

Our Super Pinky Promise Toolkit

Gentle activities for children and grown-ups to practice calm, connection, and brave goodbyes



OUR PROMISE We can miss someone, feel a big feeling, and still take one brave step at a time.

Welcome Grown Up

You do not have to make every hard feeling disappear

Being apart from a parent, caregiver, sibling, or another loved one can feel enormous to a young child. Tears, clinging, tummy aches, repeated questions, anger, or sudden silliness may all be ways of saying, “I need help feeling safe while we are apart.”

Practice these messages together

- Your feelings make sense.
- Your body can learn ways to feel calmer.
- The people who love you can be apart and remain connected.

TRY THIS LANGUAGE “You wish I could stay. Goodbyes are hard today. I believe you can do this, and I will come back after lunch.”

How to use this toolkit

- Practice on calm days, not only during a difficult goodbye.
- Let your child choose which tools feel helpful.
- Praise effort: trying, asking for help, breathing, entering the room, or recovering after tears.
- Repeat activities. Familiarity is part of what makes them work.

This guide is educational and is not a substitute for individualized medical or mental-health care.

1 Big Feelings Are Welcome

Grown-up page Connect before you coach

When a child's body feels alarmed, explanations alone may not help right away. Begin with connection: move close, soften your voice, and describe what you notice without judgment.

The four step FEEL response

- Find the feeling. "Your eyes have tears and your hands are holding tight."
- Echo the wish. "You really wish I could stay."
- Express confidence. "This is hard, and you can get through it with Mrs. C."
- Link to the plan. "Pinky promise, hug, wave - and I return after snack."



AVOID "There's nothing to worry about," "Big kids don't cry," or asking "Are you okay?" again and again. These responses can unintentionally tell children that their feelings are wrong or dangerous.

Remember

Validation does not mean changing the boundary. You can warmly accept the feeling while calmly continuing with the planned separation.

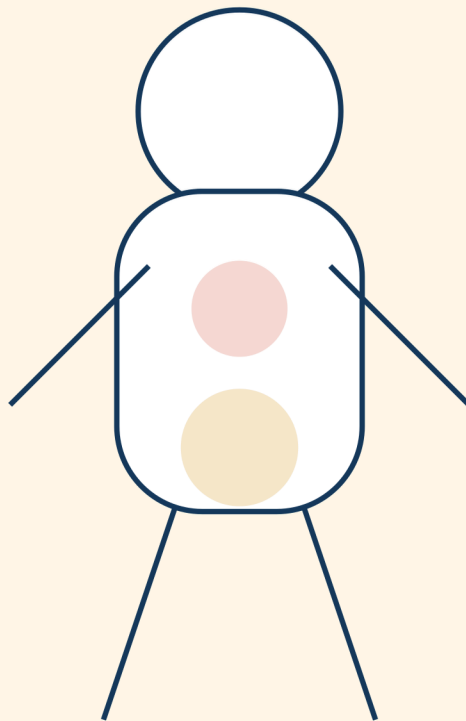
Where Does My Worry Show Up

Child activity Notice it Name it Choose support

Sometimes worry whispers. Sometimes it ROARS! Color the places where you feel worry in your body.

My worry might feel like

- butterflies or an ache in my tummy
- a fast-beating heart
- tight shoulders or squeezed hands
- wiggly legs
- tears, anger, or wanting to hide



My feeling is called

When I feel it I want my grown-up to

2 Practice Being Apart

Grown-up page Build bravery in small repeatable steps

Bravery grows through manageable practice. Begin with a brief separation your child can handle with support. Return when you said you would, and repeat the step until it feels familiar before moving to a longer one.

Build a brave steps ladder

- Play independently while the grown-up stays nearby.
- Grown-up moves to another room for one minute.
- Stay with a trusted person for five to ten minutes.
- Practice the school goodbye when there is no time pressure.
- Complete the real goodbye using the same ritual.



KEEP IT DOABLE If a step feels overwhelming, make it smaller. The goal is practice, not forcing a child through panic or eliminating every tear.

After every reunion

Say what happened: “I left, you stayed with Grandpa, and I came back. You got through our time apart and practiced a brave step.”

My Brave Steps Ladder

Child activity Choose one small step at a time

Draw or write one practice step on each star. Color a star every time you practice - even if you cried or needed help.



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5

REMEMBER Brave does not mean “never scared.” Brave means trying while a feeling is with you.

3 Create Your Goodbye Plan

Grown-up page Short loving and predictable

Long, uncertain goodbyes can keep the alarm going. Create one warm ritual, practice it together, and use it consistently. Say goodbye before leaving, and avoid returning for a second goodbye after you go.

