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opening extract from

Tough Times

written by

Clare Beswick & Sally Featherstone

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Who's This? - a new baby

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Tough Times

From time to time, we all encounter tough times, when circumstances present new challenges and demands. **Tough Tim**es is for practitioners working with babies and young children under five who are struggling to cope with new circumstances and difficult emotions**. Tough Tim**es builds on the principles, themes and good practice described in the EYFS framework and provides early years practitioners with practical ideas and tips to help very young children cope with tough times in their lives.

The activities in this series are designed specially for use in one-to-one or very small group situations to meet the additional needs of individual children at a time of stress. They also:

- use everyday objects and toys readily available in your setting
- are quick and easy to do
- encourage children to express their feelings
- have plenty of extra ideas for taking activities further if needed
- take account of the needs of babies and very young children.

The EYFS and Tough Times

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), DfES 2007 is the comprehensive framework which sets the standards for learning, development and care of children from birth to five years. Central to the framework are key themes and principles, including that every child is unique and

> '... is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.'

The EYFS framework identifies six areas of learning and development. These are:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Communication, Language and Literacy

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Physical Development

Creative Development

Tough Times books focus on aspects within Personal Social and Emotional Development. They will help you to develop and support children's self -esteem and self confidence.

They also support the development of young children's emotional literacy, enabling them to understand and express their feelings, and cope with new challenges and difficult situations in life.

I Want My Mum!

sub title



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TOPIC 1 About ‘I want my mum!’: introduction

Separation anxiety is a perfectly ordinary and expected phase in babies and young children’s development. How each baby or young child is affected by this anxiety varies hugely and is influenced by many factors, including:

- personality
- developmental stage
- earlier experiences
- position in the family and the attention they are used to in relationships with key people in their life
- self-esteem, confidence and the ability to trust others
- the confidence of key people in their lives
- the environment
- the response of those they are being left with
- time of day
- hunger, tiredness or over stimulation
- and so many other factors unique to each child and each separation.

What you might see; what the child might be feeling

Every child and every separation, environment and set of circumstances in which a child is experiencing separation anxiety is different, but very young children will show us what they are feeling. They may have very strong feelings that they don’t understand and almost certainly won’t be able to express with words, so it is important to ‘look, listen and note’, that is, carefully observe, consider and interpret what you see as the child expresses their feelings and needs.

A child may express their anxiety in many different ways, including:

- clinging to an adult
- angry or silent tears
- shouting, screaming and temper tantrums
- hurting themselves, for example, biting their hand
- becoming very withdrawn
- refusing to eat or refusing to join in
- wetting or soiling.

Any unexpected difference or change in behaviour should be noted and the cause considered. A child might be feeling any or all of these:

- sad
- angry
- confused
- lost
- fearful
- panicked
- rejected
- out of control
- jealous.

A parent leaving when they are wanted is going to leave a very young child feeling horrified that they are not all powerful in their world, and the discovery that the world does not revolve around them is a painful discovery for some children. This is not to say they have been spoilt or over indulged, just that they are at a stage developmentally where they are egocentric with little understanding of the needs of others.

