



United States Department of State  
*Bureau of Human Resources*

# COUNTING ON FAMILY



A SPECIAL BOOK ABOUT  
ME AND MY FAMILY

BY

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UNACCOMPANIED TOURS SUPPORT

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# Counting on Family:

## A Toddler's Manual for Coping with Separation

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# HELPING YOUR CHILD STAY CONNECTED

## A Note for Parents:



Early childhood is an amazing time of growth that can be both trying and exciting for parents. The relentless demands of a growing child makes separation especially difficult for those who did not expect to be single parents at this time. As the at-home parent, you are the mast, mainstay, and rudder for the family *as well as* the relational bridge to the “away” parent. The employee will certainly want to share in your child’s progress and delights and your child will benefit from the extra effort put into maintaining their relationship. However, there is no question that both will rely on you as conduit to make it all happen. For some families, this thankless reality is not much different whether they are posted together or apart. A separate Parent Manual addresses some single-parenting issues common to Unaccompanied Tour (UT) parents, and provides suggestions for things to put in place to support *you* during the separation.

This manual is designed to help your child stay in touch by making references to the away parent in every day life. While there is no substitute for the parent’s physical presence, your child will be learning that “out of sight” is not “out of mind.” For parents who may find toddler activities boring, keep in mind that the activities are designed for the child; your job is to help guide your child. The child would be learning at this level whether the family was separated or not.

Children develop at different rates and show individual preferences; pick and/or modify the activities that fit your child’s level and interest. Parent instructions are provided in dialogue boxes on the back of the activity sheets. Short 5-10 minutes sessions spread over the separation work best; go at the child’s pace and follow his/her lead. Should you need more advanced activities, contact FLO for a manual for school-aged children. Each child in your family should have their own manual. By gathering the items sent back and forth from post in this binder, each child will, ideally, have a complete album by the time Dad/Mom comes home.

Additional family information, checklists, resources and full Appendices are located in the back of both the “At-home” Parent Manual and the “Away” Parent Manual.

## Developmental Implications for UT families

Get ready for the Big Chase! From ages 1 -3 your child will continue on an exponential growth and learning curve that will make you tired just thinking about it. On the one hand, the rapid development of speech, social, cognitive, and motor skills transforms your infant into a little person who is more engaging. On the other hand, their boundless energy, complete dependency, and constant need for monitoring are utterly exhausting. Separation at this time does not preclude a child's ability to attach per se, provided his/her needs are consistently well taken care of by a warm caregiver. It can, however, interfere with attachment to an absent parent. For this reason, it is wise to plan as many visits with the employee as feasible. In addition, investments in a fast internet connection, a web-camera, and, above all, time focused on your child will help to facilitate distance bonding.

At this age your child:

- Needs a lot of emotional refueling in between explorations (e.g., demanding that primary caregiver be around, and insisting, “watch me, watch me.”). Your physical presence is important as a reassuring “touch base” as your child’s range of territory expands. When you are together for R&R, go to another room while your child plays with your spouse so he/she can begin to see your spouse as a safe and loving refueling base as well.
- Begins to conceive of a world that consists of “me” and “not-me,” but does not understand that others are separate from self (e.g., treats Mom’s arm as an extension of own arm; commands Mom and becomes frustrated with Mom’s limitations). Eventually, as frustration with not being able to control the “not-me” grows, you may enter the so-called “terrible two’s” – rather a misnomer as it can occur anytime between 2-5 years. In general, setting limits and maintaining consistent structure is important in helping the family navigate these waters. It is important for both parents to agree on limits, consequences, and consistent follow through. Prior to R&Rs or eventual reunion, discuss with your spouse current methods of handling defiant “no’s” and outbursts.
- Begins forming internal ideas of external objects as memory and symbolic learning increases. This is the beginning of knowing that something (including Dad/Mom) exists when they are out of sight. Thoughts are very concrete and bound to the stimuli in the immediate situation. This implies that:
  - While your toddler is very young, simply removing forbidden things from their sight works better than just saying “No, don’t touch.” They will cry for a short time, but will recover quickly as their attention is attracted to something else.
  - When it’s time to say goodbye, keep your farewells short. Prolonged farewells might actually serve to escalate their distress.
  - If Dad/Mom and child are separated for a long time without any contact, expect your child not to know Dad/Mom. Put another way, although distance bonding activities seem tedious, they will help to build a bond that can be solidified when the employee returns. Don’t neglect it!

**Equipment:** that will make communication easier during separation

- ✓ Digital camera (if you don't have one, now would be a really good time to invest in one!)
- ✓ Web-camera
- ✓ Computer with good speakers, high-speed internet capability; printer
- ✓ Phone

**Handy Supplies:** to use with adult supervision

- ✓ Non-toxic colored crayons, chubby size
- ✓ Washable, non-toxic colored markers, chubby
- ✓ Rough paper for scribbling, tearing (an old phone book works well)
- ✓ Old magazines
- ✓ Glue stick
- ✓ Tape
- ✓ Scissors (for parent to use; also child-safe ones for kids)
- ✓ Optional: 3-hole punch to insert extra sheets in this binder



**Shopping list:**

- ✓ Simple children's books: hard board and soft, terry books
- ✓ Two copies of longer books – one to leave with child, other for employee to take and record
- ✓ A container that will serve as a Treasure Box to collect all the goodies sent from overseas; your child can personalize it with stickers or crayons
- ✓ A set each of A-B-C, 1-2-3 flashcards preferably colorful and/or with pictures; for employee to send back to child, one card at a time
- ✓ Blank cassettes (and a small tape recorder, if you don't have one)
- ✓ A sturdy, childproof tape player
- ✓ Transitional objects: items that are imbued with comforting qualities over time; they help smooth transitions e.g. from wakefulness to sleep, from being together to being alone.

Examples of transitional objects include:

Blanket

A soft toy

Dad/Mom shirt or pillow that smells like Dad/Mom

Dad/Mom's photo (see Parent Manual Appendix B for professional items)

A cut-out of Dad/Mom's handprint that Dad/Mom kissed

Mirror with Dad/Mom transparency

## Things to Do Before Dad/Mom Goes:



My Family Tree

Where I live Now

Where Daddy/Mommy is going

People who take care of Me

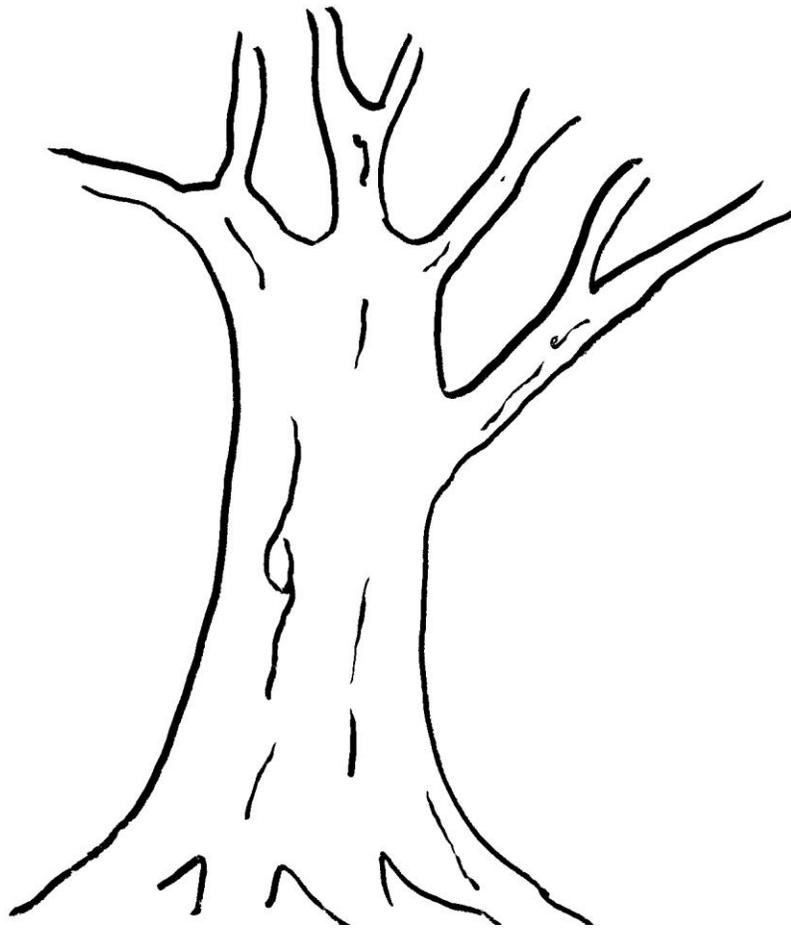
Is it OK?

