

I see YOU

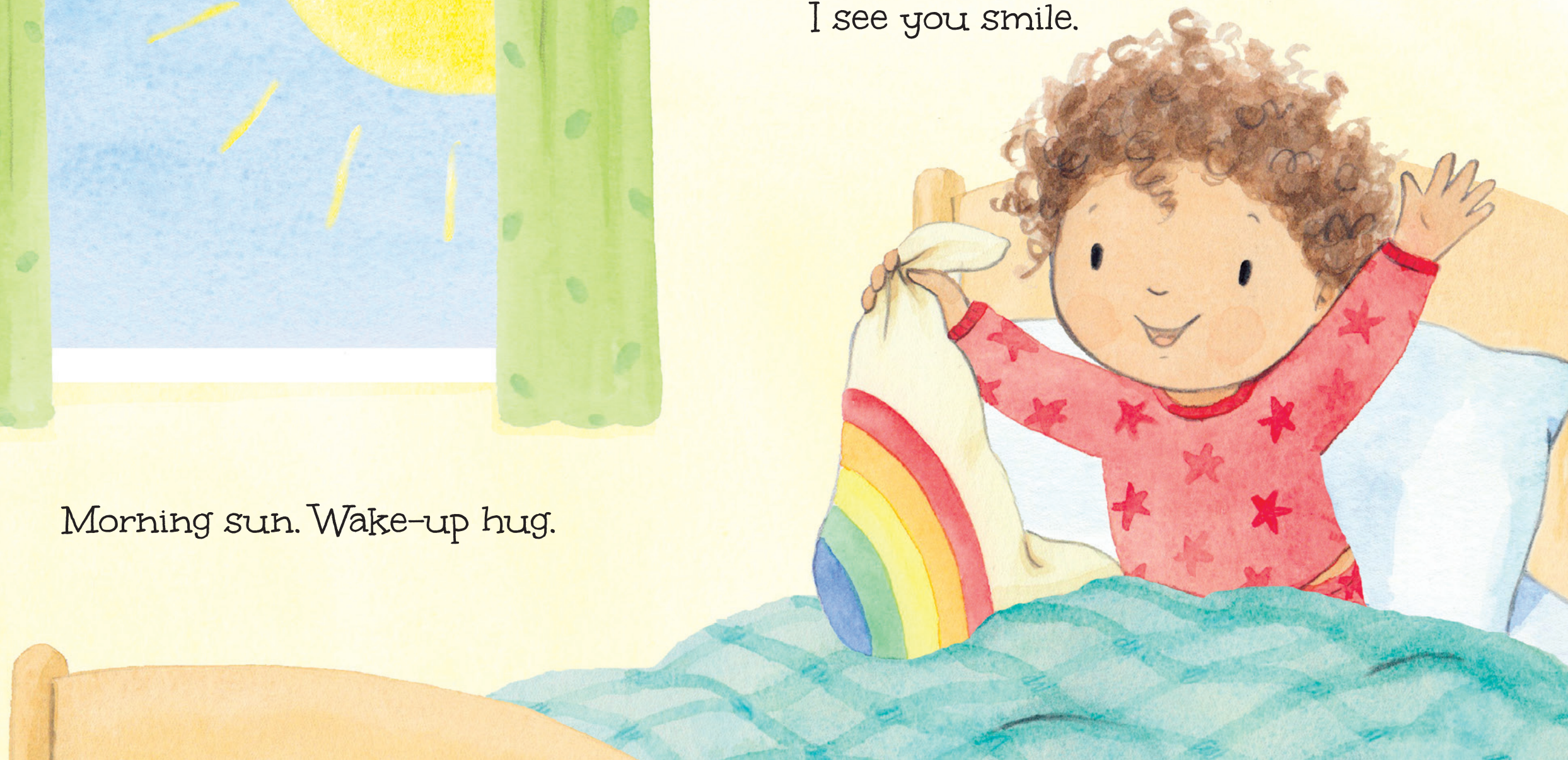


SMILE



Morning sun. Wake-up hug.

I see you smile.