Hellos and goodbyes

A simple routine to begin and end each session



What you need

- A small teddy bear
- A small hanky-size piece of soft fabric

What you do

1. As soon as the child arrives, stand with the parent. Get down to the child's level so you can gaze easily into each other's eyes. Give the child the teddy bear to hold.
2. Smile and sing to the child. Using a simple bright voice, sing:
   It's a new day, it's a new day and I say,
   Hello, hello to you.
   It's a new day, it's a new day and I say
   Hello, hello to Ted.
   Welcome to our day
   What shall we do? Let's go and play.
3. Move gently into the nursery, and stand with the child and watch the activities. When the parent is ready to go, say clearly to the child, 'Time for mummy to go. See you later mummy'. Pause for the parent to give the child a very brief kiss and then, as the parent moves towards the door, ask the child, 'Can teddy wave goodbye?'.
4. Give the child the small piece of fabric to wave goodbye. Make sure the parent knows that, having said goodbye, they need to make a calm but firm exit.
5. If the child is distressed, a second member of staff needs to reassure the parent once the parent is out of the child's sight.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Make this activity a priority every session. Routine is the key.
- Speak and move slowly with the child, avoiding the busiest and noisiest parts of the setting. An anxious child needs gentle reassurance and acknowledgement of the way they are feeling, not distraction.
- Comment carefully on what the other children are doing, drawing the child's attention to the possibilities of getting involved in the play.
- Allow time for the child to calm themselves and give them specific praise for becoming calm, such as, 'I think saying goodbye to mummy this morning was really hard, but you are safe and have done really well to come in and see what we have to play with today'.
- Give the anxious child regular reassuring smiles and thumbs up throughout the session.

More ideas

- Agree with other practitioners in the setting a simple goodbye song to be sung with all the children at the end of each session.
- Create a poster for the parents' noticeboard about what the setting does to help children to settle into each session.
- Ask the children to select a smiley, okay or sad face to show their key person how they are feeling when they first arrive in the session.

Specially for babies

- Involve parents in deciding a goodbye routine before the session in which they plan to first leave their baby in the setting.
- Keep goodbyes to parents calm and unrushed, but planned and brief.
- Make sure parents feel confident that they are able to bring their baby's comfort object to the setting, and that it will be respected and well cared for and, most importantly, returned safely at the end of the session.

What next?

Making sense of the day



What you need

- A digital camera
- Index cards
- A shoe box
- Scissors
- Sticky tape

What you do

1. Take photos of the key parts of the session, such as the children playing indoors, playing outside, snack/mealtimes, story time and so on.
2. Print these photos and mount them onto index cards.
3. Cut a slot in the lid of the shoe box to make a simple posting box.
4. With the child, choose up to four photos that will show them the order of their day, and fix these to the wall.
5. Talk to the child simply about the order of the day, including the point at which they will be reunited with their parent/carer.
6. As each part of the day depicted by a photograph passes, help the child to find the right photo and post it into the box.
7. Post the last card with the parent and child together.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Keep your language simple, and speak slowly and gently to the child.
- When you see the child happy and relaxed, comment positively, such as, 'you look like you are having fun', so that the child can recognise positive moments in the session.
- Spend time watching with the child. Allow plenty of time for them to observe the other children and make their own decisions as to when they are ready to get involved.
- At group time, allow the child to sit alongside quietly confident children who will be sensitive to their anxiety.

More ideas

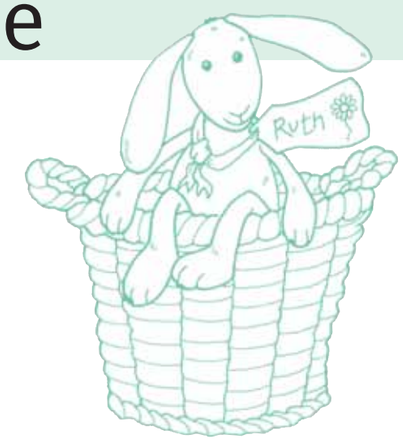
- Create the activity timetable on an interactive whiteboard.
- Fix Velcro dots to the back of the photos so the child can create their own photo timetable as they gain more confidence.
- Use photos to offer choices of activities to the child.
- Add a photo to the timetable of the parent and child together at the beginning and end of the session.

Specially for babies

- For older babies and very young children, substitute the photographs with everyday objects, such as a cup for snack time, a hat for outdoor play, a book for story time and so on.
- Give the youngest babies consistent situational clues to help to develop their understanding of the session's routines, such as putting a hat in their hands and saying 'time to go outside' before getting them ready to go outside, or perhaps giving them an empty cup and saying 'dinner time', before lifting them into a chair for their dinner, and so on.
- Remember, separation anxiety is a perfectly ordinary part of child development. Reassure parents of this with a calm, assured approach.

