

When Your Child Won't Go Anywhere Without You

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SUMMARY

Madeline Winter, a hand-in-hand parenting instructor, discusses strategies for addressing separation anxiety in children. She emphasizes the importance of planning, connection, and limit-setting to help children cope with separations, advocating for proactive approaches rather than waiting until a separation occurs.

- Separation anxiety is a normal developmental phase in children, often manifesting as distress during parting.*
- Planning for separations can alleviate anxiety; parents should not wait until the last minute to address these feelings.*
- Building connection credits through activities like "special time" can help children feel secure before separations.*
- Limit-setting is crucial; it involves establishing boundaries while providing emotional support to help children process their feelings.*
- Listening tools, such as stay listening and play listening, can aid in addressing children's fears and emotions related to separation.*
- Consistency and reconnection after separations are vital for helping children heal from their feelings of loss.*
- Madeline recommends the "Say Goodbye to Separation Anxiety" online course for parents seeking structured guidance.*
- Parents are encouraged to seek support through consultations and community resources to navigate separation challenges effectively.*

hi welcome it's really really great to have you here my name is Madeline winter and I'm a hand-in-hand instructor and parent coach based in Sydney in Australia and working with parents across the world and we have a couple of folks here already we have a number

joining us and I'm sure many of you will be watching I think or listening to this afterwards so what I would like to do here is just get set up and then we'll get going so I'm here with you and it it I think what I'm going to do is close

the chat function and that because I don't want to multitask multitasking is not good for us and so if you have a question you can put your hand up at the bottom of your screen if you're on a screen is a little hands up and if you have a question that we don't answer I'm

really happy to hear from you and I love to do it in person so you can find me at Madeline winter ma de le ine winter dot-com or one word Madeline we'd say calm and book a free 20 minute consultation and I would love

to spend some time with you so this is say goodbye to separation anxiety I have to leave now and I will talk for a little

and then I will see if you have any questions but do feel free to pop your hand up I will try to get to you so one question you know where to start I'm going to talk a little bit about what is separation anxiety I'm going to talk about why it happens and I'm going to talk about what you can do about it

and the way I've organized that is that is that I what I want to talk about is how you can plan for it which is a really important part we tend to get sideswiped by separations we're waiting until we absolutely have to leave and our child's really upset and one of the things I love about working with parents on separations is that we really don't have to wait till the last minute we can

actually do it in a very systematic strategic way so there's there's plenty of work you can do that you don't have to do under the pressure of actually having to leave so I'm a great one for making a plan I want to talk a bit about how important connection is and a listening tool that we use that that we use to that's a very efficient at building connection called special time and then what effectively we are doing

around separations is we are bringing a limit we are saying to our child you know I want to go I have to go and they're saying I don't want you to go and ultimately that's really a limit and I'll talk a little bit about limit setting and when we've brought the limit when we've made the proposal that we have to leave we need to listen and then generally we need to leave and that's an

okay thing to do I think we often get caught worrying that you know it's going to be a problem you know it's heartbreaking to leave our child upset but actually there are plenty of tools for can acting and reconnecting and helping our children heal from their worries and their fears and leaving is a fine thing and then when we come back we need to reconnect we need to use special time to reconnect so good so what what I really

want you to do is take a strategic approach approach to separations I want to help you get good information and get a good sort of framework for understanding what's happening I want you to get help we really it's such a huge issue in in our relationship with our children it's not something that makes any kind of sense to try and tackle on your own and I'd like to offer

you though as I said the possibility of making a plan for action and upfront here I want to say that I highly recommend the self-paced parent Rescue Squad course produced by hand-in-hand parenting hand-in-hand is a not-for-profit which is based in Palo Alto in the US and has instructors like me around the world and they produce these fantastic little courses they're incredibly good value at about 40 bucks

us and they outline the hand-in-hand approach the listening tools that are the most relevant to your particular challenges there's a number of them but the one about separation is one I would highly recommend working through their three hours about three hours long altogether broken into three broad classes and they'll give you

things to think about things to try and they're broken each of those classes are broken into about 15 minutes segments so if you

