



Gradual Entry and Easing the Goodbyes

It can be hard and sad for your little one to understand what is happening when you leave them at daycare for the first time, and hard for you too! If there is anything you would like me to do to help, please let me know. Your little one is going to be going through a lot! This will be a big transition for you and your child. After all he/she will be learning to spend more time away from Mom and Dad, routines at home are most likely going to be changed or adjusted, and he/she will be learning all about the routines, environment, people, and fun stuff at daycare too. There will be a huge shift in your child's world, and we want to make it as easy, loving, nurturing and secure a transition as possible.

The following are some tips to help make a smoother transition from Mommy's or Daddy's arms to daycare. We understand that some of the following steps may be hard to do with your little one crying so I will do my best to help you and your little one with the transition.

In my experience it is best to make your goodbyes short (not too short though) and plan to visit at the end of the day rather than the beginning of the day. I have found that if a parent stays longer than 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the day, this only reinforces anxiety in the child. **Note -If you wish to take longer before you say your goodbyes you can - it really is your choice as a parent. You know what is best for your child and I will support your decision. **

Supportive Home Preparation for Daycare

The following are some things you can do at home to help prepare your little one for daycare, both physically and emotionally.

- Get your child accustomed to the same daycare nap schedule (or as close to it as possible). Your current schedule may be working well at home for you and your child, but it may not be an appropriate schedule in a group setting. Once in childcare we do things as a group for active supervision and safety reasons. Although we do have some flexibility, we work in a ratio of one adult to eight children so we simply cannot be in multiple places at once to provide differing schedules between children.
- To help reduce separations anxiety, get your child comfortable being away from you or at least out of sight. Attachment parenting is a wonderfully supportive developmentally appropriate and nurturing parenting style. It is equally important for your child to be able to form connections, relationships, and attachments beyond the primary caregiver. This may come naturally for your child or may be something your need to work on with your child. Make small changes to encourage developmentally appropriate independence (self-feeding, holding their own sippy cup etc.). Create and utilize opportunities for your child to practice being away from the parent. Usually this is for small periods of time with aunts, uncles, or grandparents.
- Get your child used to drinking from a bottle or sippy cup so they can stay hydrated during the day. If breastfeeding, you will also want to stretch the time between nursing sessions. These two things will aid immensely in helping your child to be content and happy at daycare.
- Grant your child time to self-soothe and fall asleep in a crib/bed rather than in your arms. This is an important skill to prepare for in daycare! Again, with a ratio of one adult to eight children, it simply isn't possible (or physically healthy for the educator's back) to children to rock sleep daily; let alone

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multiple children. However, we do have a nurturing rest time routine that includes cuddles, reading a story, tucking in, saying “goodnight”, blowing kisses and occasional back rubbing if needed.

- If your child is a preschooler, you can pre-load them with positive thoughts about daycare. Talk about what happens at daycare, the other children at daycare, and what a typical day will look like. By doing this you are establishing comfort, excitement, and connections with daycare.

Gradual Entry/ Slow Transition

Every child is unique and entering daycare is a different experience for each child. At TSCC, we hope to provide a comfortable and positive change for the children in our care. We will strive to make sure your child feels safe and content here. In the beginning however, it is normal for the average child to feel some discomfort when their parents first leave them in a new environment. An upset child can generally be distracted and is able to stay and play for an hour or two before they need reassurance from their guardians. Infants and toddlers that have very strong secure attachments to their parents may cry or be distressed but rest assured this is a necessary step in learning that often improves with time and passes after a week or two in care. Children become more comfortable each day as they form new attachments with staff, children, and the welcoming environment. Consistent attendance helps get through this transition period with the most success. Though some children can be dropped off and stay through a full day, it is still our policy to have a gradual entry to assure that the transition is most beneficial for your child. Gradual Entry is part of the full-time fees and begins when your childcare contract starts. Typically, this looks like the following:

- One to two weeks prior to the start of daycare and your childcare contract visit 2 to 3 times for an hour with your child. This is at no charge to the parents and does not require the child to be counted in ratio for the facility as the parent is present the entire time.
- The first week of childcare. As this is time spent in childcare without the parents (and the child is counted in ratio), we do charge for this time as part of our full-time fees. This time happens at the start of your childcare contract. We recommend this to happen before the parent/parents are officially back to work as it is a transition period for the child and entering childcare can be a unique experience for every child. While we realize gradual entry may not be convenient for every parent, and we want to be flexible in planning it with you, we also want it to be a comfortable experience where we can be sensitive to your child's adjustment to the unfamiliar environment and people.
 - Monday - 1 hour visit
 - Tuesday - 1 to 2.5 hours
 - Wednesday - 2.5 to 4 hours (includes lunch time but not nap time)
 - Thursday - 4 to 6 hours - only if the child is comfortable with the 4-hour days (include lunch/nap)
 - Friday - regular schedule (full day) if child is comfortable

*Please note that the above schedule may change according to your child's comfort level and ability to separate from parents. We want to make sure your child has a positive experience at TSCC. Taking the time now to slowly transition will help with your child's comfort, confidence, and ability to build relationships and connections eventually.

