



PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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WHY DOES MY TODDLER CRY SO MUCH WHEN I LEAVE?

by Jacqueline B. Sallade, Ed.D.

Separation from one's mother or father can be hard at any age, but it is especially hard for the baby between ages one and two. This age is characterized by *separation anxiety* – the inability to comprehend that the parent's departure is temporary and not in any way a rejection.

Even if expected by or customary for the child, separation – especially when the child is placed with an unfamiliar person, even for a short time – can lead to long bouts of crying, disruption of eating and sleeping schedules, and mistrust of people. It is important that the child be exposed *gradually* to new caretakers, whether they are relatives or baby-sitters.

The transition can be made smoothly only if the toddler perceives that Mom or Dad trusts the new person, learns that he or she will return – first soon, and gradually after longer absences – and develops a comfortable relationship with the new caretaker.

Talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please call the Pennsylvania Psychological Association, 717-232-3817, or visit www.papsy.org.