

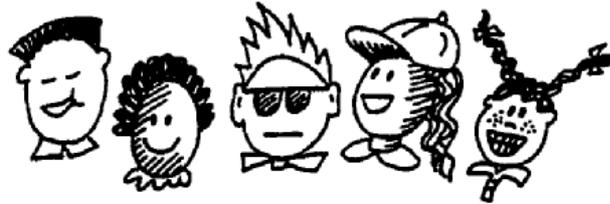
“I CAN  
DO THAT!”

A Booklet about Military Separation for Young People Aged Nine Through Twelve

---

# "I Can Do That"

## A Booklet for Young People Aged Nine Through Twelve Whose Families Are in the Military



This edition of I CAN DO THAT has been edited and altered for use in New Zealand following the feedback provided by New Zealand Military families who trialled the booklets. Thank you to those who provided us with your valuable comments and ideas.

I CAN DO THAT is one of a series of four booklets about military separations for children and young people. These booklets were written as a part of Operation R.E.A.D.Y., under an agreement between the Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the United States Army Community and Family Support Centre, Department of Army.

All four booklets were developed with the help of active Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve families and Family Support Personnel. We sincerely thank all those who helped produce these publications.

By Jo Knox, Ph.D., and Dorothea Cudaback, Ph.D.  
University of California Cooperative Extension.

Artist: Lisa Krieshok.

February 1993.

Published by:  
Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand  
2 Seddul Bahr Road  
UPPER HUTT

© Copyright New Zealand Defence Force 2002

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be adapted, modified, reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form or by any means including written, electronic, mechanical, reprographic, photocopying or recording means without the prior written permission of the copyright owner except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1994. Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to copy or reproduce any part of this publication should be addressed to the publisher.

**WARNING:** The doing of any unauthorised act in relation to a copyright work may result in both a civil claim for damages and criminal prosecution.

---

---

## About This Booklet

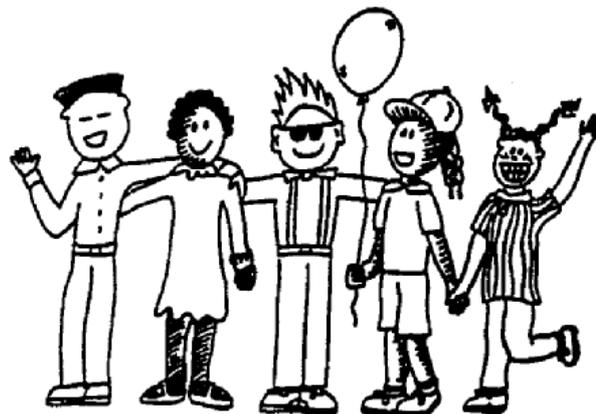
This ideas and activities booklet is written for young people with parents in the Navy, Army and Airforce. Having the military as part of your life can be exciting, but it can also be tough when you have to be separated from your parents because of their military duties.

This booklet gives you some information about ways military separations can affect kids your age. It also includes some suggestions for handling a separation from one or both of your parents, staying close to your parents while they are gone, coping during separation and preparing for homecoming. Feel free to pick and choose the ideas or activities that are helpful to you.

Coping with separation is a challenge; some of the suggestions in this book come from kids, like you, who have been through military separations.

They say:

