

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Separation anxiety around starting school or University can feel overwhelming for students at this time of year. Students will need to contend with making new friends, adjust to living with other people, and learn to navigate a new routine. Many students have feelings of inadequacy before their transition to University, those emotions will be amplified, at least for a while after they leave home. Additionally, your child's identity can be shaken during the transition to University – familiar peers who have given them a sense of "where they fit in" are no longer around. Even the most independent person can experience some homesickness.

Often neither parents nor the child thinks about separation anxiety and the emotional aspects of the transition to University. It isn't just the student who can have some problems coping – often parents struggle to adjust to this new phase of life without their teen and find themselves going through a bout of separation anxiety when their child leaves for school.

Separation Anxiety Symptoms

The following separation anxiety symptoms can affect both teens and parents:

- A feeling of helplessness, sadness, worry, or anger
- Excessive worry, allowing your thoughts to run wild ("what if?" thinking)
- Fear or reluctance to go off to school and leave the familiar comforts of home
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach-aches, loss of appetite
- Crying
- Racing heart, shortness of breath

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How to Help Your Child Deal with Separation Anxiety

It's normal for children and parents to go through many of these separation anxiety symptoms during the first term of University, but many don't seek help. Keep in mind that those who already teenagers who already experience depression or anxiety will probably require even more emotional support. Here are some ways you can help you're your child transition to University:

Talk to your child before they leave for University and let them know that it's okay to feel overwhelmed as they adjust to their new life away from home.

Listen to your child and encourage them to talk about the stress they are feeling.

Encourage them to join a club, group or get involved in extracurricular activities to make new friends.

Visit them at University if you can, and if you are needed.

Educate yourself about the places your child can go for help, such as on-campus support groups or counselling.

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