

SEPARATION ANXIETY

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS + PRACTICAL TIPS
TO ASSIST WITH DROP OFFS & TRANSITIONS

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EVIDENCE & EMPATHY

WHO AM I?

a mother, a Scientist and an advocate
for parents & families





WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

What is Separation Anxiety

Understanding Attachment

Practical Tips





WHAT IS SEPARATION ANXIETY?

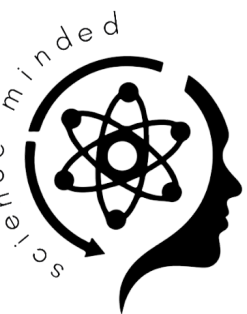
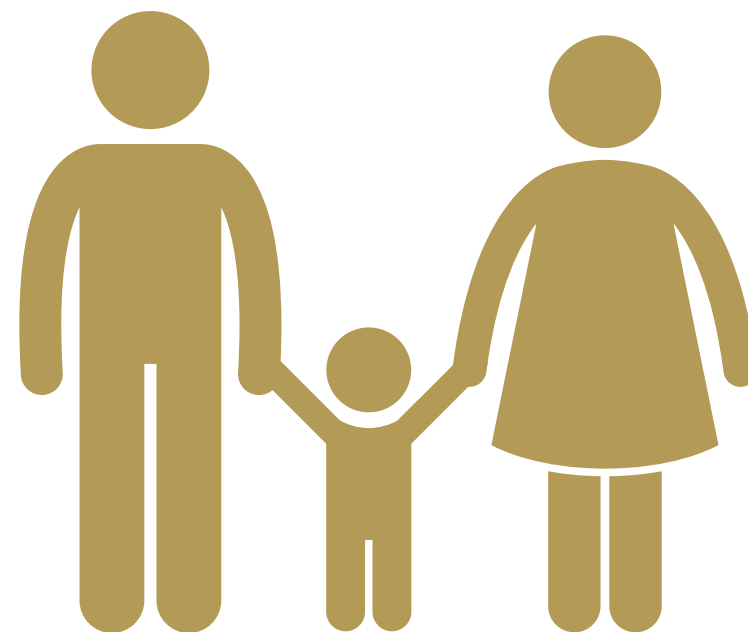
When children are anxious or distressed by the idea of act of separating from their caregiver.

It is common in babies & young children and especially common during periods of change/stress.



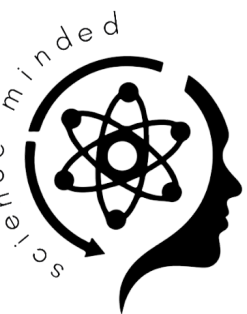
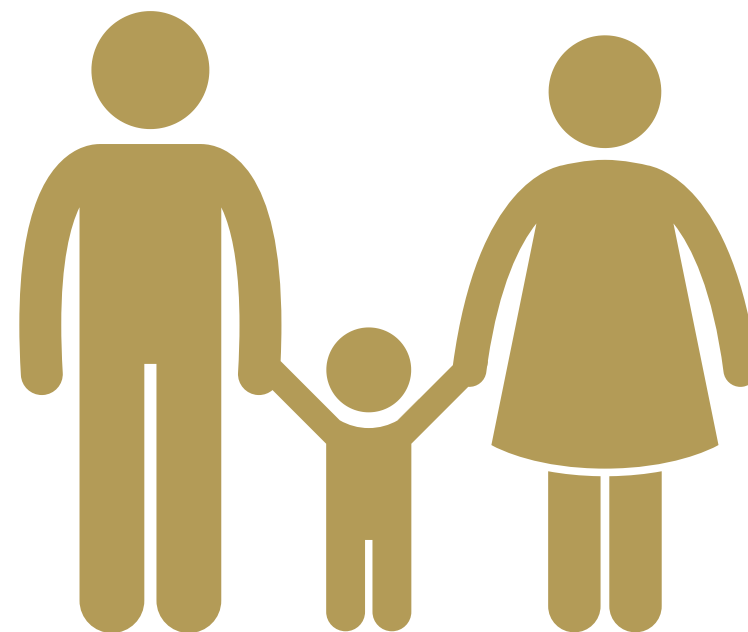
WHAT IS IT?

