

What should I do if a child is overly attached to objects?



Written by: Heep Hong Society Educational Psychologist Team

A friend's five-year-old daughter has been exhibiting "object attachment" since she was two years old. No matter what she does, she must hold her old, worn-out teddy bear, almost never letting it out of her hands. The old teddy bear is her most important possession, and she must hold it tightly wherever she goes. If she finds it missing, she becomes irritable and cries incessantly. Recently, her mother threw away the teddy bear for hygiene reasons, and the girl cried all day long.

From a psychological perspective, a child's attachment to an object is a stage in their psychological development, most commonly occurring from six months to three years old, and peaking around two years old. According to child psychology, these old objects and toys are a source of psychological security for young children. The duration of a child's attachment to objects varies; some children's attachments are short-lived, while others may continue until they start elementary school. Children may become particularly attached to familiar objects during sudden events or changes in their environment, such as a sudden change in living conditions, exposure to violence, or separation from loved ones, as these objects provide a source of comfort and stability.



Conduct a "Farewell to Attachment Objects" Ceremony

Educational psychologists believe that since a child's excessive attachment to objects is caused by a lack of security, to solve this problem, one should start by increasing the child's sense of security.

Generally, guiding children to give up their attachment to objects from the age of three is the best time, as the child already has sufficient independent ability. Parents and kindergarten teachers expressing care through language and timely hugs can also help alleviate the child's feelings of insecurity.

On the other hand, parents can hold a "farewell" ceremony for the object of the child's attachment, such as a "handkerchief farewell ceremony," which involves asking the child to say goodbye to the handkerchief through verbal description or drawing. Together, they put away or bury the handkerchief, "cutting off" all possibilities that might make the child miss it, but at the same time letting the child know that the parents will keep the object safe for them to retrieve for reminiscing when they grow up.

In addition, many children become "addicted" to items like small blankets, little pillows, teddy bears, or their usual bath towels. When purchasing these items for young children, parents should consciously prepare other objects for substitution, so that the child cannot become overly attached to any particular item. If from the start there are two or three small blankets prepared, or a teddy bear family including grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, little teddy bear, and its cousins, allowing the child to alternate choices, they will not easily invest too much emotion in any one thing.

Give "Unconditional Hugs" Often

Parents should hug their children often, and pat their backs and heads. This kind of unconditional hug can suggest to the child "I am by your side, I love you, don't be afraid, I am here! It's okay to fail, you are safe!" and so on. Children who often hug with their parents will never treat a small blanket or teddy bear as their "spiritual guardian."