The five part pinky goodbye

- Connect. Get close and give your full attention.
- Name the return. Use a point in the routine your child understands.
- Make the promise. Pinkies, hand on heart, or your family phrase.
- Complete the ritual. One hug, one kiss, one wave.
- Leave calmly. Let the trusted adult begin the next activity.



SAMPLE SCRIPT “You wish I could stay. Mrs. C will help you. I will return after rest time. Hand on heart, pinky promise, hug, wave - then I go.”

Coordinate with the caregiver

Agree on who will greet your child, what activity begins immediately, and how updates will be handled so the child receives one steady message.

Our Pinky Promise Goodbye

Family activity Design your own ritual

Choose one from each row or invent your own. Practice the whole goodbye when everyone is calm.

1 Our connection

☐ One hug

☐ Two kisses

☐ Hand on heart

2 Our special signal

☐ Pinkies

☐ Secret wave

☐ Silly handshake

3 My first activity

☐ Greet my helper

☐ Draw

☐ Build

☐ Read

4 Our promise words

"I will come back _____."

OUR

COMPLETE

GOODBYE

4 Calm My Body

Grown-up page Practice regulation before the hard moment

Calming tools work best when they are familiar. Practice for a minute during playtime, bedtime, or story time. During distress, offer one tool instead of many choices.

Three simple tools

- Flower and candle. Smell the flower slowly; blow out the candle gently. Repeat three times without forcing an extra-deep breath.
- Turtle squeeze. Gently tighten hands, shoulders, and toes for three counts without holding the breath; then soften.
- Five senses. Name five you see, four you feel, three you hear, two you smell, and one you taste. Use three-two-one for younger children.



CO REGULATE FIRST Sit nearby, lower your voice, and do the tool yourself. A child may join after watching. Refusing a tool is not misbehavior.

Keep the goal realistic

A coping tool may make a feeling smaller or help a child recover sooner. It does not need to erase the feeling to be useful.

Build My Calm Down Kit

Child activity Choose what helps your body

Circle or draw three things you want in your kit.

- ☐ family photo or connection card
- ☐ small comfort object
- ☐ breathing flower card
- ☐ paper and crayons
- ☐ soft fabric square
- ☐ trusted people card
- ☐ something else



When my body feels worried I can

- ☐ Breathe
- ☐ Squeeze and soften
- ☐ Notice my senses
- ☐ Hold my comfort object
- ☐ Ask _____ for help

MY CALMING PHRASE “This feeling is big, and I can take care of my body.”

5 My Trusted People

Grown-up page Safety can have more than one face

Children cope more confidently when they know exactly who will help them while you are away. Name those people, describe what they can do, and let the child practice asking for support.

Make helpers concrete

- Use names and pictures: “Mrs. C is your classroom helper.”
- Explain actions: “She can sit with you, help with your zipper, or call me if you are sick.”
- Practice: “I miss my grown-up. Can you stay near me?”
- Tell the helper which routines and calming tools are familiar.



CONNECTION OBJECT A family photo, paper heart, matching bracelet, or safe, age-appropriate comfort object can remind a child of connection. Check what the setting allows.