Infants who enjoy a positive relationship with their attachment figure, often **protest being separated** from them.



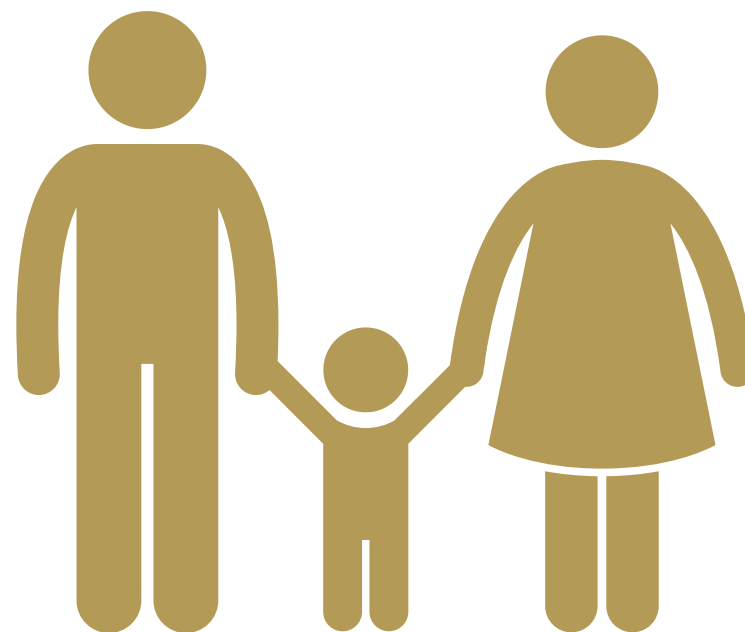
WHAT IS IT?

The intensity and duration of separation protest/anxiety is affected by your child's **temperament**, your **personality** and how you **respond**.



WHAT IS IT?

It usually begins around **8 months old**
and often reduces sometime between **2-3 years**.



WHAT IS ATTACHMENT?