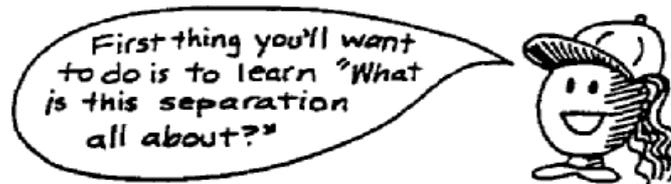
***"I CAN DO THAT!"***



---

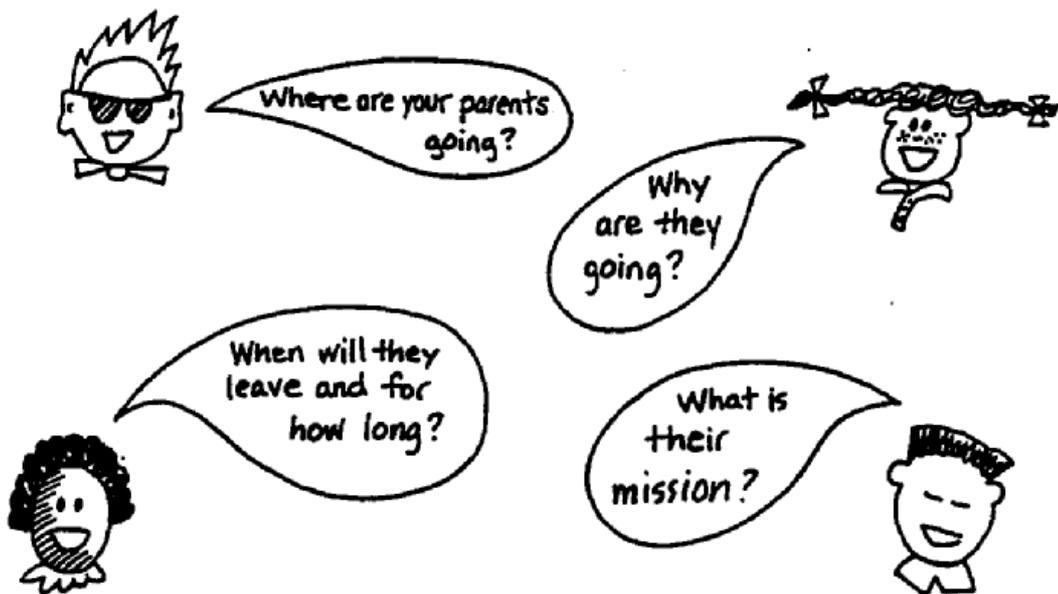
# Get The Picture

Separations happen when one or both of your parents have military duties and have to leave their families to attend special training or to serve in a peacekeeping type of role overseas. Usually it's one parent who leaves. Sometimes you know several weeks in advance when your parent is leaving; sometimes you find out just before he or she leaves.



Ask your parents or an older brother or sister, "What's happening?" Sometimes parents on military duty can't tell you much about where they are going or why. If they can't answer all of your questions, be understanding and just label them "TOP SECRET".

Your mission is to get all the W's you can; What, When, Where and Why?



---

# What About Me?

Another thing to find out is, "How will this separation affect me?" That means asking some more questions. See if you can get the answers to some of the questions on this page and any other questions you may have.

What's going to happen on special occasions like holidays and my birthday?



What do my parents expect from me during this separation?



Can my parents write to me while they are gone?



Other things I want to know about are...



---

# Getting Ready For The Departure

## More Questions To Answer

Here are some more questions to help you plan when one or both of your parents are going away.



## A Gift To Go With Your Parents

Some kids give their parents a special package to put in their pack or travel bag to open after they have gone. Here are some things you might want to put into such a package:

- Pictures of you and your parents
- Writing paper and a pen
- A small sewing kit
- Some safety pins & clothes pegs
- A handkerchief or two
- String or fishing line
- Their favourite lollies
- Some chewing gum
- An extra tin of shoe polish
- Small puzzle or crossword book
- A few favourite jokes, stories or poems
- Something small & special of yours to remember you by



---

# Goodbyes Are Hard!

Goodbyes are hard! They can be the worst thing about having parents in the military. One thing is for sure - saying goodbye is going to hurt. So, when you say "Goodbye" remember:



Families say "Goodbye" together in their own unique way.

Helping your parents to say "Goodbye" is a special thing to do.

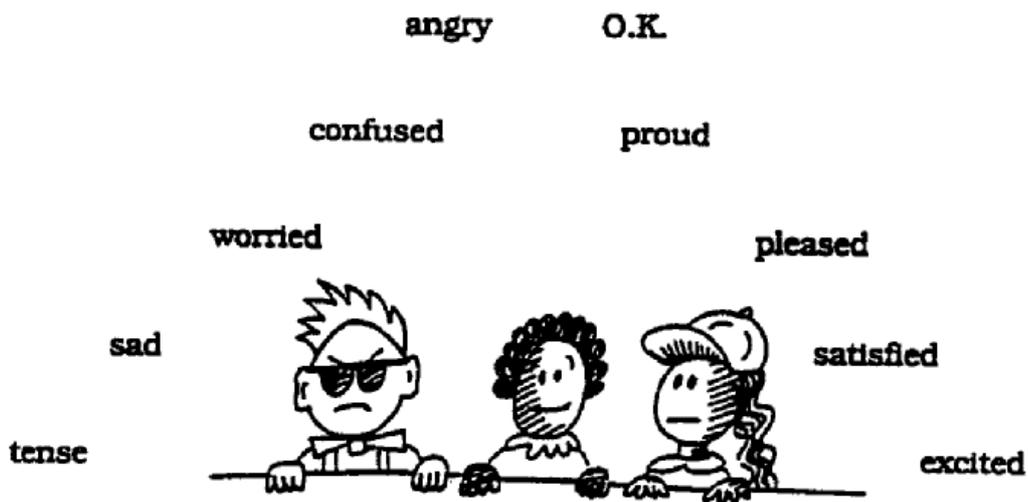
---

---

# Feelings About Your Parents Being Away

Part of handling a separation when your Mum or Dad has military duties is knowing what your feelings are. It is important to be able to say how you feel. Keeping feelings bottled up makes you feel awful. Knowing your feelings and understanding how they affect you, will help you to learn how to handle them better.

Here are examples of some feelings that kids have when one or both of their parents leave:



Sometimes you feel one way. At other times, you may have more than one feeling at the same time. You might even have opposite feelings, like feeling both confused and pleased.

What are some of the feelings you have about being separated from your parents?

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Good feelings are not a problem. It is negative feelings, especially feelings you don't talk about, that make problems for you. Sometimes when you have negative or mixed up feelings, you might say or do something, which hurts someone else. Learning how to manage such feelings is all part of growing up.