Watch me Grow!

My List for the Family Meeting



# My Family Tree



## My Family Tree

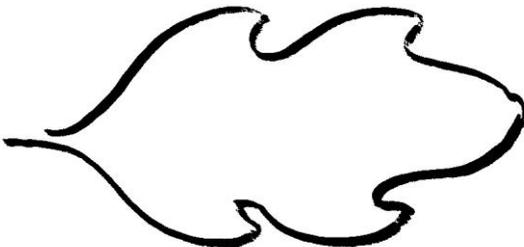
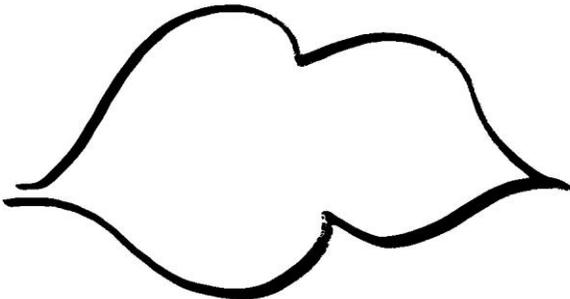
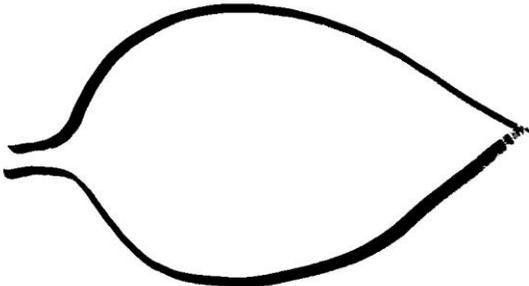
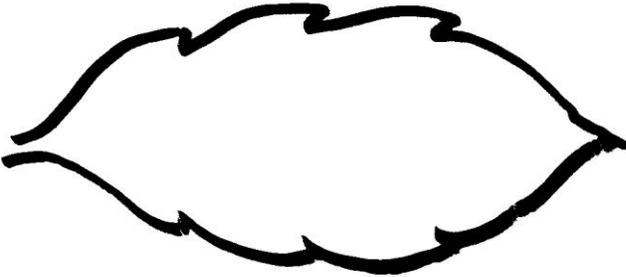
**Aim:** to reinforce a sense of belonging to a larger family; to identify members by name and relationship.

**Parents:** Use the Tree and Leaf outlines to help your child make a family tree. Write names or draw each family member on separate leaves and stick these on the tree (use leaf template in Appendix C if you need extra). Photos can also be used. Add acorns for unborn siblings, or pets under the tree.

**Dialogue:** Explain how all your family members are connected, specifying relationship names as well as full names. Talk about how trees grow and change over time but always remain connected through the roots.

**You'll need:** colors, glue or tape, scissors.

Leaves and acorns for my family tree





People Who Take Care of Me



So many people care for me!



## People Who Take Care of Me

**Aim:** to reassure your child that he/she will be well cared for now and during separation.

**Parents:** Help identify people that your child sees everyday that they can turn to if they need anything. Ask your child to draw a picture of them doing something with the child.

**Variation:** Use additional sheets, if necessary, to draw other settings where your child spends a lot of time: e.g., day-care, grandmother's house, etc.

**Dialogue:** Talk about all the different people who care about your child and explain that they can be relied upon to help. Give names. Emphasize that they will not be left alone and are part of a larger, loving network. Listen for any worries that come up; give reassurance.

**You'll need:** colors, (photos optional).

# Is it OK?

It's OK if I ask someone else besides Mommy and Daddy for help.



My helpers:

---

Name number

---

Name number

---

Name number

If I don't know what to say them, I'll say a code word and they will help me. Here it is in case I forget:

Secret Code Word: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Needs: Is it OK?**

**Aim:** to make an easy way for your child to ask someone else for support.

**Parents:** Children need permission to go to other grown-up's or families and you need extra support to help while your spouse is away. With young children, support systems must be familiar and accessible in order to be useful, so don't wait for an emergency to develop before your child engages his/her support people.

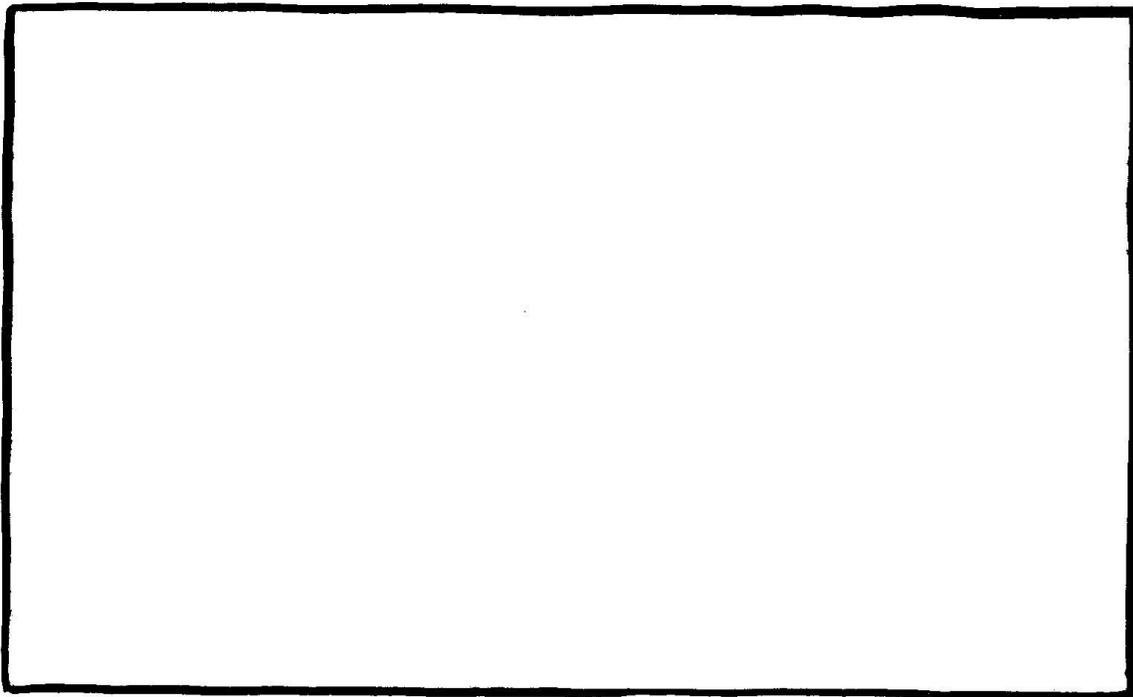
1. Identify the people your child feels most comfortable going to if they need extra help; write down their names and numbers.
2. Ask him/her pick a code word that will be used to signal "I need you to listen to me right now." Avoid using emergency words like "fire" or "danger." Practice using the word from time to time.
3. Call the people to ensure that they are willing to help your child if needed. Make sure the child tells them the code word, and is reassured that when the word is given, the adult will drop what they're doing to listen. (Discuss contingency plans with that person privately if necessary.)
4. Make "dates" for your child with each support person so they have regular social contact and feel comfortable going to them.

