

# St Marie's RC Primary School 'Separation Anxiety'




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# Plan this morning...

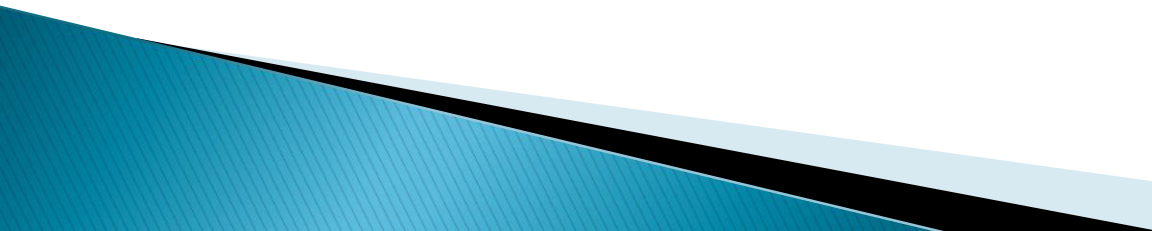
- ▶ Anxiety
  - ▶ Separation anxiety and school
  - ▶ Top Tips
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# Your child

How can you tell when they are anxious??



# What is anxiety?

- ▶ *Some* is normal
  - ▶ Anxiety is (supposed to be) ‘adaptive’
  - ▶ Anxiety is *not* an illness
  
  - ▶ But... it is unpleasant to experience and can be distressing to see in our children
  
  - ▶ And... it becomes a concern when it gets in the way of children doing things they like or need to do
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# What is anxiety?

- ▶ A response to perceived THREAT
  - Real or imagined / exaggerated
  - Physical or social
- ▶ Fight/Flight/Freeze
- ▶ Emotional regulation is key



# The vicious cycle of anxiety



# What keeps the problem going?

- ▶ Over-estimate likelihood
- ▶ Over-estimate awfulness!
  
- ▶ **Avoidance**
- ▶ Too much reassurance
  
- ▶ Never discovering they can do it or cope with the discomfort!



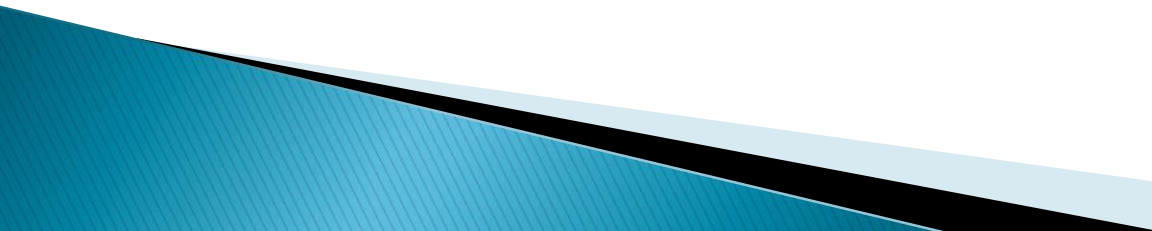
# Understanding separation anxiety & school

- ▶ New experiences
- ▶ Change in routine
- ▶ Parents' anxiety
- ▶ Stressful events
- ▶ Worries about parents

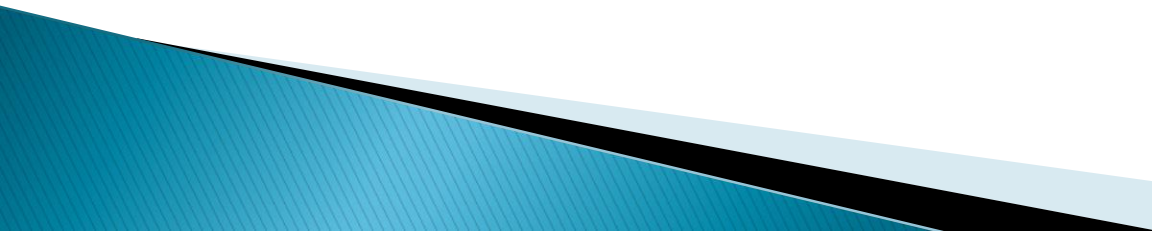




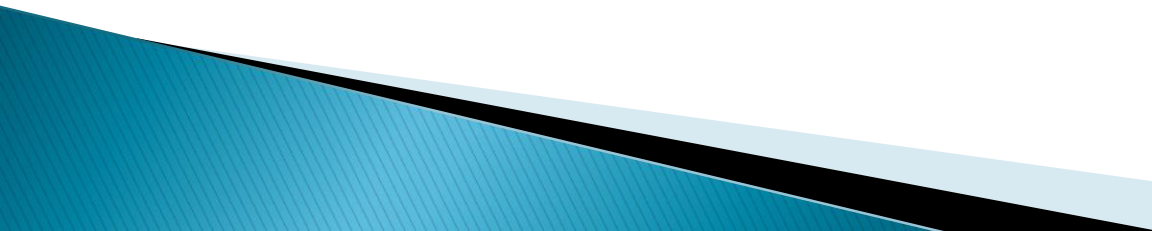
# What you can do I (general)

- ▶ Try to resist giving reassurance straight away
  - ▶ Giving reassurance feeds the vicious cycle – not helpful long-term
  - ▶ Listen, normalise and understand your child's concerns
  - ▶ Support your child to recognize what's going on and think how they can stop avoidance
  - ▶ Provide certainty where possible– who can they talk to, how they can communicate to you they are not okay
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# What you can do II (school)

- ▶ Morning routine
  - ▶ Practice short separations
  - ▶ Talk about what you'll do later
  - ▶ Transitional object – reminder of you to carry around
  - ▶ Make saying goodbye positive and warm, that they will be held in mind by you throughout school day
  - ▶ Ask yourself about your own anxiety
  - ▶ Trust the settling-in process
  - ▶ Remember: they won't be sad all day!
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# What you can do III

- ▶ Keep anxieties low in general for you and your child
  - ▶ Good sleep, food, exercise
  - ▶ Have fun together
  - ▶ Keep your promises – consistency is key!
    - E.g. come back when you say you will
  - ▶ Have a goodbye ritual
  - ▶ But keep it short! (remember the unhealthy cycle)
  - ▶ Don't hesitate, linger or hang around
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# Finally...

One thing you might change / try / do differently

