

Being away from one another

Elisha's story



Roy was trying to get his two-year-old daughter, Elisha, ready for child care. 'Me no go. Lisha stay Daddy' Elisha cried as she ran to her bedroom. Roy followed her and said softly 'Elisha, you are really upset. Would you like a hug?' Elisha ran to her dad for a comforting hug. 'It is hard sometimes being away from me isn't it?' 'Me miss Daddy', Elisha cried. Roy stroked Elisha's hair as this always helped her calm down. He reminded Elisha about some of the fun things she does at child care with the other children. Elisha started to feel better and offered 'I like painting!' Roy replied, 'Yes you do. Remember the one of Mummy, Daddy and Elisha on the fridge? And we added some trees and flowers when we got home didn't we?' Going to the kitchen, Roy suggested 'Why don't you take it to show everyone today?' Still looking a bit anxious Elisha watched her father place it in her bag. Roy reassured Elisha by saying 'I am always thinking of you and we will see each other again at the end of the day. I wonder what you will bring home to show me tonight?'

Separating from loved ones can be distressing

Early childhood services are supportive environments where children have many opportunities to grow and learn through their positive experiences. However, when children are separated from their parents and carers they can feel distressed. This is a common response from about six months of age among babies and toddlers. Some preschool children may also experience some separation distress.



Children may show their distress in different ways. Whereas some may be visibly upset (e.g., when Elisha began crying), others may have physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea or tummy aches. Other children may show their distress by appearing nervous, being restless, clingy, or by being quiet and withdrawn.

Distress from separating from their parents or carers is a common feeling for many children when they first go to an early childhood service. They may be feeling a little unsure in a new setting with new people. Children's distress is generally short-lived and they are quite often happily playing within a short time of their parents or carers leaving. Over time, children learn to feel safe in their new surroundings and gradually experience less separation distress.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at www.kidsmatter.edu.au. The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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