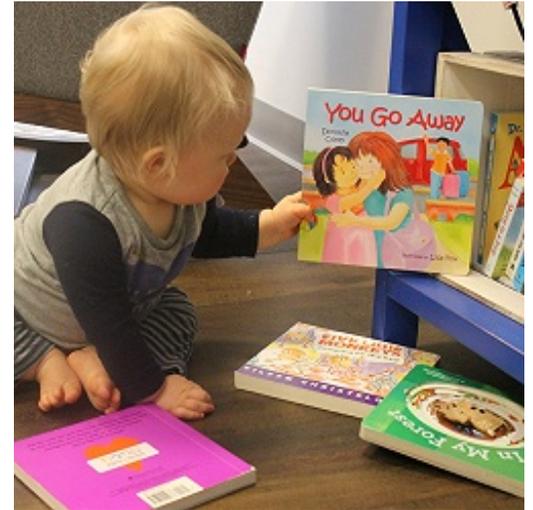


Back to Work with Baby: Questions to Ease Separation from a Young Child

Renee
Bock

Saying goodbye to your child whether they are three months olds, two years old or four years old is never easy. Usually, we are faced with separating from very young children because we have to return to work after their birth. But no matter the circumstance, and even if we are ecstatic to be with other adults on our career path, parents (and often children) find it difficult to say that first good bye.

Our questions and concerns are endless. We wonder, who will love my child? Who will make sure they're safe? How do I know what they're doing all day? It is not surprising that everyone's anxious about this process. Yet there are ways to make you feel more confident that your child is in good hands, which will make the transition easier. One way to start is by asking yourself five basic questions when choosing a childcare center:



Is this a happy place?

Children are aware of the emotional climate of a classroom. If the center is happy, with relaxed teachers, then it is more likely to be a positive experience for your family.

Is the director a resource?

The director, after all, acts as a parent when you are away from the center. You need to be sure your director is a knowledgeable early childhood professional, who can advocate for you and your child when necessary. You should feel confident that the director enjoys children. And they should be able answer questions even when you present challenges or issues.

Do I like the space?

A lovely environment sets the stage for loving and learning. Ask yourself, is the space clean? Does it smell good? Are there beautiful things to explore? Is it safe here? If someone is taking good care of the space, they're likely to take good care of your child.

Is there extended time for goodbyes?

It takes time for a parent and child to digest the separation, and centers need to provide unhurried time for a gradual transition. Children need to get to know and trust their teacher. Parents need to be present supporters of their child as they watch them increase confidence in the new environment. And one size doesn't fit all. Flexibility is essential because every parent-child duo takes a different amount of time to separate.

Are there other parents in the same boat?

The community of young parents provides a support network for you and your child. You will have many questions about the center, about whether this or that is normal, and you need friends you can turn to at any time. Being a new parent can be scary, and while your mother in law might have lots of opinions, friends have a more neutral stance.

One thing to keep in mind—challenging transitions can happen at any time. You might find a toddler integrates easily at first and then several months later decides they'd rather spend days at home with mom. What's important is that teachers and parents work together to support children as they work through these emotional challenges.

As hard as it is to say that first goodbye, you will feel much more secure if you find a supportive social network for you and your child, where teachers are loving, available to listen and talk, and everyone embraces the first goodbye.