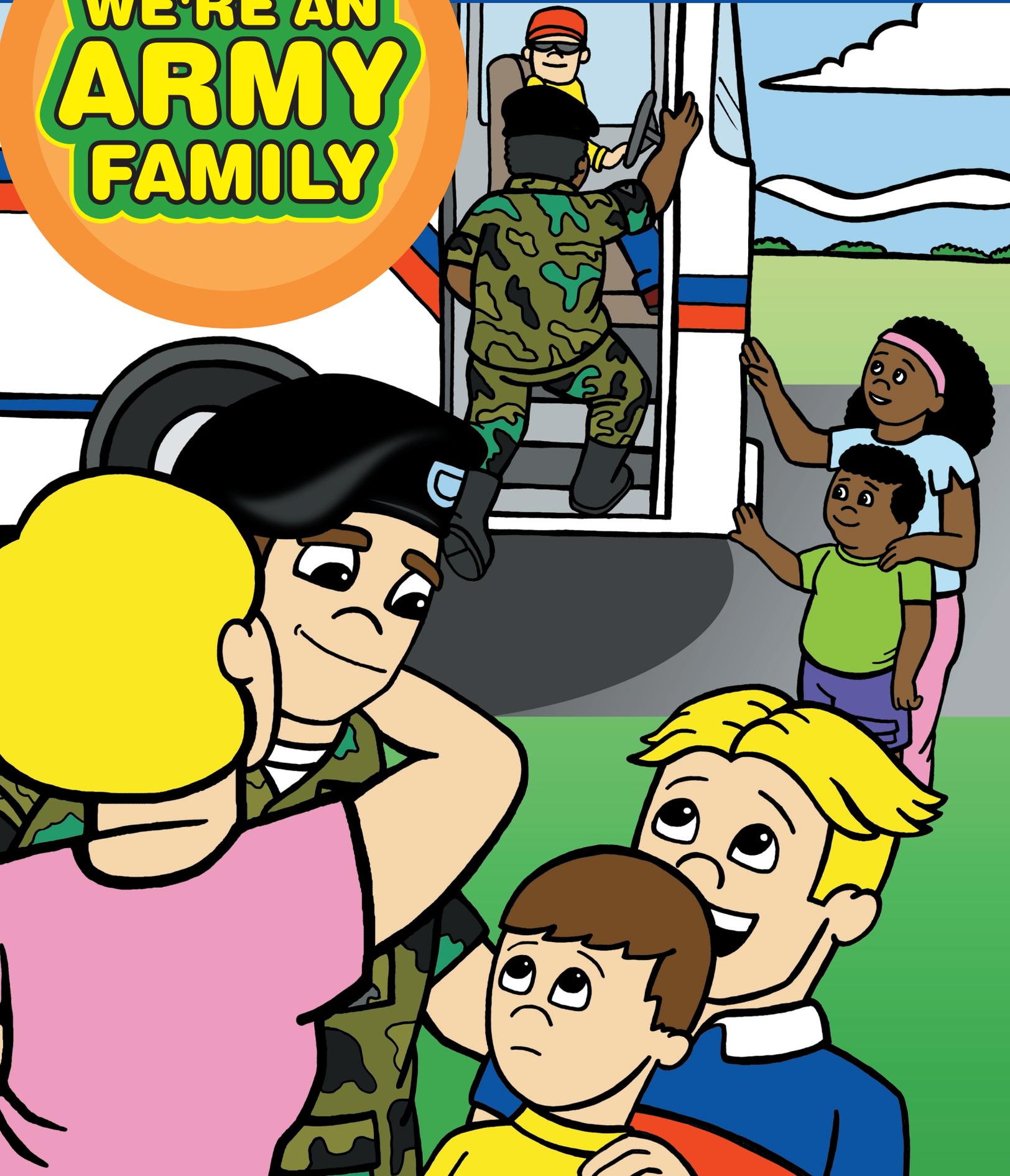


A Story about Deployment
For School-Age Children

WE'RE AN ARMY FAMILY





We're an Army Family is one of a series of four booklets about Army separations for children and young people ages 3 to 17. These booklets were written as part of Operation READY under contract between the University of California, Riverside and the US Army Community & Family Support Center, Family Programs Directorate.

All four booklets were developed with the help of active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve families, Army Community Service personnel, and Child Development and Youth Services staff members.

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We sincerely thank all those who helped us produce these booklets.

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OPERATION
READY
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