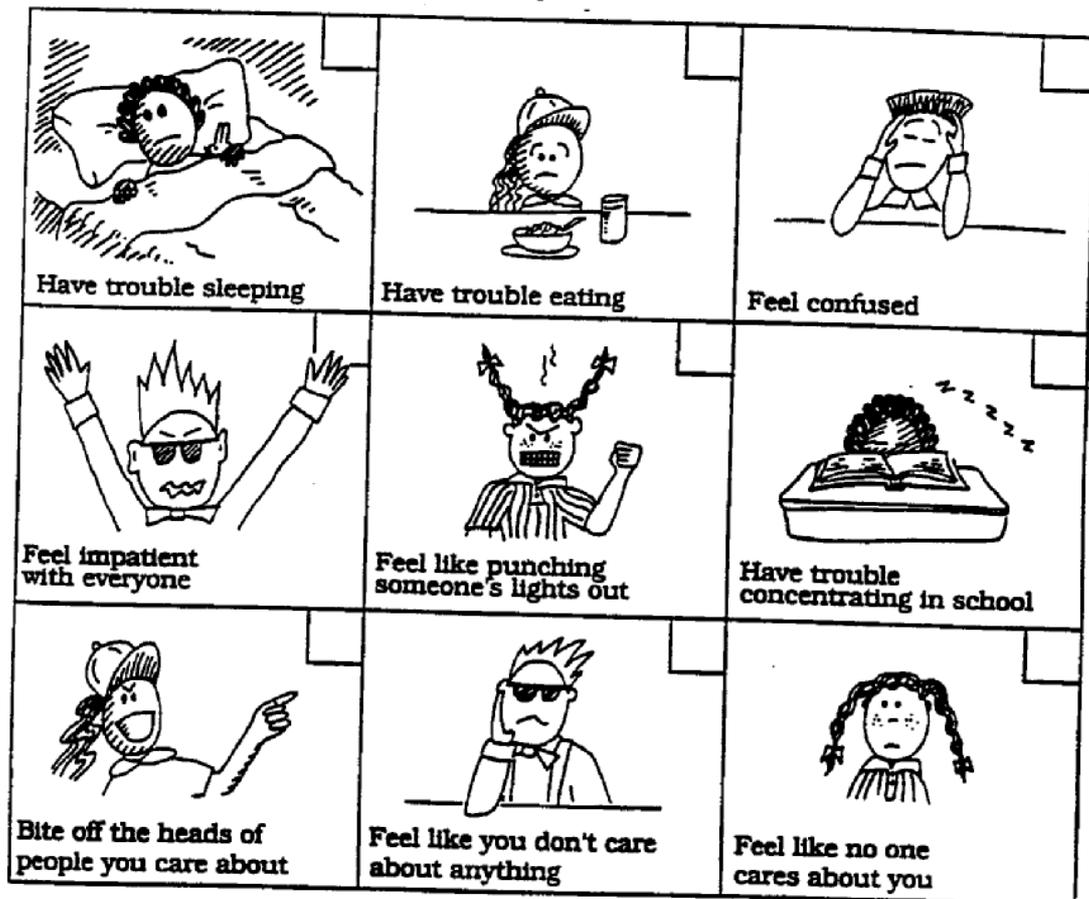
---

# Knowing When To Say "HELP!"

Kids who have been through separations say that you need to know when you are getting stressed out and what to do about it. Keeping an eye on your stress level means knowing when "too much" is going on.

These are some of the ways you can feel stress.

Check it off if you have ever.....?



These feelings and behaviours are normal during stressful times. On the next page are some of the things you can do to feel better when you are stressed out.



---

# Feelings

Here are some of the things you can do to handle stressed-out feelings during separations.

Share your feelings with someone you trust



Think about it! Separations are hard.

Talk with someone you trust:



Special people I can talk to are : \_\_\_\_\_

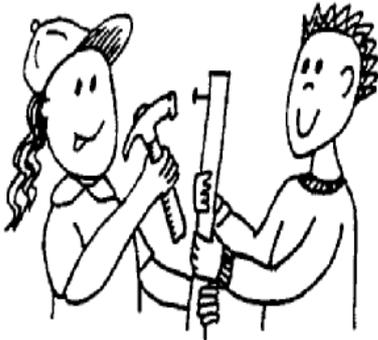
---

---

# Other Ways To Chill Out

Another way to handle a separation is to keep busy and to do fun things. It's not hard to find things to do when you feel good. But, when you feel down, you have to work at feeling better. Here are some things you might do when you feel down.

## Get Connected



- ✓ Join a club
- ✓ Be a volunteer
- ✓ Fix, grow or build something with a friend
- ✓ Listen to music with a friend
- ✓ Get a group going with other kids like yourself
- ✓ Hug somebody you like... real hard
- ✓ Invite your best friend to do something fun
- ✓ Help Mum or Dad around the house

## Get Your Body Going

- ✓ Jog a little
- ✓ Take a hike
- ✓ Join a karate Class
- ✓ Go swimming
- ✓ Ride your bike
- ✓ Go skateboarding
- ✓ Play tennis
- ✓ Play basketball



