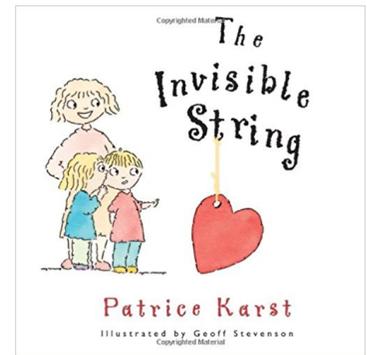


The Invisible String

By Patrice Karst

Written to address children's fear of being apart from loved ones, *The Invisible String* delivers a helpful message that though people may be separated from the ones they care for, whether through distance or even death, love is the unending connection that binds them. *The Invisible String* is a great book for parents and children who are looking for reassurance and reaffirmation of the transcendent power of love, to bind, connect, and comfort through times of separation.



Discussion and Questions:

- Discuss how the characters are feeling in the book and why they may feel that way. Look at the expressions on the character's faces, their gestures or posture for clues.
- Talk about events that happen in the book. For example, when it is lightening and thundering, discuss how the child feels when this happens. Encourage them to make a face to match how they might feel. In a group setting, encourage children to look at one another and describe what they see.
- Discuss things people might find comforting. Provide time for children to find something that is comforting. Then discuss the item the child found, similar to show and tell.
- The idea of an invisible string may be confusing for some children. Spend time explaining and defining this concept. Then invite children to consider to whom they might have an invisible string attached. Provide examples for children if needed.
- Ask children what they think their loved ones might say back to them if they could talk through the invisible string. Ask children to share how they might respond.

Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Your Invisible Strings**
 - Have older children draw a picture of themselves with their caregiver. Glue string onto the paper to connect them to their caregiver. This could also be done with photos.
 - Younger children can assist in a hand-over-hand fashion with the gluing of string to connect pictures of them and their caregiver. This can also be a tactile or sensory activity for a young child who may be too young to understand the concept of the string itself.
- **Make a Web**
 - Use self-portraits or pictures of each individual child in a classroom to make a web to show that everyone in the class is connected. Images should be placed in a circle on a large piece of paper or bulletin board. Children can glue or pin one end of a string on their picture and then connect the other end to a classmate. Ensure all children end up connected. The adults in the class should also be included in the web. This activity can be done in preschool classrooms, childcare settings, or with families.
- **Songs**
 - The Itsy-Bitsy Spider can be adapted as follows and hand motions could be created.
The itsy-bitsy spider climbed up an invisible string.
Up he was climbing to all the ones he loved.
When he reached them, he gave them all a hug.
And the spider and his loved ones were back together again.

- **Crawling Across the Invisible String**

- After reading the story, use yarn to create a course for the child to crawl or walk along.
- Recordings or images of the family member who is away, or a comforting item that is associated with the absent family member can be used as goals to reach along the way. Be sure that these items are somehow connected to the string pathway.
- An additional variation could use video chat with the family member who is away, if available. Depending on the ability of the child, they can crawl or walk from area to area to interact with the person in the video.
- This same activity can be used with a child facing the loss of a family member. If video or voice recording are not available, ensure that enough other associated items can be used.

Ages 3 to 5:

- **Create a Phone**

- A pretend phone can be created using two clean plastic cups or tin cans that are connected by a piece of string. For additional directions on making a pretend phone, see <https://bit.ly/2NuG8Ss>. When the phone has been created children and family members can practice speaking and listening to one another.

- **Kinesthetic Classroom Web**

- While sitting in a circle (or facing one another) discuss ways in which the individuals are all connected. Ask children to think of kind words they might share with those in the circle (or whom they are facing) and generate a list together.
- If done in a group, have one child hold onto the loose end of a string on a ball of yarn. The child should throw the ball of yarn to another student, allowing the string to begin unraveling. The child who threw the ball should make a kind statement to (or about) the person who caught it. Repeat this process until all individuals in the circle are holding a portion of the string. The ball of yarn serves to remind children of the invisible string.

- **Messages Across the String**

- Use a string on a map and pictures to show the general location of the child's caregiver and the location of the child. Emphasize the connection between the two despite distance.
- The child can write messages or draw pictures they wish to send across the string. These messages can be clipped to the string. Messages can also be taken down and mailed to the absent caregiver.
- For children whose loved one has died, consider using a map and clouds, taking care to discuss this with the child's surviving caregiver to ensure this would not intrude upon their personal beliefs.

- **String Bracelets**

- Prior to the departure of the caregiver, create matching bracelets with embroidery string that both the child and caregiver will wear throughout. Discuss ways the item might help them remember one another while they are apart.
- This activity should be discussed with the military caregiver to ensure the necklace or bracelet being made will be allowable per military regulations regarding jewelry.

- **Meeting Sensory Needs**

- *The Invisible String* can be adapted to include sensory stimulation by gathering small items a child can feel related to specific pages as they are read.
- For example, on the first page, the characters are sleeping. A small pillow or blanket can be provided for the child to interact with while this page is read.
- Other items related to the content of the book can be gathered to make this a rewarding sensory experience for children: dried glue drops can be rain drops on page two, a white piece of clear fishing line can be the invisible string a child can feel, etc.