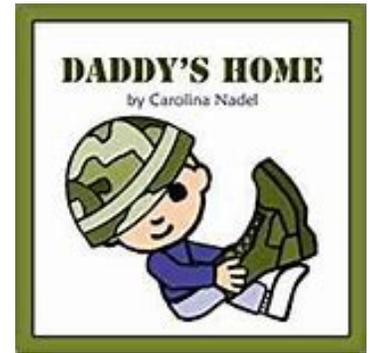


Daddy's Home

by Carolina Nadel

This book is about a young boy whose father comes home from war and experiences post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The child in the book is frustrated because of his father's condition. With the help of his mother, the boy begins to understand PTSD.



Discussion and Questions:

- Ask the children how the boy is feeling on each page. If needed, provide a feelings-face chart and let children point to an emotion. Offer choices if they have difficulty answering (i.e. "Is he happy or sad?").
- Ask the children why they think the child might feel that way. Allow plenty of time to answer and repeat what is said. If children struggle to answer, label the feeling while pointing to the picture, then point to the feelings-face chart and label the feeling again.
- Ask the children if they have ever felt any of these feelings. Allow them to describe how and when they felt that emotion.
- Ask individual questions related to things happening in the book such as:
 - How would you feel if you were told to be quiet at dinner? (pg. 10)
 - How do you feel when you don't get to pick what's on TV? (pg.11)
- One way to engage children in reading is to "Read, Ask, Repeat." Start by reading a page or two of the book. If the children have enough language, ask them to describe what happened on certain pages by asking a *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, or *how* questions. This allows them to explain what is understood.
 - For example, after reading page 17, say, "What happened to the boy on this page?" When a child answers, repeat the answer. Even if the child is not very descriptive with their answers, repeat them and provide more details.
- Ask questions about specific words. For example, "What is a nightmare?" (pg. 13). If the child does not know a word, define it for them. If applicable, let the children act out the word. For example, "Can you show me what it means to whisper?" Below are some words from the book to define and discuss:
 - War
 - Bored
 - Scream
 - Nightmare
 - Danger
 - Whisper

Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Grounding Activities**

Grounding Exercises- Grounding is the process of making yourself aware of the present moment. This can help those with PTSD stay in the moment during stressful events, which can help to manage flash backs. Care should be taken to ensure children of caregivers with PTSD do not feel responsible for fixing their caregiver; however, they should be included in the healing process. One way to include the child is to create regular family activities that support the caregiver with PTSD.

- Group drumming is an exercise that will easily engage young children. For exceptionally young children, the child can sit on a family member's lap and do hand-over-hand drumming. Group drumming can be as easy as drumming on the floor or it can include instruments. Families could make instruments to use during the group drumming sessions. Directions for making drums can be found here: <http://krokotak.com/2013/09/lets-make-a-real-kids-drum/>



- Nature is a place where healing often takes place for individuals with PTSD. Encourage the family to take nature walks, go on picnics, go camping, etc., if possible. Finding places that are not crowded is often a good support for the caregiver with PTSD. Consider bringing headphones or ear plugs for the caregiver with PTSD, in case some of the noises are alarming.
- **Music Playlist**
Listening to music is a therapeutic activity for children and adults. In a home where a family member is living with PTSD, music can help with the healing process for the entire family.
 - Allow the child to help create a playlist of his favorite songs so they can listen to them at any time. Explain to the child that if there is a song they like on the radio, it can be requested for inclusion on the playlist. The playlist can be put on a CD or be created on Spotify/iTunes and played on a device. Explain to the child they can request to listen to their playlist by simply asking their caregiver.
 - For nonverbal children, create a picture card of music for them to use to make their request.
 - For younger children, a caregiver can add which songs they may enjoy. The caregiver can watch for cues from their child to know when playing the music might be helpful.

Ages 3 to 5:

- **Grounding Activities**
 - Gather the family together in a circle. Have everyone close their eyes. Remind the child that this is a quiet game that requires listening. Have them sit with someone with whom they are comfortable, so they can receive any support they might need. Lead the family in several deep, cleansing breath cycles. Next, draw attention to the five senses by having the family think of something they can currently hear, smell, taste, feel, and see (one at a time). Between each of the five senses, remind the family to complete a cleansing breath. If the child is very young or restless during the activity, try doing only one or two of the senses at a time.
 - Give everyone a turn to name an object in the room that they like or that comforts them. Have them share 1 to 3 things about the object they like. To make it more interactive for the child, allow them to pick up the objects and bring them to the person who is talking.
- **Discuss Triggers**
 - The mother in the book explains to the little boy that loud noises can cause the dad to feel scared, upset, or angry. The boy understands that a firetruck is one of the triggers for his dad. Talking to a child about what kind of events might cause someone with PTSD to get upset will help them be prepared for the potential reaction of the caregiver to these events. Providers may need to coach caregivers in this discussion so the child does not feel responsible for or burdened by their caregiver's triggers.

If the military caregiver is able and comfortable, allow them to lead or be a part of a conversation with their child to help identify possible triggers. After reading the book in full, go back to page 20. Encourage the caregiver to ask, "The boy learned that sometimes loud noises upset his dad. Like a firetruck siren. What other kind of noises might upset him?" Other books can be used to identify loud noises that might trigger someone with PTSD. Caregivers can ask their child, "What can you find in this book that might upset the dad?" or "What do you see on this page that might upset the dad?" If the deployed caregiver is coming home or has recently arrived home, explain to the child that their caregiver may get upset from these noises too.

If the military caregiver is already home during this activity, but does not feel comfortable participating in these activities, invite them to make a list of their triggers to share with their partner. Their partner can then share with the child what types of events are likely to upset the military caregiver. Being open and honest with the child is important and helps children process

their own feelings and understand the caregiver's condition is not their fault. Again, caregivers may need extra coaching prior to this discussion to avoid placing responsibility or burden on the child related to their caregiver's triggers.