## Get Your Mind Going

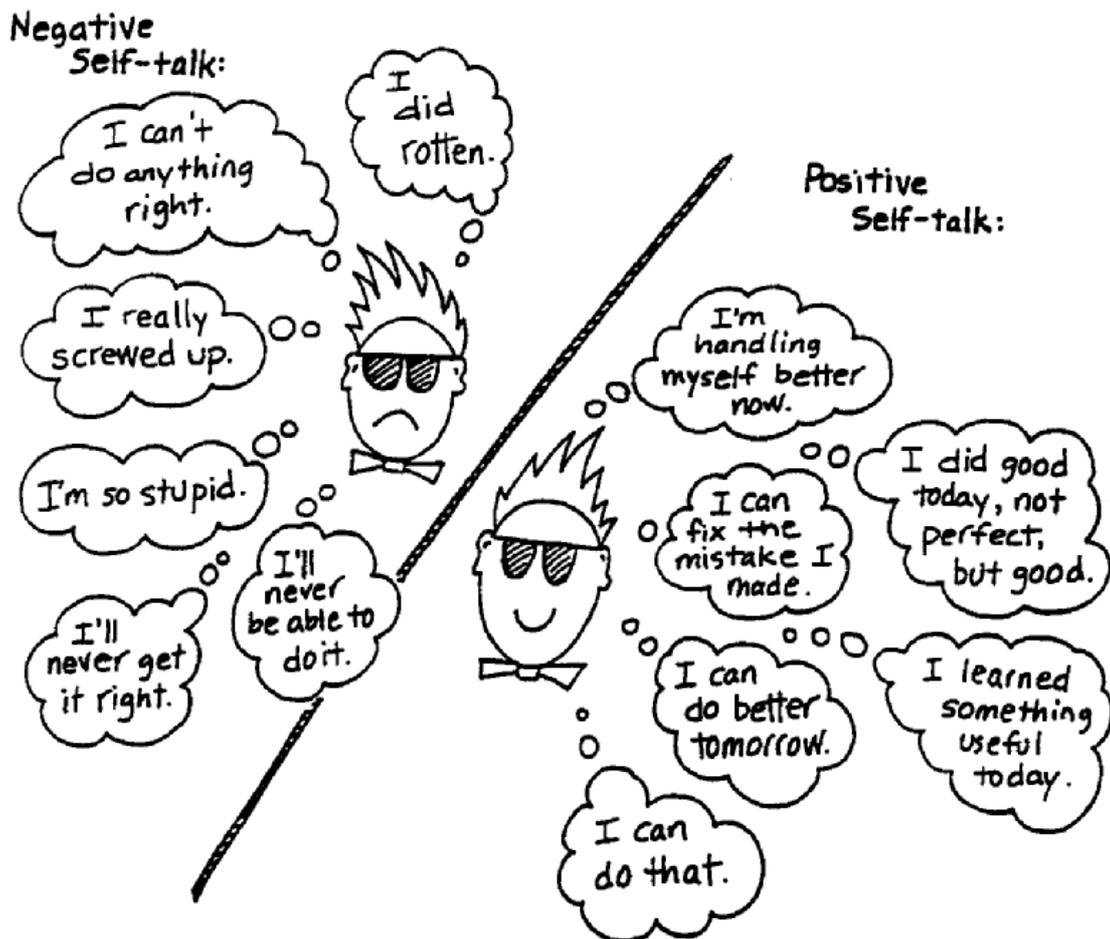
- ✓ Watch an upbeat video
- ✓ Get a joke book and tell your friends some jokes
- ✓ Think about a favourite time you had with your parents and write to them about it
- ✓ Lie down under a tree and watch the clouds go by
- ✓ Draw or paint a picture
- ✓ Go to a movie
- ✓ Daydream



---

# When Things Are Tough Talk Positive and Think Positive

When thoughts in your head all say crummy things, this is called "negative self-talk". Negative self-talk is a downer. It is important to describe your difficulties with positive statements and celebrate your improvements.



**Be Positive About Yourself!**

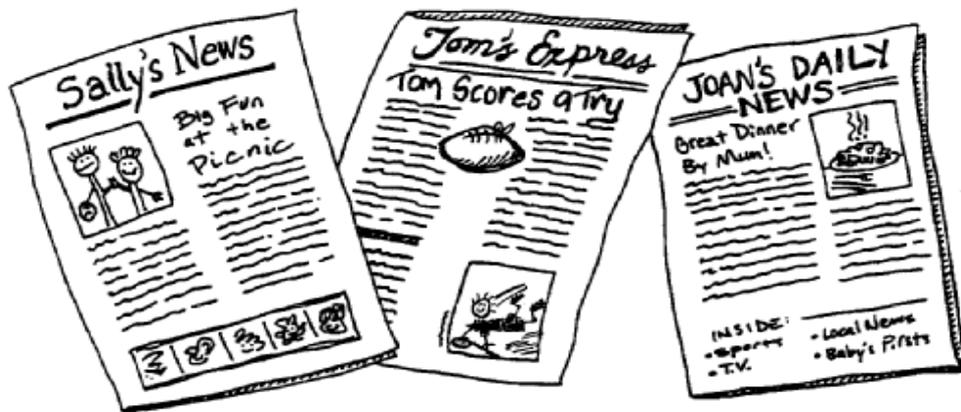
You have all it takes to handle being separated from your parent and to handle a lot of other daily challenges. Don't forget to feel good about your successes every day.

---

---

# Staying Close To Your Parents Who Are Away

One of the good things about separation is the stuff you can send parents, and the things they can send you. One thing is for sure; they are probably pretty lonely without you and the rest of the family. Here are some things you and your parents can do to stay in touch.



Family Newspaper

Parents who are away like ordinary kinds of news, the every-day stuff that they are missing out on. You can help your parents out by being the family reporter. One way to do this is to create a family newspaper, another is to tape daily happenings and mail the tape to your parent. You may want to do both!

