

Insight To Action

Reflecting On: Separation Anxiety

Date: 30-Sep-25

What Happened?

What was the situation, experience, or decision? What did I observe, feel, or notice?

A two-year-old child in our toddler room displayed heightened distress during drop-off, clinging to their parent and crying inconsolably. Despite familiar rituals, the transition remained difficult for several weeks. I was the lead educator supporting this child.

Why Is This Significant?

Why did this stand out to me? How did it impact children, families, educators?

This experience challenged my assumptions about attachment and transition timelines. It reminded me that even familiar environments can feel overwhelming when emotional safety is compromised. It also highlighted the importance of co-regulation and consistent, responsive care.

What Did I Learn?

What insights did I gain about myself and others? What strengths or gaps became visible?

I learned that trauma-informed transitions require more than routine — they demand attuned presence, flexibility, and deep listening. I also realized that my own emotional state influences the child's regulation. The child's voice was expressed through behavior, and I needed to interpret it with compassion.

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What Could Be Improved?

What didn't work or felt misaligned? What barriers or tensions emerged?

Our team initially relied on standard strategies (e.g., distraction, redirection) without adapting to this child's unique cues. We didn't document the emotional patterns early enough to inform a tailored plan. I also noticed that our communication with the family lacked depth — we didn't ask enough about home routines or cultural practices.

What Will I Do Differently?

What actions or changes will I take? What support, resources, or collaboration might I need?

I'll co-design a transition plan with the family, including comfort items, visual cues, and predictable rituals. I'll document emotional responses using our Child Voice Caption Kit to ensure the child's experience is visible and validated. I'll also initiate reflective debriefs with the team to support collective learning.

How Does This Connect To Broader Practice?

Which frameworks, policies, or ethical principles are relevant?

This reflection aligns with the Early Years Learning Framework principles of secure, respectful relationships and responsive environments. It strengthens our trauma-informed approach and reinforces the need for emotionally intelligent documentation. It also informs our advocacy for ratio reform — moments like these require time, presence, and relational depth.