are squeezing it in it's doable and it will be a way that you can build your child's help you build your child's confidence and real the pain of parting so I recommend those and I'll also go back to that so um what does separation anxiety look like I think we all know that moment when we

need to leave and and our child's wailing and our hearts breaking and their hearts breaking and it just feels hideous and sometimes we just have to leave sometimes we have the luxury of kind of ringing ringing whoever we've left our child with and often we discover that you know they've they've settled down and they're perfectly happy and I'll talk about that a little bit but I want you to know that it's not it it doesn't necessary

fears around separation don't necessarily only turn up in that way and if you're having struggles with sleep if your child tends to be a bit aggressive when you've left them or if they're withdrawn and shy those are all signs that our child might be struggling with big feelings about separation and fundamentally it's a fear it's a fear that a child is carrying and when we're

tackling a fear we usually need to use a number of the listening tools that we teach we teach five listening tools and generally you'll you'll need to have a sense of all of them fears are what we would categorize as being an emotional project they tend to it's rare that you can kind of have a little fear turn up listen to your child about it and it's done generally fears tend to be something that's that persist that show

up over and over and over and you generally need to get yourself well organized around tackling them which is the kind of that those are the tools that I want to give you today I think it's also important to understand that separations are normal it's part of a child's development I think what happens is that a child gets to a certain point where they're

reaching out in the world and they're feeling this the the separation from you and that's a good thing we need them to do that but they need to get through those feelings in order to be able to get to the next phase which is where they sort of consolidate and and enjoy their newfound confidence and then developmentally they stretch out again so you'll tend to find that that separations go in in waves you'll do a

bit of work around it you'll come back to it and you're you're yeah you'll do a bit of work it looks like it's cleared up and then it pops up again and it's not because you're a bad parent or that your child has regressed at all it just means that they've stretched out a bit more and the thing about fears is that they they are

about now like a separation fear is about now you do have to leave and that's a real challenge for a child but the big thing to understand about them is that they're also about the past they're standing in for other stressful experiences that your child has had children accumulate stressors and often those will show up around other issues

so they'll show up around sleeping eating getting in the car seats you know and it can be about things that are happening now but it's important to understand that it can be about things that have happened sometimes in the long past and one of the anecdotes that Patti wiffler who hand-in-hand parenting tells is a story about a little girl who was had big feelings about that that were big

feelings of separation that was showing up around really wanting her if you're in the u.s. you would call it a pacifier in Australia we would call it a dummy and they had been working together on it for a while they've done some playing around it using the listening tool we call special time which is a one-on-one child lead play time I'll talk a little bit more about it in a little while so they did lots of playing around it

where mummy would you know the little girl would lose lose the pacifier and mummy was really upset about it and the little girl would get to find it and be very pleased with herself and so often in special time a child will act out the story but what we want to try and do is is kind of let them act it out from the powerful position and in my experience that kind of play a lot of emotional

healing happens there's something about getting to work through something from the position of being the person in charge of the experience that makes an enormous difference and builds children's confidence extraordinarily so they did some some special time around it and then it happened and that had a few cries about not you know about leaving the pacifier and eat the pacifier got left with dad the mum and dad was separated and and mum decided

not to not to not to go and retrieve the pacifier and that's a limit she made a decision to bring a limit there and I want to talk a bit about how separations are a limit just sweetheart I'm not going to go and get the pacifier and the little girl had you know big cry about that and they worked through it and she got to a point where she was happy to be without it for a while he

came up a few times over the next day and then one evening she really wanted the pacifier and mum said no sweetheart we're not going to do that and then the child had an up which is what happens when we bring a limit often and then the little one said mommy mommy I've got a bee sting a bee sting on my on my on my hand right here and she pointed to where the mum remembered that when the girl was very

little she'd had to have a stent or a catheter put into her hand and she was pointing to exactly the spot where that happened and it it often happens that a child will bring up something after a big cry about some pretext that turns out to be about something that really big that's happened to them we don't always know that we don't always know what the backstory is I think you can always trust that there is one but

sometimes if we've you know had the luxury of being with a child since birth we'll have a pretty good idea what the story is as I said we don't really need need to know it but but it's just by way of telling a story to make it clear that that these hurts are carried often from sometimes very early in your child's life so as I've already suggested the tackling separation anxiety for young

