

Keep the Love

From the practice of Elliott McCray, Ed.S., The McCray Learning Lab

What this builds (transformative SEL): Identity (“Who I am”) with a thread of Agency (“I can do it”).

This is a gentle story about the loss of a pet, often a child's first experience of death. It is designed to be **grounded and non-prescriptive**: it never promises the sadness will go away, never rushes a child toward “closure,” and treats missing someone as love, not as a problem to fix. The child learns to name a big feeling, build and keep a memory, and carry a love that doesn't leave.

Plain words, on purpose

Auntie Nia uses “died,” “gone,” “not coming back”, not “went to sleep,” “we lost him,” or “passed.” Young children take softer phrases literally, which can make death feel confusing or reversible. The words are plain; the handling is soft.

There is no timeline, and no “right” way

Feelings are offered, never assigned. Tears and not-crying are both honored. The resolution is *carrying* the love, not feeling better or “moving on.” Follow your child's pace; they can pause and return any time.

When grief needs a real helper

This is a practice tool, not therapy. Some grief needs more than a story. If a child's grief stays stuck, changes their eating, sleeping, or school, or turns to hopelessness or self-blame, reach out to a counselor, school social worker, or a children's grief service. You know your child best.

This is a practice tool for rehearsing skills, not therapy, counseling, or a clinical service.

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