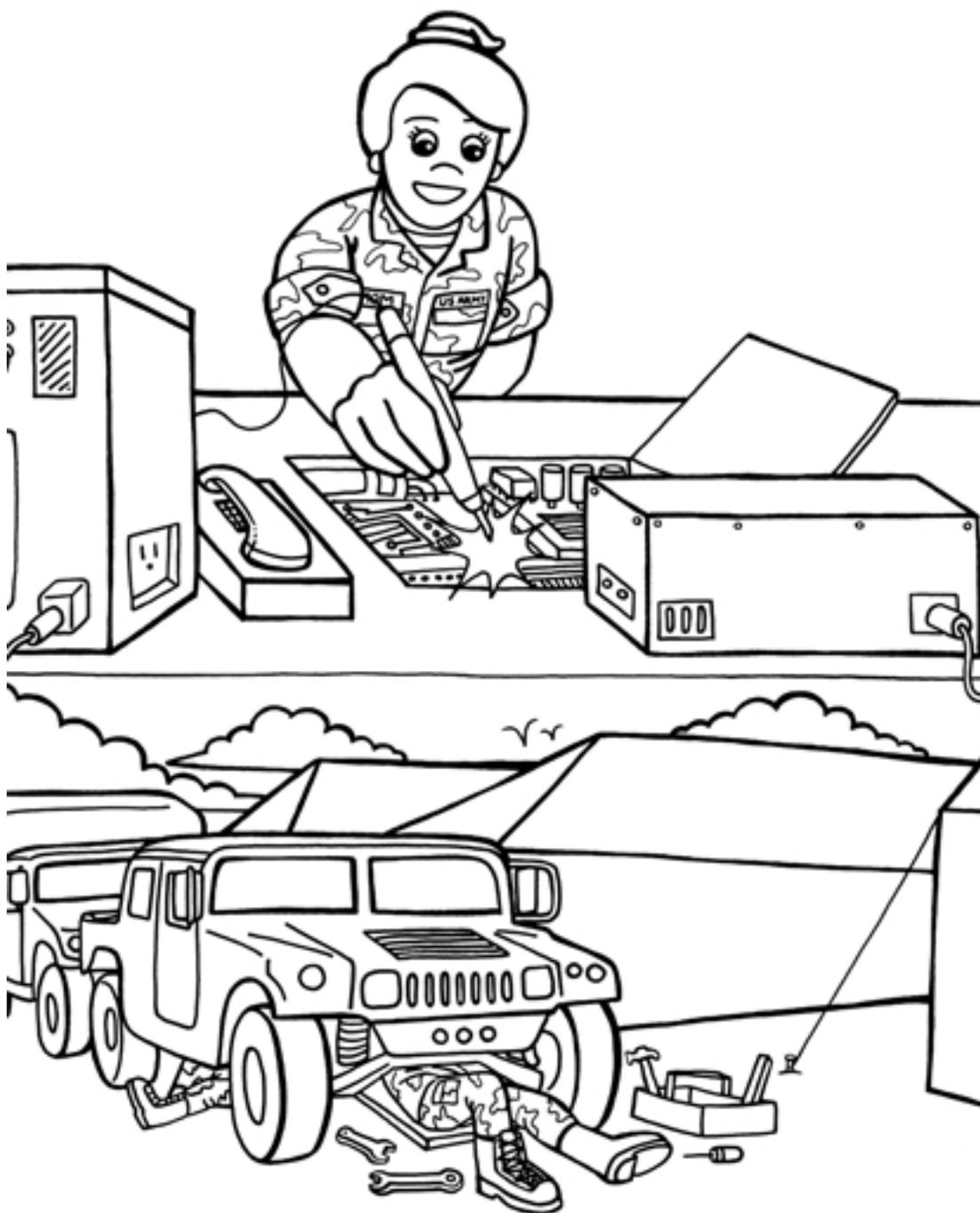
We're an Army Family



My name is Matt and I'm seven and a half. I'm going into the third grade. We're an Army family. Dad is in the Army and Mom is in the Army Reserves. Mom says that means she's a 'part-time' soldier. Oh yeah, I have a big brother named Kevin, too.



My best friends are Leon and Kim. Leon's dad is in the Army and Kim's mom is a soldier.



People in the Army have important jobs. My dad is a medic. He helps doctors take care of soldiers who are sick or hurt. Mom works on radios. Kim's mom is a medic like Dad, and Leon's daddy fixes motors. I want to learn to fix motors, too.

A lot of the time our parents work nearby, but sometimes soldiers have to go away to do their jobs. When Dad has to go away to do his Army job I'm proud of him, because I know his job is important. Sometimes Mom goes away to do her part-time Army work, too.



When Mom or Dad is going away I have lots of different feelings. I feel bad or proud or sad or scared or mad. I can have more than one feeling at the same time. Want to know a secret? Sometimes I'm even happy that my mom is going away for a while, because I'll get to spend more time with Dad.

Grown-ups have lots of different feelings about going away, too. Before Mom or Dad goes away we all talk about how we feel. Talking about our feelings helps us feel better. Making a picture of my feelings helps me feel better. Kevin writes about his feelings in his JOURNAL. I'm going to start a journal and write about my feelings too.

My mom and dad try to tell me **BEFORE** they go on an Army trip. One time Dad had to leave right away. That was hard. I got mad at him because he didn't have time to say goodbye.

Before Mom or Dad goes away we have a **FAMILY MEETING** about what's going to happen while they're gone. I like these talks. I ask lots of "W" questions. I want to know where they're going, when they'll leave, and when they'll get home? I want to know will things be different while they're gone and will they be safe?

Before the family meeting, my parents or Kevin help me write down all my questions. They answer as many questions as they can. Sometimes they don't know all the answers. Sometimes they can't tell me some things, 'cause it's **SECRET** Army stuff. But I still feel better when we talk about it.

These are the questions I asked the last time Mom had to go away.