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Regular Drop-Off Routine

It is normal for your child to cry on arrival, especially for the first few weeks. Remember crying usually stops within seconds or minutes of your departure.

You are welcome to text me to see how your child is doing if you are concerned. Also, watch and wave to your child at the goodbye window.

1. Upon arrival knock on the front door and come inside. We will welcome you into our childcare home. Please step inside with your child and briefly greet anyone present with an upbeat positive voice. Try to use every one's name (this will help your little one associate names and people faster, then, when you are at home you can talk about his/her friends to help reinforce the connection with daycare).
2. Once inside, toddler parents can hand their child's items to the educator so that she can put them away for the child. Preschool children will be assisted by the educator in putting their items away.
3. All parents must sign their child into care using the attendance sheet at the doorway. The sign in sheet is attached to a clipboard and is normally hung inside the front door on the parent information board just inside the entry. Check off that your child is healthy and fit to attend childcare that day. Temperature checks are no longer required daily and are optional.
4. Finally, say your goodbyes to your child. Toddlers can be lovingly passed over to the educator's arms, while preschoolers will be encouraged to join the other children in the playroom (either on their own or guided by the educator's/parent's hand). **Please make your goodbye brief with a loving hug and/or kiss. Don't forget to tell your child will be returning for them later in the day. Never leave without telling your child goodbye! Sneaking away can cause fear and great distress for your child.** Once you say goodbye, please leave confidently. Don't dawdle, don't hesitate, and please don't yo-yo back and forth with hugs and kisses. Hesitation and insecurities on the parent's part transfers onto the child and causes difficult separations that encourage tears, crying, clinginess and anxiety for the child. **Brief positive goodbyes lead to reduced anxiety in children.**
5. Once you say your brief goodbye inside and leave the facility, I welcome parents to briefly wave goodbye one more time at the "goodbye window" before you get into your car. This goodbye window wave helps children understand object permanence and that their parent is leaving the property and not simply just on the other side of the front door.

Easing the Goodbyes

Establish a consistent and predictable goodbye routine through the above ritual for drop-offs and by trying your best to drop off around the same time every day.

Don't rush the mornings. Try to give yourself extra time in the mornings so that if something happens to go wrong in the (like your toddler refusing to eat or tearing all their cloths off after just getting them dressed), you don't share a hectic rushed feeling with your child. A genuine positive connection with your child makes a huge difference in their mood at daycare.

Make connections between home and daycare. Leave a favorite comfort item from home at daycare (stuffed animal, favorite book, or small blanket). Send a family photo to daycare for the "family photo" wall. This photo can also be taken down off the wall and offered to your child to support them as needed. Also help

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your child to remember their friends' names and build connections with them by talking about them at home. You can look at photos from the daycare FB page at home and talk about your child's day and their friends.

Connect and identify emotions to foster social and emotional development. You can do this by identifying emotions, empathizing, and talking about them. For example, "Ms. Monica said you were sad when mom went to work. That must have been scary for you to not understand where mommy was. It was hard for me to hear you were sad. Try not to worry tomorrow, mommy will always come back to get you at the end of the day." Or "Ms. Monica said you had fun at the playground today! She said you loved the swing. I bet the swing was so exciting and enjoyable. Feeling with wind on your face must have been refreshing!"

Be prepared for setbacks. Children go through different phases of separation anxiety as they grow, and their brain develops. Additionally changes in routine like illness, vacation, vaccinations etc. can all cause reversion in separation security. This is perfectly normal for young children, and it is typical for toddlers to experience weeks or days of smooth drop-offs followed by rough ones. Its best to reaffirm your child the daycare is a safe place and stick to routines as best your can to support them through the rough phases.

It will take time for your little one to get settled in, but that he/she will, with time, learn that this is a safe, fun, and loving place to be. For some children it may take only a few hours to feel comfortable here and for other children it may take days or weeks. This is normal. Your little one will come around in his/her own time and start to love it here! Until then the educator will always be close by with a reassuring smile and loving arms for a hug when needed.

Typically, we try to text an update and photo or two to parents with an update each day during the gradual entry process. After that we send photos less frequently but do post plenty to our Facebook page. If texts during your workday is something you do NOT wish to have done, please let us know. Parents can also call/text and get an update at any time, don't be shy. If the educator's hands are full changing a diaper or simply elbow high in glue and sprinkles, she will let the answering machine pick up to take a message or reply to any texts once she is available.

If you would like to try another approach to introducing your child to daycare, I will be happy to discuss it with you. Please know that you can come and talk to me at any time about your child and the daycare.