**Dialogue:** Tell your child that while you will always do your best to be around for them, it's OK if they take their needs to other caring people when you can't help them.

**You'll need:** pencil; access to support people.

# I Live Here

This is the flag of the country where I live now



The country is called \_\_\_\_\_

The town I live in is called \_\_\_\_\_



## **I Live Here**

**Aim:** to help your child begin to understand the concepts of “here” and “there,” and “where.”

**Parents:** Have your child draw the flag of the country where they live now.

**Dialogue:** For younger toddler: to demonstrate “here” and “there” ideas, place an object (e.g., small U.S. flag) close to your child and say “here it is.” Then place the object far away but still in sight, “there it is.”

For older toddler: Talk about the country that you live in: e.g., country name, types of foods and language. Talk also about other places the child might have lived.

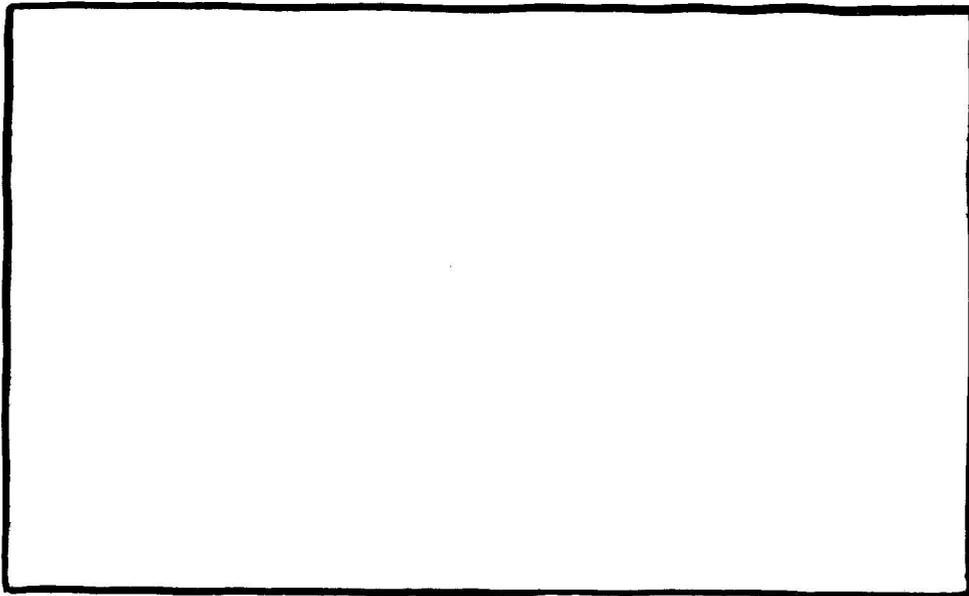
**You'll need:** colors.

\_\_\_\_\_ is Going There

Country name: \_\_\_\_\_

They speak: \_\_\_\_\_

This is the country flag.



## **Daddy/Mommy is Going There**

**Aim:** to familiarize the child with general post information.

**Parents:** Ask your child to draw and color the flag of the country where Dad/Mom is going. Fill in the questions at the bottom of the page. Draw symbols of the country, e.g., crescent, animals.

**Dialogue:** Talk about the post, and how different countries have different flags, languages and customs. Reminisce about places where you've lived before as a way of making "there" and "here" more concrete.

**You'll need:** colors; post information (given by FLO or spouse).

# Watch Me Grow

CHANGES	Date:	Date:	Date:
Height			
Weight			
Hair length			
I can reach (object)			
New skill			

---

Place wrist here

---

Place heel here

## Watch Me Grow

**Aim:** to familiarize the child with the concepts of size and change; to introduce the notion that not all changes (like separation) are bad.

**Parents:** The chart is to be filled at regular time intervals so you can all see how quickly your child is growing and changing. With the wrist on the line, trace your child's handprint and date it. Repeat with foot. In six months, use a different color to trace another hand and footprint on top of the old ones. Finally, when your family is reunited, repeat and trace your spouse's and your own hands also.

**For Fun:** on a separate sheet do the same using a Pet's or Favorite Toy's paw print.

**Dialogue:** Talk about "big" and "small" concepts. Address change in general so the child realizes change is a normal part of life. Some of the changes they will face during separation will be tough, but others are not difficult at all.

**You'll need:** colored markers.

# My list for the Family Meeting



How many sleeps until Daddy/Mommy goes away? \_\_\_\_\_

Will he/she be back before my next birthday? \_\_\_\_\_

Will I see Daddy/Mommy again? \_\_\_\_\_

Two things I'm most worried about:

---

---

Two things I can do while Daddy/Mommy is gone:

---

---

If we make a family time capsule, I would like to put in:

---

---

## **My List for the Family Meeting**

**Aim:** to include your child in family discussions about how the separation will be handled and expectations.

**Parents:** Give your toddler an opportunity to add his/her input into the Family Meeting by filling in the “list.” (Other family members will be making such lists too.) Allow him/her to “write” down their ideas; add a written translation later. Make a mental note of concerns – target these during the family meeting(s).

**Dialogue:** Talk about the changes that the separation will bring. Ask about expectations, if any, and allow him/her to ask questions. In answering questions about time or ‘when,’ use activity or holiday markers rather than dates, e.g., “seven sleeps,” or “after your birthday,” or “before Thanksgiving.”

**You'll need:** crayon or pencil.

**Things to Do While Dad/Mom is away:**



**Where Daddy/Mommy Lives Now**

**Numbers and Time**

**Letters**

**Colors**

**Shapes**

**Opposites**

**Feelings**

**Things to Make and Send**

**Things to Play**



Where \_\_\_\_\_ lives now

## Where Daddy/Mommy Lives Now

**Aim:** to familiarize your child with a few more details about post.

**Parents:** Have your spouse send a photo or describe where he/she lives now. Note details with your child: e.g., a house, apartment building, compound, the color of a building, etc. Ask your child to draw this, showing your spouse in the picture as well. Suggest including weather indicators, (e.g. sun or sand to depict a hot, dusty place).

**Dialogue:** Talk about the type of place Daddy/Mommy lives in; explore similarities and differences to where you are.

**You'll need:** colors, descriptions or photos from post.

# I can count!

1



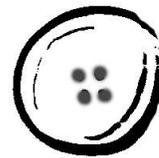
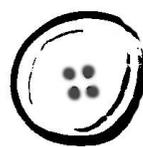
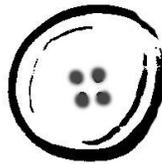
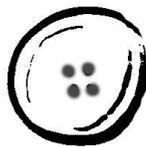
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3