Where will we say goodbye to Mom? At home? At the airfield?

Will Mom write to me a lot?

Will Mom get hurt?

Will Dad be grouchy 'cause Mom's gone?

What can I do if I really need to talk to Mom while she's gone?

Will I have more work to do at home?

Will there be more rules at home?

Who will come watch my soccer games?

What will I do if I get really lonely or scared?

Who will take care of us if Dad has to go away too?



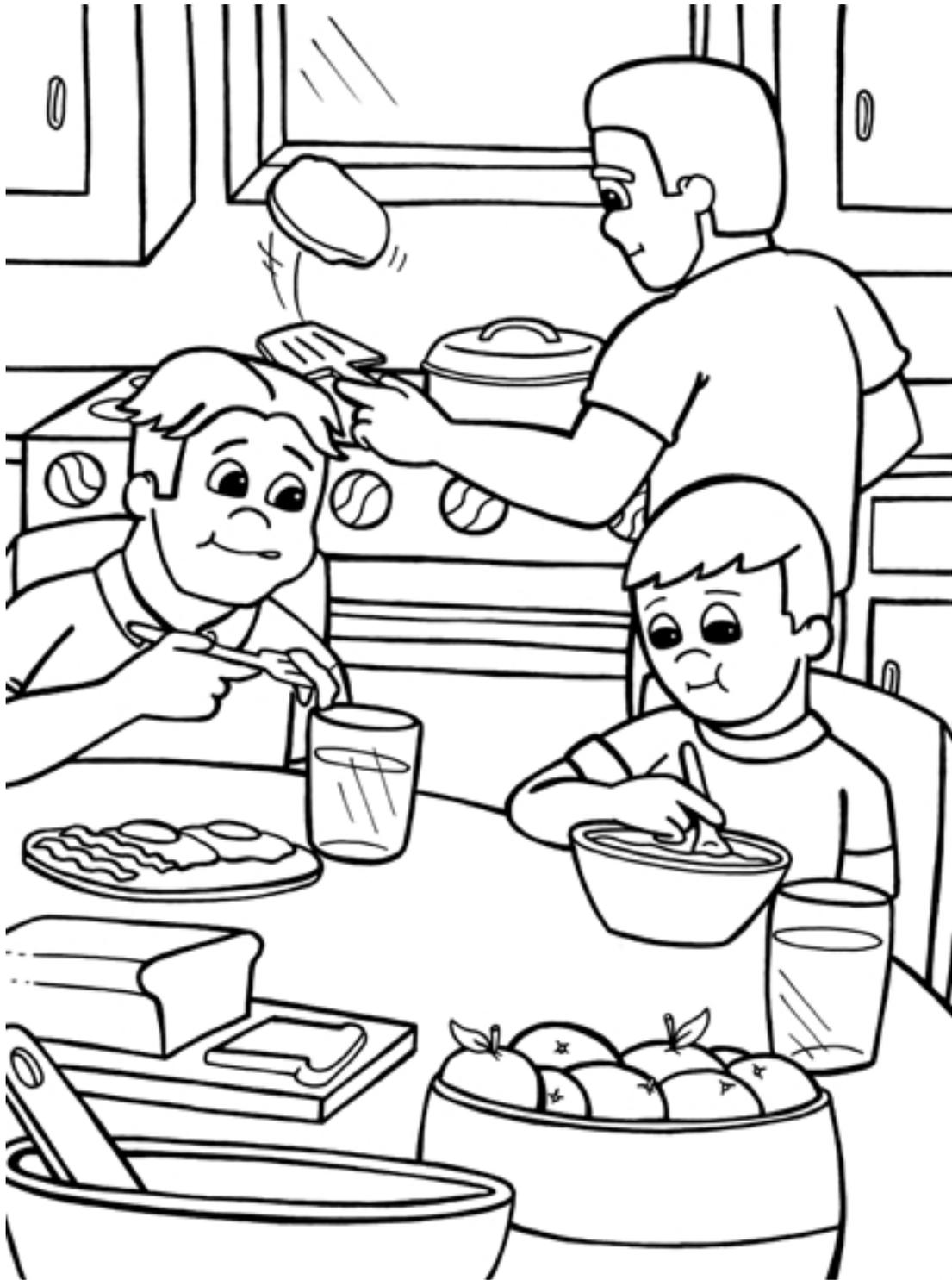


Mom and Dad help me write down the answers to my questions, so I can look at them later. After Mom or Dad is gone I like to read about where they are and what they are doing there.

We find the place they are going to on a map and put a big red X on it. We draw a green line from our house to where Mom or Dad is going. Then we draw a blue line back to us.

We stick the answers to my questions and the map on the refrigerator with magnets. We put a picture of our parent there, too. We can look at them whenever we want.

Leon and Kim ask their parents lots of questions too. The **MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION** is, “ Who will take care of us when our parents go away.”



