious gifts to share with parents during the holidays. Every year start a new one and you'll document the 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 59 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.

## Support Childhood Vaccinations

As September approaches many schools and child care centers 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. As a child care provider you can support vaccination programs by making sure the children in your care are getting the appropriate vaccinations on schedule. If you are caring for children who do not have health care or the financial means for medical care, refer them to the following sources:

1. Call 211 for referral to social services agencies.
2. Find a clinic in their neighborhood that can help them or refer them to the right agency.
3. Call the Public Health Nurse in their home town's Health Department. He or she may refer them to an FQHC (Federally Qualified Health and Migrant Centers) clinic in their area. They can also find a listing of these clinics at [www.njpc.org/FQHC](http://www.njpc.org/FQHC).
4. Be on the lookout for mobile health units that may visit their neighborhood.
5. If they get no satisfaction, they can call the WARMLINE at Programs for Parents. (1-800-713-9006)

## 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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