

# Daycare or Preschool - Peaceful Good-Byes

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *The No-Cry Separation Anxiety Solution*

**Heading off to daycare or preschool, and leaving Mommy or Daddy behind for the first time is a colossal milestone in a child's life.** *There is no exact method for figuring out which child will happily wave and run off to play and which one will take one look at the new surroundings and superglue himself to a parent's leg. If yours is one of those superglue kids, here are some ideas to help him loosen his grip and enjoy his new experience.*



## Take small steps to your separation goal

Some children have an attack of anxiety if they go from a comfortable daycare setting, or a part-time school day to a brand new situation or a longer schedule. It can help to slowly move to the new routine. If your child is struggling, see if you can arrange to build up to the full day's schedule. Begin with a one hour segment for a day or two, moving to a two hour segment, and eventually to the full schedule. Regression can happen after a weekend, particularly after having three or four days off at home. In this case it can be helpful to shorten the first day back by a few hours to allow your child to readjust to where she was before the long weekend. After a month of two of the new schedule your child should settle in to his new routine.

## Encourage friendships with playdates

Ask the teacher or caregiver if there are a few friends your child has connected with. Set up a few playdates with these children at your home. Make each visit relatively short, as too long of an event can be tiring or stressful for a child who is new to playdates. Plan ahead to have a snack and game ready, as some children will find a full session of free-play difficult to navigate. Once you've had a couple of successful sessions at your home, branch out to a playdate at a friend's home.

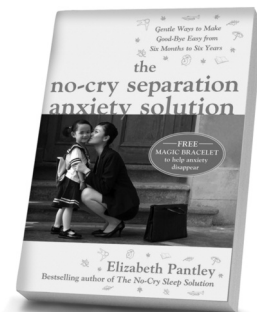
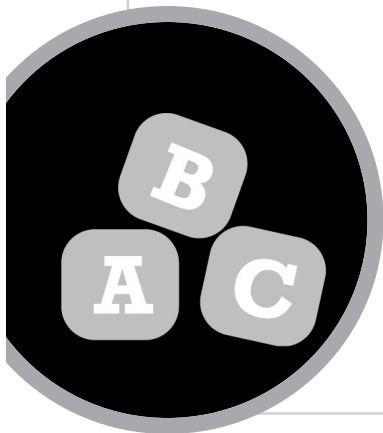
The play sessions that occur away from school allow children to develop a more personal friendship. Having a deeper friendship with another child or two at the daycare center or classroom can create more security for your child when he's away from home during the day.

## Coordinate arrival with other families

If you can, coordinate your daily walk or ride to school with another family. Set up a carpool and offer to drive the kids together. Having a friend to walk into the center with can change the dynamics of the drop off routine dramatically.

## Remain calm when your child is anxious

When other adults are waving goodbye to their confident children, and your little one is crying and clinging to you for dear life, it's easy to become flustered. It's that time, however, when your child desperately needs you to present him with your calm and loving reassurance. Put on blinders and tune out the other parents and children so that you can focus on your child only. You can be most helpful when you convey your confident, peaceful demeanor to your child.



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From *The No-Cry Separation Anxiety Solution* by Elizabeth Pantley (McGraw-Hill). Here is the link for information and more excerpts: <http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth/>