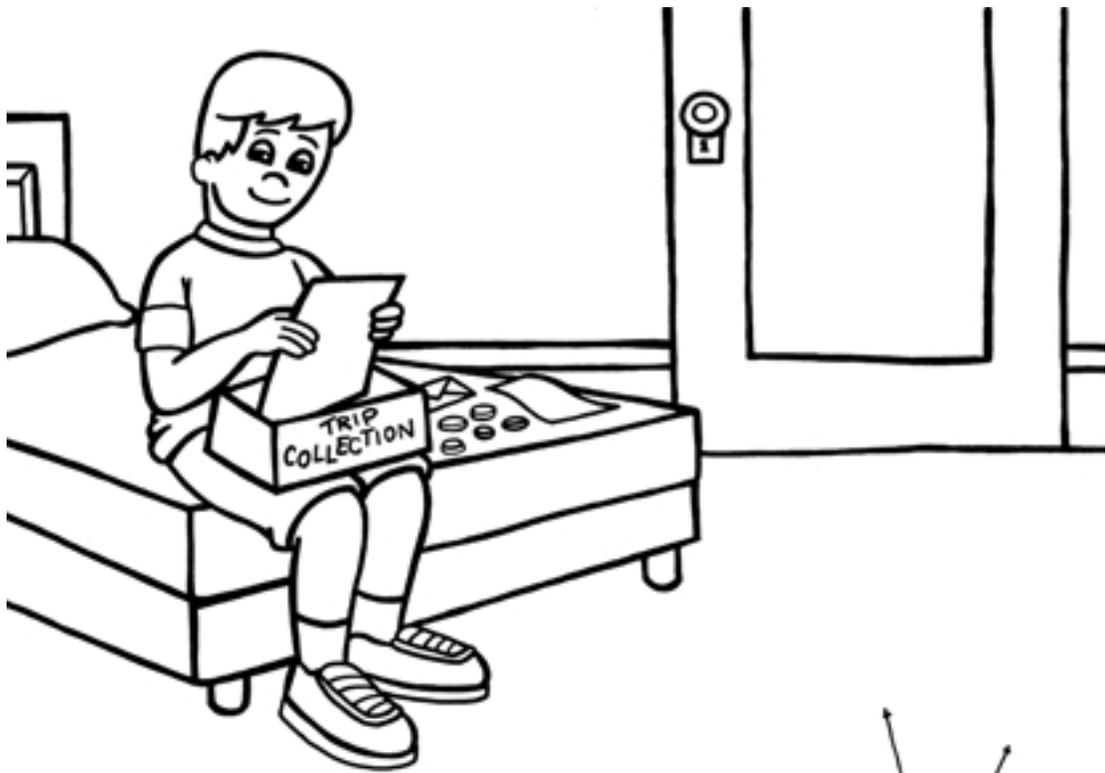
In my family, when Mom goes away Dad takes care of us; and Mom takes care of us when Dad is gone. I worry about who will stay with us if Mom and Dad both have to go away at the same time. Dad says Grandma Smith will always stay with us if they both have to leave. That's okay. We like it when Grandma is here.

Leon's mom takes care of him and his little sister when his dad is gone. When Kim's mom goes away, she stays with her grown-up friend Michelle, who lives next door. She says that's a lot of fun!!!!



Before my mom or dad goes away, our family does something special like going to the zoo or having a party or picnic. My parent who is leaving spends special time alone with just me and Kevin. Before Mom went to training last summer we saw the Dinosaur skeletons at the museum. They were really big!!!!

We take pictures during our special time together, and put them in a book. I like to look at them while my mom or dad is away.



Before they go I decorate a box for a TRIP COLLECTION. While they're gone they send me things that I keep in it, like money from other countries and pictures of where they sleep.

Once Dad sent a wrapper from my favorite candy bar—but the writing was in German. I took it to school and showed it to my friends. Then I put it in my box with some stamps and Dad's letters. I'm going to keep my trip collections forever. Leon makes a trip scrapbook for his trip collection when his Dad goes away.



Before our parents go away we make goodbye surprises for each other. Mom reads our favorite stories on tape. She sings our goodnight song on the tapes too.

Once Dad made a book of photos of our family. He wrote a story of what was happening in the pictures on each page. I like looking at the book when he's gone. We're going to add more pictures and stories before he goes away next time. Dad won't sing on a tape, though. He says he sounds yucky.

Kim's mom left her four cards. She got to open one card every Saturday while her mom was gone. She said that was great!



We make things for our parents to take with them on their Army trips.

I like to draw “Goodbye-for-Now” pictures for my parents. Sometimes Kevin helps me write notes on the back. Kevin makes “Good-bye-for-Now” letters and pictures for Mom and Dad, too. We put them in Mom or Dad’s duffel bag as a surprise or give them to Mom or Dad at a “Goodbye-for-Now” dinner the night before they leave.

Leon decorated a white t-shirt for his dad to take with him. Kim made flowers out of tissue and hid them in her mom’s duffel to find later.