You can make up a newspaper or tape using some of the ideas below:

- ✓ Interview different members of your family or friends
- ✓ Write up short articles about what is going on at home
- ✓ Write about news around town or about information of interest to your parent, like how their favourite sports team is going
- ✓ Tell about your visit to the dentist, your sisters new shoes. Just ordinary stuff is great
- ✓ Include pictures of family members
- ✓ Cut out articles and pictures from local newspaper or magazines that your parent would find interesting
- ✓ Make up a funny story
- ✓ Draw your own comic section

---

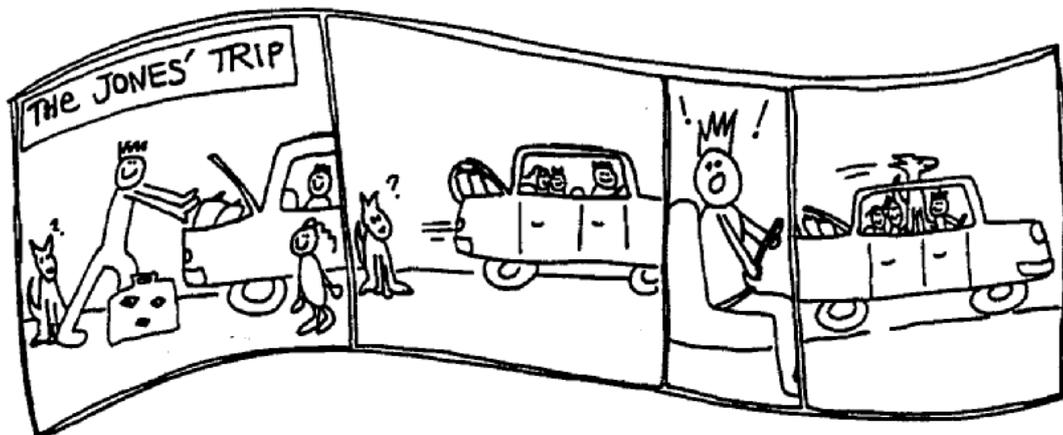
# The Daily Record

Your parents will appreciate hearing the voices of family members. You can tape ordinary conversations at meal times or at special events like birthdays and holidays. You can tape interviews with family members. Ask them funny questions, or get them to tell jokes. You can edit it and be the "radio announcer".



## Family Cartoon Strips

You can make up a cartoon strip of your family to send to your parents.



# Movie and Book Reviews

## A Movie Review

You can send a review of a movie you've seen or a book you've read.

TO: \_\_\_\_\_ FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

Movie Title:

Actors:

Story was about:

Plot was: *(circle one)*    excellent    good    fair    dumb

You should ...  
*(tick one)*

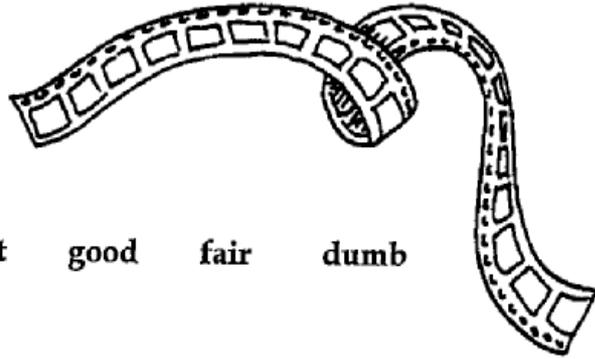
go see it as soon as you can

this film is so-so ~ go and see it if you are a bit bored

don't ever go to this movie

this movie should be banned from the galaxy!!

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## A BOOK REVIEW

TO: \_\_\_\_\_ FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title:

Main Characters:

Story was about:

Plot was: *(circle one)*    excellent    good    fair    dumb

You should: *(tick one)*

read this book soon

read this book some day

maybe you should and maybe you shouldn't

don't ever bother reading this book

this book wasted a tree!!

