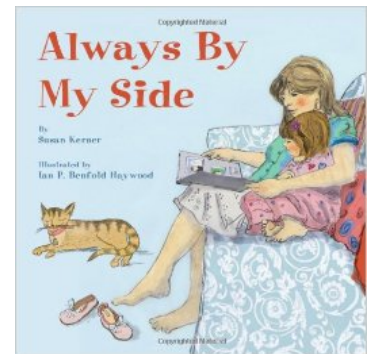


# Always By My Side

By Susan Kerner

*Always By My Side* addresses the loss of a father and provides a child with comfort as they cope with the loss. The book shares the profound message that even though a father may not be physically present, his love for his child stays forever. Fathers may not be present due to work, deployment, divorce, or even death, but the special bond they have with their family can be seen throughout daily moments. A companion book, *Mama's Right Here*, also written by Susan Kerner, shares a mother's ever-present love.



## Discussion and Questions:

- This book will require adults to be very considerate of the audience. If reading to a whole group, ensure the timing is appropriate. If a child in the group has recently lost a loved one or are experiencing a great loss of any kind, ensure that the child and their caregivers are comfortable with the story being shared at school. While the book offers great coping strategies for dealing with loss, it is important to be sensitive to the audience and make sure that they are prepared to address the loss.
- Discuss with children common feelings people have when they lose a loved one. Give an example of a time when you experienced a loss and explain how you felt.
- Talk about and look at the different emotions in the book. Allow children to act them out. How can they tell what the person is feeling? Talk about the situation. Talk about other situations that may cause those feelings.
- Memories and Reminders
  - Discuss what a memory or reminder is (i.e., It is the way items, places, sounds, etc. can remind us of our loved one), and how memories/reminders might make people feel. Be prepared to discuss possible negative memories/reminders. Give examples and/or point out examples in the book.
  - Talk about the different ways in which the characters in the book remember their dad.
  - Relate how individuals remember their loved ones with how the characters in the story remember the father. Use the objects collected in the Show and Tell section below, to compare to the different pages in the story as it is read.

## Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Calming Bottles**
  - Supplies: water bottle, clear glue, clear hand soap, a variety of glitter, food coloring, water, duct tape
    - Water bottles made of a heavier plastic, such as those used for sports or energy drinks, work best.
    - Optional: \*\*\* Sequins, beads, shells, plastic jewels, etc. can also be added. This can add different sizes, shapes, and colors to the bottle. I would refrain from using anything with metal that may rust\*\*\*
  - Remove the lid and any labels from the container. Fill the container half way with the clear hand soap. Then add the clear glue and bring the level in the bottle to  $\frac{3}{4}$ . (This would be  $\frac{1}{4}$  mix of clear glue)
  - Add any glitter, food coloring, and any additional items to the bottle. Fill the remainder of the bottle with warm water.
  - After creating the calming bottle, seal the lid with hot glue or secure duct tape.

- **Songs**

- If You're Happy and You Know it
  - Sing the song to the common tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It." To extend the song, continue with additional emotions and feelings. Make up additional verses with other feelings; such as: If you're angry and you know it, stomp your feet; If you're scared and you know it, hide your eyes.
    - If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.
    - If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.
    - If you're happy and you know it, your face will surely show it.
    - If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.
- I Have A Happy Face
  - Sing the song to the common tune of "I'm A Little Teapot." Children can sing the song and make faces that represent the emotion about which they are singing.
    - I have a happy face,  
Just watch me grin.  
I have a great big smile  
From my forehead to my chin.  
When I'm upset  
And things are bad,  
Then my happy face  
Turns to sad.
  - These songs and accompanying ideas from Jean Warren can be found at <https://bit.ly/2siGjaR>
  - Using a feelings chart during this activity may be helpful for children to identify new emotions for the different verses.

Ages 3 to 5:

- **Using Emotion Face Cards**
  - There are a variety of different ways to use emotion cards to help children identify feelings and begin to consider the feelings of others. For these examples use a stack of cards with different emotion faces represented on each one. See the link below for information on how to make cards for this activity.
    - Hold the stack of cards face down and flip them over one at a time to name each emotion.
    - Put the cards face down on the floor or table in rows (as if playing a traditional matching game) and ask the child to flip them over one by one as they name the emotions.
    - Place a selection of cards on the table face up. It may be good to experiment with 3 at first, and eventually display up to 10 at a time. Name one of the emotions and ask the child to identify which card was described.
    - Show the child a card at random and ask them to mimic the face pictured, then name the emotion together.
    - Additional ideas for using emotion face cards can be found at <https://bit.ly/2yox5gl>
- **How I Feel: A Coloring Book for Grieving Children by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.**
  - This is a great book to help children begin talking about grief and emotions. Used primarily as a coloring book, it is non-threatening and allows children to ease into discussing hard feelings.
  - As a coloring book, the pages help children identify and label feelings. Several pages have questions that ask a child to identify why they may feel certain emotions ("Sometimes I feel scared because . . ."). The book has pictures of different young children who have lost someone and identifies different



emotions they are feeling. These feelings range from impassive, scared, mad/angry, relief, hurt, sad, unable to control emotions, feeling different from other kids, and feeling alone. The book then helps children feel comfortable expressing their emotions and talking about the person who died. It encourages them to talk about how they feel, share their true feelings, not keep emotions inside, and reminds them that it is okay to cry and also that it is okay to be happy, laugh, and play.

- This book can be purchased individually or in sets at <https://bit.ly/2Pox8Qz>