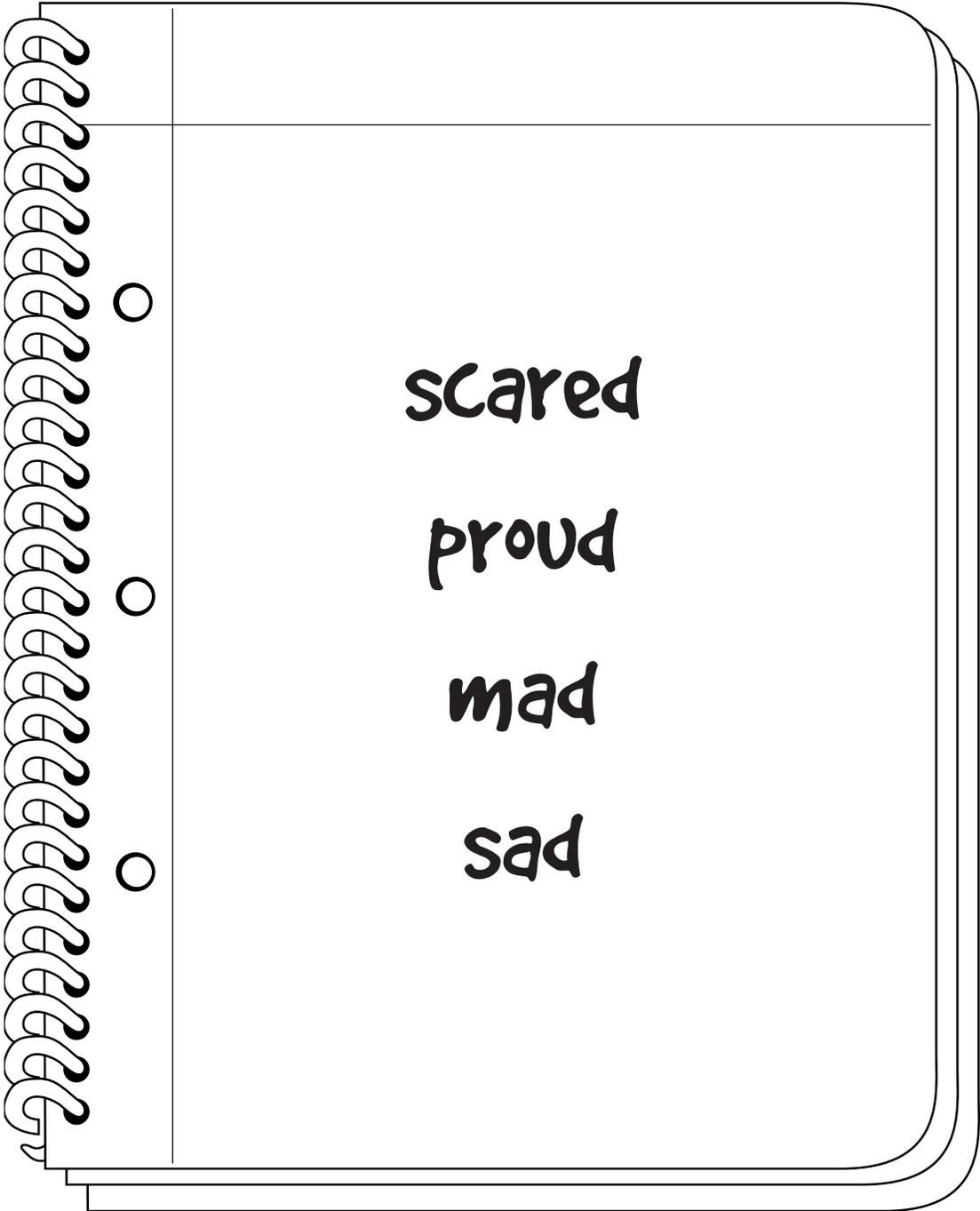


When it's time for our parents to leave, we all go to say goodbye. Sometimes we say goodbye at home or at the airfield or at a bus.

We are excited and sad at the same time. Sometimes I'm a little mad at Mom or Dad for leaving and don't want to say goodbye at all. Sometimes we cry a little or a lot. Sometimes we cry on the way back home.

When my Mom or Dad is away I can feel bad or yucky. My tummy hurts or I feel sick because they are gone.

Last time Dad was away Mom helped me write down my feelings.



I was scared that Dad would get hurt. I was proud because he helps other soldiers. I was kinda mad at him for leaving, too. But mostly I was sad, because I missed him. Mom told me she was sad and missed Dad a lot too.



When I feel bad or sad, I feel better if I do something fun. I ride my bike, play catch, or watch my favorite videos. Talking to my friends helps me feel better, too.

Sometimes I talk to my soccer coach, Mr. Williams, about how I feel. I like talking to Grandma Smith and to my Sunday School teacher, Miss Martha, too. Grandma showed me how to take **BIG BREATHS** when I feel bad to help me feel better. We made a pinwheel to practice **BIG BREATHS** with.

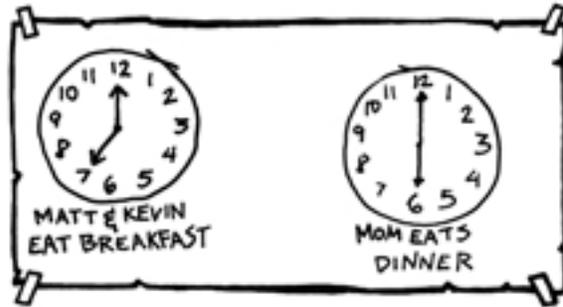


My teacher, Ms. Warner, wants to know when Mom or Dad is away on an Army trip. When my mom is away, Dad writes a note for me to take to my teacher. Dad sends a note to Ms. Warner when Mom is gone. When I feel bad, Ms. Warner talks to me and I feel better.