It’s special to me

Comfort toys from home



What you need

- A wicker basket
- Small pieces of thin card
- Felt pens
- Ribbon
- A single hole punch

What you do

1. Ask a key person to talk with parents about the value of comfort toys and invite them to bring their child’s comforter to the setting. Explain carefully what provision will be made to make sure that it is only accessible to their child.
2. Reassure the child and parents that great care will be taken to avoid comforter objects being misplaced.
3. Help the child to make a special name tag for their comfort toy using the felt pens and card. Punch a hole in the tag, thread a length of ribbon through it and use it to label the comforter.
4. Place the comfort toy in the wicker basket. Explain to all the children in the setting that this is name’s special toy and that it is to stay in the basket.
5. Let the child have the toy each time they need it, but also regularly invite them to return the toy to the basket.
6. When they are busy with an activity, ask if you might put the toy in the basket for a few minutes.
7. As the child grows in confidence and asks for the toy, encourage them to bring the basket closer, but leave the toy in the basket to touch, but not hold.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Observe the child carefully and identify what triggers their need for the comfort toy.
- Talk about how the child feels when they have their comfort toy.
- Model the language the child needs to express their feelings.
- Listen to the child’s developing use of language to express their needs and feelings.

More ideas

- Try a small group Circle time activity focused on comfort objects.
- Bring in your old comfort object/old soft toy to show the child.
- Read *Dogger* by Shirley Hughes (Red Fox).
- Read *Alfie Gets in First* by Shirley Hughes (Red Fox). Share the story of Alfie getting locked in the house alone, and talk about the way Alfie feels and other experiences that can make us feel sad, scared or alone.

Specially for babies

- Make time to sit quietly with the baby. Provide them with their comfort object, enjoy some quiet finger play together, give a little hand massage whilst listening to relaxing music.
- Try to think ahead and make the comforter available before the baby becomes distressed, perhaps as you see them becoming tired, or maybe during busier or noisier times in the setting.
- Make sure all staff know where the child’s comforter is kept and that it is to be returned to the parent/carer at the end of each session.

How much longer?

Using timers with older children



What you need

- A selection of different timers, such as a sand timer, kitchen timer or a simple alarm clock, and a card clock template for matching

What you do

1. When calm, show the older child the cardboard clock set to the current time. Talk about the hands of the clock and the numbers they are pointing to.
2. Look at, and talk about, how this matches the clock in the setting.
3. Tell the child what time the parent or carer will be returning to the setting, and show them this on the cardboard clock. Ask them where they would like to leave the cardboard clock and agree to check back to the clock regularly to see how time is progressing towards pick-up time.
4. Use the sand timers or kitchen timer to measure together how long some everyday activities or routines take, such as how long they played outside today, how long story time is and so on.
5. Model language that helps the child to develop an understanding of time, such as ‘next’, ‘before’, ‘after’, ‘soon’, ‘later’ and so on.
6. At home time, show the child how the cardboard clock matches the clock in the setting.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Listen to the language the child uses to report what has happened previously and also to predict ahead.
- Watch to see which activities absorb the child and which activities or situations are most likely to cause the child anxiety.
- Think about the changeover times in the nursery, such as end of group times, a tidy-up time and so on, and consider how best to support the child who is taking a while to settle in the setting.
- Consider the child’s understanding of time and what clues they rely on to follow the progression of the session towards the time when their parent/carer will arrive.