ones is in some ways usefully thought about as a limit setting exercise and I like to think about your relationship as a bank balance that you need to build connection credits in that but in that bank balance and these will help when you need to make a withdrawal and a separation is a kind of withdrawal in the bank balance you'll use up your

connection credit when a separation needs to happen so it's really useful to do some work around around building connection and it's really then going to make the process of separating and and bringing a limit around separations sweetheart I have to leave now and then often what will happen is a child will have big upsets so you know

separation is well thought of as a limit setting exercise it's like they want you to stay and you have to go it's a limit what's really fantastic is to is to plan for that let me just get to my next set of thoughts so I think it's helpful to understand about how we think about limits setting in hand-in-hand and it took me a while of using this in my own family and teaching it to understand

that that limit setting is right in the middle of this approach that sometimes we sometimes limit setting is it is sort of introduced as if it's some kind of special technique we have to master and then everything will go well and our experience is that sort of limit setting is part it's like every day we're having to bring limits that bringing limits is a great thing and that it it's part of

limit setting in itself is part is a kind of balancing act between making sure there's plenty of connection credits in the relationship and then bringing elements around what we're in hand-in-hand called off-track behavior and then either if we can do that warmly enough sometimes kids can get back on track but sometimes what happens when we bring that limit is they have a big upset and that big upset is what's

happening when a child gets upset about you leaving you've brought a limit I'm going to leave suddenly there's a big lot of feelings so round limit setting it's like when children are connected they can comply they can do what needs to be done if you know they can figure out workable workable responses to a situation so long as what's what you know what it is that you're asking them to do is reasonable but when kids are

full of feelings they often they can't comply they actually can't do what you're asking them to do and trying to reason with them at that point generally won't work because they're flooded with feelings and the part of their brain that can make sense of information plan and get organized their thinking brain is effectively offline and in order to get it online again we're going to need

to do something about those feelings which are flooding our child and limits our the way that we do that so in this approach we're not for instance we're not trying to teach our kids we're not trying to teach our kids to cope without us we're trying to heal their feelings that have got attached to us leaving or that are about us leaving so that they can kind of take the take our love with

them well while we're away remember that we're going to come back and be able to enjoy the whatever experience they're going to have without us without sort of being preoccupied with their sense of loss about us so we aren't trying to teach our kids we're trying to heal them so in hand in hand we we teach five listening tools you may be familiar with

them special time is a one-on-one adult to child playtime which I'll talk a little bit more about later stay listening is where we listen to a child's upsets without criticism without trying to stop them and without [Music] commentary and without trying to fix up the problem I mean there are some problems that we need to try and fix up you know but sometimes no matter what

you do to try and fix the problem a child remains upset and at that point the best thing that you can do is listen to them so I'll talk a little bit about what that looks like in the context of separation and the the other tool is this limit setting and special time and stay listening are sort of an integral part of that and then we have a

listening tool called play listening which I'm probably not going to have time to talk about much it's incredibly powerful tool it's where you set up play it's not as formal as special time it's child-led and what you're after with this kind of play is laughter and laughter when a child is in charge you can use play listening around feelings of separation you can play play listening games to do with coming and going wanting and not wanting chasing

games are the most basic unsophisticated and incredibly effective way of allowing a child to release lighter fears which will be part of what they need to do to get over feelings about separation so chasing games at almost any age are a good fallback whew I'm gonna get you whoo and then another just just very

briefly talk about play listening or in the context of dealing with separations another lovely game to play around play listening is some a tug-of-war so you and someone else was me and my husband who did it regularly with my little one when she was little she's now 14 we can't really do it now she's bigger than I am but so I recommend getting and while they're little but

with with the tug-of-war it's like you have a tug-of-war about the child you'd pull her back and forth I mean try not to do any damage I have to admit one time we did a little damage but it was fixed reasonably easily but you know I want her know I want to know I want her in any child is going to laugh in life laughs most children will laugh and laugh and laugh about being wanted very

actively and physically in that way and it's a really you know it gets to the core of being wanted and being connected and that's part of what we need to help our kids work on to kind of tackle separation anxiety so and then the last tool of the five is an adult-adult listening tool called a listening partnership and often around separation