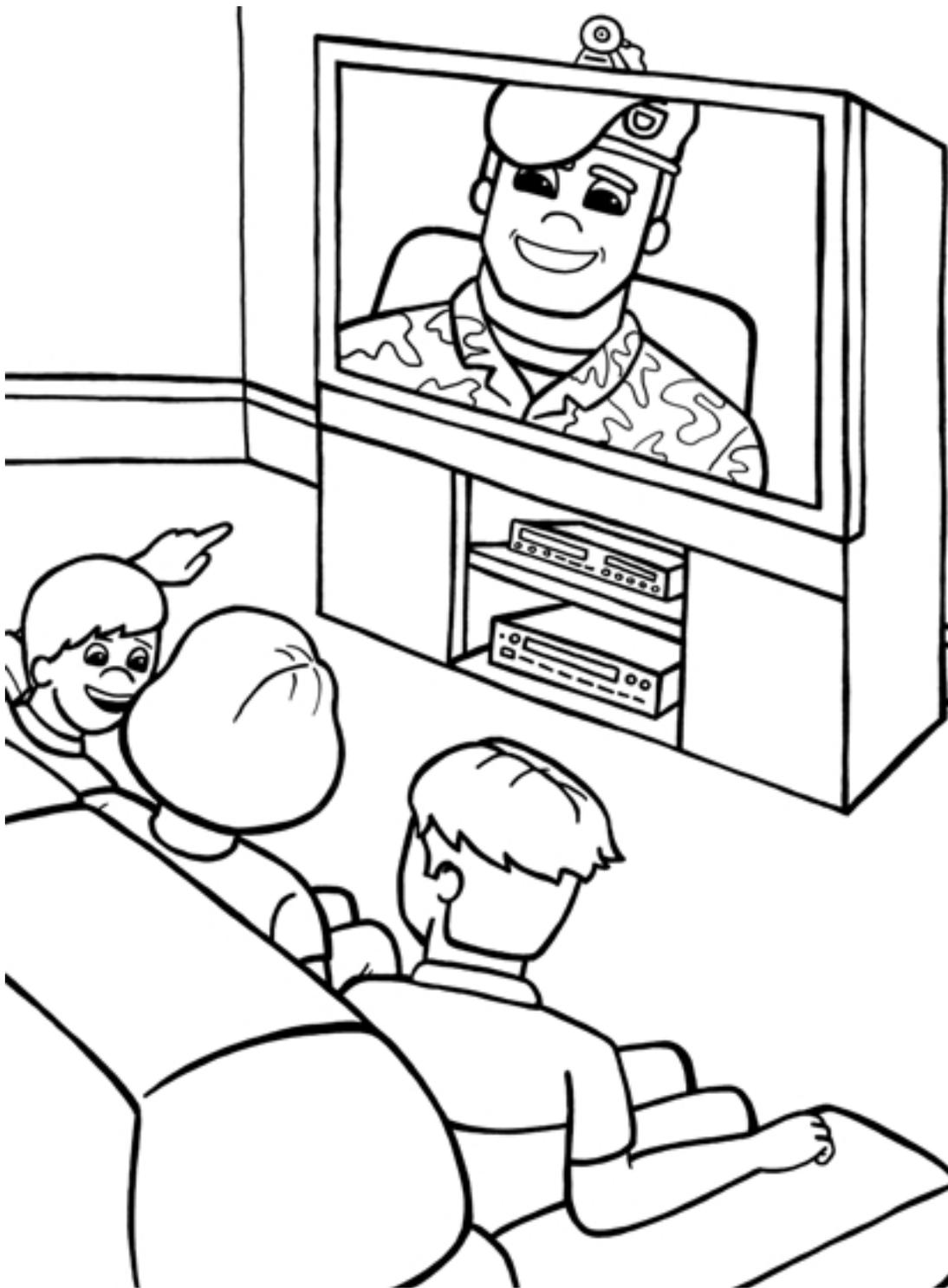
When Dad is gone, sometimes Mom feels bad or lonely, too. I help cheer her up. Last time Dad was away I picked some flowers and put them on the dinner table. She liked that.

When Mom is gone, I sing silly songs and tell Dad jokes and make him laugh when he feels grouchy.



When my mom or dad is away, it can be their breakfast time when I'm going to bed, or their lunchtime in the middle of the night while I'm sleeping.

We make clocks with the time at our house and the time where Mom or Dad is, so we can see what they're doing when we're having breakfast or dinner, or driving to school. I think it's funny when Mom is just getting up in the morning while Kevin and I are getting ready for bed.



Last time Dad was gone we went to the Army post and talked to him on a **REALLY BIG TV**. We had to wait a while for other kids to talk to their parents, but it was great.

I told Dad, “You’re a TV star now.” He said, “Then I better do more than just sit here,” and made some silly faces. It was pretty fun.



When our mom or dad is away we send things to each other. We send letters, some pictures we draw, and some of our schoolwork, especially the “A” papers. Kim colored a picture for her mom on cardboard and cut it up to make a puzzle. Her mom did the puzzle and taped it together. Then her mom wrote a letter on the back and mailed it back to Kim. That was pretty cool. Maybe I’ll send my dad a puzzle next time he’s gone.