More ideas

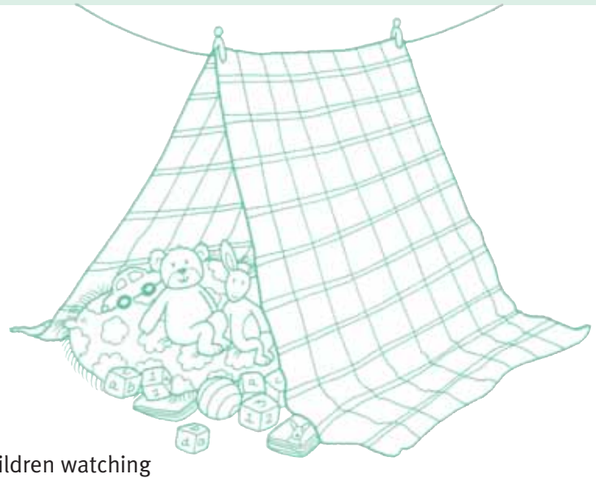
- Talk to parents about possible triggers for unexpected separation anxiety, such as changes to the child’s routine at home or the arrival of a new baby.
- All children will enjoy *I Love My Mummy* by Sebastien Braun (Boxer Books), a beautiful picture book showing a young animal, discovering the world supported by its mother – a great opener for conversations about feelings. There is a companion book titled *I Love My Daddy*.
- For children who may have a parent who is away for a long period of time, look at ***Daddy, Will You Miss Me?*** by Wendy McCormick (Aladdin Books.
- For children whose parents work long hours, try ***When Mummy Comes Home Tonight*** by Eileen Spinelli (Simon & Schuster Children’s Books.

Specially for babies

- Use consistent simple language to reassure babies who are anxious on separation and be kind but honest about when their parent will return.
- Try dancing and rocking a distressed baby gently.
- Use distraction sensitively. It is important to acknowledge the baby’s distress before attempting to distract them.
- Bubbles and a gentle blowing on the baby’s hands often capture even the most anxious baby’s attention.

A safe place to watch

Building a den or an oasis



What you need

- A net curtain or similar
- A cushion
- Pegs
- A soft toy of the child's choice

What you do

1. Talk to the parent about the importance of all children watching and gaining confidence before joining in with activities and play.
2. Help the child to build a simple den by pegging the net curtain up in a suitable corner so they can create a safe hidey hole where they can watch the other children from a quieter spot.
3. Make the corner comfortable for the child with the cushion and the soft toy.
4. Share a book together in the den and then spend a little time quietly watching the other children.
5. Comment on what the children are doing.
6. Allow the child to use this den or oasis whenever they wish. Keep it a quiet spot for watching.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Observe the child's use of the den. Are there particular triggers before they decide to spend some time watching from the den? What do they find comforting about the den? What entices them out of their oasis?
- Listen to the child's comments as they talk about the setting. Observe their body language and consider how to help them move towards exploring the setting more fully.
- Talk to the child, commenting on what they can see from the oasis. Try to avoid direct questions but give the child plenty of opportunities to make non-verbal responses.
- Remember to offer and respect the child's choices.

More ideas

- Remember some children will need a quiet space or corner to observe outdoor play.
- Big cardboard boxes can be used to create great dens with the addition of just a blanket.
- Try to use semi-transparent fabric in the oasis to allow the child to feel hidden and unobserved, but allows them a clear view of the other children's play.
- A simple finger-friendly rocking horse or similar rocking chair/toy is a very comforting place to sit and watch.

Specially for babies

- Personalise the child's seat or play space.
- Try to keep meal times, personal care and play routines as consistent as possible.
- Start and end each session with a consistent routine. Try using the same picture book or song to begin and end each day.
- Create a treasure basket of familiar objects personal to the baby and their family, such as one of their socks, a parent's glove, one of their soft toys and so on.

Where's my mum/dad?

Using a simple storyboard



What you need

- About six index cards
- Pens
- Blu-tack

What you do

1. Talk to the child about their day. On each card, draw together a simple fun line drawing to illustrate part of the day – the first part may be getting ready for school: getting dressed, brushing teeth and coming to the setting.
2. On the second card, draw saying goodbye to their parent, then playing. Ask the child to talk about and draw key parts of the session. Together, create about six story cards illustrating the child's day up to being collected from the session and where they go next, maybe home on the bus or to another Early Years setting.
3. Fix these to a low door or wall. Talk to the child often during the session, looking together at the storyboard and finding out where the child is in the story. Talk about things that make them feel happy, sad, nervous, excited and so on at each stage of their day.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Observe the child's body language carefully – it often tells you more about how they are feeling than their words.
- Try to model the language they need to use to express their feelings.
- Allow plenty of time for watching.
- Offer the distressed child quiet, unfussy reassurance. Often, a simple gentle touch of the child's hands or a gentle blow on their face is enough to comfort and reassure them.

