



The Invisible String - Book Guide

Social Emotional Learning – Connection, Comfort, & Loss



Learning about connection at an early age is a great way to build resilience for children. As humans, we are deeply wired to connect and fostering those safe and supportive relationships with trustworthy individuals helps children to feel secure and loved. As Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs taught us 70+ years ago, safety and love are two basic needs we can help children to meet. Use this wonderful children's book to introduce the importance of connection and help children to understand that connection and love are still present even if we are separated from the loved one. Great for use with kiddos who are struggling with separation anxiety, big changes, grief/loss of a loved one, loved ones moving away, self-soothing, or any other reason for separation.

1. **Read Aloud.** Read *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst together. Stop every few pages to point out the illustrations and talk about how the children might be feeling. **Tip – If you do not have the book at home you can find the book on several “Read Alouds” on YouTube.
2. **Talk about it.** As you read the book, instruct the listeners to think about the invisible string and what it is like for the children. You can stop after each page to discuss or wait until the end and go through all of them together. Help them understand that more than just connection, the the invisible string brings comfort. Emphasize the quote “Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it with your heart and know that you are always connected to everyone you love.” *The Invisible String* is also a great parallel for faith beliefs and explaining our connection to God.
3. **Discussion & Reflection.**
 - *Who all does your invisible string connects you to?*
 - *How do you know when you are connected to someone you love?*
 - *Where all can the invisible string reach?*
 - *Has there been a time when you just really wanted to be with your loved one?*
 - *Are there any problems the kids in the story had that you could relate to?*
 - *“Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it with your heart” – What does it feel like in your body when you feel loved? Where do you notice that feeling?*
 - *What is a time that you felt alone? Who did you want to connect with in that moment? What made it hard to reach out to someone else?*
 - *Whose heart is farthest from you now? Whose heart is closest?*
 - *Which connections feel the strongest? Which connections feel the weakest?*
 - *Is there someone you wish was connected to your heart who is not? If so, who would that be?*



Thrive Therapy Houston, PLLC

www.thrivetherapyhouston.com | (832) 974-0153 | info@thrivetherapyhouston.com

4. **Paper Doll Chain Connection Activity.** One of my all time favorite connection activities to do with *The Invisible String* is making paper doll chains (see instructions below). As children create their paper chains, have them identify their main support people. Each paper doll will become one of those support people, with the child being the center doll on their own chain. I like to encourage kiddos to decorate the paper dolls to match the person they represent (it brings some laughs). As they create their chains, talk about the ways each person supports them and shows their love.

5. **Not-So-Invisible String Activity.** Another great activity is to find some string, yarn, or thin rope and turn them into bracelets. As you do this talk about the invisible string that connects you both and how this string is meant to be a reminder of that connection when you are apart. It may help to work together to braid or twist the rope somehow so that it is interconnected. Often it is helpful for the adult to also wear the other reminder bracelet to remind them that the connection and missing is mutual. This activity is particularly helpful for anxiety in school aged children and provides them with a concrete representation of an abstract idea. Help your child to talk through examples of different scenarios when the bracelet may be helpful, like getting worried at school, etc.

6. **Drawing Activity.** Sometimes it is a little easier to keep it simple. Have the kids draw a picture of their invisible string connecting all of their loved ones. Maybe have them draw a large heart on the page and draw (or write the names for) the people connected inside their heart. As you figure out who is connected in your heart by your invisible string, don't forget to include pets! (Tip – Although it may feel tempting to prompt or suggest people for your child to add, try to resist. We want to reinforce their sense of agency and pick people that FEEL connected. Typically, if they forget someone they will often run back later to add them later.)



Paper Doll Chain Activity

Instructions to Make Chain:

1. Cut a strip of paper as long as you like your chain. The longer the strip, the more dolls you will end up with. (Many people like to fold printer paper “hot dog” style so it is long and a reasonable height for the chain (about 4 inches tall). You can make as many as needed.)
2. Fold the strip of paper accordion style, making each panel the same width (about 1 or 2 inches wide)
3. Draw the doll outline on the front panel before you cut it out (it will only be half of the body so the other half will be on the other side of the fold). You can follow the example or you can freestyle the outline.
4. Cut around the figure but don't cut along the folds where the parts of the body touch.
5. Unfold the chain of dolls and then decorate!