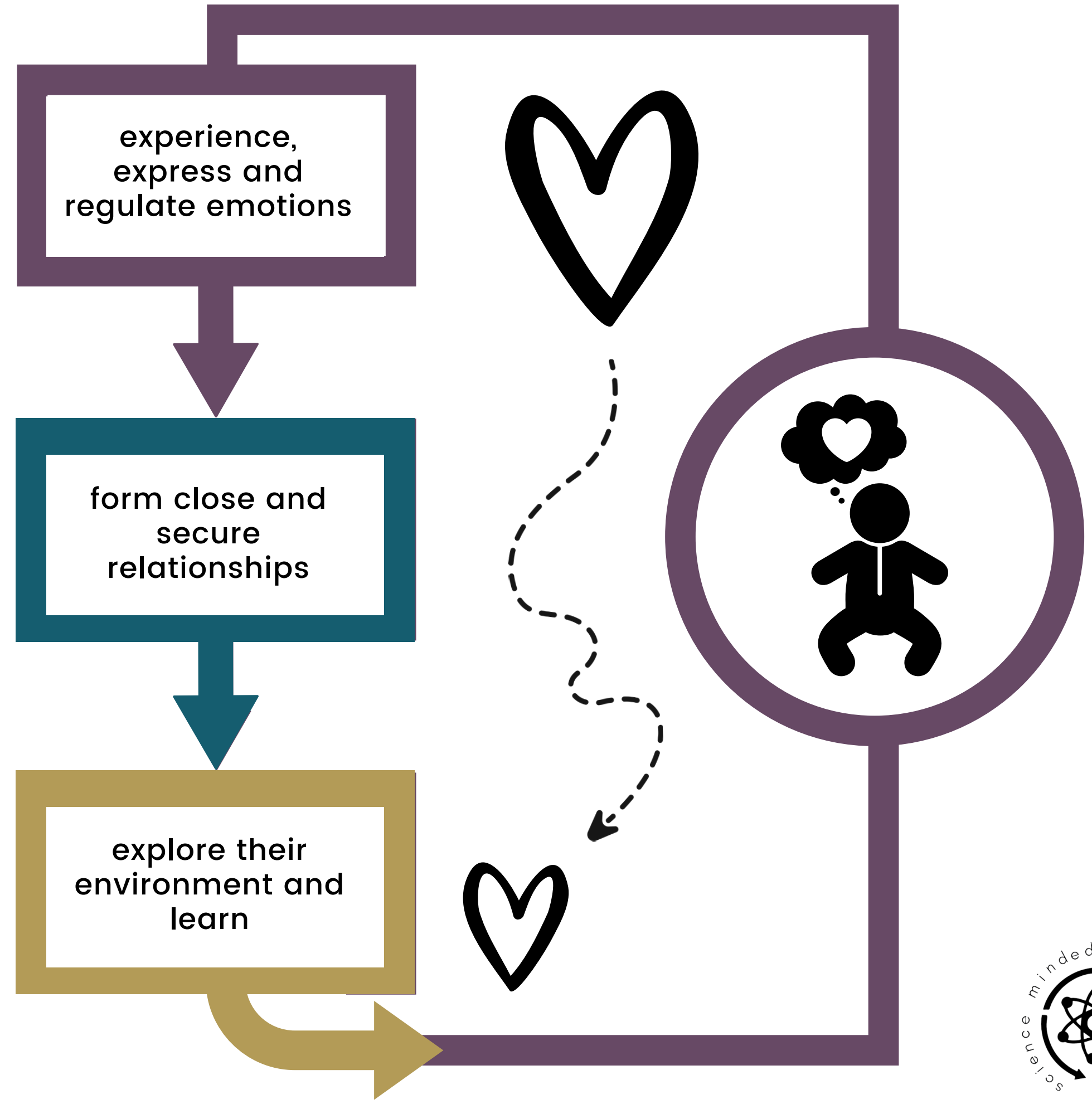
Attachment describes the special and enduring bond between child and caregiver.

By being available & responsive, caregivers help establish a sense of security & safety.

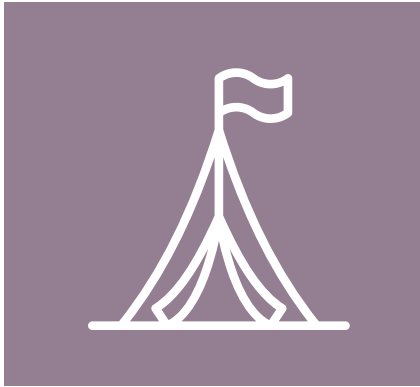


WHY IT MATTERS

It supports your infant's mental health.



COMPONENTS OF ATTACHMENT



Secure Base

The caregiver provides a secure and dependable base for the child to explore the world.



Safe Haven

When the child feels threatened or afraid, they return to the caregiver knowing they will receive comfort and soothing.



Proximity Maintenance

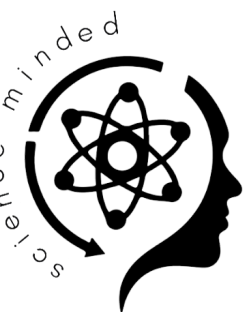
The child strives to stay near the caregiver, in an effort to feel safe.



Separation Distress (or Separation Anxiety).

When separated from the caregiver, the child will become upset & distressed.

Powell, Cooper, Hoffman, & Marvin (2009)





OUR FEARS

"Having my child in care will negatively affect our relationship"

"They will feel abandoned, they won't know I'm coming back."



WHAT ABOUT ME?