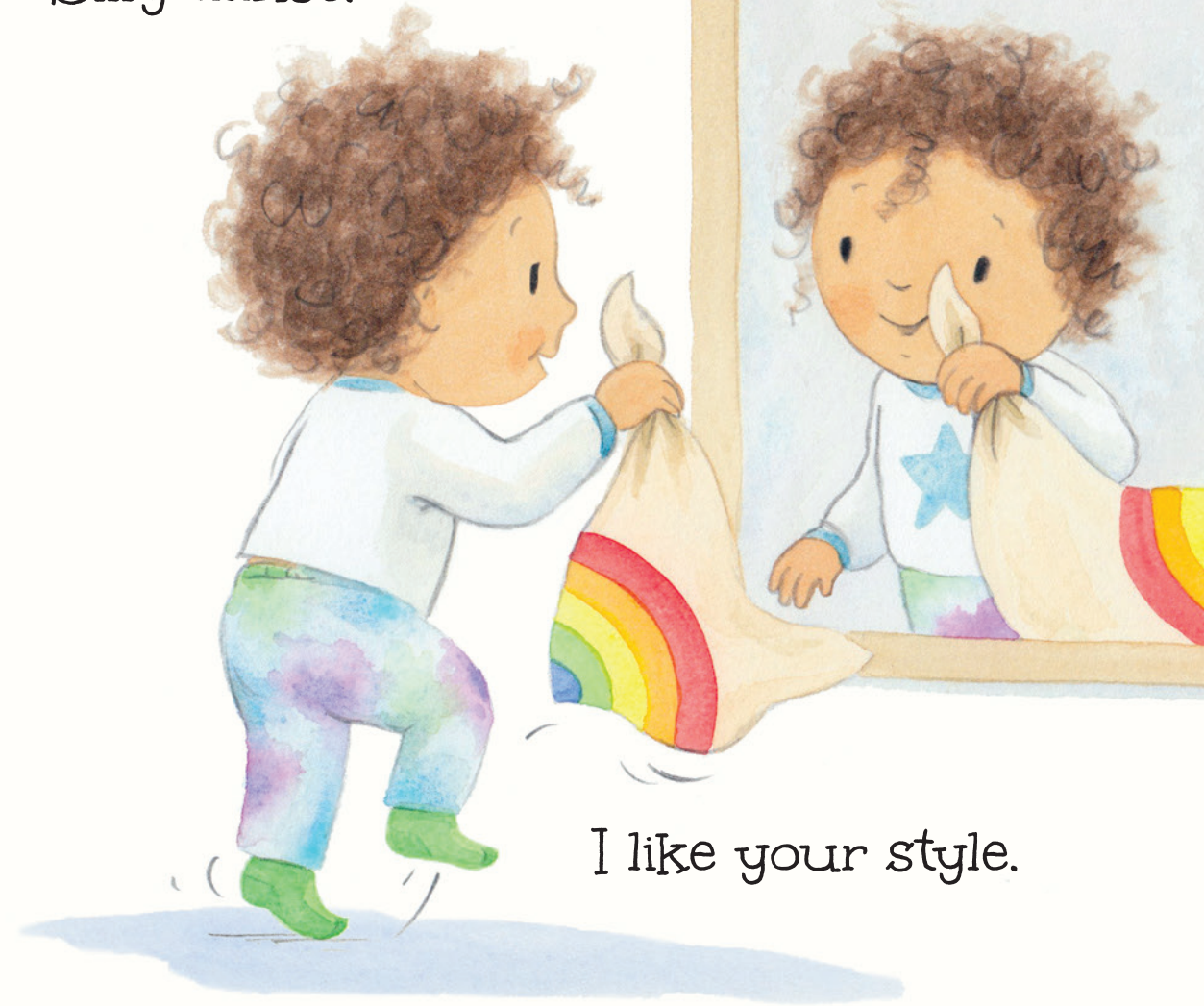




Tie-dye pants.

