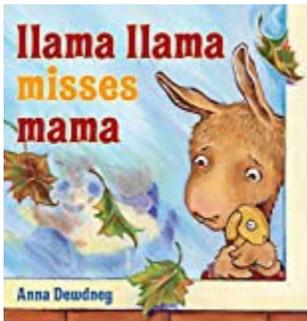


Separation Anxiety in Kids

by Dr. Carly Wilbur, UH Pediatrician and PSI Medical Director • Fall 2022

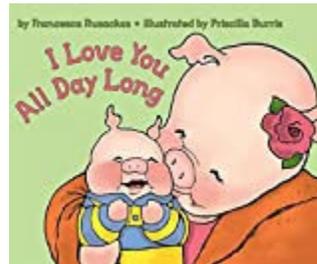
As the school year gets underway, we start the weekday routine of saying goodbye as parents leave for work and children leave for school. For some, however, this parting of ways and the time leading up to it can be paralyzingly scary. Sometimes there's an event to blame, perhaps a change in the family dynamic, like parents separating, the birth of a sibling, or a move to a new home or school. Other times, kids may be overly fearful for no obvious reason. Particularly for young children starting school for the first time, breaking away from the safety of their home and parents can be understandably anxiety-provoking. Whether we understand why or not, our job as parents and teachers is to help smooth that transition and make sure every child feels safe.

To help kids learn the language they need to communicate these fears and feel heard, and to assist us as adults to reinforce the message that even when our kids are out of sight, they're not out of mind, here are a few children's books that might help ease the separation.



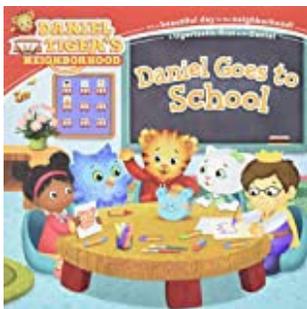
LLAMA LLAMA MISSES MAMA
(Anna Dewdney)

Excellent rhymes help this book skip along while Little Llama experiences first-day jitters at his new school.



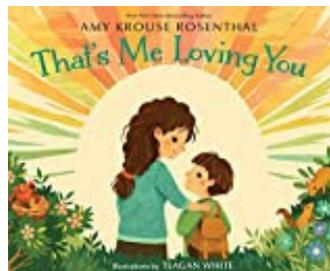
I LOVE YOU ALL DAY LONG
(Francesca Rusackas)

Owen worries about separating from his mom, but she reassures him that he's in her thoughts even when they're not together.



DANIEL GOES TO SCHOOL
(Becky Friedman)

Not just for established Daniel Tiger fans, this book explains that the time away from each other is just temporary. There is a Daniel Tiger episode on the topic as well, that includes a "Grown-Ups Come Back" song.

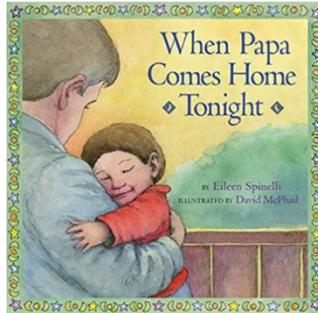
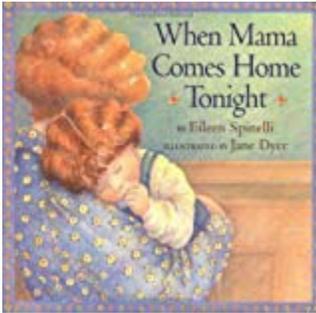


THAT'S ME LOVING YOU
(Amy Krouse Rosenthal)

From a prolific author of books for children and adults, this story reminds the child that they can recognize their parent's love in everything around them.

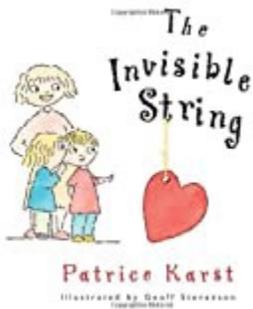
(See more on page 2.)

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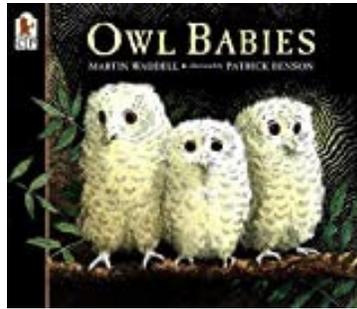
**WHEN MAMA COMES HOME TONIGHT
and
WHEN PAPA COMES HOME TONIGHT**
(Eileen Spinelli)

Instead of highlighting the separation, this book focuses on all the things we can look forward to once we're reunited after our day apart.



THE INVISIBLE STRING
(Patrice Karst)

This book covers not only separating for school or work, but also other life circumstances that keep us apart when we'd prefer to be together.



OWL BABIES
(Martin Waddell)

When three owlets wake up overnight to discover their mother is missing, they worry. Children will relate to the little owls' unease and their attempts to be brave.

We've all been there, rushing through the morning, praying to avoid a loud, ugly scene at the bus stop or at daycare drop-off. Any opportunity to reassure our children that our love is enduring, despite distance, is a chance to make them feel loved and valued, and to strengthen our relationship with them. Allowing them to feel safe also affords us a smoother transition and a more productive morning routine. And starting out on a positive note often sets the tone for the rest of the day.

Adequate preparation and messaging in anticipation of separating can make the morning goodbyes more pleasant for everyone involved.

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