More ideas

- Create a parallel set of story cards for a parent's day, describing what they did before the session, what they are doing while the child is with you and finishing with them collecting the child. Be sure to make their day sound boring!
- Create a storyboard using felt figures and shapes on a felt board.
- Draw outline pictures on an overhead transparency and project this on to a blank wall or cupboard.
- Use play people and Lego to talk about and play through the child's and parents' day.
- Share books about the first day at nursery, for suggested books see the resources section on pages 103–110.

Specially for babies

- Use real everyday objects and a doll or teddy bear to model simple pretend play.
- Encourage older babies to wave goodbye and blow a kiss as a clear signal that their parent is leaving.
- Make sure all parents say goodbye to their baby before leaving, rather than trying to leave while the baby is distracted. Explain to parents the importance of being honest, calm and confident about leaving, as well as the importance of trust to even the youngest baby.

My special note

A useful prop for older children



What you need

- Heart, flower and star shaped note paper
- Pens
- Star or smiley face stickers

What you do

1. Invite the parent to sit with their child for a few moments to create a special 'love you' note for the child.
2. Encourage the child to be involved, making marks, choosing stickers and so on.
3. Ask the parent to offer the child choices of where they want to keep their special note, such as tucked in a pocket, in a little bag or so on.
4. Ask older children to make a special note for their parent to keep with them.
5. Tell the child that anytime they are wondering what their parent is doing, or are feeling a little sad or afraid, they can look at their very special note.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Make sure the child is very much a part of the note making and choices.
- Talk to the child about special mementoes that you have, such as special jewellery or photos that help you to remember special people.
- Look together at the note the parent and child have created from time to time in the session. Acknowledge its importance to the child and their feelings of longing.
- Regular show and tell sessions allow all children to make a clear link between home and the setting. Less confident children can bring in objects for you to show and tell on their behalf.

More ideas

- Encourage the parent and child to make a simple message bracelet – a strip of thin card decorated with stickers and a special message from the parent to the child. Fix this loosely around the child's wrist by taping the ends together.
- Simple twisted or plaited friendship bracelets are fun and special for parents and older children to make together.
- For Charlie and Lola fans, share the story of Lola's invisible friend who was too nervous to start school, *I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child (Orchard Books) and then visit www.charlieandlola.com for simple games and lots of fun printables.

Specially for babies

- Consider with the parent the sort of things that help the baby to settle.
- There are many models of communication passports that can be adapted for babies and very young children in your setting. See the resources section for useful websites. These are a great way of ensuring that everyone in the setting is aware of the baby's needs, likes and dislikes, as well as being an excellent focus for discussion between a parent and key person.

Magic Ted

Teddy bear hand-puppet play



What you need

- A teddy or simple hand puppet
- A hairbrush and flannel
- A cup
- Tissue
- A small picture book
- A toy car
- A tiny scarf/ribbon

What you do

1. Play with the child, modelling simple pretend play. Help the child to 'wash' and brush teddy. Talk about the sort of things the child does at home with their family before they come to the setting.
2. Give teddy a drink and try to use words to describe how teddy might be feeling, such as tired, hungry, thirsty and so on. Also model language to describe emotions, such as happy, sad, excited, scared and so on.
3. Using simple pretend play, take teddy through the main parts of the nursery day, starting with saying goodbye to parents and then moving onto other activities, such as playing, getting wrapped up to play outside, having a snack and story time.
4. Ask open questions to encourage the child to think about how teddy might be feeling.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Play alongside the child, modelling simple pretend play and providing a simple commentary to describe actions.
- Watch to see how the child imitates actions and listen to the language they use to describe how teddy might be feeling.
- Observe how they relate to teddy or another hand puppet. Do they become absorbed in the activity?

