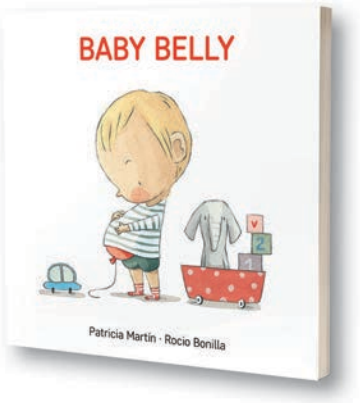
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Share Children's Books to Ease Young Children's Transitions



You can purchase *Baby Belly* or *Sleepy Time* with 20% off and free domestic shipping here or here. Enter code MPKIDS20 at checkout.

When you are a little kid, everything is new. The unknown can be unsettling, making changes and transitions challenging. As the parent of a toddler or preschooler, helping your child feel safe and confident involves providing consistency and routine when you can, and helping your child understand upcoming events and changes in their lives.

Sharing a book is a great way to help your toddler or preschooler calm the anxiety or tension that comes with change or transitions. Wordless books are especially good for this age group. By talking about the pictures with your child, you can create a story together that your child can relate to.

Sleepy Time and *Baby Belly* by Patricia Martin are wordless board books that are perfect for toddlers and preschoolers. They explore two common experiences for young children: bedtime and the impending arrival of a new sibling.

Getting ready for bed can be a soothing routine, but it can be stressful, too. Everyone is tired at the end of the day, sometimes making the steps more challenging. By keeping to a routine, your little one knows what to expect and can feel some control over the situation. Reading *Sleepy Time* with your child provides you and your child the opportunity to talk about your family's own bedtime routine, and can set the stage for your child's bedtime process.

Baby Belly chronicles a young child's observation that his mom's tummy is getting bigger and bigger. The child's curious and sometimes skeptical expression conveys his wonder and speculation about the changes in his mom and his life. Highlighting Mom's gradually growing tummy, the pictures show the family preparing for and welcoming a new baby. Talking about this process, and how the child and mom might be feeling, by reading *Baby Belly* is an excellent way to introduce a young child to the idea of a new sibling.

Don't be thrown by wordless books. They provide you with the freedom to tailor the story to your child's experiences, interests, and attention span. By talking about the pictures with your child, and asking questions and listening to your child's answers, you can personalize the story!

Here are some tips to make your wordless book experience successful:

- **Talk about the pictures.** Describe what is happening in the pictures. Ask your child what they see.
- **Make connections to your child's experiences.** Point out similarities: "Look! He has a toy elephant too!" "What kinds of toys do you like to play with in the bathtub?"
- **Explore feelings.** Encourage your child to look carefully at the character's expressions and the pictures in general. Ask your child how she thinks a character feels. Name different feelings.
- **Read it again.** Repetition is soothing and builds familiarity and vocabulary.
- **Let your child read the story.** After you've shared a wordless book a few times with your child, ask your child to read it to you. Let them tell the story as they see it. Follow their lead. If your child wants to linger on one picture, that's fine. Explore the details, name colors or shapes, ask questions, take your time. If your child isn't interested at all, try another time.

The simple act of sharing a book with a child can ease anxiety just by sitting close and talking calmly about the story. Reading books about familiar or new experiences can build confidence and reduce anxiety by letting your child explore situations from a distance. Wordless books are perfectly suited for sharing, allowing you to personalize the story for your child.

This Article's Author

Eileen Hanning, M.Ed., has more than twenty years experience designing reading curriculum for underserved kids and training for their parents and social service providers about reading and child development. Her passion for children's books and hands-on learning has lead her to review children's books, learn, research and write about education, child development and toxic stress, and to create her own consulting company, ReadLearnReach, where she serves a variety of clients with their curriculum, children's book and writing needs.