I mean half the challenge is that it's hard on us it's hard on us to leave our children heartbroken about us having to leave and our lives are such that we have to leave and in fact it's good for us to leave children children's

confidence is built by having us go away and come back so long as they get to have the feelings about it so listening partnerships are where we make an agreement with another parent to listen

to each other in turn and we keep it confidential we don't comment we don't pass judgment we don't offer our opinions we listen and what we're listening for is the underlying feelings just like we are with our kids and sometimes for instance you know the way you might use you can use listening partnerships incredibly flexibly but one of the ways you might use it is you know at that moment where you've just left your child and you feel that your

heart's going to break you might want someone on speed dial so you can ring up and just have a huge table because sometimes you know our worries about our children and how they are there they're actually to do with the baggage that we're carrying and parenting pulls that baggage up so you know you know very quick examples when when I walked into the playground when my daughter first started school I really felt dreadful

just absolutely dreadful took her to listening partnerships and uncovered this whole part of my story that I think was sorry big I hardly had been able to acknowledge it and it was that when I was starting school my parents had spent a year in a foreign country where they didn't speak the language and I didn't speak the language and it was just a very hard time and very isolating and that's that somehow was pulled up at the

point where my daughter's died at school so you know our children's experiences pull up our own experiences and having somewhere where we can take those feelings and get them out of the way so that we can actually fully see what's happening for our children instead of you know feeling alarmed when the alarm is really about you know what happened to us way back then around separations what I what I recommend is that you plan

I really as I said earlier I really recommend that online course say goodbye to separation anxiety it's also a great thing to watch with your parenting partner because tackling separations is often something that you can do even better with another person on another adult involved especially someone that a child feels well

connected to so take the online course do it with someone who's involved in the project talk about it together I also really recommend booking parenting consultation that will help you work out exactly what the issues are in your family exactly how you want to tackle it and help you because there's probably a whole bunch of issues popping up and

help you figure out which ones are the important ones and which ones you're going to put aside for now sometimes it just takes one parenting consults to really get that sorted so I highly recommend just not tackling this on your own so one make a plan to what we need to do to work successfully around separations is make sure that our connection credits in our relationship with our child are really topped up and special time is one

of the best ways to do that so special time is is a play time that's one child it's mostly one adults sometimes you know there's another adult around it doesn't it's it can work with more than one adult but generally because of

logistics it's 100-plus I think each child needs a line into each of their primary carers there's something very important about having this kind of one-on-one playtime with

each of your children special time is best done if you announce it and you time it and because you can't do special time forever it doesn't work and what you do is you say I'll do whatever you want to do and you know there are obvious limits around safety and as your kids get older you may need to put some limits around finances I

would recommend bringing you know putting those limits around special time at a different time so the discussion okay we're only going to spend if what your child wants to do in special time is experiment with spending money outside a special time you bring them you have the limit clear before you start so you're not caught in the middle of special timing so I'll know actually we can't afford that so you may need to have some general limits but in general

what you want is the time to be I'll do whatever you want to do bring your enthusiasm bring your delight in your child and it needs to be a time where you don't have distractions where you don't make suggestions about what the play will be that you don't bring up hard topics that you just be very pleased with them and a special time the more I use it the more I work with parents using that the

more marvelous it is it can do a million different things but there are two main things that will let you do with your child in this context one is it has them feeling like you are deeply on their side it's what we would call the big yes that builds emotional credit in your relationship and the other thing that special time can allow a child to do which I sort of briefly mentioned earlier is they can work through

experiences in special time so they can play out scenarios and what they will sort of instinctively do and you can kind of help them do this is they'll play the experience out from the powerful position so it's really common for children who have had medical experiences which is just about every child little children if you offer them a doctor's set they may well choose to

give you injections and you get to be the victim or you know the person who's being done to and you get to be pleased about it you might want to look for laughter a little but the main thing is that a child gets to play the way they really want to play and they really know that they have a deep sense that you're on their side and then then what we want to do around separations is

