

Sparrow

by Dorinda Silver Williams

Available in two versions (Mama and Papa), this book helps very young children learn to cope when their caregiver is physically or emotionally injured. Children can find comfort in the message of the story for even when a caregiver goes away and comes back acting or looking different, they still love their child.



Discussion and Questions:

- Ask the child to point to the mama/papa bird and then to Sparrow. Use the pictures of the birds to label and talk about body parts.
 - Discuss eyes, beak, and wings.
 - Ask the child if they have the same body parts, and if not what they have instead. Encourage the child to point to their own body parts.
 - Model answer to the questions for the child if they have difficulty responding.
- Point to and label objects in the pictures (i.e., leaves, map, house, stars, moon, clouds).
- Consider using different voices for each character in the story (i.e., a higher voice for Sparrow, a deeper voice for Papa).

Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Dramatic Play Animals**
 - Gather caregivers and other family members to play with the child.
 - If possible bring items or use toys related to a trip to the doctor (i.e., stethoscope, thermometer, bandages, gauze wrap, etc.).
 - Explain the word injured and list examples in ways that are age-appropriate. (i.e., remind the child of a time they fell off their bike or someone they know got hurt, etc.).
 - Talk about the injuries that occurred in *Sparrow*. Show the child the pictures of the injured beak and wing. For young children, consider pointing to “ouchies” in the book and labeling them as an “ouchie.”
 - For older children, ask them if they have ever been injured or if they know someone who has been hurt before. Explain that everyone is going to help an injured stuffed animal get better.
 - Allow a caregiver or the child to be the “doctor.”
 - Create a doctor’s office area where injured stuffed animals can wait to see the doctor.
 - Explain to the child that they have to tell the doctor how their stuffed animal got hurt, and what part of the animal hurts.
 - Help them pick an area if they are having difficulty.
 - If the child is nonverbal, ask them to point to the injured area. For younger children, encourage the caregiver to narrate the activity and model with the child.
 - Each person can take their stuffed animal to the doctor and point out where they are injured, and the doctor will use the tools to fix them.
- **Songs**
 - Encourage families to learn and sing simple songs with their child that express love and affection. There are many simple songs available on YouTube or at a local library. Some can be found at the links below:
 - Barney Theme Song (<https://youtu.be/ix9wpsIKwBE>)

- Skinnamarink by Sharon, Lois, and Bram (<https://youtu.be/qPdV8jXAJUQ>)
- If You Love Me and You Know It by The Kiboomers (https://youtu.be/mLdfVgWJ_yk)
- Love Grows One by One by Mrs. McPuppet (<https://youtu.be/2MMAkzLDzUU>)

Ages 3 to 5:

- **Check!**

- Invite the military caregiver and child to create a checklist like the one in the story.
- Brainstorm with the caregiver and child and pick a daily routine for which they can make a checklist (i.e., before school/childcare, nap time, bedtime, etc.).
- When they have chosen the routine, talk about what kinds of things can be included on the checklist to do related to the routine. Then create a list.
 - For example, if the routine is bedtime, the checklist may include brushing teeth, putting on pajamas, reading a bedtime story, and getting a drink of water.
- After the checklist is made, the family can use it during the specific daily routine. The caregiver can read off the checklist to make sure each item is completed. The child can say, "Check!" when an item is completed just like the characters in the story. Digital photos or drawings made by the child can accompany each step in the checklist to help the child become more independent.
- Hang the checklist in a place where it can be referred to as needed (i.e., child's bedroom, the fridge, a mirror in the bathroom).
- Encourage other family members to participate in the routine checklist, especially when a deployment is approaching. Explain to the child that while the military caregiver is away, other family members can help with the activity.
- Encourage the military caregiver to continue the routine over the phone or during video chats or ask about it when they are able to communicate with the child.

- **Map Activity**

- Invite the military caregiver and the child to create a map like the one in *Sparrow* so the military caregiver will know how to get back home.
- If the military caregiver is already deployed, this activity can be completed with the caregiver at home and then mailed to the military caregiver.
- Use a piece of white or colored construction paper or card stock to make the map. The map can be as detailed or simple as the child and the family want or feel comfortable making it.
- The map should include a minimum of the family's home and the general location of deployment. Other locations to include might be: the child's school, a park, the grocery store, and a relative's home. The goal is to create a map that will comfort the child and assure them that their caregiver will know how to get back home.
- Connect the two locations on the map with a line or piece of string. The child can draw places on the map using markers, colored pencils, or crayons. Stickers, pictures from magazines, and digital photos also can be added. Other details to include based on the child's age and interest level might be oceans, mountains, and other land forms between the two locations.
- When the map is finished, have the family explain to the child that the map will help the military caregiver get back home.
- It may be helpful to keep a copy of the map by taking a picture of the map and having it printed. Hang the map in a location the child can see or give it to them to keep in a special place.