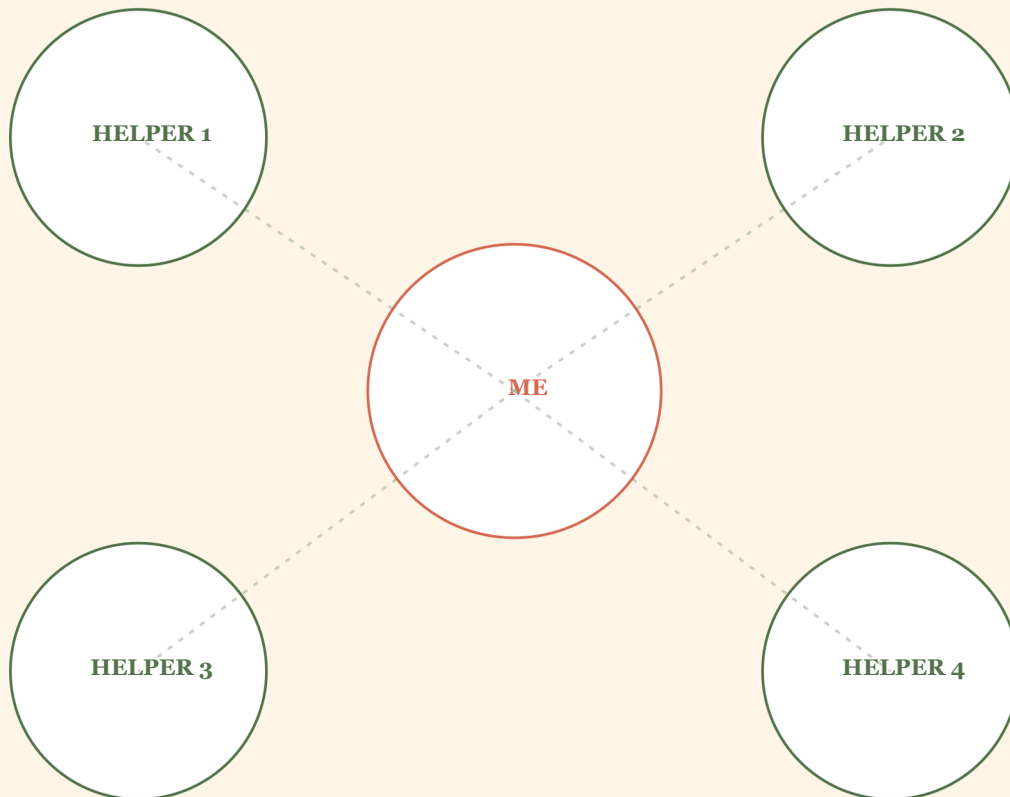
Safety note

Teach that trusted adults listen, respect body-safety rules, and help children contact their caregiver when something is wrong.

My People Map

Child activity Draw the people who help you

Put yourself in the heart. Draw or write one trusted person in each circle.



Words I can use

- “I miss my grown-up.”
- “Can you stay near me?”
- “Will you breathe with me?”
- “I need help with _____.”

6 Notice Brave Progress

Grown-up page Praise effort recovery and help seeking

A successful separation is not defined by a tear-free goodbye. Notice the skills your child is building before, during, and after the hard moment.

What counts as progress

- Naming a feeling or body signal
- Completing one part of the goodbye plan
- Accepting comfort from a trusted adult
- Using or watching a calming tool
- Joining an activity after crying Recovering a little sooner
- Trying again the next day



PRAISE SPECIFICALLY Instead of “Good job being brave,” try: “You had tears and still walked to Mrs. C. You asked her to hold your hand. That was a brave step.”

Do not make love the prize

Offer warmth and reunion regardless of how the separation went. Stickers can mark practice, but connection should never depend on performance.

My Brave Heart Garden

Child activity Every practice helps something grow

Color one flower after each practice. You may color a flower even if you cried, felt angry, or needed lots of help.



Today I practiced

☐ Saying goodbye

☐ Asking for help

☐ Calming my body

☐ Joining an activity

☐ Coming back together

☐ Trying again

One thing I want to remember

I AM GROWING I can have a big feeling and take a brave step.

When More Support May Help

Strong feelings deserve support not shame

Separation worries are common, especially during changes and new routines. Consider speaking with your child's pediatrician, school support team, or a qualified child mental-health professional when the distress:

- is intense, persistent, or getting worse
- continues long after the separation or persists for more than a few weeks
- interferes with school, sleep, eating, friendships, or family life
- causes frequent physical complaints such as stomachaches or headaches
- leads to repeated school refusal, panic, or inability to participate
- begins after a frightening event, loss, or major family change

START WITH CURIOSITY School refusal or sudden distress can have many causes, including bullying, learning challenges, sensory needs, illness, family stress, or anxiety. Look for the reason rather than treating the behavior as defiance.

Helpful information to share

Note when the anxiety happens, how long it lasts, body complaints, sleep changes, what helps, and what teachers or caregivers observe.

If you are worried about your child's immediate safety, contact local emergency services or an appropriate crisis service in your country.

Super Pinky Promise Certificate

For practicing brave separations and caring for big feelings

This certificate belongs to

I practiced staying connected, asking trusted people for help, calming my body, and taking brave steps - even when my feelings were big.



Date

Grown-up

OUR PROMISE Growing independently does not mean growing apart.

Companion to My Brother Is Going to Kindergarten • Louiza Amouri

Thank you

For the grown-up: Keep this toolkit available and return to whichever page your child needs. Progress is rarely perfectly straight. Connection, consistency, and practice matter more than perfection.

Evidence informed foundations

Content is informed by parent guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics at [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the UK National Health Service. Sources checked September 2026. Final publication should receive review by a licensed pediatric mental-health professional.

Companion to My Brother Is Going to Kindergarten • Louiza Amouri