effectively bring a limit and the thing about limit setting is we want to do it as gently as possible so we call this the Long Goodbye and I did a lot of this when my daughter was little my husband and I worked together on this so [Music] when you so you make a proposal and you

make a smaller proposal as possible so you might say honey in an hour so but back up a little bit one thing about separations is your child will have feelings about you leaving anytime when it looks like you might be

going to leave and this is why the cool things about working on separation you do not have to wait until you really have to leave so part of your planning process will be deciding when there are

times in the week where you can set up you can do a bit a special time and then you can make a proposal to leave knowing that probably your child's going to be upset about that you're bringing a limit I'm going to leave and at some point when your child really gets to feel that you're leading they probably if they will have feelings and you can do that on Sunday morning when you don't actually have to go

anywhere you don't need to wait until you actually have to leave there are sometimes a chunk of feelings for a child that you you know when my daughter went to school I started school we've done a lot of work around separation when she was little and I did a lot of work knowing that the transition to school was probably going to be challenging but I could not get we did all sorts of playing I did play

listening in the playground that all sorts of using the listening tools we did special time in the morning we did a slow walk to school I could not get her I knew she was carrying worries about it but the place which she could have those worries coming out as heartfelt wails and sobs was on the on the on the step outside the door of the classroom and that just wasn't going to work and I could not get into those tears any other

place but with an anxious teacher who doesn't understand the process and a whole bunch of kids who are likely to be having similar feelings not enough adults around to listen to all those two and have those feelings although if only we could organize that the transition to school would be so much easier but basically the so there'll be times where you just can't quite get to it except in circumstances that just aren't workable but a lot of the time of separation you

can set it up at a time when you actually have time to listen you can get the morning routine going early or you can you know set it up on a Sunday what we did it on a Sunday and we started little so so I would say sometime before sweetheart later on I'm gonna go out and I'm gonna leave you with daddy it helps

if you're leaving a child with someone that they feel safe with because if they feel safe they may be able to continue having a bit of a sob about you leaving after you've gone but it's not essential my daughter and I did quite a bit of this work in the middle of the night nighttime raving waking was our separation issues as much as anything else and we Co slept but at that period when we were working on winning and

nighttime waking I actually used I don't know if everyone calls them cots but we call on a cot which has you know little child's bed with a kind of you know fence around it and she would be on one side and I would be on the other and she would be trying to get to me and I would be just far enough away that she couldn't quite get to me so she could feel the separation but she couldn't

actually get me because once a child's on top of us they don't feel the separation anymore and sometimes we kind of we think that the feelings have gone away when the child stops crying so I you know you'll often see a

baby having a big cry and then they get to sort of sink into or collapse into mums shoulder and the crying backs off and it's because they can't feel the separation anymore so what we're doing is getting a balance

of enough connection that it's safe for a child to feel it but enough separation that they can feel it so I would say I'm gonna leave and initially that would be enough and this was pre verbal this was before my child really had a lot of words but children can understand heaps and then after a while it was it was like she worked through each spot in the separation so after a while the

announcement would be you know I can cope with that so then I would need to do something like if we're playing and now I'm going to leave sweetheart I'm gonna give you to Daddy so I make a proposal you start with a proposal and and that might be enough to have her start to cry and then we would be able to stay listen we would be able to listen to the upset sweetheart I will always come back to you but I do have to

go so we listen to the upset and when a child sort of backs off from the feelings if we've got what it takes and I'll talk about consistency in a minute but if we've got what it takes we can bring their attention to the separation again and you know I might then need to move on to Daddy's lap but I I remember of this kind of really clear memory of there was a long pathway so it involved

but as we work through the stages of the separation I would have to move further away for her to get to feel it until she got to the point where basically I think she'd just done that piece of work and it was like well cheerio mom have a good time but up until that point I would walk very slowly towards the door just watching for where the tears were but that I remember very clearly that the

thing at one point the thing that would get her going and this is so interesting with a pre verbal child I would get the car key sweetheart I'm going to pick up the car key I'm gonna I'm gonna go now and she knew before she even had words that the that getting the car key was serious was was that I was really gonna leave so you know they're watching us all the time so we call that

