



When Goodbyes are tough

As a parent or caregiver there is possibly nothing that pulls at the heart strings more than tricky goodbyes when dropping your child off to early learning, especially when they are just settling in and the environment is new and unfamiliar to you both.

It's normal to feel a range of emotions and wonder if things will settle or get easier. You are definitely not alone! Here are some ideas that could help both you and your child when goodbyes get tricky.

Set up transition visits to slowly introduce your child to their new environment

These transition visits are fantastic at building relationships between your whānau and the centre. Most centres will require settling visits before your child officially starts.

The more your child sees you relaxed and happy within their new environment the more secure and safe that they will feel.

Establish a consistent routine

Start each day with a nice and consistent rhythm, this can help children feel confident that they know what is coming next in their day.

Prepare for Early Learning the night before

It's beneficial to get everything your child needs ready the night before, such as laying out their clothes and preparing lunch (if it's a lunchbox center). This helps save a little time in the morning and reduces that morning time rush that can be unsettling for a child.

Establish a Goodbye Ritual

Although it may seem easier to slip away while your child is distracted, this can create challenges later on. If your child turns around and realises you're gone, they might become more upset next time, wanting to stay close to you to avoid being surprised again.



Goodbye rituals can be simple, such as waving through a window, giving a high five over a gate, or blowing kisses from a designated spot. This is another way of creating predictability for your child, allowing them to know what to expect, and over time, it will become easier for them to say goodbye.

Lots and lots of communication

Letting your child know what will happen next before it occurs is an excellent way to reduce any anxieties. You might say something simple like, “I will stay with you for five minutes, and then I will be on my way.”

As well as letting your child know when you are going to leave, sharing with them when you (or another caregiver) intend to pick them up can be super beneficial as well.

For instance, you could say, “I will come back to pick you up after your afternoon tea or nap.” This fosters a sense of security for your child as they know what to expect and when.

As hard as it can be sometimes, try and keep your words and actions consistent. If you let your child know you are going to leave in 2 minutes but then keep extending that time, it can sometimes lead to confusion. Let your child's teacher know when it's time for you to go, and they will be able to support your child

through this transition. Teachers are well versed in goodbyes and are there to ensure that everyone's emotional well-being is always nurtured.

Bring a comfort item

If your child has a comfort item from home then letting them bring this can help your child feel a stronger sense of security.

Make sure the item is clearly named so if it does become misplaced it can quickly be reunited with your child.

Acknowledge your child's feelings

Goodbyes can be tough and bring up a lot of emotions and feelings for your child, by validating their feelings you are reassuring them that it is okay to feel nervous or sad as well as showing them that you understand and value their views on situations.

Every child is wonderfully unique and you may find that your child becomes unsettled even after attending for a while, this can be a natural part of development or could be due to changes within your child's life such as a new sibling etc.

If you are noticing any changes let your child's teacher know and they will be able to support you both.