4

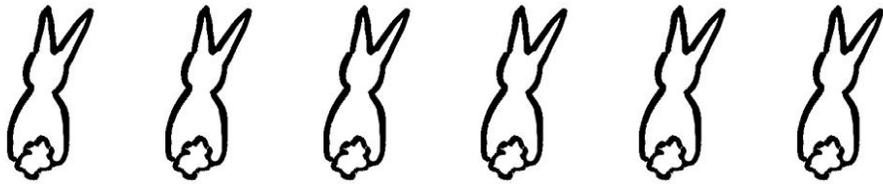


5





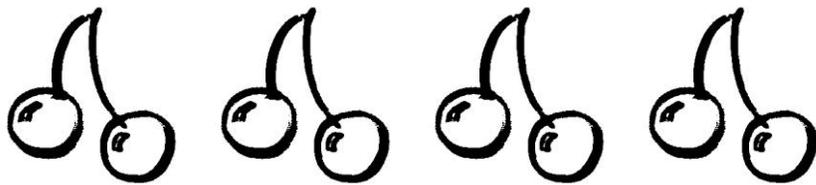
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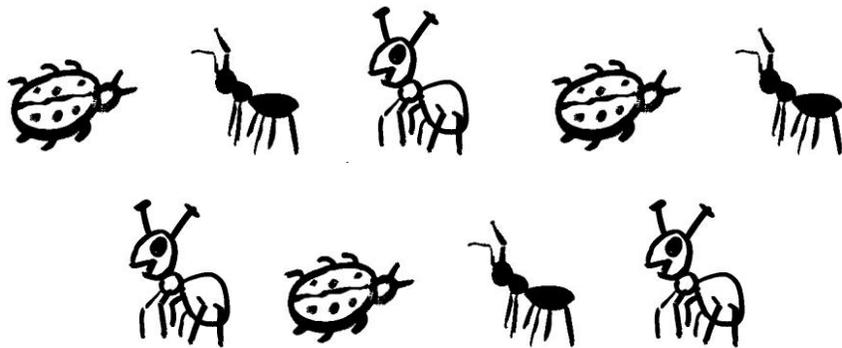
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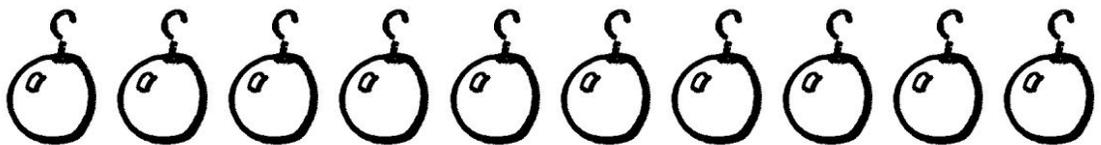
8



9



10



I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

## **I Can Count!**

**Aim:** to develop familiarity with numbers and counting.

**Parents:** Have your child count the items on the page. Go slowly, giving each item a number while counting. Try to write in the number of his/her age.

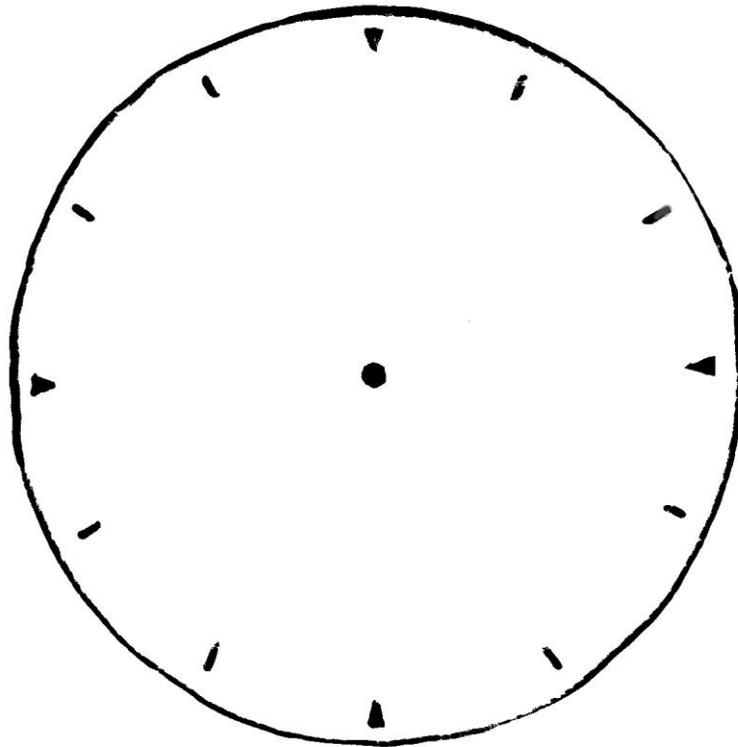
**Variation:** reinforce numbers by counting objects in the house, e.g., steps, chairs, shoes.

**Dialogue:** praise your child for counting in the right order.

**You'll need:** pencil or pen.

# Time to Talk!

This is the time when I talk on the phone



When it is daytime here, it is \_\_\_\_\_ where Daddy/Mommy is.

## Time to Talk

**Aim:** to reinforce number and time concepts; to associate Daddy/Mommy and family with meaningful numbers.

**Parents:** Look at the different clocks in your house, including analog and digital displays. Identify on the clock when Dad/Mom calls, connecting number symbols to time concept. Ask your child to draw in the hands indicating the time when Dad/Mom usually calls.

**Dialogue:** Talk about how numbers appear everywhere in the environment, e.g., clock, phone, or calendar. Numbers help us organize and order our world. Talk about daytime vs. nighttime.

**You'll need:** pencil, colors, clock.

## Times of My Life

Things I do at different times of day:

**Breakfast time** \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock

**Naptime** \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock



**Bath time**

\_\_\_\_\_ o'clock

**Bedtime**

\_\_\_\_\_ o'clock

## Times of My Life (two pages)

**Aim:** to associate numbers with meaningful time concepts; to introduce the idea of sequential order.

**Parents:** Ask your child to draw a small picture of him/herself doing the specified activity or an item associated with it, e.g., bed for naptime. Say at what time it's usually done and what is done at each ritual in a step-by-step manner. Point out particular times when you particularly remember Dad/Mom, e.g., at bedtime, or talking during Dad/Mom phone time.

**Variation:** talk about other times such as getting dressed, going to grandmother's, or going grocery shopping.

**Dialogue:** Talk about different times of day, e.g., how the sun is up at breakfast and going down at dinnertime or bedtime. Reinforcing steps in activities helps your child to learn the order of doing things, e.g., "first, we put on your... then we..."

**You'll need:** pencil, colors.

M-O-M-M-Y

Mommy's name is \_\_\_\_\_

Mommy likes \_\_\_\_\_

The best thing I like about Mommy is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

She smells like \_\_\_\_\_

## Look at All the Letters: Mommy

**Aim:** to reinforce letter recognition.

**Parents:** Have your child color in the letters; draw a picture of Mom and me; ask the questions and record their answers. Send to spouse.

**Variation:** repeat activity with names of other family members, pets, relatives or friends.

**Dialogue:** Use the opportunity to talk about Daddy/Mommy's name, e.g., full name, who gave them their name, etc. Talk about how letters help us to communicate ideas.

**You'll need:** colors.

# D-A-D-D-Y

Daddy's name is \_\_\_\_\_

Daddy likes \_\_\_\_\_

The best thing I like about Daddy is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

He smells like \_\_\_\_\_

## Look at All the Letters: Daddy

**Aim:** to reinforce letter recognition.

**Parents:** Have your child color in the letters; draw a picture of Dad and me; ask the questions and record their answers. Send to spouse.

