

unfamiliar people does not represent such a significant threat to their attachment to their mothers. They have learned from experience that parents exist when physically absent. Repetition of events such as going to bed without the parents but waking to find them there again reinforces the reliability of such brief separations. Consequently, toddlers are able to venture away from their parents for brief periods because of the security of knowing that the parents will be there when they return. Verbal and visual reassurance from the parents gradually replaces some of the previous need to be physically close for comfort.

The separation-individuation phase of the toddler encompasses the phenomenon of **rapprochement**; as a toddler separates from the mother and begins to make sense of experiences in the environment, the child is drawn back to the mother for assistance in identifying the meaning of the experiences ([Meissner, 2009](#)). Developmentally, the term *rapprochement* means the child moves away and returns for reassurance. If the mother's response to the toddler is inappropriate, the toddler may experience insecurity and confusion.

Transitional objects, such as a favorite blanket or toy, provide security for children, especially when they are separated from their parents, dealing with a new stress, or just fatigued ([Fig. 11-2](#)). Security objects often become so important to toddlers that they refuse to let them be taken away. Such behavior is normal; there is no need to discourage this tendency. During separations, such as daycare, hospitalization, or even staying overnight with a relative, transitional objects should be provided to minimize any fear or loneliness.