



Transitional Objects: Security Blankets & Beyond

Remember the Charles Schulz character Linus and his blanket? He dragged it around wherever he went, nibbling on its corner or curling up with it when the going got tough. You may still remember your own favorite childhood blanket, doll or teddy bear, too. Security objects such as blankets are part of the emotional support system every child needs in their early years.



Your child may not choose a blanket, of course. They may prefer a soft toy instead. Chances are they'll make her choice between months eight and twelve, and keep it for years to come. When your child is tired, it will help them sleep. When they are separated from you, it will reassure them. When they are upset, it will comfort them. When they're in a strange place, it will help them feel at home.

From dependence to independence

These special comforts are called transitional objects. They help children make the emotional transition from dependence to independence. They work, in part, because they feel good: they're soft, cuddly, and nice to touch. They're also effective because of familiarity. This "love" has your child's scent on it, and it reminds them of the comfort and security of their room. It makes them feel everything is going to be OK.

Despite myths to the contrary, transitional objects are not a sign of weakness or insecurity, and there's no reason to keep your child from using one. In fact, a transitional object can be so helpful you may want to help them choose one and build it into their nighttime ritual.

Why having a duplicate is a good idea

The value of You can also make things easier by having two identical security objects. Doing this allows you to wash one while the other is being used, thus sparing your baby (and yourself) a potential emotional crisis and a bedraggled lovey.

If your baby chooses a large blanket for her security object, you can easily cut it into two. They have little sense of size and won't notice. If they've chosen a toy instead, try to find a duplicate as soon as possible. If you don't start rotating them early, your child may refuse the second one because it feels too new and foreign.

Don't worry about thumb sucking

Parents often worry that transitional objects promote thumb sucking, and in fact they sometimes do (but not always). But it's important to remember that thumb or finger sucking is a normal, natural way for young children to comfort themselves. They'll gradually give up both the transitional object and the sucking as they matures and find other ways to cope with stress.

More information

- Social and Emotional Development: 8 to 12 Months (/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Emotional-and-Social-Development-8-12-Months.aspx)

Last Updated 11/22/2021

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