**Variation:** repeat activity with names of other family members, pets, relatives or friends.

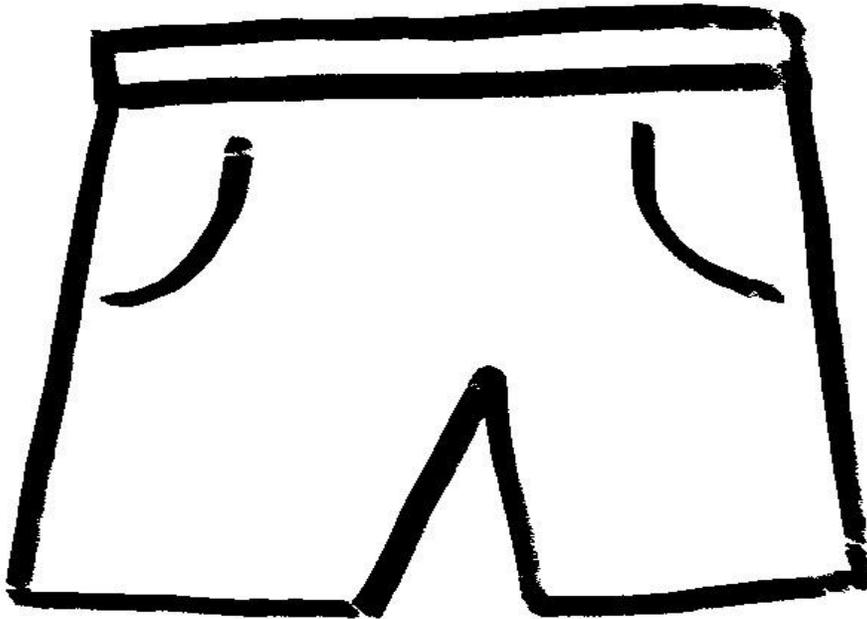
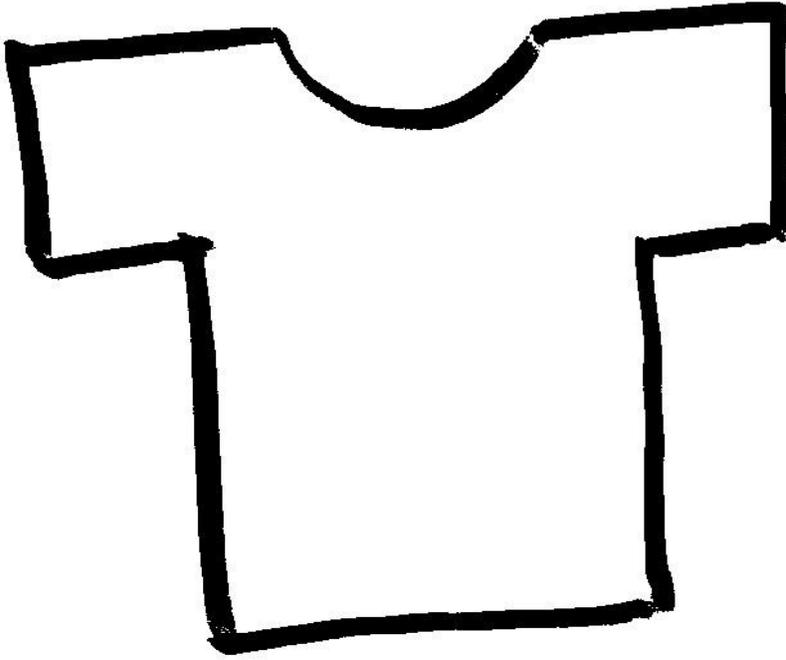
**Dialogue:** Use the opportunity to talk about Daddy/Mommy's name, e.g., full name, who gave them their name, etc. Talk about how letters help us to communicate ideas.

**You'll need:** colors.

# Color Me

Clothes

T-shirt



Shorts

## **Color Me: Clothes**

**Aim:** to reinforce color concepts and associate colors to everyday items.

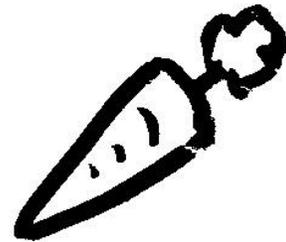
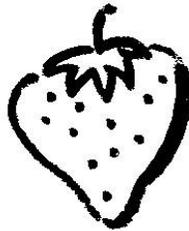
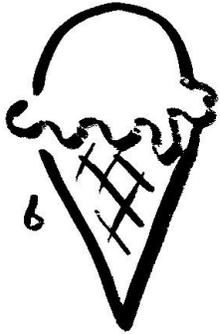
**Parents:** Open your closet door and name the colors that meet the eye. Ask your child to color the items on the sheet, using Dad/Mom's clothes if available.

**Dialogue:** Talk about how different members of the family tend towards certain colors of clothing. Colors can represent our tastes and moods as well as describe an item.

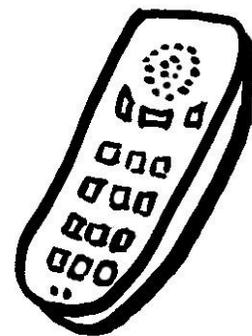
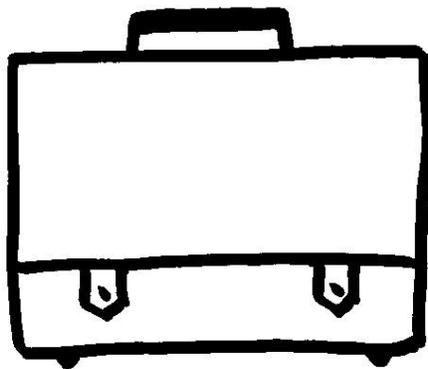
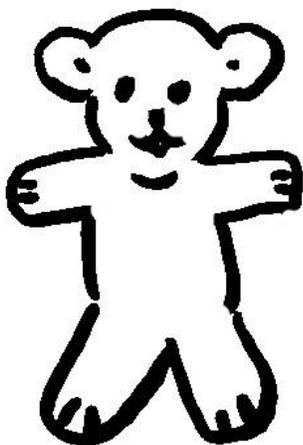
**You'll need:** colors, some of Dad/Mom's clothes.

# Color Me

## Food



## Travel things



## Color Me

**Aim:** to reinforce color concepts and associate colors to everyday items.

**Parents:** Look around the house and comment on all the different colors, including dark/light variations within the same color group. Using the sheet for suggestions, draw one object per page on the blank pages inserted between this and page 47. Ask your child to color the items, referring to real objects when possible. In the U.S., certain colors have come to be associated with certain seasons or holidays – allow your child to use whatever colors they associate with seasons from the places and experiences he/she has seen.

**Variation:** 1. Ask which colors your child identifies with certain things or moods, e.g., red often connotes anger. Make a chart showing colors and what they represent to your child using his/her own words, e.g., light blue means soft, or brown suggests itchy.

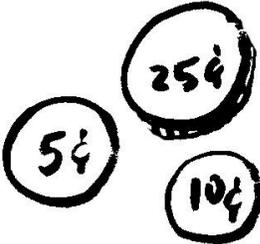
2. Look at photos of post sent by your spouse; ask your child to identify the many colors at post, making note of larger differences, e.g. is it greener where you live or at post?

**Dialogue:** talk about how colorful our world is and how colors describe things.

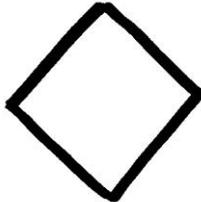
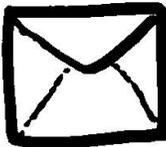
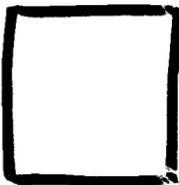
**You'll need:** colors, photos from post; some of Dad/Mom's clothes.

# SHAPES

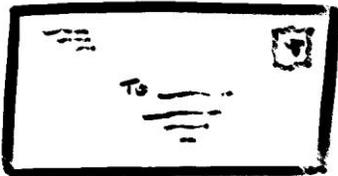
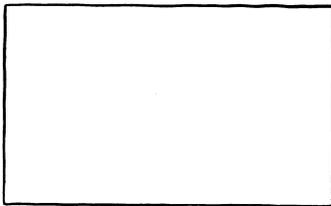
Circle:



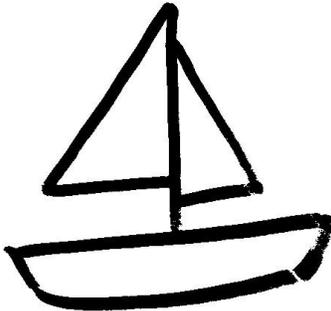
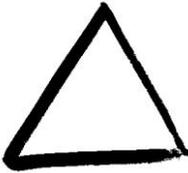
Square:



Rectangle



Triangle



## Shapes 1

**Aim:** to reinforce basic shape recognition.

**Parents:** Ask your child to identify the shapes. Using the sheet for suggestions, draw one object per page on the blank pages inserted between this and page 49. Ask your child to color the items, referring to real objects when possible.