It feels hard because IT IS

We are hard-wired to respond to and be near our children

Part of our job is to help our children form strong attachments
to other people

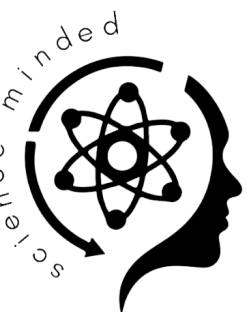
ALLOPARENTING

We don't live in villages anymore, but...

Little Locals & the Little Locals educators are our village



Emmott & Page (2021)



CONNECTION



SECONDARY ATTACHMENTS

Secondary attachment figures are people with whom children develop a close attachment relationship and provide children a sense of safety and security in the absence of their primary attachment figure.



Bowlby (1969)

PRACTICAL TIPS



PREPARATION

DROP-OFF

TIME

PREPARATION



Adequate Experience
Conversation & Stories
Advanced Warning

preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Adequate experience

- Stay & plays, shorter days etc.
- Create positive experiences/associations
- Experience of "being separate"

preparation

drop-off

time



EXAMPLE

Separation Games

- Peekaboo
- "Be right back!"
 - "I came back"



preparation

drop-off

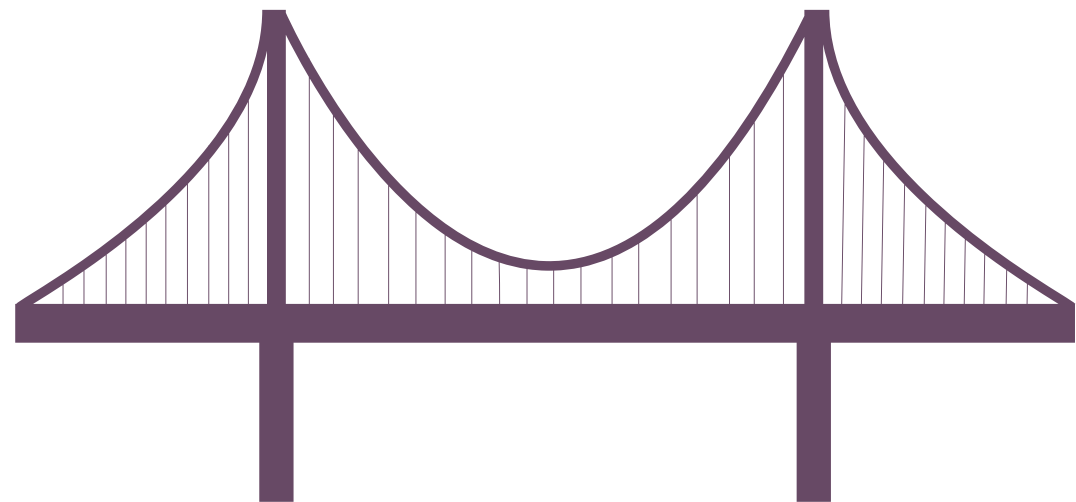
time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Conversation & Stories

- Little Locals & educators are part of your village - talk about them!



preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Advanced warning

- Give them fair warning
 - talk about their favourite educator
 -
 - involve them in packing bag

preparation

drop-off

time



DROP-OFF



Consistency
Goodbye Rituals
Attention

preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Consistency

- Timings of drop-offs & pick-ups
- Same educators
- Be specific
- Allows development of routine