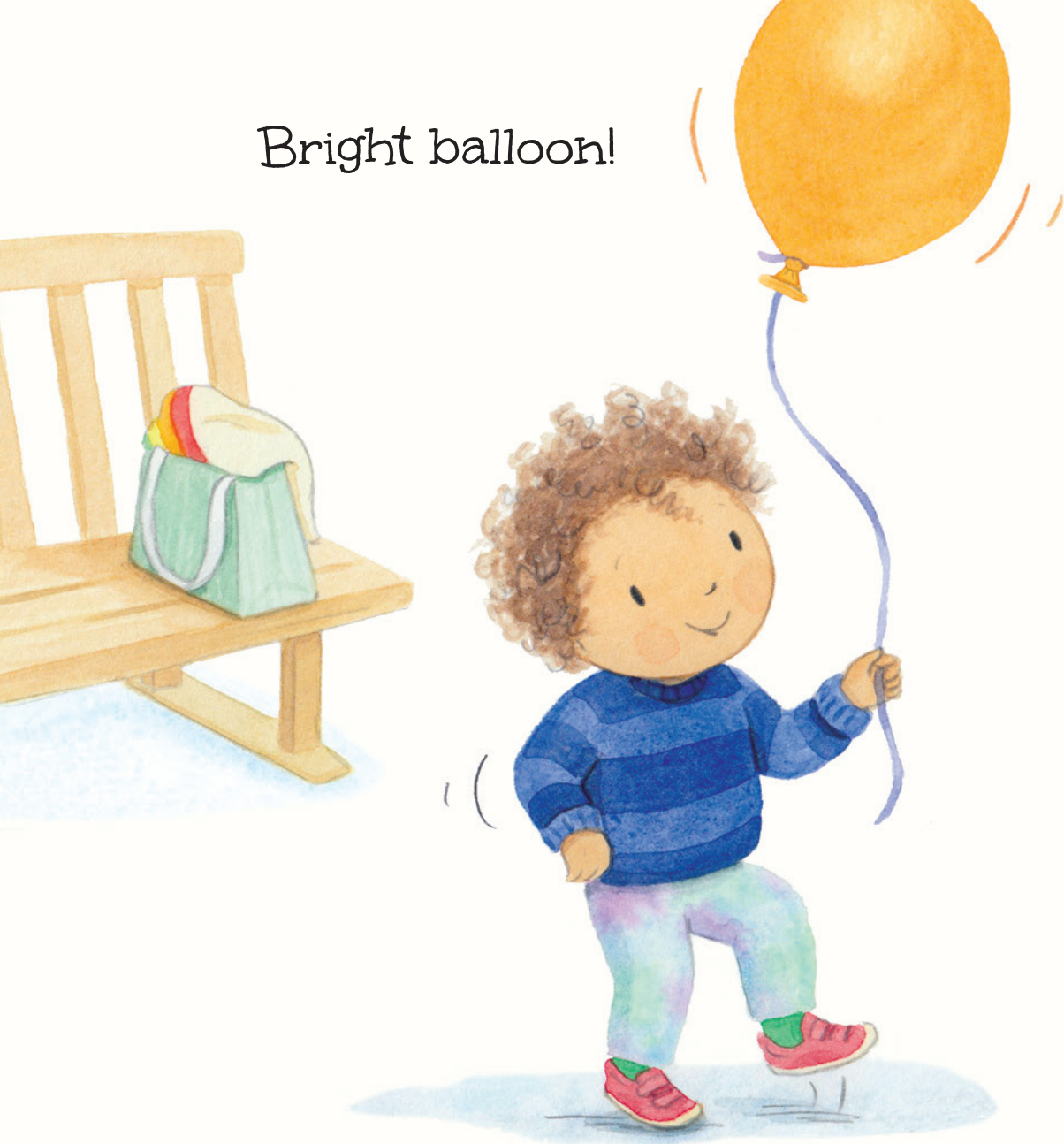


Silly dance.



I like your style.

Bright balloon!



Bouncy tune!  
I see you wiggle.





# FOUR TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

*Sawubona* is the Zulu word for “hello.” It literally means *I see you*. When I first learned this, I instantly thought about the relationship between parents and children—or between any caregiver and the little ones they love.

Everyone needs to be *seen*—especially toddlers, who crave the loving attention of the adults in their lives. When we say “I see you” to toddlers, whether by our words or by our actions, what we are really saying is: “I’m paying attention to you. You are important to me. I like you just the way you are.”

**Here are four ways you can communicate “I see you smile” to the young children in your life.**

## 1. Notice Their Body Language

**Though toddlers are still developing their language skills, they talk to us without words all the time!** Their facial expressions and body language tell us so much about what they are feeling and how they are responding to their environment. Use simple language to share what you observe: “Look at you twirl! It’s fun to dance to this music.” “What a big smile! You really like going down the slide.” “I hear you giggling! This book is funny, isn’t it?” This helps toddlers feel seen and builds their vocabulary.

## 2. Help Them Notice Your Body Language

**Toddlers learn from observing other people, especially adults, and will often imitate what they see and hear.** Because they are watching us all the time, we can use that impulse to help them learn. We can explain *why* we are smiling, sighing, or laughing—and help them connect the dots between our body language and our emotions: “I’m smiling because I love watching you paint. You use such neat colors!” “I’m laughing because I saw a silly picture of a dog. Do you want to see?” “Hmmm. This is my confused face. Where did I put my keys?”

## 3. Preview the Day

**The events in this book take place over the course of a few hours:** waking up, getting dressed, outside playtime, inside playtime, and naptime—all of which come with their own tasks and routines. Toddlers crave predictability and feel more confident when they know what to expect. As Fred Rogers said, “When children know ahead of time what’s going to happen—and not happen—they can prepare themselves for what’s coming. They can think about it and get used to their feelings about it.”

Try this: In the morning, talk about what will happen that day. Use the words *first*, *next*, *finally*, and so on, to begin building an understanding of time. Simple charts or picture cards that depict a particular routine can also be helpful in giving toddlers a sense of independence.

## 4. Review the Day

**Taking a little bit of time in the evening to review the events of the day can be helpful to toddlers for a few reasons:**

- Toddlers can remember the happy, silly, fascinating, or peaceful moments of their day—and that feels good: “The baby ducks at the park were so cute! Do you remember how they walked?”
- If a toddler had a meltdown or encountered something scary or upsetting, this review is a chance to circle back in a supportive way: “It was hard to leave grandma’s house today, huh? You were pretty sad because you love spending time with grandma. Let’s call her tomorrow to say hi.”
- It helps toddlers practice putting events in order (beginning, middle, end), a key cognitive skill.

**Anything we do—however small—to show toddlers they are seen, known, and loved will help them thrive!**