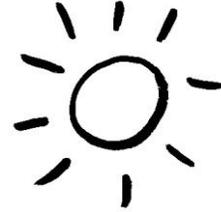
**Dialogue:** praise her/him each time they name the shape correctly.

**You'll need:** crayons.

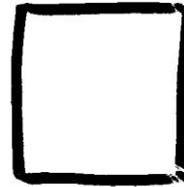
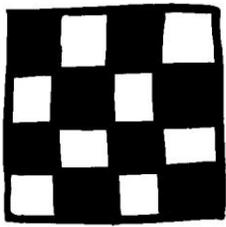
# Shapes

Find and Color in the Shapes

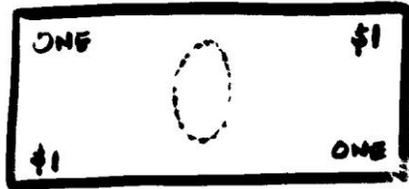
Circle:



Square



Rectangle:



Triangle:



## Shapes 2

**Aim:** to reinforce shape recognition in every day objects.

**Parents:** Ask your child to identify the shapes from among the items. Look around the house (including among Dad/Mom's things) to see if she/he can find shapes. Using the sheet for suggestions, draw one object per page on the blank pages inserted between this and page 51. Ask your child to color the items, referring to real objects when possible.

**Variation:** ask your spouse to send back photos of basic shapes at post, e.g., square windows, wheels, round lamps, etc.

**Dialogue:** shapes are everywhere. Praise her/him each time they find the shape.

**You'll need:** pencil.

# OPPOSITES

In



Out



BIG



Small

Thin



Fat



Left



Right





Short



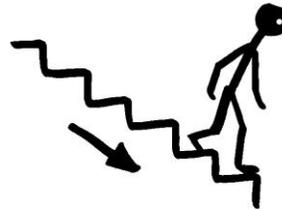
Tall



Up



Down



Hard



Soft



Front



Back



## Opposites (two pages)

**Aim:** to build concepts of basic opposites.

**Parents:** Cover up the right side of the page. Read the left word, ask your child for the opposite. Reveal the right side; repeat item by item. Ask them to act out or show you the opposites.

***Variation for Employee:*** As your child is learning a particular opposite, ask your spouse to work this into the next conversation with the child, or to send a relevant picture from post that illustrates the concept, e.g., for “in – out” show Dad putting keys into a cup, saying “In,” then taking them out, saying “Out.”

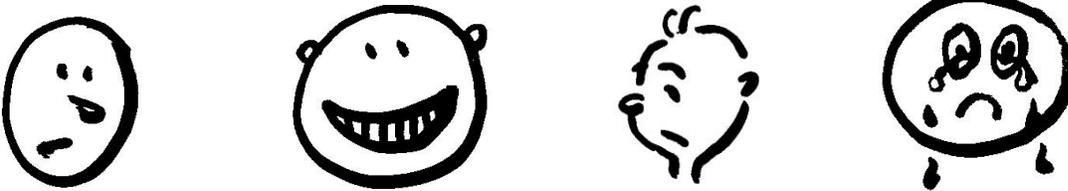
**Dialogue:** Point out opposites in your daily lives. Reinforce these concepts throughout the day, e.g., play “in-out” games; ask them to show you “soft” touch vs. “hard” touch.

**You'll need:** pencil.

# Feelings

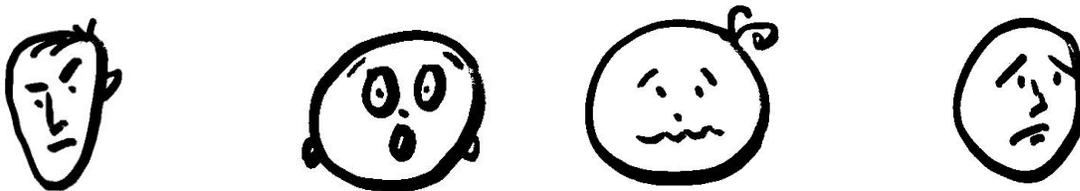
Circle the faces that look....

Happy



Times when I feel happy: \_\_\_\_\_

Worried



I feel worried when \_\_\_\_\_

Sad



I feel sad when \_\_\_\_\_

## Feelings. Page 1

**Aim:** to identify feelings in general and get used to talking about them.

**Parents:** Help your child identify and name the different emotions on the sheet; ask him/her to circle the picture and to make the face him/herself.

**Dialogue:** Talk about feelings in general. (Dialogue suggestions continue on Feelings: Page 2 sheet)

**You'll need:** Pencil.

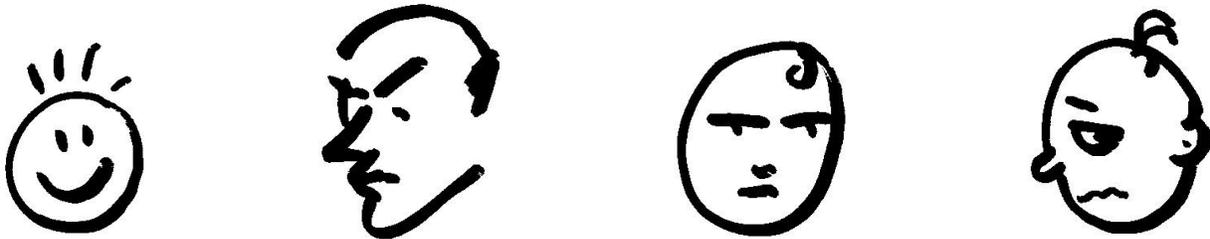
Feelings: Circle the faces that look...

**Scared**

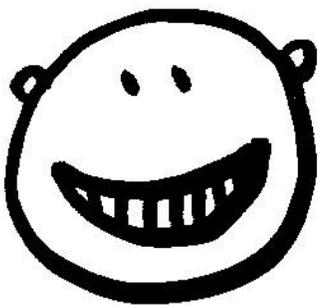


I'm scared when \_\_\_\_\_

**Angry**



I get really angry when \_\_\_\_\_



When I'm happy, I \_\_\_\_\_



When I'm sad I \_\_\_\_\_

## Feelings: Page 2

**Aim:** to identify feelings in general and get used to talking about them.

**Parents:** As with Page 1, help your child identify and name the different emotions on the sheet; ask him/her to circle the picture and to make the face him/herself. Show your 'happy/sad/mad/etc.' face also and say how we can express our emotions with our words as well as our faces.

**Dialogue:** In talking about feelings, convey that all people have both pleasant and unpleasant feelings, and that feelings in themselves are not 'good' or 'bad.' One is not 'bad' just because one feels an unpleasant emotion such as anger or guilt. (Problems do not come from feelings per se but in what one *does* with feelings.) Reinforce that "sad" does not equal "bad" – unhappy feelings are just as valid as happy ones.

**You'll need:** pencil.

# MY FEELINGS



Other words I use when I'm....

Angry: \_\_\_\_\_

Happy: \_\_\_\_\_

Hurt: \_\_\_\_\_

Afraid or nervous: \_\_\_\_\_

Sad: \_\_\_\_\_

## **My Feelings**

**Aim:** to identify your child's own words for specific feelings.

**Parents:** help your child list particular 'feelings' words used in your family in the appropriate category, e.g., "mad; down; fraidy; ikky."

**Variation:** If your child cannot identify emotions per se, start with behaviors or phrases that communicate emotion, e.g., "no fair" might indicate frustration or jealousy; pouting might mean "I'm mad at you."

**Dialogue:** talk about different kinds of feelings and how it's important to talk about them in words, even the ones we don't like to feel.