More ideas

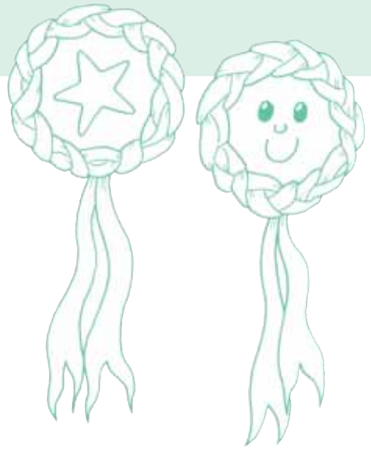
- Ask the child to suggest other activities for teddy. Talk about which activities she/he likes and why.
- Talk together about any parts of the session that teddy doesn't enjoy and see if together you can consider strategies to make these parts of the day easier for him/her.
- Encourage the child to keep teddy with them for the session. From time to time, ask them how teddy is feeling and give the puppet a smiley sticker each time she/he is happy and relaxed. If the child tells you teddy is sad, acknowledge his/her feelings and talk about how teddy can be made to feel better.

Specially for babies

- Introduce simple turn-taking imitation play with young babies, such as patting a drum in turn, splashing water in turn, or taking turns with making sounds. Begin the turn-taking sequence by copying an action the baby is making.
- Look out for simple photo board books of babies' and peoples' faces, such as *Baby Faces* by Sandra Lousada (Campbell Books). Use simple, short two- and three-word phrases to label the pictures. Introduce action and describing words to older babies.
- Older babies and very young children will enjoy *Captain Pike Looks After the Baby* by Marjorie Newman (Macmillan).
  It provides a great opportunity to introduce new words to describe our emotions.

Well done today

Celebrating small steps



What you need

- A length of broad ribbon
- A small circle of thick card
- Strong glue
- Sticky tape

What you do

1. Fix the end of the ribbon to the edge of the centre of the card. Slowly pleat the ribbon around the edge of the card. Ask the child to place plenty of clear glue on the edge of the card and to fix the pleats. Work together, chatting about rosettes and trophies as you go.
2. Finish the rosette by asking the child to draw a smiley face or star in the centre of the rosette.
3. When the glue has dried, fix the rosette to the child's clothing using a simple circle of sticky tape fixed to the back of the rosette. Talk to the child about why you feel they have earned this rosette, maybe for calming themselves down when their parent left, waving goodbye bravely, getting busy with the activities, watching and being with the other children, or maybe holding something for you while you worked with the other children.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Offer the child simple choices, for example, ask 'should we use the red or blue ribbon?' and so on. Try to involve them as much as possible in the making of the rosette.
- Talk together about the way we mark celebrations and achievements, such as birthday cakes, sporting medals, clapping hands and so on.
- Talk about the different ways of saying goodbye to people: waving, hugging, kissing, watching as they go, saying goodbye at an activity area, saying goodbye at the door and so on. Talk about how you greet and say goodbye to other people. Listen to the child talking about their experiences at home and in the setting. Try to make links between what they say about home and what happens in the setting.

More ideas

- Use skin-friendly face paints to draw smiley faces or stars on a child's hand to remind them to say goodbye to parents bravely, or for describing their feelings to you.
- Reward children with simple stickers for calming down if distressed. Offer choices of sticker pictures.
- Create a range of certificate templates for rewards at the end of a session. For lots of ideas and free printable resources, visit www.sparklebox.co.uk.
- Cut simple trophy and medal shapes from card and either paint or spray-paint in silver or gold, or cover in shiny foil paper.

Specially for babies

- Keep a special splash pat mat or similar activity to use as a reward when older babies have calmed after separation.
- Create a special treasure basket of intriguing items for the older baby to explore as soon as they are settled. For a plethora of treasure basket ideas, see *The Little Book of Treasure Baskets* (Featherstone).
- For a soothing time, choose a warm soft-textured blanket and allow the child to explore this texture, and the texture of other furry objects.
- Be sure to exclude other possible reasons why the baby might be distressed aside from separation, such as teething, hunger, tiredness, sudden noises and so on.

