

Parents passionately want to succeed in raising emotionally healthy children. They also want to enjoy their little ones. When their children arrive later in infancy or childhood, most parents are well-aware that they are doing more careful parenting.

Multiple Attachments: Expanding Horizons

By three years of age, your child is likely to have a number of relationships with people other than his parents. He may have a favorite babysitter, or just a good friend. He will prefer to play with children his own age rather than to play with you, though he still enjoys and needs you. Long periods of time can be spent in play without any fighting and with some sharing of toys.

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As your child's world expands—for example, when he goes to a daycare center or nursery school—the influences on your child's self-esteem will also include new people's attitudes toward him. As parents it's essential to provide him with the security he needs so he can go out and explore his surroundings.

While your child may be quite ready to go off to nursery school, once in a while he may slip back to his less-sure former self and not want to leave your side. These are considered to be normal separation reactions. His going to nursery school is a big emotional step for both of you.

Here is an example of a three year old boy we knew. It was the first week of nursery school. Everyday the boy's mother walked him to the classroom, gave him a hug and a kiss, and said goodbye. Each time the boy cried uncontrollably, refusing to take his jacket off for the whole day. Knowingly, the teachers respected the child's need to hold onto his jacket. For this child, removing his jacket meant that he was going to stay at this place without his mother. In a way, he was unsure he was ready for all this independence. Both mother

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Attachment disorders can limit a child's ability to be emotionally present, flexible and able to communicate in ways that build satisfying and meaningful relationships.

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and child benefited from the teacher's warm assurance that everything would be all right. Gradually, the teachers enticed the child into the fun the others were having. Some nursery schools are quite aware of children's difficulties with separation and build this into their programs by slowly introducing children into the classroom. For some children, nursery school is the first time to be on their own. It is, on the one hand, an obvious milestone, but on the other hand, it is just one of many steps that take your baby gradually toward independence.