

Creating a Confident Goodbye

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Developing a confident goodbye routine with your child is an essential part of ensuring a positive start to their experience. We're here to support you! Please write office@aspenhillmontessori.ca before August 25th or after Sept. 6th if you have questions, or call your child's campus of attendance before or after the same dates.

Start early

It's important to develop a goodbye routine before the learning season starts. Start as soon as possible; at least two weeks before your child's start date with the Centre.

- Talk about 'going to school' or 'going to care' as a positive transition that is coming, and some of the things they might do there (make new friends, see new activities, etc.)
- Drive by the building, and take a walk around the building. Point out landmarks, signs, flowers, etc. and say 'this is where you will go to school / care'
- Show older children the 'meet the staff' e-mail and expand the photos so your children can see the faces of the teachers. Name all teachers for your children.
- Make sure you have the needed items on hand for your child to start program successfully – indoor shoes, backpack, change of uniform, diapers / wipes / napping items if Bambini, diapers / wipes / feeding items / bottles if Nido
- Modify your child's sleeping and awake schedule so that they will be able to arrive on time for their start of program, and get enough sleep to enjoy their day.

Develop a routine for leaving and returning

Decide on a routine that ALL adults will use – word for word – when you drop off and pick up your child. This is important even if you feel your child is pre-verbal or may not understand.

For example, if they are walking and you will put them down, give them one hug at their level, look them in the face and tell them "I love you. Have an amazing day! I will see you at (time of pickup)!" and then leave without looking back or stopping. When you come back, you will get down to their level, say "Hi (name), it's (time of day) and it's great to see you! I can't wait to hear about your day! Let's go home."; and then you will walk out holding their hand. If they are still in-arms in our infant program, develop a routine that you will use with them before you hand them to a caregiver.

Develop wording and a routine that works for your family, and is appropriate for your child's age – include cultural gestures or symbolism where you like, or special words or actions (nose rubs, fist bumps) depending on your routines. If you have an older child, involve them in the process, and ask what they would like to do to say goodbye and hello. We recommend letting the child know a specific time that they will see you rather than using 'I will see you later', to assist children in developing a sense of commitment to a parent's return.

Practice this routine with your child at home, when you leave the room, go grocery shopping and leave them with the other parent, etc. Make sure you repeat the re-entry / welcome back procedure as well!

Let them know that you are practicing for school. Practice it for EVERY time you leave their sight for a few days – it will feel silly, but soon your child will almost ignore the process. Make sure you keep the wording the same EVERY TIME, and for EVERY ADULT. This is essential for the child to develop a pattern.

Get help and practice

Once you have the routine at home, practice leaving your child with someone that they do not know as well – even if it's for 15 minutes. A new babysitter, a friendly neighbour, or even a family member that your child does not know as well works. This is especially important for children who struggle with change and transitions.

Make sure that you let your caregiver know what you are practicing, and that you will need them to take and hold your child once you are done your routine so you can leave confidently.

Then, once you have said your confident goodbye routine, hand your child to the caregiver, **and walk away**. Try not to look back!

- This can be one of the hardest things to do, especially if this is your child's first time at care outside of the home. Be strong! Your child takes their cues from you about positive transitions and how to manage their emotions.

Return at exactly the time you say you will, and do your re-entry procedure.

Repeat as many times as needed so both you and your child feel confident. Gradually increase the time away, if you have started at the 10 or 15 minute mark.

At the Centre

You may not have a chance to practice outside of the home before your child starts with the Centre – that's OK. *As long as you have practiced at home, you will be able to do it at the Centre, and your child will know the routine.*

Arrive on time or early for your scheduled care, and make sure that you bring everything your child needs. If you need to, arrange with the Centre to drop off items (napping items, diapers, wipes, bottles) in advance. That way, you are a confident adult, and you can focus on your goodbye routine.

If you feel your child will cling, or that you will need support, please let us know prior to drop off and we will be ready to assist! ☺

Once you have said your confident goodbye at the Centre, hand your child to the caregiver, **and walk away**. Do not repeat your goodbye, do not look back, and do not linger.

We have worked with thousands of young children, and can assure you that they will settle in **as long as we have the parent's support for a confident goodbye.**

We will always call you if your child has not settled in within a reasonable time based on their ages and stages development. Generally, Nido and Bambini children settle within 5-7 days of regular attendance at the Centre, with days 2 and 3 being the heaviest crying days. Casa and Kindergarten children new to care will settle within 5-20 days of regular attendance at the Centre, with consistent attendance and positive parent support, depending on their previous exposure to out-of-home care. We will ensure their tears are dried, and they move happily and healthily into their activities.

Correct your habits

Many parents don't realize that they may be using words or actions that teach their children to be fearful of being without them. Here are some common things we see that can affect your drop off success:

- Avoid sentiments that will make your child focus on your needs. For example, "Mommy will be so lonely without you" or "Mommy will miss you so much" or "what will Daddy do without his buddy?"
 - o Instead, make the focus on the child: "You will have so much fun today!" "You will see your friends."
 - o You can also suggest that you are going to do things that you know your child does not like – for example, if they dislike going to get groceries, you can say 'Mom is going to do boring stuff like get groceries. You will have way more fun here!'

- Avoid over-talking about leaving in the 10-15 minutes before you drive to the Centre. Sentences like "Daddy will be leaving soon!" gets anxiety levels up.
 - o Focus on educating positively about the pattern ahead to teach 'past and future' concepts: "You're going to school today. We will drive there and then Mommy will go to work. After school, we will come home and play Lego!" (Just make sure to follow through 😊)

- Don't carry your child from the car to the babysitter or Centre unless they are pre-walking infants. This promotes 'clinging' and reduces independence. Even if your child is newly walking, encourage them to carry one item and to hold your hand while they walk.
 - o Or, carry them part way, but put them down as you get closer.
 - o If your child refuses to walk, even after encouragement, carry them facing forward so they cannot cling to your neck. When you reach the door and it is your turn, put them down on the ground and keep their arms by their sides while you wrap your arms around them.

- Don't show your child that you are nervous or upset at leaving them. Children pick up on our 'vibes', and it quickly becomes a feedback loop that results in upset parents and children.
 - o If you need to cry, do ☺ but do it on your way back to the car where they can't see or hear you.
- Avoid looking back, and don't linger after your Confident Goodbye. Expect that your child will cry, will reach for you, and may even yell 'MOMMMMMYYYYY'.... ☺ If you are ready and prepared for it, knowing where you are in your transition cycle, you can leave Confidently, knowing that your child will quickly settle in to their routine.
- Try not to allow 'one more hug' or doing extended convincing talks outside of the programming door with your older child. This negotiation period will become longer each day, and more difficult to end. If negotiation has started, let your child know that you will be leaving and say goodbye – then follow through! Ask the administrator at the door if you can hand your child to them, complete the process, and depart.
- Don't hang around, attempting to catch glimpses of your child after drop off. If your child sees you, the transition period will have to start again – while it may make you feel better, it is disruptive to your child's day and delays the integration process.
- Don't keep your child home from care or return home if they are having a difficult time at drop off. It teaches your child that if they cling / fuss / cry, mom will take them home... which makes the next drop off even worse for you (and them). Follow your caregiver's lead and recommendations, and trust that they want the best for your child's success and ability to settle.
- Encourage your child's independence by showing them how to dress themselves, put on their own shoes, and pick up their toys. Encourage them to walk instead of carrying them in stores / to and from the car. If they want you to do something for them, show them how to do it themselves, and assist them as needed. All of these actions help your children be interested to create their own experiences, of which school and learning is one.