



Stranger Awareness/Stranger Anxiety

You may be discovering that your child is becoming more aware of unfamiliar adults. Once, your child would go to anyone who wanted to hold him. Now he looks scared and worried when a stranger approaches. Some children can be open, affectionate and outgoing with parents but become clingy, fearful and upset around strangers. Although this can be stressful to parents, it's a sign that your child is developing as expected. He is aware of and attached to different people in his life. Stranger awareness or stranger anxiety is very typically in older infants. Their attachment to you is strong—and they want the comfort of you. This may be an especially tough time to introduce new people—especially babysitters—into your child's life.

Stranger awareness or stranger anxiety is very common in older infants. Your baby is attached to you and feels safest with you. Your baby can now distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar adults. Your baby may protest when a stranger approaches or you try to leave. Your baby now understands that you continue to exist even when you leave the room and he/she can no longer see you. Your baby may cling to you, even when you try to go to the bathroom in privacy. This is a very normal part of child development, but can be hard on parents and babies. Here are some strategies that help both parents and children.

1. Don't Push

Respect your baby's fears and don't force your baby to interact with adults, especially with hugs and kisses.

2. Comfort Your Baby

Hold your baby, hug and be reassuring. Help your child feel safe. Use simple words to describe your baby's concern. ("Are you worried that I'm going bye-bye?")

3. Give Your Baby Experiences Out in the World

Seeing people while in your company may help your baby get used to being around a variety of people.

4. Introduce a New Person Gradually

If you have a new person spending time with your child, let your baby visit with that person a few times with you present, before you leave your child with that person.

5. Trust Your Baby

If your baby really protests or becomes unusually upset when in the company of a specific adult, he may really feel threatened and unsafe. Check it out or talk with your health care professional.

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