

***We seek to provide a caring and safe environment, where children are respected, challenged and stimulated to achieve their potential***

## **Coping with Separation Anxiety**

A new beginning anywhere can be an emotional experience for children and parents alike.

An normal adjustment period may involve some separation anxiety and tears, as children make the transition from the care of their parents, or caregivers, into the Early Learning Centre.

The staff at the Early Learning Centre are experienced in reassuring and assisting children in making this adjustment.

How quickly the child adapts depends on a number of factors including;

- the child's age
- the child's stage of development
- the child's past experiences in care
- the child's lack of experience in care
- the parent's, or carer's, ability to prepare themselves and the child for separation

**Some of the following strategies may help the process go more smoothly.**

## **Share Information**

Share your child's unique likes, dislikes, fears, eating or sleeping habits or anything else that will help staff members ease the transition.

## **Visit the Early Learning Centre**

Prior to commencement, make arrangements to visit the Early Learning Centre.

Meet the staff, especially your child's Home Group teacher, and have a tour of the centre facilities.

## **Shorten Attendance**

Shorten attendance for the first few days.

Make arrangements to collect your child earlier. Shorter days will give your child more time to adjust and will allow him or her to learn by experience that you will return.

## **Build Trust**

Children will often use their parents as a bridge for developing a relationship of trust with a new adult.

Have confidence in the ability of staff members to care for your child.

Let your child see you and staff members building a friendly relationship.

## **Prepare the Night Before**

An unhurried, unstressful, pleasant start to the day is crucial to successful separations.

If the child is old enough, he or she can be involved in preparing their lunchbox, selecting their clothes and packing their bags.

Ensure that essential items, such as a hat, are included as being without such things can be distressing.

## **Something from Home**

While we discourage bringing toys and valuable items to the Early Learning Centre, we acknowledge that young children often use an object from home, such as a favourite toy or blanket, as a comfort.

Other children may prefer to put a family photo or a familiar object belonging to a parent in their pocket or schoolbag.

Eventually, the need for these comfort items will diminish.

## **On the Way**

On the way to the Early Learning Centre, have a calm and positive attitude.

Talk about what you, and your child, will be doing that day.

Explain, in terms your child can understand, when you will be collecting him or her. For example, 'when you are sitting on the mat at home time', or 'after lunch'.

## **Develop a 'Goodbye' Ritual**

Rituals are reassuring. Plan a special way of saying goodbye, for example, 'I will turn and wave goodbye when I am at the gate'.

You may involve an older child in determining what this ritual will be.

## **Take the Time to Say Goodbye**

Taking the time to say goodbye is an important part of establishing a smooth separation.

Leaving without telling your child can destroy trust and encourage the child to cling on future occasions.

## Avoid Repeated Goodbyes

Once you are ready, say goodbye, go through your established goodbye ritual and then please leave.

If your child is reluctant to say goodbye, offer reassurance of your return and pass his or her care over to a staff member.

A prolonged farewell can make the child more fearful and clingy.

## Accept and Listen to Feelings

If you or your child are upset about the separation, reassure yourself that you have taken all the steps necessary to place your child in a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment.

Saying, for example, 'I know how you feel and I will miss you, too' offers acknowledgement of sadness or distress.

Accept the fact that a temporary period of adjustment and some feelings of parental guilt are normal.

## A Happy Reunion

An important part of the separation process, is the reunion.

Greet the child warmly, ask about their day or allow time to stay with your child for a while as he or she finishes their activity, tidies away or prepares to leave.

## Communicate

Parents are most welcome to communicate with the Early Learning Centre, by phone or by email, to see how their child has settled.

In the event of extreme distress, the Early Learning Centre staff will contact you.

## Starting at the Early Learning Centre

- *Become familiar with the ELC*
- *Be well informed*
- *Be reassured*
- *Be prepared*
- *Encourage independence*
- *Label all equipment and clothing*
- *Pack a hat and a change of clothes*
- *Communicate with your teacher*
- *Inform the ELC of any changes*
- *Participate in the ELC*

**If you have any queries, please speak to your child's teacher, call the Early Learning Centre or contact the main school office at the Murray Site**

The Ela Murray International School  
P O Box 1137, Boroko  
ELC Ela Beach Site Ph: 321 4304  
Murray Site Ph: 325 7991  
Fax: 325 7925

The Ela Murray  
International School

Early Learning  
Centre

New  
Beginnings



*We Play · We Learn · We Lead*