preparation

drop-off

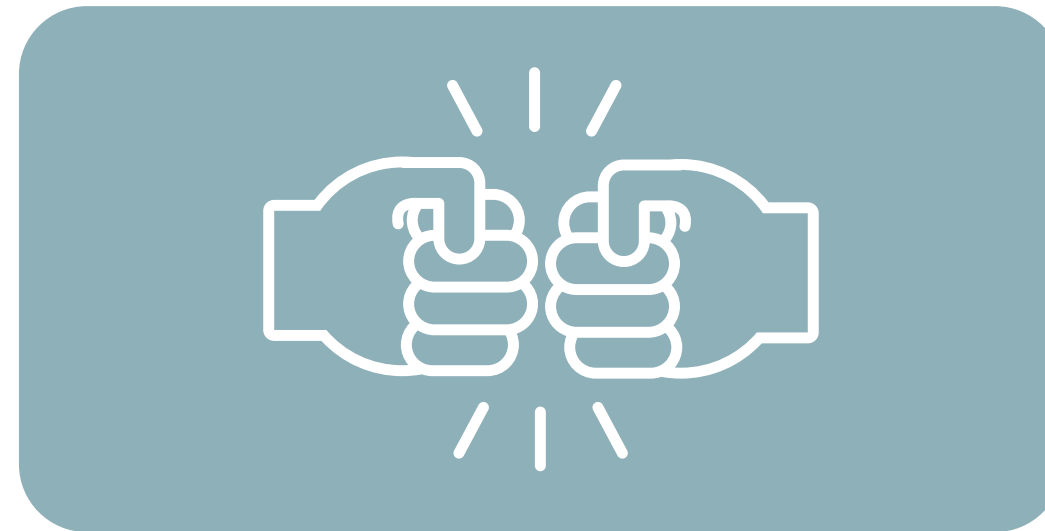
time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Goodbye Rituals

- Short & sweet



preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Attention

- An intentional goodbye where you connect (physical touch, eye contact)
- Do not sneak out!
- Make sure they have the attention of an educator in the room

preparation

drop-off

time



EXAMPLE GOODBYE

Tell them the story of what will happen

Remind them of the reunion

Connected while apart

Calm & confident goodbye

"Mummy has to go to work now. Your friend Soomi is going to look after you today"

"Mummy will be here to pick you up after your afternoon snack."

"Saying goodbye can be hard. Maybe you could play blocks with Soomi? I love you baby."

Leave younger babies with a sensory connection (e.g. something that smells like you). For older children, they could pull on your "love string" to connect while apart.

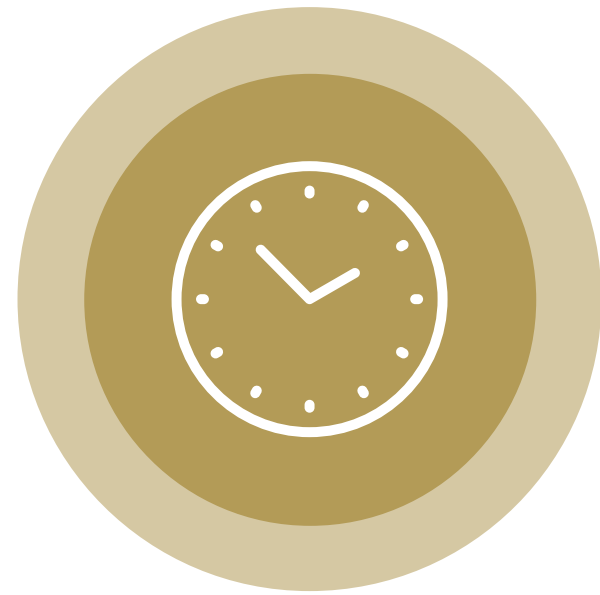
preparation

drop-off

time



TIME



Pick-up Time
Quality Time
Give it Time

preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Pick-up Time

- Be enthusiastic!
- Don't rush it - hang out in the room
- Crying upon pick-up
 - "After-school restraint collapse"

preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Quality Time

- Where possible, after pick-up, set aside quality time together
- They have missed you - they need to refill their "love cup"



preparation

drop-off

time



PRACTICAL TIPS

Give It Time

- Much of the 'solution' = experience + development
- Closer to 2-3 years, childrens' attachment development better allows for deep connection with multiple adults

