

When Goodbye Feels Too Big

Printable Toolkit for Ages 2–5

Use these pages with the book. Choose one situation, observe what is happening, and try one bridge at a time. Every goodbye does not need to look calm. What matters is helping your child move through the transition with a clear plan.

Quick start at the next goodbye

1. Get close and name what you see: *You are having a hard time saying goodbye.*
2. Choose one bridge: a familiar adult, first activity, visual cue, comfort object, or body-based option.
3. Give one concrete return cue: *I will come back after snack.*
4. Keep the goodbye short and honest: one hug, one sentence, and a clear handoff.
5. Let the receiving adult guide your child toward the first small activity.

A quick age reminder

Age 2: use a concrete object, a short phrase, and physical help to move.

Ages 3–4: invite a simple choice between two bridges or two first activities.

Age 5: offer more explanation, but still reduce language when the body is overwhelmed.

Pattern Snapshot

Use this page after one real separation. Write what happened before, during, and after. You are looking for a working hypothesis, not a permanent label.

Situation _____

What happened before?

What did my child do or say?

What happened after the goodbye?

What helped my child recover?

Pattern I want to watch

☐ Close-Contact

☐ Big-Feeling

☐ Change-Sensitive

☐ Slow-to-Say-Goodbye

☐ Quiet-Worry

☐ Fresh-Start

What I will try next

Choose One Bridge

Choose one support that fits the pattern. More support is not always better support. Try one change, then observe what your child does.

Connection and predictability

- ☐ A familiar adult will receive my child.
- ☐ My child will know the first small activity.
- ☐ We will use a visual cue or connection object.
- ☐ We will use one short goodbye sentence.

Activity and environment

- ☐ We will make the first step smaller.
- ☐ We will choose a quieter entrance or activity.
- ☐ A familiar toy, puzzle, or book will be ready.
- ☐ We will practice when my child is rested and fed.

Body-based options

- ☐ Push the wall together, then walk to the next step.
- ☐ Carry a small bag or object to the receiving adult.
- ☐ Take a slow walk or use a steady rhythm before the handoff.
- ☐ Offer a firm hand squeeze only if my child accepts it.

Our bridge for the next separation

Goodbye Script Cards

Cut along the outside edge or keep this page near the door. The script is for the adult to use consistently. Your child does not need to repeat it.

Goodbye Script Card 1

Feeling: You feel _____

Plan: First _____

Return cue: I will come back _____

Handoff: _____ is staying with you. _____

One hug. One sentence. A clear handoff.

Goodbye Script Card 2

Feeling: You feel _____

Plan: First _____

Return cue: I will come back _____

Handoff: _____ is staying with you. _____

One hug. One sentence. A clear handoff.

Caregiver Handoff Sheet

Share this page with a teacher, grandparent, babysitter, or other trusted adult. Keep the plan short enough to use during a real goodbye.

Child name _____

Date _____

Receiving adult _____

Situation _____

Our short goodbye sentence

The first activity or place to move toward

What to do if distress rises

What to tell the parent after the goodbye

Please notice recovery, not only crying.

What Progress Will Look Like

Choose an observable sign. Your child can make progress while still crying, asking questions, or needing a familiar object.

- ☐ My child accepts the receiving adult's help.
- ☐ My child moves toward the first activity.
- ☐ My child asks for the plan instead of repeating the same question endlessly.
- ☐ My child begins to recover sooner or with less adult support.
- ☐ My child returns to play, eating, sleep, or connection after the separation.

We will look for

After the goodbye — what did my child do after I left?

What helped recovery?

Do not use these as the only measure of success

Whether your child cried, how quickly you left, whether your child looked cheerful, or whether the plan happened perfectly.

Fourteen-Day Practice Calendar

Use this as a flexible record, not a deadline. Stay with one manageable step for as long as your child needs. Change the plan when your observations give you a reason to change it.

DAY	SITUATION	BRIDGE	WHAT HAPPENED / NEXT STEP
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

Review at the end of this week — what repeated pattern did I notice?

What should stay the same next time?

Fourteen-Day Practice Calendar

Use this as a flexible record, not a deadline. Stay with one manageable step for as long as your child needs. Change the plan when your observations give you a reason to change it.

DAY	SITUATION	BRIDGE	WHAT HAPPENED / NEXT STEP
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Review at the end of this week — what repeated pattern did I notice?

What should stay the same next time?
