

Security Objects

Linus, a character in the Peanuts comic strip, carried his blanket everywhere. Other characters sometimes made fun of him or tried to take the blanket away. Towards the end of the comic strip's run, Linus seemed to be outgrowing his need for the blanket—just as almost all children in real life outgrow their need for an object like a blanket. Research shows that more than half of all children use a security object, generally between 2-3 years of age. Research also shows that children with security objects may be more likely to adjust to a stressful situation like child care or preschool.

The function of a security object (e.g., blanket, stuffed animal)

- Provides the child with a tangible connection to mother or other important caregiver while they are apart
- Lessens anxiety and fear of separation, relieves tension, eases transition from mother to others
- Provides the comfort of something familiar
- Gives tactile stimulation



- Helps with the important developmental step of the differentiating the child's self from his or her mother

Tips for dealing with security objects, especially in child care settings

- Welcome and accept the child's attachment to a security object.
- Show the child that you understand why the object is so important.
- Don't expect the child to share the object with other children; this is one time it's okay not to share!

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- Have more than one, if at all possible, in case of loss or need for washing (e.g., cut a favorite blanket into pieces).
- Don't use the object as a reward or punishment.
- Let the separation from the object happen naturally (which is probably what happened with Linus).

Cautions

- Be alert to when the attachment to the object keeps the child from participating in activities or making friends.
- Pay attention if there is a sudden regression to using it again that may indicate emotional distress.
- Do your best to keep the object clean so it is not a health hazard!

R E S O U R C E S

Transitional Objects. Healthy Children. <http://bit.ly/2lb5iNY>

Attachment to inanimate objects and early childcare: A twin study. Keren Fortuna, etc. <http://bit.ly/2ms99Gk>

More Than Just Teddy Bears. Colleen Goddard Psychology Today. <http://bit.ly/2msaixC>

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at PAIECMH@pakeys.org with questions or concerns.