We make care packages to send to Mom or Dad. We put lots of things in the care packages like their favorite comic strips, candy, cookies, and new photos of us. Mom helps Kevin and me make tapes and send them to Dad. We talk about our soccer games and tell jokes. When Dad's gone for a long time, Mom makes videos of Kevin and me and sends them to Dad.



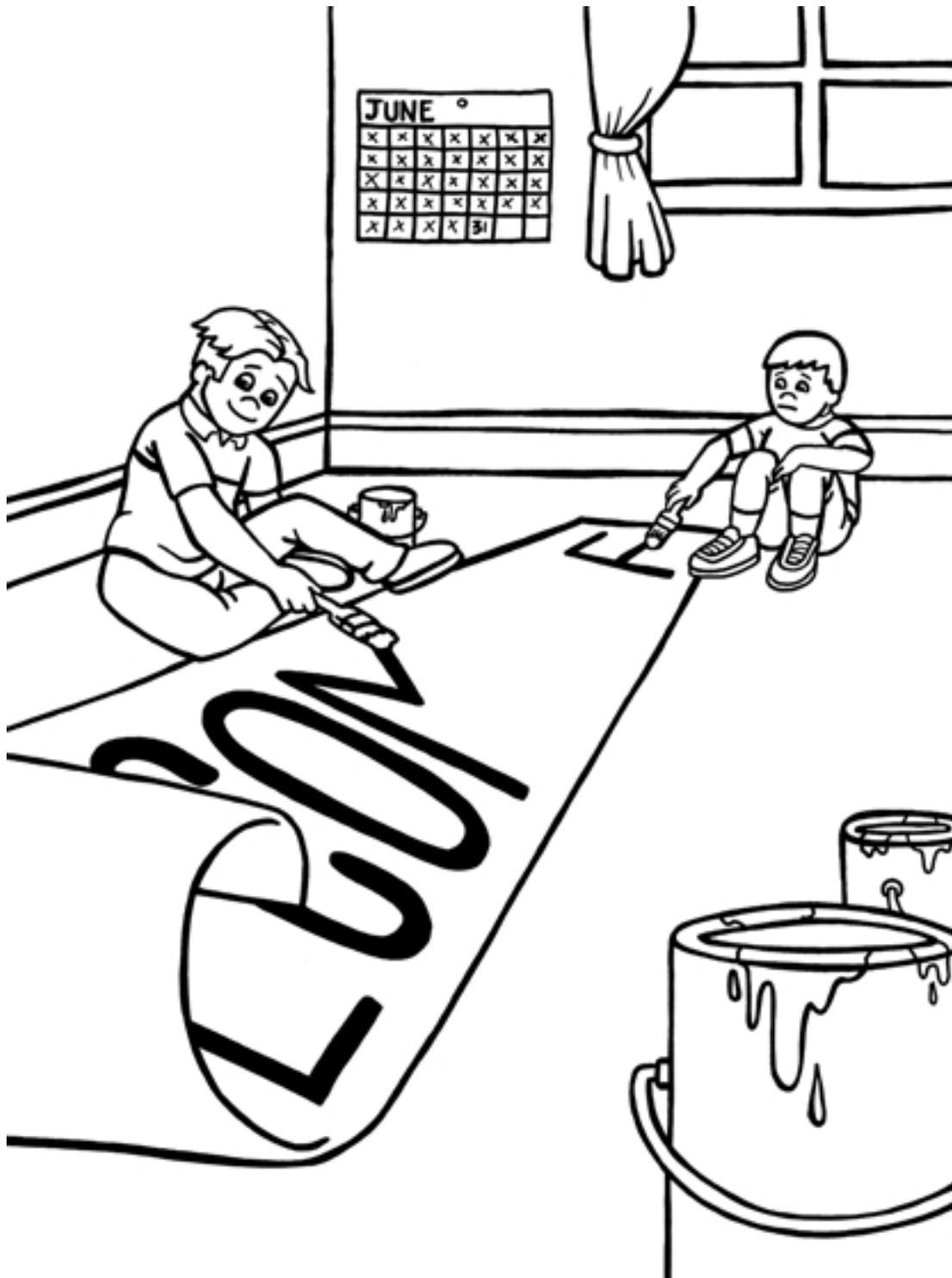
Our moms and dads send us letters and cards, too. Sometimes they send presents and other stuff.

Kim and her mom send each other Good Times Cards. They write about cool stuff that happens while her mom is gone. Kim puts some of the cards on her wall.



Mom got me my own email account and showed me how to send email letters on the computer. Now I can email Dad or Mom when they are gone, and they'll email me back as soon as they can.

Sometimes we can even send pictures to each other on the computer. One time Mom sent an email picture of her sitting in a Humvee. I want to ride in a Humvee too!!!