the Long Goodbye and what I'd say about that is that you do it for as long as you can manage and then you know you can decide not to leave consistency isn't vital what's vital is our senses since our kids sense of connection with us so if we run out of steam or we need to you know go and do something else so we've run out of time we don't have to keep going with the

process of bringing a limit around separation we can either change that change the deal and you know go off and do something else together or leave and then and then you know come back later and that's the next bit that I want to talk about which is which is that we do need you know there will be tons when we need to leave and leaving is fine often what happens as a child a child stops like they'll they'll wail while we're

sort of within proximity but they'll stop crying once we've left and you'll ring the childcare center and they'll say you know oh she's fine and and she is you know he your child has managed to pull their feelings off the

separation and they're getting on with what could well be a bunch of fun things to do but it doesn't mean that the feelings have been dealt with it just means that it's that in part it's not safe enough for a child

to stay there with them many of us we actually really do need quite a lot of help to stay there with those feelings but leaving is fine and sometimes hanging around when a child can't get to those tears like in a childcare setting where it's not actually really okay to have a big hotel to have a big cry sometimes that's actually not that useful because you can say I remember working in a childcare center and seeing

it from the workers point of view and you could see these children and you know I'm anxiously awaiting their parents departure and not really able to kind of focus on the interesting things that were happening and also not able to have their big cry they wanted to have so sometimes the best things just leave and then to come back later and reconnect so special time again is a fantastic way to reconnect when you get back home come in

warmly and do ten minutes special time it's remarkable how there's two things that does it's remarkable how quickly it will reconnect you after a separation but sometimes a child will play some games there because sometimes one of the big sort of trickiness is when out when we're first working on separation is you know that we don't know what's happened to our child while we've been away and when you put children in charge of the

play in the way we do in special time they often tell us they'll set up play that tells us stuff about what's been going on you get really useful information that you will hardly ever get from asking how things are going so you leave and then you reconnect afterwards so that's that's my little picture of how to run a project around

separation anxiety if you would like to ask a question feel free you can put your hand up and it will tell me that you've put your hand up and I can answer it and otherwise you can write the question if you're a bit shy or you're in a situation if you press the Q&A so if you're interested to ask a question please do one of those two things and if

afterwards you've got questions I'm really happy to chat so you'll find me at madeleine winter m ad ele ine winter or one word madeleine winter dot-com and just press the button for a free 20 minute consult and we can have a chat you'll also find a ton of support on the hand-in-hand web page so that's hand in

hand parenting dot org and the best way to find your way around that web page is to use the search function so if you plug in separation or separation anxiety it will turn out a whole bunch of useful articles there's a couple of great articles written by Paddy would flow and then there's lots of stories there of parents who are telling their stories about how they have used the listening tools to tackle children's fears about

them leaving so you'll find that very helpful well it doesn't look like anyone at this point has a question they want to ask so I will wrap up as i said i i i reckon that their parent rescue squad courses are really excellent value and the one that you'll do well to have a

look at if separations are an issue for you is is say goodbye to separation anxiety they are they are about three hours long divided into three classes and their video of paddy whittler I could listen to Patti forever I think she's just you know she's just got a way

of talking about these things that's just very easy to to get and they're divided into little 15-minute bites so if you just had fifteen minutes then you can watch one of the little videos and you'll get a series of things that you can try and then next week you come back and learn a bit more about what's going on and learn another and about another listening tool I think they're great they're only about I think

39 US dollars and they're really good value combine them with a parenting consultation and hand in hand has an enormous number of instructors who work across the world and around all with with a really huge breadth of experience so any parenting issue that you have come across you you you'll find if you

book a parenting consultation hand-in-hand will link you up with someone who's best able to help you and I'm always happy to have a chat and I do parenting consultations as well so I hope you found this useful I would love to hear from you I would love to hear how it goes stay in touch with me at Madeline Windsor calm ma de le I any winter calm

and go will go well thank you so much for making the time to kind of come and learn a little bit about about separations and about how connecting and bringing limits and listening can move things forward so that your child can you know happily leave happily have you leave so you can go off and do other things so more power to you you're doing a great job you deserve a bucketload of

support and good information and have fun so bye