

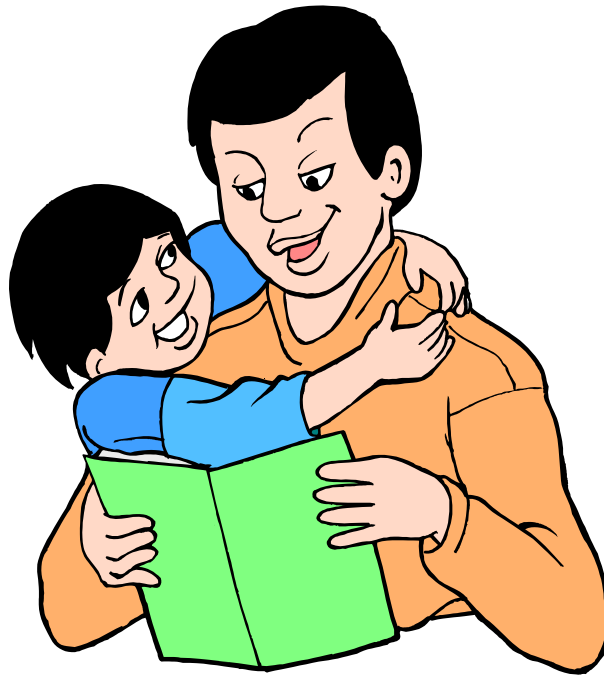


# HOW TO HANDLE CLINGING

Separation anxiety, or clinging is a very natural part of a child's development. While clinging isn't really a discipline problem, it can be just as draining on a parent/caregiver. Here are some suggestions on how to deal with the clinging child.

## Remember that:

1. It is normal for children to hold or cling to adults, especially when they feel afraid or insecure.
2. Children often cling when they are separated from their parents. It is important for other adults involved with the children to do all that they can to help them feel safe and loved.
3. The more hugging and holding you do, the more safe and secure the child will feel.
4. Interesting activities and other children to play with can be a great distraction when a child feels clingy, but do not force a child to do something he does not want to do.
5. Different children need different amounts of hugging, holding or being near you.
6. Confer with parent/caregiver to work together to make the child feel safe and secure, both at home and at child care.
7. Do not belittle a clinging child. Just expect that some day he will no longer need to cling.
8. Remember not to take a child's need to cling personally. You have not done anything as a parent or caregiver to cause clinginess. It is an inborn trait in about 15% of children.



## Suggestions on how to handle clinging:

1. If a child is clinging because of separation anxiety, be sure to tell her where you are going if have to go out of her sight. "I am going into the kitchen to get our snack, and I'll be right back."
2. Don't get angry at a child for always following you around. Stay calm, and take time to hug or hold him and then help him to find a friend or activity to get involved with. Help the child become involved in the activity and then slowly withdraw as the child seems more secure. Remain in the child's sight.
3. Develop trust with the child by being honest, not sneaking out the door or lying to him. Tell him that you are leaving but will be back using concrete examples as to when, such as "after you have your nap and snack, I will be back"
4. Let the child move away from you when she is ready, rather than you moving away from her.
5. Try and give your child special time alone with you each day, doing what the child wants to do, not what you want to do. 10-15 minutes a day can work wonders.
6. Watch the child carefully for times when he does not cling. Think about what causes this independence and try to include these things in your day together. Help the child gain confidence and a sense of control by encouraging her to be successful at independent activities such as having low hooks so she can hang up her own jacket, or a step stool to reach the sink.
7. If you need to be away from the child's play space for a few minutes, let the child come with you. If that isn't possible, bring a toy or game to a nearby room or hall so that the child can still see where you are.