It's in the book

Story time ideas to say goodbye



What you need

- *Goodnight Miffy* by Dick Bruna (Methuen Books).
- A toy clock, socks, shoes, small train, small ball and a large plastic box
- A small blanket or similar

What you do

1. Share this simple board book with the child, encouraging them to imitate waving goodbye to each object on the page as you turn over each page.
2. Explore the objects and play at matching them to the pictures in the book.
3. Next, retell the story using the objects, waving goodbye to each object as the child puts them into the box.
4. At the end of the story, cover the box with the blanket. Pause and then, using a surprised voice, say 'Where's the ball?' and so on, helping the child to find each item in turn under the blanket.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Chat with the children about bedtime routines with an emphasis on feeling words, such as warm, sleepy, calm and so on.
- Think about each child's attention skills. Ask yourself about the importance of the props?
- Listen to the language used, identifying spontaneous and imitated phrases and for the child linking the story and props to their own experiences.

More ideas

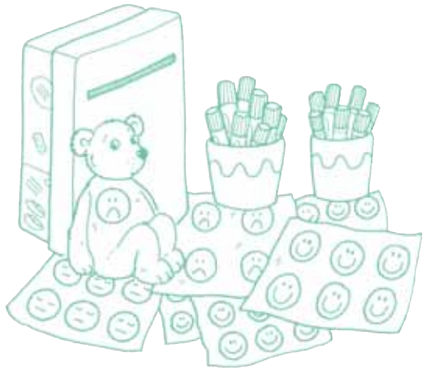
- Play lots of simple hide and seek and peek-a-boo type games to encourage babies' and children's understanding of object permanence.
- Check out the the resources section on pages 103–110 for excellent books which deal with saying goodbye and parting.
- Use puppets and simple everyday objects as props and invite maybe one or two other children to enjoy sharing these stories. Encourage them to talk about their own feelings and experiences.

Specially for babies

- Invite the parent to give the child a 'special kiss on the palm of the baby's hand' to keep for the session.
- Make goodbyes calm, planned, kind and ***short***. Gone is gone. In order for the child to understand the parent has gone but is coming back, reassure quietly but don't delay – a swift goodbye is best.

How do I feel right now?

Expressing and recording feelings



What you need

- Felt pens
- Sticky labels and small pieces of card
- A simple posting box

What you do

1. Together, use the pens to create a different smiley face emoticon on each of the labels. Create happy faces, tired faces, sad faces, a sad face with a teddy (to mean 'I need my special toy/comforter') and one label with lots of happy faces (to mean 'happy with my friends').
2. Talk with the child as you make the labels together, focusing on words to describe feelings. Try to show empathy and also help the child to realise that you and other children also have similar feelings at different times.
3. Fix the labels onto the cards.
4. Spread the cards out and encourage the child and, in time, maybe one or two more children, to choose the card/label that best describes how they feel and to post it into the box.
5. Be sure to reassure and comfort the child, acknowledging their feelings and providing support, comfort and distraction as appropriate to meet the needs expressed.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Consider the range of words you use and encourage the child to use them to describe feelings and emotions.
- Watch to see how the child is expressing themselves using body language.
- Think about what prompts you can best use to engage children with this activity.
- Observe schemas that the child may be using and try to adapt the activity to best suit the child's individual needs.

More ideas

- Revisit this activity at key times in the session, particularly at the beginning and the end of the session.
- Extend this activity to circle time with a small group of children.
- Leave a few cards blank so the children can create their own emoticons.
- Use Google to find free smiley face emoticons – you will find lots of animated and printable smiley faces showing a wide range of characters and emoticons – fun to look at together with lots of opportunities for talking about showing feelings and facial expressions.

Specially for babies

- Find photos of real babies expressing a wide range of feelings and emotions, and display these in simple picture pockets.
- Model simple pretend play, such as 'dolly crying', 'dolly sad' or 'teddy jumping', 'teddy happy' and so on.
- Read *The Social Baby* by Lynne Murray and Liz Andrews (The Children's Project) for in-depth advice on observing babies and tuning into babies' needs.

