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Separation anxiety in mothers

Child shows independence; plays alone, eats on his own, stays with the babysitter, goes to the nursery ... and mother is relieved. Finally she can reclaim at least a part of her former identity; she is coming back to herself, back to time before being (only) a mother!

But after the initial enthusiasm she may experience certain unpleasant feelings: concern, restlessness, fatigue, indisposition ... Sometimes such feelings can have no connection with mother's relationship to the child. Perhaps she is a little bit out of (professional) shape, or not everything is as idyllic as she imagined it to be. To be honest, sometimes it's hard to be a (good) woman, partner or an employee. But sometimes the cause for the unpleasant feeling lies precisely in the relationship with the child, whether the mother is aware of it or not!

Equally as important as it is to be attuned to the feelings and needs of our child, is to be attuned to our own feelings and needs. Separation anxiety is a part of the normal development of a child and comes in many repetitions and variations. If we're good enough parents, we can help the child to successfully overcome such periods of anxiety and develop towards being an independent individual.

But we mustn't forget that the relationship of attachment and dependence that triggers the child's anxious feelings upon separation is always bilateral. We also get attached to the child and are in some way dependent on him. Thus it's not at all unusual if we feel the previously mentioned unpleasant feelings when the child grows more independent. In addition to them, we can sometimes also feel guilty and regret that the golden age when we were the child's entire world is over. That's why it is perfectly in place to ask ourselves how much are we aware of it and what are we doing about it?

It's probably not hard to see that it's better to pay attention to the fact of our own separation anxiety, because that way it's easier for us to avoid possible complications and conflicts with people around us who have no ill intents or

thoughts. At the same time it's also important that we don't try to hide this from the child, since he can easily read our true emotions despite the fact we're saying to him that everything is in the best of order ... So, what can we do?

#1 We honestly say and show to the child that we've missed him. It's not easy for us, but at the same time we're proud of him – his independence means a lot to us. We understand and respect that sometimes he needs to be by himself or with someone else than us, because sometimes we also need this. This way we help the child to also pay more attention to his own experiencing and consequently make it easier for him to face his anxious feelings upon separation. These are perhaps not strong enough to keep him away from exploring life without us, but they are still far from being a thing of the past.

#2 We make sure to have enough time just for the child and ourselves. On such occasions we can hug, cuddle and do everything that pleases us both. And it's worth noting that quality comes before quantity. For instance one hour before bedtime or a short trip over the weekend can have a substantially greater effect than trying to ensure enough time by force, regardless of our obligations or child's activities. Because unfortunately in the case of the latter it happens all too often that our time spent together is in fact empty time. Neither us, nor the child are in the mood for bonding and our minds are somewhere else.

Conclusion:

Mother's separation anxiety is not something bad. It doesn't mean that she pushed her child away too far or too soon. It also doesn't mean that the child will never need her again, far from that. Separation anxiety felt by the mother after the period of fusion with the child is starting to disintegrate and her primary preoccupation with him is giving way is in fact a sign that things are going into the right direction.

In the future, mother will have more and more time to devote to herself again and to the things that make her feel fulfilled, but she'll still be a mother. That's something that will stay with her for the rest of her life. Being aware of her own separation anxiety helps the mother to recognize and define her new identity

more easily. At the same time she is a mother, a woman, a partner, an employee and more. If she takes care of herself and her relationship with the child, if she ensures the right amount of time and space for it, then her life will be easier. Both the child and the mother will still be dependent on one another, but they will cope more easily when they are on their own because they will have a fuller relationship. This experience is precious and if we think a little bit harder it even isn't so special, because every relationship can benefit from being like that!