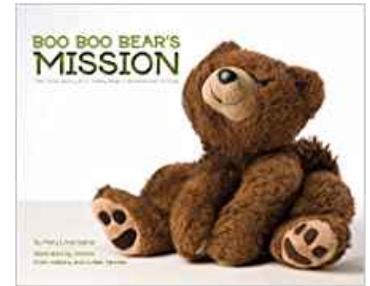


# Boo Boo Bear's Mission

by Mary Linda Sather

Shea Leigh experiences difficult feelings when she is separated from her father. She feels some relief when she sends her favorite stuffed animal, Boo Boo Bear, to visit him. Boo Boo Bear goes on many adventures with Shea Leigh's father and then returns home with him from the war. This book comforts children who are separated from a caregiver and encourages them to be compassionate to their loved ones who are far away.



## Discussion and Questions:

- Ask questions about the feelings in the book and relate them to real life. Provide a feelings-face chart for young and nonverbal children to answer questions by pointing. (see <https://bit.ly/2sKHAYM>)
- Some questions to ask include:
  - What is Shea Leigh feeling on this page?
  - How do you feel when someone you love goes away? What do you do to make yourself feel better?
  - What did Boo Boo Bear and Dad do together?
- If children have difficulty answering a question, help them by labeling an emotion and pointing to it on the feelings face chart. Children may also struggle to relate this story to their life. Adults can offer suggestions to get the child thinking, such as "Maybe you felt sad when your caregivers dropped you off at school for the first time?"
- There may be many words in this book that might be unfamiliar to some children. Talk about these words and allow children who may already know them to help explain them. Some words to discuss include:

• War	• Scraggly	• Cockpit
• Jets	• Base	• Maximum
• Mission	• Airmen	• Thrust
• Sneak	• Dine	• Crew chiefs
• Brave	• Mess hall	• Peaceful
• Pouted	• Sublime	• Veterans
• Scrawny	• Flak vest	• Adventure
• Sleeping pod	• Maneuver	
- For some of the words above, adults can draw attention to the pictures in the book to help children understand. Consider asking the children questions such as:
  - What are they doing on this page?
  - Can you find the [OBJECT/PERSON]?
- Help nonverbal children point to the pictures to locate objects/people.
- When children have difficulty answering a question, model the answer for them.
- Ask children predictive questions about the book such as:
  - What do you think is going to happen? (pg. 6)
  - What do you think will make Shea feel better? (pg. 12)
  - What do you think Shea will send to her dad? (pg. 22)
  - What do you think Boo Boo Bear is thinking when deciding to go on a ride? (pg. 32)

## Activities:

### Ages Birth to 5:

- **Mission for Me**
  - Before the caregiver is deployed, encourage them to pick out a stuffed animal to give to the child. The caregiver should tell the child that this stuffed animal will keep them company while the caregiver is away.
  - The military uses the term mission to describe what they will do. If the child is old enough, brainstorm things the child can do with their new stuffed animal to create their own missions (i.e., go to the store, visit the park, eat dinner at the table, etc.).
  - The caregiver at home can take pictures of the child with their stuffed animal while they complete their missions.
  - If the child is old enough, provide them with opportunities to take pictures that include other family members and the stuffed animal.
  - The pictures can be sent to the deployed caregiver in an email or letter. Families can also create a scrapbook of all the pictures to give to the service member when they return home.
- **Song**
  - Where is Family? can be sung to the tune of Where is Thumbkin. The family labels should be changed to fit the family's make-up.  
Where is Mommy? Where is Mommy?  
Here I am. Here I am.  
How are you today, Mom? How are you today, Mom?  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_. I feel \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in the blank with an emotion such as glad, sad, alone, etc.)

### Ages 3 to 5:

- **Feelings Book**
  - Gather construction paper, scissors, markers, glue, magazines with pictures of people, and a stapler.
  - Ask children to list several feelings. As a feeling is listed, write it at the top of a piece of construction paper.
  - Encourage children to look through the magazines to find people expressing the emotions that were listed.
  - If children have difficulty finding a picture of an emotion, assist them in finding appropriate images.
  - Help the children cut out the pictures and glue them to the piece of construction paper.
  - Children should try to find three or more pictures for each emotion. If pictures cannot be found, children can draw a picture of that emotion on the construction paper.
  - In individual settings, invite caregivers to help their children locate/draw pictures of different emotions.
  - In group settings, encourage children to work together to create a Group Feelings Book. Each child will get to help work on at least one page of the book.
  - After the pages of the book are complete, consider laminating or covering them with clear contact paper. Then bind the book using staples or binder rings.
  - The book should be kept somewhere so that the children can get to the book when they need.
  - The book can be used to talk about feelings during book reading or when a child is experiencing intense emotions.

- **Feeling and Emotion Game:**

- Gather the family or group to play a game.
- Explain that each person is going to act out an emotion while everyone else tries to guess the emotion.
- Have children list emotions. Write down these emotions on strips of paper and put them into a container.
- A child or family member should select an emotion from the container to act out. Whisper the name of the emotion to the child if they are unable to read it.
- Put the strip of paper to the side to reuse it if necessary.
- Remind players to use their face and body to act out the emotions.
- If a child has difficulty acting out an emotion, an adult can help by offering suggestions.
- In a group setting, children can either shout out their guesses or raise their hands to offer an answer. In a home setting, family members can simply shout out their guess.
- The person who guesses correctly, should be chosen to act the next emotion.
- Make sure everyone gets a turn. If the same person guesses an answer more than once, they can pick someone who has not had a turn to act out the next emotion.
- When all the emotions have been used from the container, put them back in.
- Continue the game until all the players have had at least one turn.

- **Family Journals**

This activity can help families feel connected to the deployed caregiver while they are separated.

- Help the family use a scrap book, notebook, or construction paper to record family activities and events while the service member is deployed.
- Encourage the service member to create their own journal as well.
- Some things to include in the journal are:
  - photos
  - drawings
  - written descriptions of events
  - written descriptions of feelings
  - brochures/flyers from events attended
  - copies of awards, report cards, and school work
  - letters or notes
  - heights/weight of children
  - outlines or prints of children's feet/hands
- Help the family pick a designated time each week to add to the journal as a family.
- Encourage each family member (including the service member) to add something to the journal each week.
- When the service member returns home, encourage the family to plan a time to share their journals.

- **Adventures to See**

In *Boo Boo Bear's Mission*, Shea sends Boo Boo Bear to her father to keep him company while he is away. This was comforting to her because she felt connected to her father while they were separated. The activity below helps children to experience the same comfort as Shea.

- Work with the family to select or create an item to send with the service member while they are deployed. Some suggestions for items are:
  - Stuffed animal

- Flat Stanley (see <http://www.flatstanleyproject.com/>)
- Sock puppet drawings or other artwork
- Encourage the service member to take the item with them to places similar to the ones listed in *Boo Boo Bear's Mission* (i.e., mess hall, sleeping pod, aircraft, etc.) This allows the child to learn more about their caregiver's job/living space.
- The loved ones can take pictures, write in a journal, and/or describe the "adventures" in a letter to send back to the family.
- If applicable and the family is comfortable, the activity can be shared with the child's group.
- The group could send additional items to the military caregiver or receive updates from the child throughout the time the caregiver is deployed.