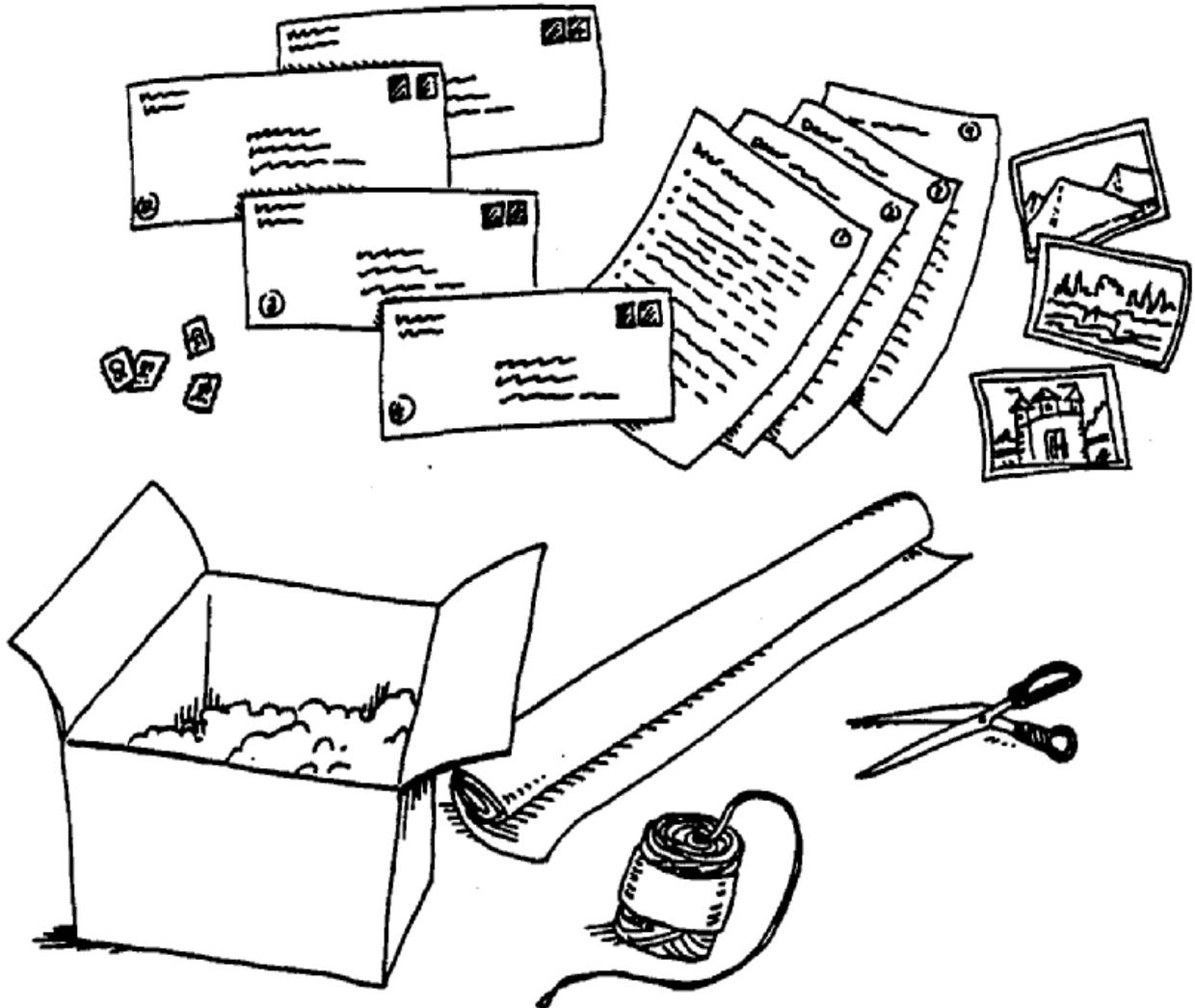
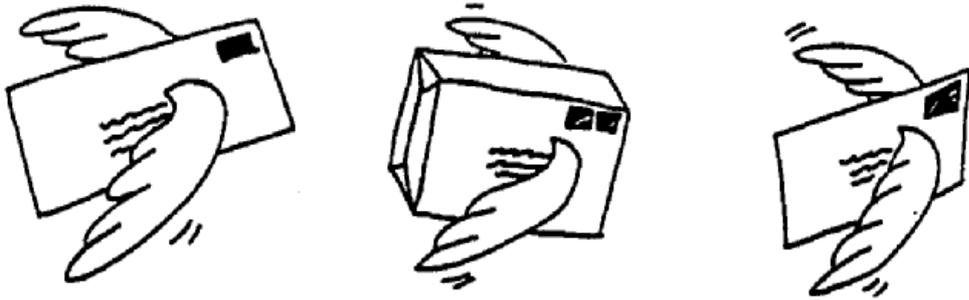
Date: \_\_\_\_\_



---

# A Care Package For Your Parents

Some kids help their parents keep in touch by sending them care packages. In these you can put addressed and numbered envelopes, paper for letters, surprises and cards. You may want to send some check-off letters like the ones on the next page for your parent to complete for you. Remember that the return mail may be slow.



# A Check-off Letter From Parents

Use this example or make up one of your own.

Week 1

Dear Family,

- \* I am staying  in a tent  in a hotel  in the barracks  out of trouble  
 other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* My trip here was  long and hard  pleasant  so-so  boring  
 other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* I arrived by  bus  tank  truck  plane  helicopter  bicycle  
 other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* The temperature is  hotter than Hades  cold as the North Pole  somewhere  
in between  other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* I get to wear  my own clothes  uniform  shorts  blue jeans if I am off duty  
 my pyjamas  other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* We spend all day  studying  moving tanks  driving trucks  exercising  
 doing communications  flying  setting up buildings  running the hospital  
 sleeping  other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* The food is  terrific  truly awful  just like home  edible every fourth day  
 other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* At night it is  cold  hot  rainy  foggy  dry  crawling with bugs.
- \* We bathe  in the shower  in our helmets  in the swamp  in a tub  not  
at all  other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* I forgot my  toothbrush  socks  smile  teddybear  sense of humor  
 other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* Don't forget to  do your homework  help around the house  be good to your  
brother/sister  write  other \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* I think about you  every morning  every afternoon  every evening  all the  
time.
- \* Would you send me \_\_\_\_\_.

