

Saying Good Bye to your Child at Child Care

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You have just enrolled your child into care. All the pieces of the puzzle are in place and now comes the day when you take your child and have to leave them there. Children, parents and even educators have a multitude of feelings and thoughts about child care. Many times as parents you may have to deal with many emotions when leaving your child in care. Sometimes the farewell can be an enormous battle, with you the parent heading off to work with a mixtures of feelings such as guilt, concern, hesitancy, apprehension, etc. The list may seem endless.

You may wonder whether the educator can really take care of your child. Will the educator understand them when they make a request? Can you really trust this educator? In some cases you may feel that you need hard evidence that your child will be in truly good hands. Added to these feelings there may be concerns that the educator will develop a stronger relationship with your child than you have and finally you may feel that you and your parenting practices will be judged.

There is much research on the benefits of child care. As parents, often the hardest part of using child care is leaving the child in the morning. Developing sound reciprocal relationships with the educators will not only provide the child with a safe and secure environment to grow and develop but will also assist in addressing concerns and issues that may arise. The Early Years Learning Framework supports the vision for children's learning where children's lives are characterized by belonging, being and becoming. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children's learning.

Food for thought

- ❖ Research has shown that understanding a child's attachment relationships assists in supporting them in separating from the parent while in care and educators are consistently observing your child to understand this attachment. *"Everyday Goodbyes" Nancy Balaban. Teachers College Press 2006.*
- ❖ Working together as parents and educators is an integral component to quality child care.
- ❖ Developing and building trust between parents and educators begins with exchange of information so that the child care environment and the home are linked. *"How does it feel?" Anne Stonehouse AECA 1994*
- ❖ Common goals that are clear and agreed on for the child's wellbeing creates a sound working partnership.
- ❖ Making decisions together about your child is the cornerstone of partnerships. Remember that decision making is not a matter of informing the educators or visa versa of a decision being made. *"How does it feel?" Anne Stonehouse AECA 1994*

- ❖ Using care for the first time places many parents into a position of not knowing what is expected of them. Continually ask educators any questions that may seem obvious to others i.e. how long should I stay in the morning.

Strategies to Support Parents and Childcare Workers

- Work with the educators to agree on a suitable and proactive length of time that you as the parent can stay when dropping your child off.
- Develop a routine with the educator for the “leaving” time i.e. a special ritual, saying good bye, waving from a window. Look towards the educator’s skill to create this routine to make separation easier for both you and your child.
- Allow your child time to attach to the carer when the parent leaves i.e. sitting on your lap, giving cuddles, allowing the child to stay near.
- Support the child’s emotional needs rather than firstly trying to distract.
- Consider routines that can create an easier separation e.g. greeting an educator, putting bag away, waving good bye at the door. Maintaining a consistency in these routines will assist in creating a safe and secure environment for your child.
- Discuss with the educator what you hope to gain from your child being in care.
- Discuss strategies for you to slowly build up the time you are away from your child e.g. sit in the staff room for 5 minutes increasing the time away.
- Discuss with the educator what their childcare service is there for, including philosophy policy and practices.
- Be clear in what you hope will occur within the child care setting and clear in what you want to say to the educator.
- Share your hopes, dreams concerns and be open to suggestions made.
- Together with the educator develop an action plan to address specific separation behaviours.

References:

- Balaban Nancy “Everyday Goodbyes” Teachers College Press New York 2006
- Harrison Linda “Attachment – building secure relationships in early childhood” ECA 2003.
- Stonehouse A “How does it feel?. AECA 1994
- Keyser J “From Parents to Partners” Redleaf Press 2006

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