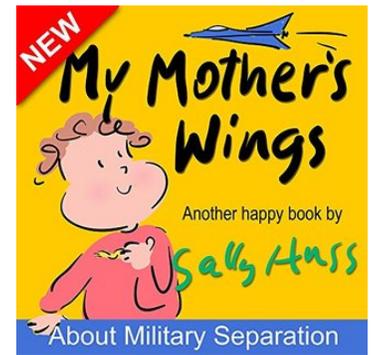


My Mother's Wings

By Sally Huss

This story is from the perspective of a young boy whose mother is a military pilot. The child talks about how he is lonely and sad when his mother is away, but when she's home he feels happy. The mother gives her son a pair of military wings to wear while she is away. She explains that in their hearts, they are never apart. The child takes this message and shares it with his friends who also have military caregivers.



Discussion and Questions:

- What do you think they are feeling in this picture? If the child has trouble answering, give them a choice. Are they sad or happy? Why do you think they are happy? What makes you sad? (pg. 3)
- What do you like to do with your caregiver when they are home? (pg. 7)
- The boy's mommy wants him to smile. Do you think you can smile too? (pg. 15)
- The boy's friend Ellie is upset. How do you feel when your friends are sad? What do you do to help them when they feel sad? (pg. 17)
- How did the child help Ellie? Do you think his mommy would be happy that he helped his friend? (pg. 18)

Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Dramatic Play**
 - In the story, the child knew that their mother was a pilot in the military. The child explained that the mother flies a big plane in the sky. If possible, invite the military caregiver to play with the child and explain what their job is. In a group setting, the caregiver can be a guest speaker and explain their job to the entire group. Then, think of a way to help the child(ren) understand the military caregiver's job by enacting it through play, if possible.
 - Examples:
 - If a child's caregiver is a pilot, show them how to bend their arms (like wings) and then fly around the group or individual setting. Explain to the child, "This is what mommy does while she is away." You could also show the child pictures of an aircraft to further help them understand their caregiver's job.
 - If the child's caregiver is on a submarine, find a toy submarine and a tub of water. The child can dip the submarine in the water. Show the children that submarines go deep down in the water and explain, "That's why it's hard to talk to daddy while he is away."
 - For very young children, caregivers can pretend with the child by acting out the sounds or motions of the machines the military caregiver drives or works on.
- **Music and Movement Activity**
 - After reading the story, sing the song below and do the motions listed. If the child's deployed caregiver works with airplanes, encourage the child to practice the song and perform it for the caregiver when they returns home. If the deployed caregiver has access to email or video chat, the caregiver at home could send a video of the performance to the deployed caregiver. The song can be adapted to fit other military branches as needed.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lyrics
I'm a little airplane, way uphigh. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motions
(hand shades eyes and looks into the sky) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With my great big silver wings, watch me fly! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (arms out like wings & tilting side to side) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the pilot tells me, I'll come down | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (hold hand over ear like a radio) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swooping and gliding, to the ground. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (hold arms out like wings, spin around, fall down) |

Ages 3 to 5:

- Calendar Activity:**

- In an individual setting, create a countdown calendar with the child. The calendar should have important days to look forward to along the way, with the last day being when the deployed family member will be home. There are many ways the countdown calendar can be made. Some examples are a paper chain, envelopes hanging on a clothesline, or a clipboard with paper.



- For longer deployments, a countdown of months may be more appropriate than a countdown of days. Warn the child that sometimes return dates can change and help adjust the calendar if necessary. For children who may be sensitive to the changing dates (i.e., the deployed caregiver will return later than expected), it is recommended to adjust the calendar while they are sleeping or away from home.
- For more calendar ideas visit <https://bit.ly/2KEiTHz>
- In a group setting, a child who has a deployed caregiver might need extra support in the group. In addition, the caregiver who is away is missing out on a lot of the child's experiences during that time.
 - One way to provide support to the child and caregiver is to create a group Reflection Calendar dedicated to the deployed caregiver. Each month the child can add a work of art, picture, or letter to the calendar.
 - Teachers can explain to other children what "deployed" means and enlist their help in making a gift for the deployed caregiver. The first page of the calendar would have the month written on it, then the pages following would be artifacts from the group during that month.
 - For example, there might be a page saying "May" with several pages afterward of pictures, letters, and artwork from each child in the group. When the caregiver returns home, the group can present the calendar to the caregiver.
- Military Badge Activity:**
 - Make or buy a military badge for the child that represents the deployed caregiver's role or unit in the military. If making a badge, print a picture of military insignia and allow the child to color and cut it out if they are able. Apply tape to the back of the printout so it will stick to the child's shirt. Have a "ceremony" where the child is given the badge. This ceremony could take place before the military caregiver is deployed so they can "pin" the child, just like the mom in the story did.

- This can be adapted for the group by having all children make a military badge of the branch of their choice. Then all caregivers can be invited to a ceremony to watch their children receive their badges. Any military or veteran family member can help pin the children.
- **Certificate of Merit Activity**
 - Create a Certificate of Merit after reading the book *My Mother's Wings*. Explain to the child that this certificate is for being understanding, helping others, and getting along with others (i.e., siblings, other caregiver). Talk about what each of these things mean and provide examples to the child. Create a checklist with each of these characteristics like the one shown below. Put stars, stickers, or happy faces in the second column each time a child demonstrates one of behaviors. When the child has a symbol next to all three behaviors, consider framing the certificate and giving it to the child.

_____ 's Merit Checklist	
Be Understanding	😊
Help Others	😊
Getting along with others	😊