What did I do today?

Building links with home



What you need

- A talking photo album! Originally designed for the blind but now widely available, these simple books allow you to add your own pictures and photographs, and you can record a sound bite for each. The photos can be changed easily and messages re-recorded, bespoke to each child's needs.
- Star stickers
- A digital camera and mini printer

What you do

1. Take photographs of key activities and times during the child's day or week and print them together.
2. Choose photos to include in the album to best reflect the child's week. Check out what they felt was the highlight of the week.
3. Together, record a sound bite or mini message about the activity. Again, focus on words to describe feelings.
4. Put the photos and recorded messages together in the album. Talk about how the child felt during each activity, if it helped them feel at home in the setting and so on. Help the child to add stars to favourite activity images.

Being there - playing, watching, listening, talking

- Observe the child's responses as they share the book with other children, adults and family. Help the child to use appropriate words to describe their feelings
- Encourage the child to join in the recording process, verbally or non-verbally by pressing buttons and so on.
- As you look at the album together offer specific praise for completing activities, joining in games, taking turns and so on.
- Help the child to think about and talk about how other children in the pictures might be feeling.
- Identify the activities that the child went to after they had said goodbye to their parent/carer and also comment on the last activity of the session before being reunited with their carer.

More ideas

- Tear or cut pictures from resource catalogues and magazines showing favourite toys and activities enjoyed.
- Use Talking Tins and Talking Badges as a great way to give instant reward to a child for settling into an activity. See www.talkingproducts.co.uk and www.inclusive.co.uk for more ideas and inspiration.
- Ask parents to help the child to bring in a memento of an activity they have done together, maybe a bus ticket or ice cream wrapper and so on. Talk about these with the child, focusing on how they felt and who they were with.
- Play alongside the child with play people in small world play. Encourage scenarios that involve people arriving, travelling and saying goodbye, maybe a train station or children getting on a bus to go to school. Provide a simple commentary using short phrases at a level appropriate to the child's understanding.

Specially for babies

- Encourage parents to borrow a toy from your setting to play with their baby at home and then return it.
- Look out for board books with lots of babies' faces and different facial expressions. Encourage parents to share these with their babies.
- Develop a simple tickle or giggle game with the baby and then encourage the parent to play this simple game in the same way at home too.

Advice

Tips for practitioners when face with a distraught child:

- use a calm, quiet voice
- offer gentle physical reassurance
- give the child a soft toy to hold/hug
- use simple words of comfort
- acknowledge the strength of the child's feelings
- provide reassurance that the parent will be back after … (be specific – not just back later)
- sit at the child's level, alongside them
- provide opportunities for the child to be distracted but don't force it
- offer a warm, welcoming space for the child to watch
- be consistent
- ensure parents make a swift and calm goodbye/exit
- ask a colleague to provide support to the parent out of sight and hearing of their distressed child
- praise the child as they calm down and gain control of the way they are expressing their feelings
- create a gentle, kind, warm but light atmosphere – you are sorry the child is upset, but everything is okay and the play session can continue uninterrupted
- not make a big fuss.

Reassure parents by:

- explaining this is a perfectly ordinary part of child development
- planning together how you can help the child to overcome these feelings of anxiety
- avoiding blame – some children are naturally more anxious than others
- talking about what you do in the setting to help all children understand the day
- agreeing how you will let the parents know their child has settled
- planning to review how it is going every few days
- sharing some of the activities in this book – that way, parents will feel they are making a real contribution towards helping their child to settle.

Try to create a calm, ordered and warm atmosphere within the setting. Provide a wealth of opportunities for all children, from the quieter, less-confident children to the wildly enthusiastic, confident children. Be a good role model, listening carefully and responding appropriately, tuning into the needs of the children and the parents. Be confident and trust your instincts – a calm, happy, focused practitioner is just the sort of key person an anxious child needs.