preparation

drop-off

time



EXTRA TIPS

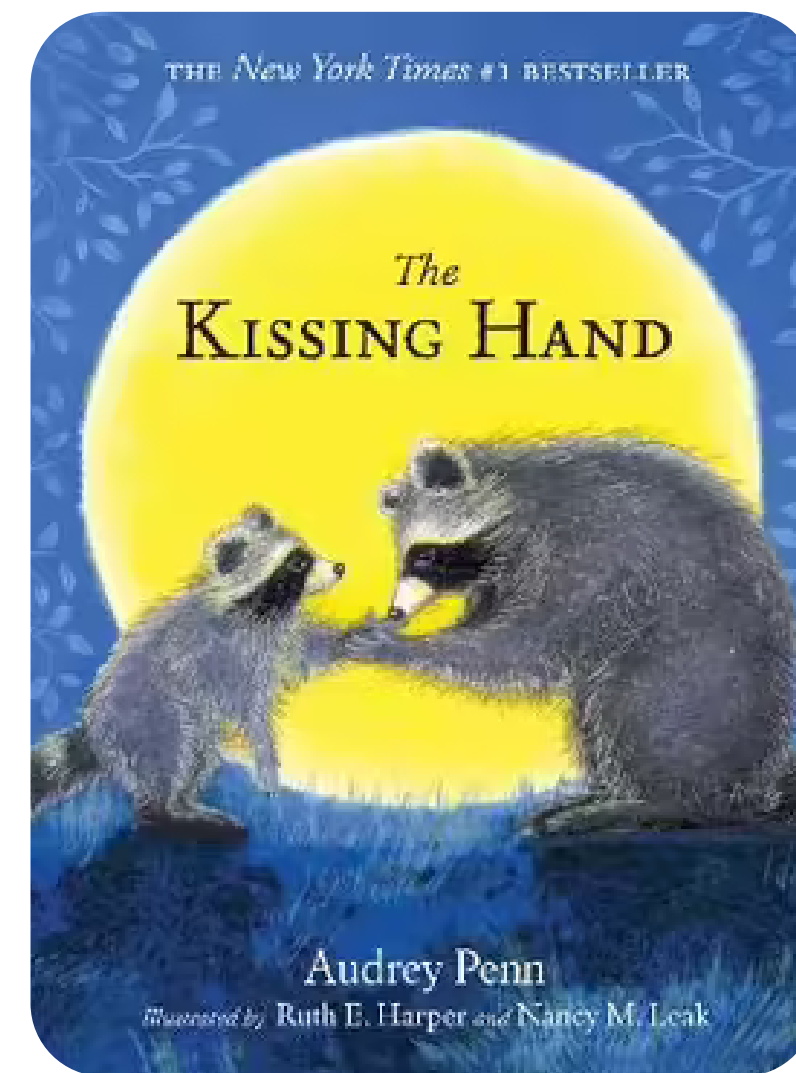
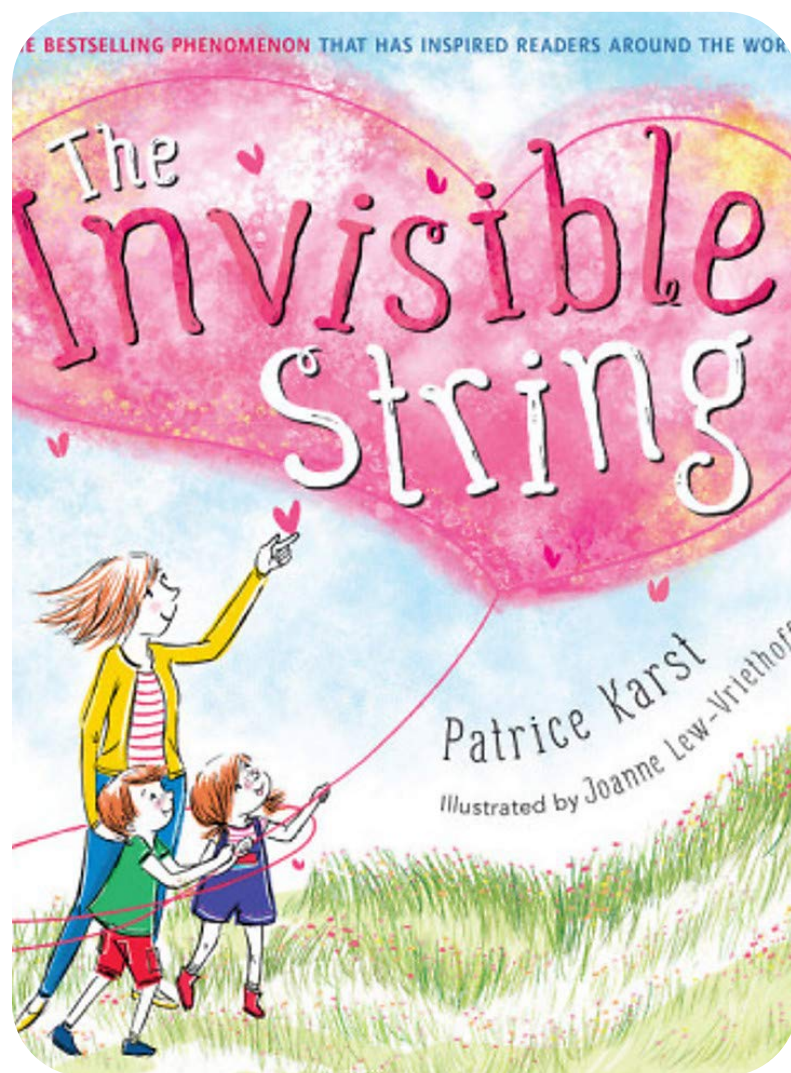
- Acknowledge and validate their (and your own!) experience