**You'll need:** pencil.

# Naughty!



I don't like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I'm naughty when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Mommy (or at-home parent) is naughty when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes this happens if I'm naughty \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I'm good, the best thing that happens is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

## Naughty!

**Aim:** become familiar with what your child defines as “naughty” and “good.”

**Parents:** Ask the questions; write down their answers verbatim. Have them draw a “naughty” scene or memory, if they can; talk about what happened. Make a mental note of differences between what she/he thinks is naughty, and how *you* it. Later discuss your child’s moral development with spouse. [Remember at this age, children will tend to define good and naughty according to compliance with rules. Their use of the term “naughty” doesn’t necessarily mean they feel bad.]

**Dialogue:** ask if they have any worries; reinforce that they can always come to you, no matter how bad they feel or how bad the behavior.

**You’ll need:** pencil

# Favorite Things

These are a few of my favorite, favorite, things:

I like to eat: \_\_\_\_\_

I like to drink: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite toy: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite game to play is: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite time of day is: \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite thing about you is: \_\_\_\_\_



I LOVE YOU!

## **Things to Make and Send: Favorite Things**

**Aim:** to keep the employee current on your child's interests.

**Parents:** Ask your child the questions; write the answers. (The "you" in last question refers to Daddy/Mommy who will be reading the page.) Have them draw a picture of themselves with a favorite item, at a favorite time of day with Daddy/Mommy.

**Dialogue:** Talk about liking and disliking things; note that it's OK to like some things more than other things. Reassure that when it comes to loving people, we can love more than one person and love doesn't "run out." Wonder out loud about Dad/Mom's favorite things (get ideas for Care Packages!).

**You'll need:** colors. Send to parent at post!

# See What I Can Do Now!

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ Shoe size: \_\_\_\_\_ Clothes size: \_\_\_\_\_

What I can do today that I couldn't do before: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I can reach \_\_\_\_\_

I eat \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I don't like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Some things I say:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hand print:

## **Things to Make and Send** **See What I can do Now**

**Aim:** to let your spouse know a few details about how your child is developing.

**Parents:** Ask your child some of the questions – you will have to help fill out the rest; trace his/her handprint. Copy the template (at end of manual) and send information again as your child grows – especially before your spouse returns and is looking for gift ideas!

**Dialogue:** Talk about how your child is growing up: she/he can do so much more now, and has more varied interests and tastes. Say how pleased and surprised Daddy/Mommy will be to see how big they are now.

**You'll need:** pen, small photo of your child.

Happy Birthday!!



## **Things to Make and Send: Seasonal Pages: Happy Birthday**

**Aim:** to share family highlights with spouse at post.

**Parents:** Your child uses this sheet to write and draw her/his birthday message to Dad/Mom. When complete, allow her/him to put it in the mail.

**Variations:** Make similar pages about family birthdays and holidays that your spouse might miss, e.g., Mother's/Father's Day, Thanksgiving, and seasonal holidays.

**Dialogue:** Talk about the sentiments of greeting cards and the extra things we do to show thoughtfulness during the times when Dad/Mom is most likely to miss family. Praise your child for making the effort to share their warm thoughts of Dad/Mom.

**You'll need:** Colors. Optional: Stickers, glitter, photos, tape or glue.

# I Went to the Dentist!



I Miss You!

## **Things to Make and Send: Personal Pages: I Went to the Dentist**

**Aim:** to share your child's everyday highlights with spouse at post.

**Parents:** Ask your child to draw a picture of going to the dentist or losing a tooth. Add a sentence describing what happened. Stick on a photo or any memorabilia of that occasion you might still have (e.g., dental office brochure, pictures, receipts). Send to spouse - ask him/her to collect the pages and bring them home at the end of tour.

**Variations:** Make similar pages about one theme. Starting with hints about where, what you did, who was there, etc.; let the child "fill in" with recollections. Add any ticket stubs or other items of interest.

Suggestions:

Firsts: haircut, play ground outing, solid food, diaperless night, flight, etc.

I went swimming

Day with Grandma

Day care

Big Storm on our Street

Play group pals

Dog days (pets)

My big bandaid/Boo-boo

Bedtime rituals

I got sick

I wish you were here to....

**Dialogue:** Talk about what happened at that event. Reinforce how many different things your child has done and seen, and how well they remember things. Say how special times are mingled together with "ordinary" days; that sad days (like missing Dad/Mom times) don't last forever.

**You'll need:** Colors. Optional: Pictures; memorabilia, adhesive.



I LOVE YOU!!



## **Things to Make and Send: I LOVE YOU Sign**

**Aim:** to make and send a cheerful note for Dad/Mom

**Parents:** Have your child draw or doodle anything they want that conveys his/her love to your spouse. Add lip prints using Mom's lipstick and a photo if possible. Ask the child to put it in the envelope, seal with a kiss, and send to post.

**Variation:** Signs and Awards like this are easy, quick and fun to make. You can facilitate it by printing a title/theme from the computer and your child does the rest. They can add pictures or letters cut out from old magazines for fun.

Other suggested titles: I'm So Proud of You; I miss you; Thanks for a Great R&R; You're Coming Home Soon; Best E-Mailer; Most On-Time Phone Calls Award; Bravest Dad/Mom.

**Dialogue:** talk about how happy Dad/Mom will be to receive this special message; it will definitely brighten up the day.

**You'll need:** Colors, lipstick. Optional: photos, magazine cut outs, glue.

## Things to Do For Homecoming!



Before Dad/Mom arrives:

Welcome Home Banner

New Words, New Skills

Things I want to Do When We're Together Again

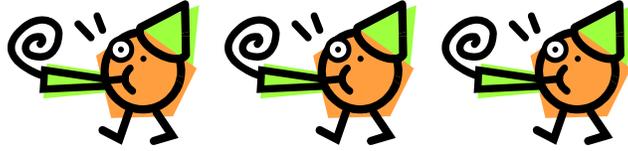
After Dad/Mom Comes Home

I Wonder

Reminders

Family Reunion Meeting





**WELCOME HOME!!!!**



## To do before homecoming

### Welcome Home Banner

**Aim:** to include your child on homecoming preparations and celebrations.

**Parents:** Child decorates the page with colorful, welcoming doo-dads. Hang it up in a prominent place just before arrival. Invite child to make other decorations like paper chains.

**Variation:** draw a “You’re Coming Home Soon” banner; send to post in last month of separation.

**Dialogue:** Talk about homecoming and celebration plans. Assign certain tasks she/he can do easily both at arrival and later at the homecoming celebration, e.g., carry Daddy/Mommy’s coat, bring in a soft pillow, sing a song.

**You’ll need:** Colors, tape. Optional: stickers and glitter optional; extra paper for other decorations.

## Things I Want to Do When We're Together Again

I'm looking forward to:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## To do 1 week before homecoming

### Things I Want to Do with Daddy/Mommy

**Aim:** to learn what your child's ideas and wishes are and involve them in Homecoming.

**Parents:** Ask your child what are the most important things she/he wants to do with Dad/Mom within the first few weeks of arrival. Allow her/him to choose one-on-one or group activities, or both. Write them down and ask your child to draw a picture of Dad/Mom doing one of these activities with him/her.

**Dialogue:** Talk about homecoming, taking note of your child's expectations. From time to time while exploring their wishes, interject reality without dampening his/her spirits about the things he/she anticipates doing. Now that it's clearer what activities are important to the child, say that you and Dad/Mom will find the best possible time when Dad/Mom isn't too tired to pay full attention.

**You'll need:** colors.

# New Words and News Skills

Look at how I've changed and grown!

Words that I say now that I didn't say before:

<hr/>	<hr/>

Things that I can do now!

<hr/>	<hr/>

**To complete before homecoming; show to parent after he/she returns.**

## **New Words, New Skills**

**Aim:** to show Dad/Mom new developments since he/she left; to build a sense of mastery in speech and physical skills.

**Parents:** Ask your child to think about a) new words or speech abilities, and b) new skills acquired since Dad/Mom left. Draw a picture in space provided. Remember behavioral skills will outweigh academic skills at this age, e.g., “I can open the fridge by myself now” is as important an achievement as “I can read.”