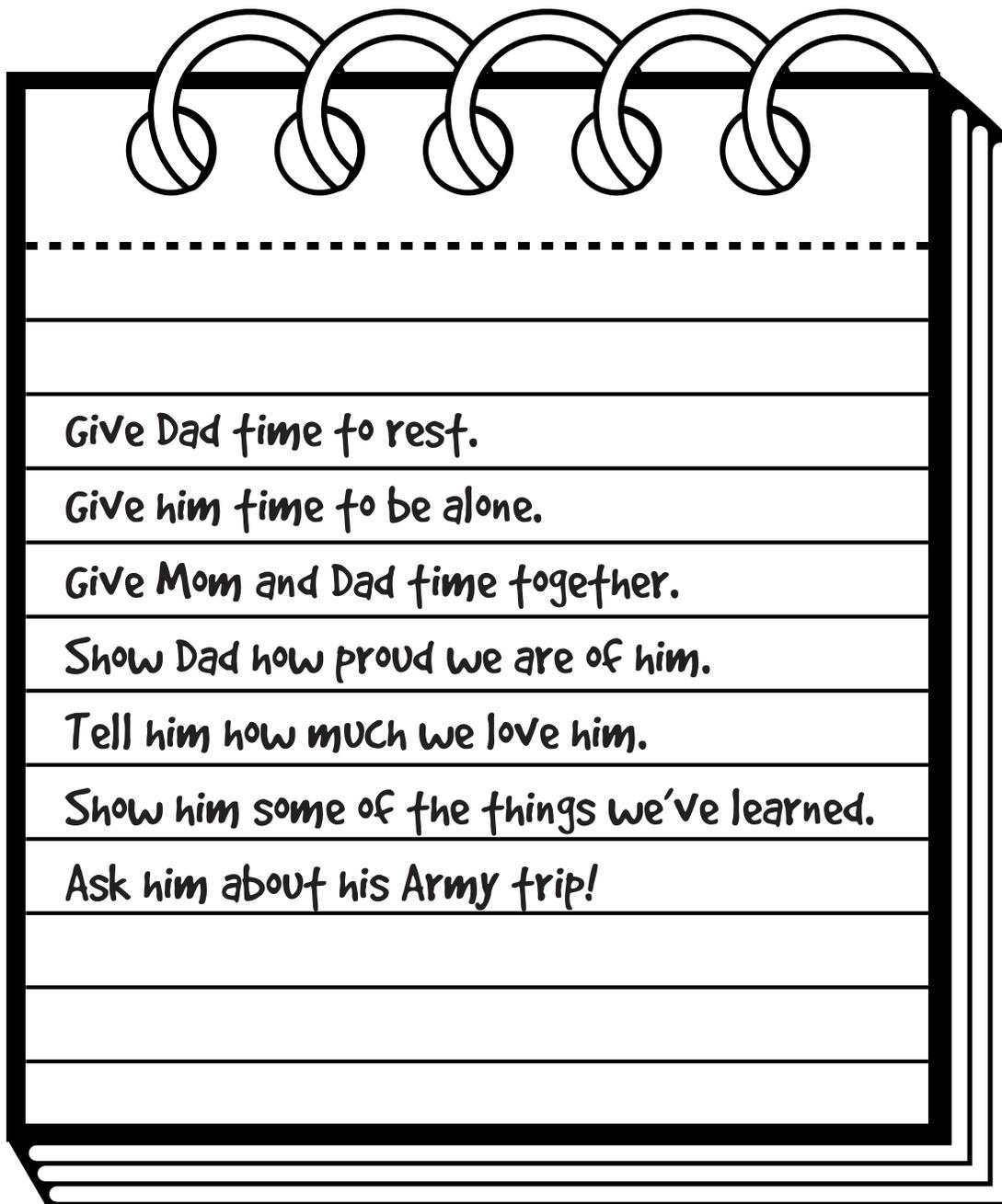
We mark the days off the calendar until it's almost time for Mom or Dad to come home. Then we start getting ready for their homecoming. Homecomings are exciting and fun but they can be hard, too.

Before my mom or dad comes home sometimes I feel funny. I worry that they might not like me as much because I've changed. I wonder if they're gonna be mad at me because I wasn't always good while they were away. I'm afraid I won't really know them, that they'll be different. Maybe they won't remember me.

Mom and Dad say that grown-ups in the Army get nervous about coming home, too. We talk about our homecoming worries before my Mom or Dad gets home. That helps. We talk about it after they come home, too.

Last year Dad was away for a long time. Before he came home Kevin and I helped Mom clean the house and decorate it for homecoming. She talked to us about the homecoming while we were helping her get ready.

Mom said we might feel funny with Dad at first, but that was okay. She said Dad might feel funny too. It can take time to get used to each other again. Mom told us that Dad might be grouchy or tired, but he'd still be happy to see us. She helped us make a list of things that we could do so Dad's homecoming would be better for all of us.



A spiral-bound notebook with a list of suggestions for homecoming. The notebook has a black cover and a white page with a spiral binding at the top. The page is divided into horizontal lines. The list of suggestions is written in a cursive font.

- Give Dad time to rest.
- Give him time to be alone.
- Give Mom and Dad time together.
- Show Dad how proud we are of him.
- Tell him how much we love him.
- Show him some of the things we've learned.
- Ask him about his Army trip!



We had a good homecoming.

I like it when our whole family is
TOGETHER AGAIN!!

