Lily Hates Goodbyes
By Jerilyn Marler

In Lily Hates Goodbyes a little girl named Lily has a dad in the military. Sometimes she has to say goodbye to him, when he leaves home for a very long time. Lily feels many emotions that are hard to understand, as she wants to feel connected to her dad but struggles while he is away. This story describes how Lily learns to cope with her emotions and to be happy in her daily life while she looks forward to greeting her dad when he gets home.

Discussion and Questions:

- Talk about what a deployment is and what feelings people might experience if a family member is deployed. Discuss the feelings of the service member who is leaving, the child, and the other caregivers.
- Discuss how family members might feel when a service member returns.
- Brainstorm things that can be done to remember loved ones when they are deployed, cope with emotions while service members are gone, and celebrate when they return home. Compare these ideas to what Lily does in the book.
- Ask questions to help older children relate to the character, Lily.
  - Sometimes Lily feels mad because her daddy is gone for a very long time. Do you feel mad sometimes too? Why? What do you do when you feel mad? Affirm the feelings of the child and note that others have similar feelings too.
  - Lily looks at the moon and knows that her daddy can see it too. This reminds her of her dad in a special way. Ask the child how they might remember a family member if they were deployed. What can they look at to remind them of someone who is gone? What special activity can they do to remind them that their family member is thinking of them?
  - Pause on the pages that show Lily riding her bike, swinging in the park, and playing the piano. Encourage the child to stay active. Talk about things that the deployed caregiver enjoyed doing with their child do when they were home. Encourage the child to do those things while the service member is away too. Take pictures of these activities so that the deployed caregiver can see them when they return or put them into a book (or attach to an electronic communication message) to send to the deployed caregiver.
  - At one point in the story, Lily takes slow deep breaths to calm down. Explain to the child that it is okay to get upset, that everyone gets upset at times, but the important thing is what we do when we get upset. Point to the picture of Lily taking deep breaths and explain that Lily is very upset but that she is taking slow deep breaths to calm herself down. Practice this strategy with the child. Show them how to breathe in slowly to the count of 4, then breathe out for 4 counts. Discuss how they feel after the exercise and ask if they would like to practice this strategy again in the future. Talk about other things people can do when they are upset and want to calm down such as, reading a favorite story, listening to music, drawing, playing outside, squeezing a favorite stuffed animal, and doing stretches.

Activities:
Ages Birth to 5:
- Feelings Toss
  - After discussing emotions, to help facilitate and encourage conversation, use an inflatable ball that can be marked with a marker (preferably a ball with different sections, like a beach ball).
• Label the sections of the ball with different faces and/or words representing the emotions discussed.
• Pass or toss the ball around and when someone catches the ball, they should say the name of the emotion their hand is touching.
• Ask the children to fill in the blanks: “I feel [emotion] when [caregiver name or title] is gone because __________.” Or allow the child to simply state their feeling about their caregiver’s absence.
• For young children, place feeling face pictures on the section of the ball. The ball can be rolled back and forth between the child and adult while singing a song to a simple tune with simple words, such as “I roll the ball to you. You roll the ball to me. And when you feel __________ my love you will still see.”

Memory Box
• Find a shoe box or other type of container in which to keep memories. These memories can include things such as pictures the child has drawn, a growth chart, important ideas and events the child wants to tell the deployed caregiver, along with photos and letters they have sent. After the service member returns, open the box together and go through the memories in the box together.

Music Montage
• Write (or find) songs with the child about or dedicated to the deployed caregiver.
• Encourage older children to sing the songs when they miss or are thinking about their deployed caregiver. Other important adults can sing the songs to a young infant or toddler while dancing or rocking together.
• There might be a special song that the child and the deployed caregiver could sing and record together prior to their departure. This recording can be routinely played as a reminder of the deployed caregiver.

Ages 3 to 5:
• To-Do Wish List
  • Think of activities the family can do together when the deployed service member returns.
  • Make a list with the child by thinking about activities everyone in the family likes to do or things the child and the deployed caregiver like to do together. Think of special things the child can look forward to doing, and, for trips that are expected to be somewhat short in duration, consider planning some activities with the service member before they depart so the child can look forward to them.
  • When making the list, keep in mind that some service members will need time to adjust after returning home. Try to prepare the child in advance that they may have to wait to start doing the activities on their list so that their caregiver can get used to being home first. When the service member has adjusted and is ready to engage in some of the activities on the list, transfer the ideas to a large, colorful piece of paper and hang it in a common area of the home. After completing an activity on the list, encourage the child to draw a picture or dictate a story about it next to the item on the list.
  • Be sure the list includes items that are low key and can be done at home, as well as, some that take place in public settings. Some service members may be uncomfortable in public spaces initially, particularly if they are loud and crowded. Guide the child to select activities that meet the wants and needs of both the child and the service member.

Countdown Calendar
• When the family has been given a return date for the deployed family member, create a countdown calendar by making a paper chain. Encourage the child to select the colors and help
staple the links together. A paper chain allows the caregiver at home to discretely add more or take away links if the return date changes (as it often does).

- **Reunion Role Play**
  - In order to prepare for a family member’s return, it may be helpful to reenact the reunion with adults, dolls, toys, stuffed animals etc. The return of the deployed caregiver can be a very exciting and special moment.
  - Use stuffed animals or other family members to role-play what might happen during the reunion.
    - What might the child say? What might the deployed caregiver say?
    - How might everyone feel?
    - Is there anything special that can be given to the caregiver or said to the returning service member (i.e., a welcome home poster)? What will be done to celebrate?
  - Practice hugging, smiling, cheering and celebrating.