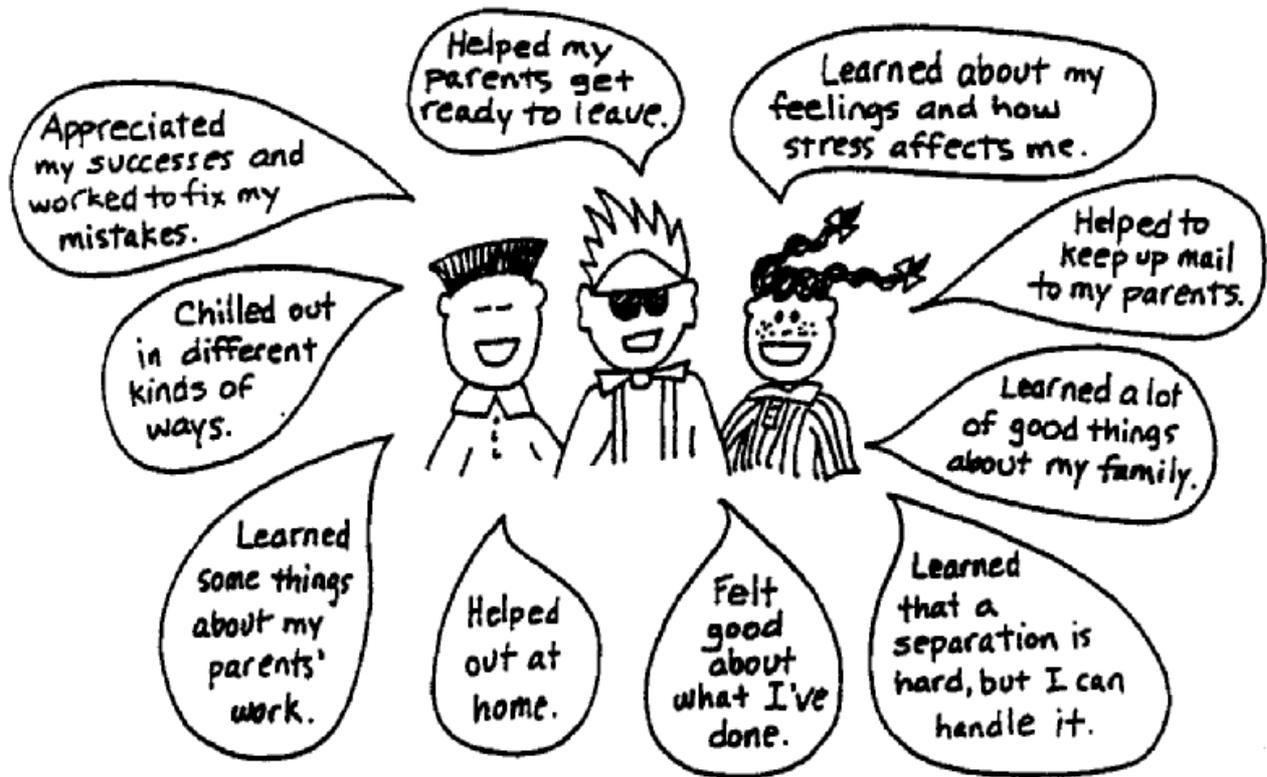
Love,

---

# Separations End

When separations end, take a little time to think about what you have accomplished during this time, what you have learned, and how you have changed. You will discover that you have met some challenges, mastered some difficulties, and done a good job.

## What I've Done And Learned During This Separation



List some of the things you have learned during the separation.

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Getting Ready For Homecoming

There are also lots of things you can do to help prepare for your parents return.

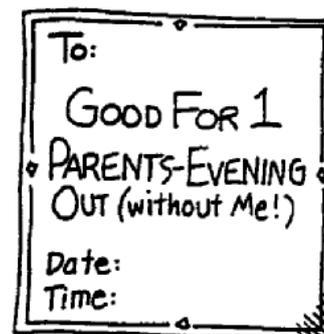
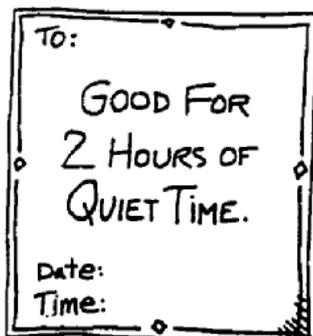
You can make a banner



You can cook something your parents and family will enjoy.



You can make sharing cards to give to your parents.  
Here are some examples.



Can you make up some other sharing cards for your parents?

---

# A Homecoming Letter

You can give your parent a homecoming letter. Copy and use the form below or make up your own letter.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**WELCOME HOME**

- \* We are very  glad  happy  excited  relieved that you have come home.
- \* We have missed you  enormously  a whole lot  more than we can say.
- \* This letter is to tell you  what has changed  what has stayed the same  
 what you need to know  why it's safe to come home.
- \* The house is  right where you left it  redecorated a whole lot  O.K., except for a window I blew out doing a science project.
- \* My room is  the cleanest you've ever seen it  hasn't been cleaned since you left  
 now inhabited by aliens and I am not responsible for its condition.
- \* Our family  is still the coolest  could use a maid and a butler  got a maid and butler after you left  still likes your corny jokes.
- \* The car  is still running  misses your driving expertise  went on a date with sister/brother and experienced a melt down  was driven into the lake and smells like fish.
- \* Since you left, I have  grown lazier  learned to love/hate/ignore/tolerate school  
 worn your sweater every day  made a new friend.
- \* Now that you are home, I would very much like to  take a walk with you  
 have a big hug from you  go to a movie with you  do whatever you want to do  
 play some ball  go fishing  other \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Maybe in the next few days, we can  wash your sweater  hear some of your corny jokes  
 fix the window I blew out  get the fish smell out of the car  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

