

**Family Living****Focus**

by  
Lancaster Co.  
Extension Agent

**Debbie Naumann****Easing Separation Anxiety**

Separation anxiety strikes all children at various moments throughout their lifetime. Whether left in the care of a babysitter for a few hours, placed in a day care home or center for the day, or dropped off for a week at summer day camp, children of all ages experience feelings of loneliness and sadness that can come when separated from their loved ones for any given period of time.

In fact, separation anxiety is a common occurrence in my household. It strikes my 20-month old son each time he experiences the departure of dad from his view. It's a common phenomenon with my 3 1/2 year-old daughter who clings to me on days that I must go to work. And I'm quite sure that it was the uneasy feeling of separation anxiety that even I experienced several weeks ago when my daughter left on a Friday evening to spend the night at Grandma's house.

Fortunately, there are many things that adults can do for children to help ease their lone-

ly pangs of separation anxiety. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Prepare your child for the separation.

Whenever possible, it's almost always a good idea to prepare both parent and child for the separation that is to occur. If it's a new babysitter that will be coming to the home, a few visits from the caretaker in advance can be very helpful in making everyone feel more comfortable. If it's a birthday party, overnight sleepover, hospital stay, or other event in which parent and child will be separated, an actual "walk-through" (ie visiting the hospital) or play-by-play description of the event can prove helpful in easing children's fears.

2. Send a familiar reminder of home or family.

When separated from a loved one, a familiar reminder of home or family can bring great comfort to a child. Perhaps it's a snapshot of the family together, a favorite stuffed animal, or a comfortable pillow with all the smells of home. When children are away from home for the first time, parents may even try

recording a message for their child to be played at bedtime. The comfort of a parents voice may be just the right thing to bring a smile to a lonely face.

3. Say goodbye.

When leaving their child with a babysitter or at child care, some parents think that "sneaking out" of their child's sight when leaving is the best way to avoid any unnecessary sadness. In fact, doing so may be more likely to provoke a child's future distrust of their parent. A better approach is to make a point of saying goodbye. Having a set pattern, such as walking to the door together, waving good-bye at the window, or exchanging hugs gives a child a sense of control and comfort when it comes time to separate.

4. Listen and acknowledge your child's feelings.

By listening to and acknowledging their child's feelings, parents can offer much comfort and reassurance. Works such as "I know it's hard to say goodbye" show empathy and understanding. Talking about feelings that your child might experience while away from you can also prove helpful, as well as discussing what a child can do about these feelings (ie. share them with a camp counselor, write in a journal, call home, get involved in a fun activity with other children.)

When children are encouraged to share their feelings about separation openly with parents, they learn how to work through difficult feelings while gaining an increased sense of confidence in themselves. Chances are good that they can then move towards greater independence in the future.

**Grill Safety**

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) - Don't wait to inspect your grill until right before you intend on using it. Look it over a couple of days in advance. You may need new hoses or connectors. On gas grills, make sure grill tubes are not blocked by insects or food drippings. Check hoses for cracks, brittleness, and leaks. Check connectors for scratches or nicks that could cause leads.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the biggest safety hazards for barbecuers are fire and carbon-monoxide poisoning. Safety should always be an important concern when barbecuing. A little common sense can cut the risk of accidents.

The following tips are from the CPSC and the Barbecue Industry Association:

- Because of the danger of carbon-monoxide poisoning, never barbecue in an enclosed area.

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

- Never leave a grill unattended once it is lighted and never attempt to move a hot grill.

- Set up the grill at least 10 feet from any building and away from dry leaves or brush and high-traffic areas.

- Never use gasoline, kerosene or other volatile fluids as charcoal starter - they can explode.

- Do not use an electric starter in the rain or when you're standing on wet ground.

- Check for gas leaks whenever

er you reconnect the grill to liquid propane (LP) gas cylinders or if you smell gas. To check for leaks, open the gas-supply valve fully and apply a soapy solution (one part water, one part liquid detergent) with a brush at connection points. If bubbles appear, there is a leak. Turn off the gas and tighten connections. If there is still a leak, have the unit repaired.

- Allow coals to burn out completely and let ashes cool for 48 hours before disposing of them. If you can't wait that long, carefully place ashes in heavy-duty aluminum foil and soak with water.

- Never store an LP gas cylinder on or near a grill.

- Don't wear clothing with flowing fabric such as shirt tails, frills or apron strings. Do use flame-retardant mitts.

- Use baking soda to control a grease fire and have a fire extinguisher handy - or a bucket of sand or garden hose.

- Clean grills at least twice a year.

There's nothing like the smell of a good barbecue on a hot summer evening. Be sure to keep all of your barbecues safe this year. Follow the above tips and enjoy!



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