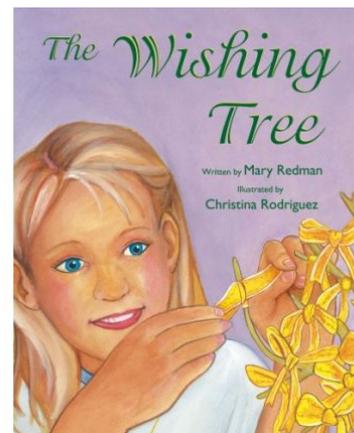


# The Wishing Tree

By Mary Redman

Amanda's dad leaves home to serve in the military. Her mom encourages her to think of something they can do that will help the time go by quicker. Amanda decides to create a wishing tree. Each day her dad was gone she wrote a wish on a ribbon and tied it to her tree. Amanda's dad was happy to see the wishing tree when he returned home.



## Discussion and Questions:

- To help young children stay engaged in the book, ask questions and point to specific things on the pages.
- Discuss what feelings Amanda might be experiencing during different parts of the book. Provide a feelings face chart to help children identify different emotions.
- Children may need help understanding what a wish is. Identify wishes that have come true and others that have not come true (i.e., a new toy, a pony). Give examples of wishes from the story.
- This book is written at a comprehension level that may be best for early elementary students. However, some young children may still understand the story. Adults also can paraphrase the written text or talk about the pictures instead.

## Activities:

- **Military Sensory Bin**
  - Fill the bottom of a plastic bin 2-3 inches deep with paper shreds or foam packing peanuts. Help the child cut pieces of different types of yellow ribbon and/or string in varying lengths to go into the bin. While cutting the ribbon talk to the child about the meaning of yellow ribbons for people in the military.
    - The American Folklife Center in the U.S. Library of Congress provides a detailed history of the yellow ribbon and ultimately defines it as “a banner through which families could express their determination to be reunited.” Learn more at <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/ribbons/ribbons.html>
  - Gather small items that remind the child of his military parent such as a button from their uniform, patches, shoelaces, military challenge coins, camouflage materials, etc.
  - Mix the ribbons and items into the paper shreds or foam peanuts and encourage the child to dig through the sensory bin to find items. As the child pulls out an item, discuss how that item reminds them of their deployed caregiver or the memory they have connected to that item.
- **Ribbon Roll**
  - This activity, to be done before a deployment, may require multiple adult helpers and should be done carefully. Before beginning the activity, gather a hot glue gun, small piece of foam board, and yellow string or ribbon. Draw a large circle on the foam board and place one dot on the perimeter of the circle for each family member, making sure the dots are approximately equidistant around the circle (see Figure 1).
  - All members of the group/family should sit around the foam board at a specific dot. Provide the deploying caregiver with a spool of yellow ribbon. Encourage the caregiver to briefly explain what the yellow ribbon means to military families.
  - With the hot glue gun, an adult will place put a small amount of glue on the first person's dot. That person will carefully place the end of their ribbon on the glue.

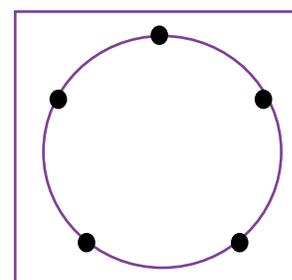


Figure 1

- While waiting for a moment for the glue to dry, encourage this family member to say something about the person to whom they will roll the ribbon to next. As the ribbon is rolled use a popsicle stick to apply gentle pressure to the end in the glue to keep it from coming loose.
- Repeat this process until all members have had at least one turn. If the members of the group wish to have multiple turns, add more glue dots to the circle. The longer the activity continues the more intricate the yellow ribbon design on the foam board will be.
- When everyone is finished, cut the ribbon off at the last place it was glued and put the hot glue gun out of the reach of children.
- As a family, talk about how the family is connected by this ribbon and how this picture will remain in their home to remind them of their connection to one another even when they are physically apart.
- **Wishing Wall**
  - Hang a large poster board or piece of paper on the wall write “Wishing Wall” on it. For children who struggle to understand the concept of a wish, this paper can be labeled differently with a concept the child does understand (i.e., hope, dream).
  - Provide multiple colors of sticky notes and pens for writing or drawing pictures of wishes, dreams, and hopes children want to share with their deployed caregiver when they return home. Provide examples if necessary.
  - If the child is very young or unable to express their wishes, feelings or memories can be written on the sticky notes instead. For example, if a child is looking at a picture of the caregiver before bed, and shares that they miss how the deployed caregiver used to put them to bed, this can be written on a sticky note and hung it on the wall.
- **Yellow Ribbon Display**
  - On p. 7 Amanda says the yellow ribbons she and her mother see are in support of the troops. Reread this part of the book and discuss the ways people can show support for one another, providing suggestions if needed (i.e., offer a tissue if someone is crying or sneezes).
  - Have the children name someone they know who is in the military.
  - Cut a ribbon from yellow paper or provide a spool of wide yellow ribbon. Write the names of the people the children named on the ribbons.
  - String or tie each of the yellow ribbons on a long piece of yarn and hang the string of yellow ribbons in the home or classroom.