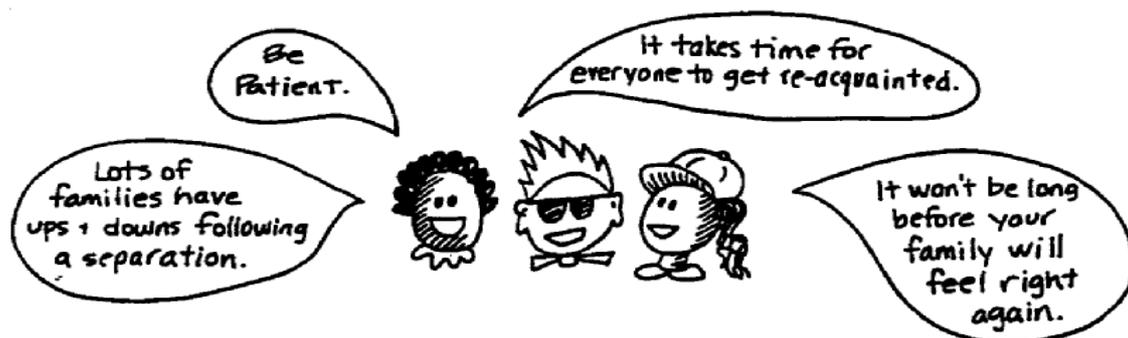
LOVE,

---

# Together Again: Homecoming and Reunion

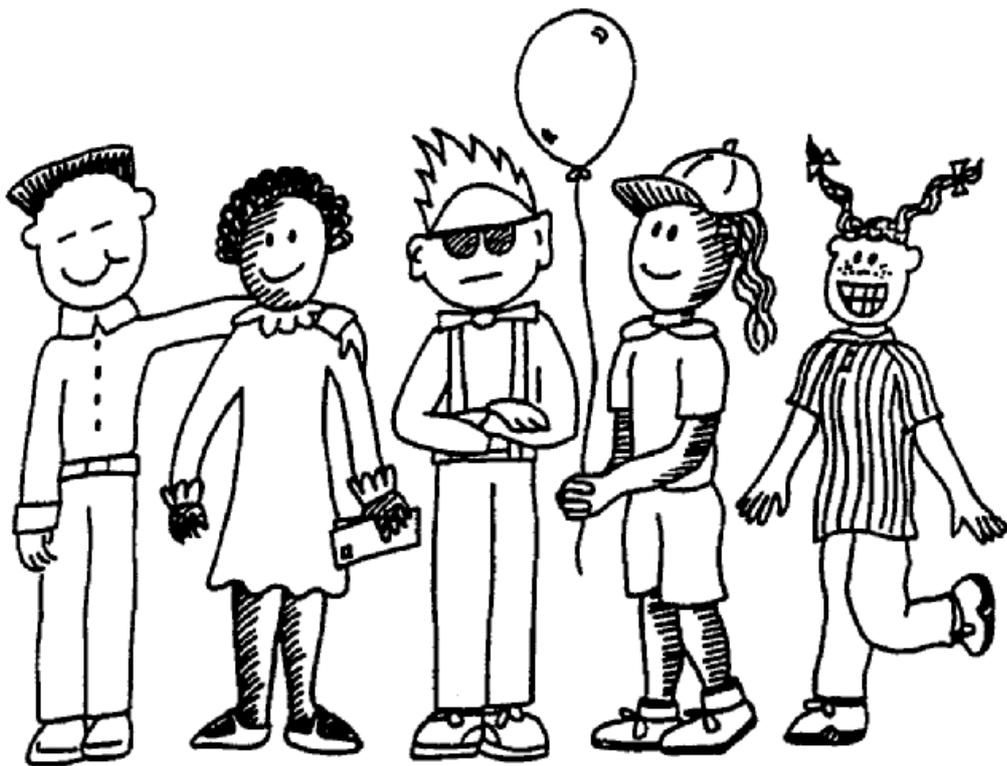
## Things to Think About

- ❖ Reunion, like separation, may happen with lots of notice or it may happen suddenly. Here are some things you need to know about reunions:
- ❖ Reunions take adjustment. It takes time for everyone to get to know each other again. Take your time and expect surprises during the first few weeks your family is together again.
- ❖ Reunions can be stressful. You have all grown and changed during the separation. Remember to chill out. You know how.
- ❖ Reunions bring out strong feelings. These feelings can be positive, negative or mixed up. You may feel very happy to see your parent or worried about what they will be like because you haven't seen them for so long. You may feel uneasy about being together again. That can be upsetting, but it's normal and, in time, it will pass.
- ❖ Reunions can bring misunderstandings with them. It may take you a while to feel comfortable with your returning parent again.
- ❖ Reunions involve sharing your parents with others. Remember that each family member wants time with the parent or parents who have been away.
- ❖ Reunions require time alone for parents who have been away. Be prepared to give your parents "time out".



---

Together Again!



I DID IT!

---