"I feel sad sometimes too, and miss you when I'm away from you"

"It's hard being away from your favourite people."

EXTRA TIPS

- Remind your child of your continued connection to them, even when apart



GOOD ENOUGH PARENTING



"Parenting is sometimes like looking both ways to cross the road, then getting hit by a plane."



DEVELOPMENT IS NOT LINEAR



DEVELOPMENT IS NOT LINEAR



- moving rooms
- illness/teething
- favourite educator is away





Some babies who experience separation anxiety can become quite upset at drop offs but once a strong bond is formed with an educator you should eventually notice this becoming easier. While your little one may get upset it's best that you say good-bye and leave soon after, as staying back generally can make them much more emotional than a brief, confident goodbye kiss and go.

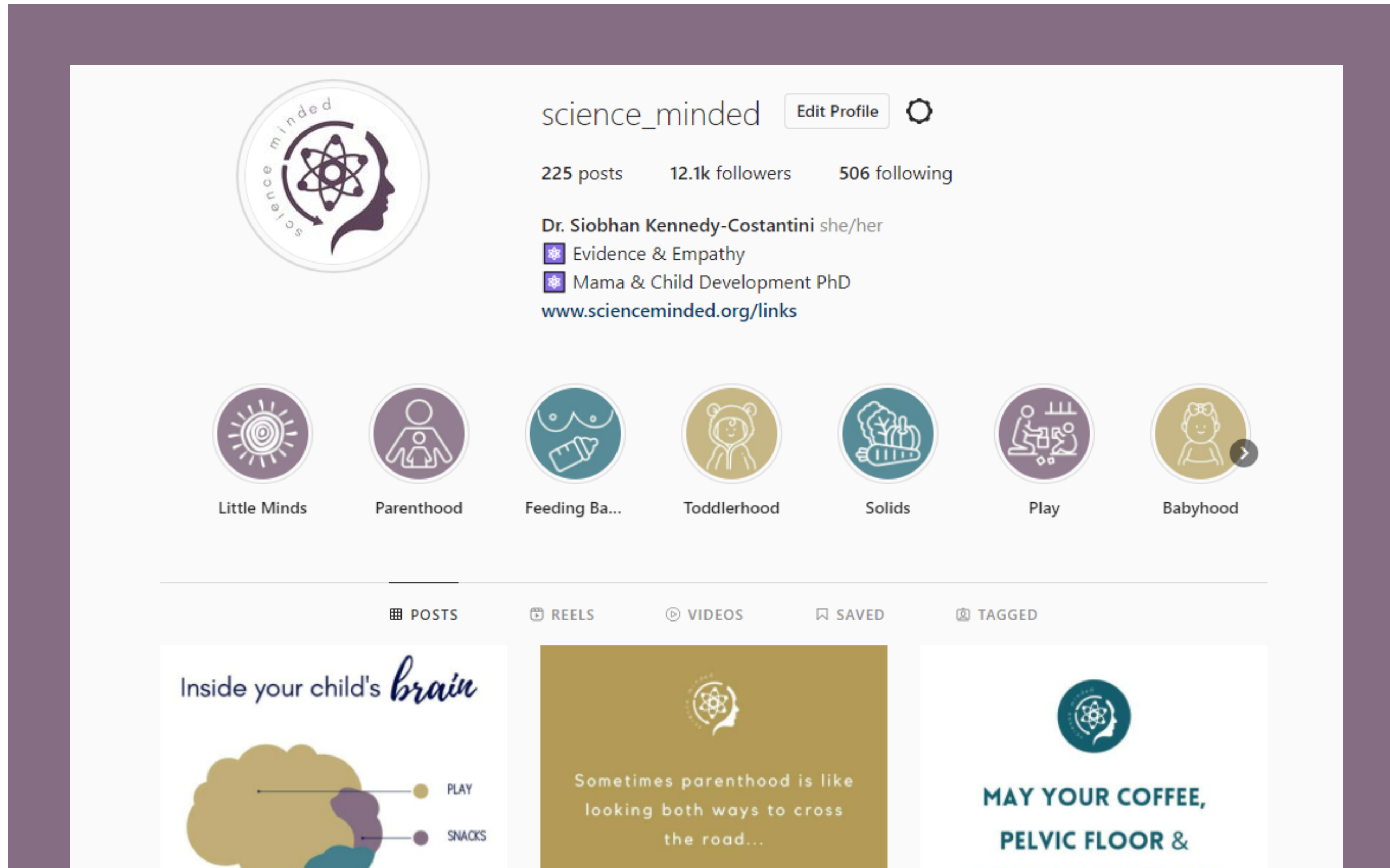
Your little one is very perceptive of your emotions and will notice if you are anxious or nervous or unsure about leaving. We promise your little one is in the safest hands and will be shown so much love and affection throughout the day!

At pick up you will find if you can sneak up to the window without your little one spotting you can see them happily playing and engaged. Once they see you, they may cry, and this is because they are still learning how to use and control their emotions. Often, they are happy to see you and sad at the same time because they missed you.

QUESTIONS?



WANT TO LEARN MORE?



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

FACT PACKS



KEEPING ABREAST

A Science Minded 'Fact Pack' full of essential information you need to know about breastfeeding.

WWW.SCIENCEMINDED.ORG



STARTING SOLIDS

A Science Minded 'Fact Pack' to help you confidently navigate your baby's transition to solid food.

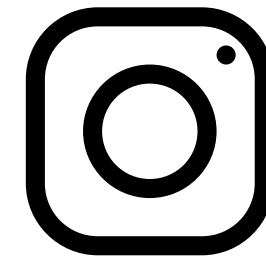
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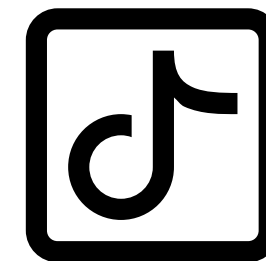
CHILD'S PLAY

A Science Minded 'Fact Pack' all about how children learn and grow through play.

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