### ***Variations:***

1. If short on newly acquired skills, show increments of growth, e.g., “You can say ‘Yellow and Lunch’ now instead of ‘yeyyow and yunch’;” or recognizing letters quicker than before.
2. If your child has idiosyncratic speech or words made up by combining two languages, make a list of the words he/she says and provide translation, e.g., “yai-yai” means “naughty;” “haati moo” means “elephant”.

**Dialogue:** Any new skill is praise worthy. Talk about how much your child has learned and accomplished over the last year. Point out how they get better at newly acquired skills each time they’re practiced.

**Employee:** use this opportunity to talk about how things in the family are changing again now that you’re home and can see how many more things your child can do for him/herself. Emphasize that even positive changes, like growth, need adjustment periods for practice and getting things right.

**You’ll need:** pencil and colors.

# Reminders

Things to do with Daddy and Mommy:



Done (check)

- Draw my last hand print with Daddy and Mommy's \_\_\_\_\_
- Draw a picture of My Family Now \_\_\_\_\_
- Look at what I can do by myself now \_\_\_\_\_
- Do "I Wonder" list \_\_\_\_\_
- Put all the pages back in my binder \_\_\_\_\_
- Looking through my treasure box together \_\_\_\_\_
- Things I want to do with Daddy/Mommy \_\_\_\_\_

## To do 1-2 weeks after homecoming

### Reminders: Things to Do with Mom and Dad

**Aim:** to create an opportunity for your child to bring closure to the separation by reminiscing together over the good and not-so-good times.

**Parents:** About 3-4 weeks after the employee's return, spend quiet one-on-one time when you can go over the Reminder list with your child; allow her/him to check off items. Depending on how many items she/he has on the list to share, you will need more than one sitting -- plan on one or two activities per session.

**Dialogue:** talk about the themes in each activity; praise your child for having grown and done so well during the separation.

**You'll need:** For the following manual pages:

My hand print with Daddy/Mommy's: add your handprints to the Watch Me Grow page.

My family now: on a separate piece of paper, the child draws a picture of the reunited family; insert this into binder.

Look at what I can do by myself now: go over New Words, New Skills page.

I wonder: fill out the page together (instructions on back of sheet).

Help gather all the pages and complete this Dad/Mom and Me binder. Add photos.

Look through your child's treasure box together; tell stories about where the items came from.

Look at Things I Want to Do When We're Together list; tick off the ones you've done together. Ask if she/he wants to modify the list; set times to complete the list if possible.

## I Wonder....

When Daddy or Mommy looks a certain way, I wonder what it means

When Daddy looks/says.....	I think it means....



When Mommy looks/says....	I think it means....

## To do 3-4 weeks or more after homecoming:

### I Wonder...

**Aim:** to explore each other's communication signals and clarify as needed.

**Parents:** Ask your child if they've noticed you looking or sounding a certain way and ask them what they think it means, e.g., "frowning means you're mad at me for something;" "yelling means you don't love me anymore."

Note: Your child picks up on all the nuances of your moods, tone of voice and actions. Because their thinking is egocentric at this age, children will interpret these as meaning something about them. This exercise presents an opportunity to address any misunderstandings openly and hopefully, safely. If your child notes something less than complementary about you, try not to become defensive or go into a guilt tailspin, neither of which would help your child. Instead, recognize that your moods, likely a residue from the separation, are understandably affecting your family. Even if you do not seek support for yourself now, recognize his/her perceptions, and encourage your child to talk with someone else until you are more able to be available.

**Dialogue:** talk about how people can't always tell what another person's actions mean and it's OK to ask if you think something's wrong.

**You'll need:** pencil.

## My List for the Family Reunion Meeting

The best thing I like about Daddy/Mommy being home again is:

---

Two things that we did well while Daddy/Mommy was away:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Two things that are different now that Daddy/Mommy's home:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Some things I would like to change:

---

---

I go to Mommy for \_\_\_\_\_, and I go to

Daddy for \_\_\_\_\_.

Don't forget to open the Family Time  
Capsule!



## To do 1 month after homecoming

### **My List for the Family Reunion Meeting**

**Aim:** to include your toddler in family discussions about adjustments that might be made to the family routines.

**Parents:** Give your child an opportunity to add his/her input into the Family Meeting by filling in the list. (Other family members will be making such lists too.) Allow them to “write” down their ideas; add a written translation later. Make a mental note of the things he/she seems most concerned about – target these concerns during the family meeting(s).

Don't forget to incorporate the family activities and time capsule after the meeting!

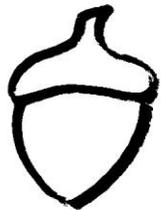
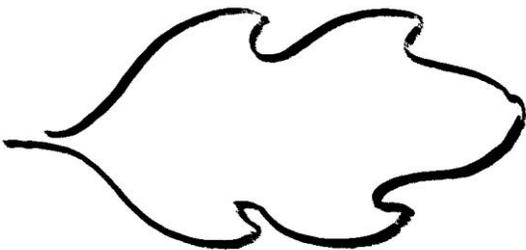
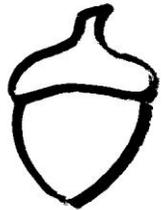
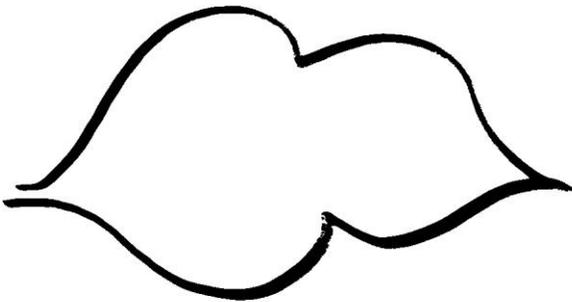
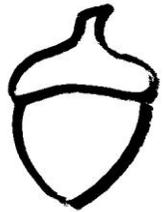
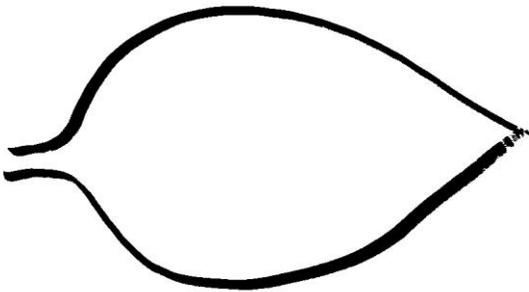
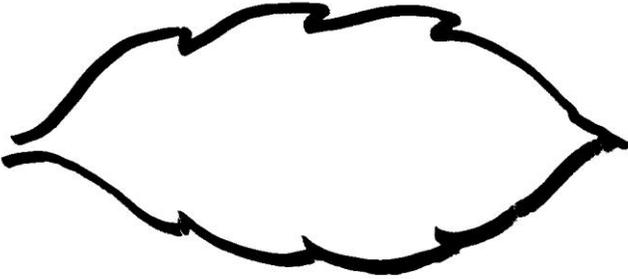
**Dialogue:** Talk about how well he/she did with all the changes during the separation. Point out how things have changed again now that Dad/Mom has come home. Ask about their perceptions of changes, if any, and allow them to ask questions. Note any concerns; reassure that in time, things will smooth out.

During the actual family meeting, allow your youngest children to speak first; excuse them later to play quietly if they cannot sit still.

**You'll need:** pencil; plan time for meeting(s).

# Templates

Family tree leaves, acorns





# See What I Can Do Now!

Today's date \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ Shoe size: \_\_\_\_\_ Clothes size: \_\_\_\_\_

What I can do today that I couldn't do before: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I can reach \_\_\_\_\_

I eat \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I don't like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Some things I say:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hand print: