

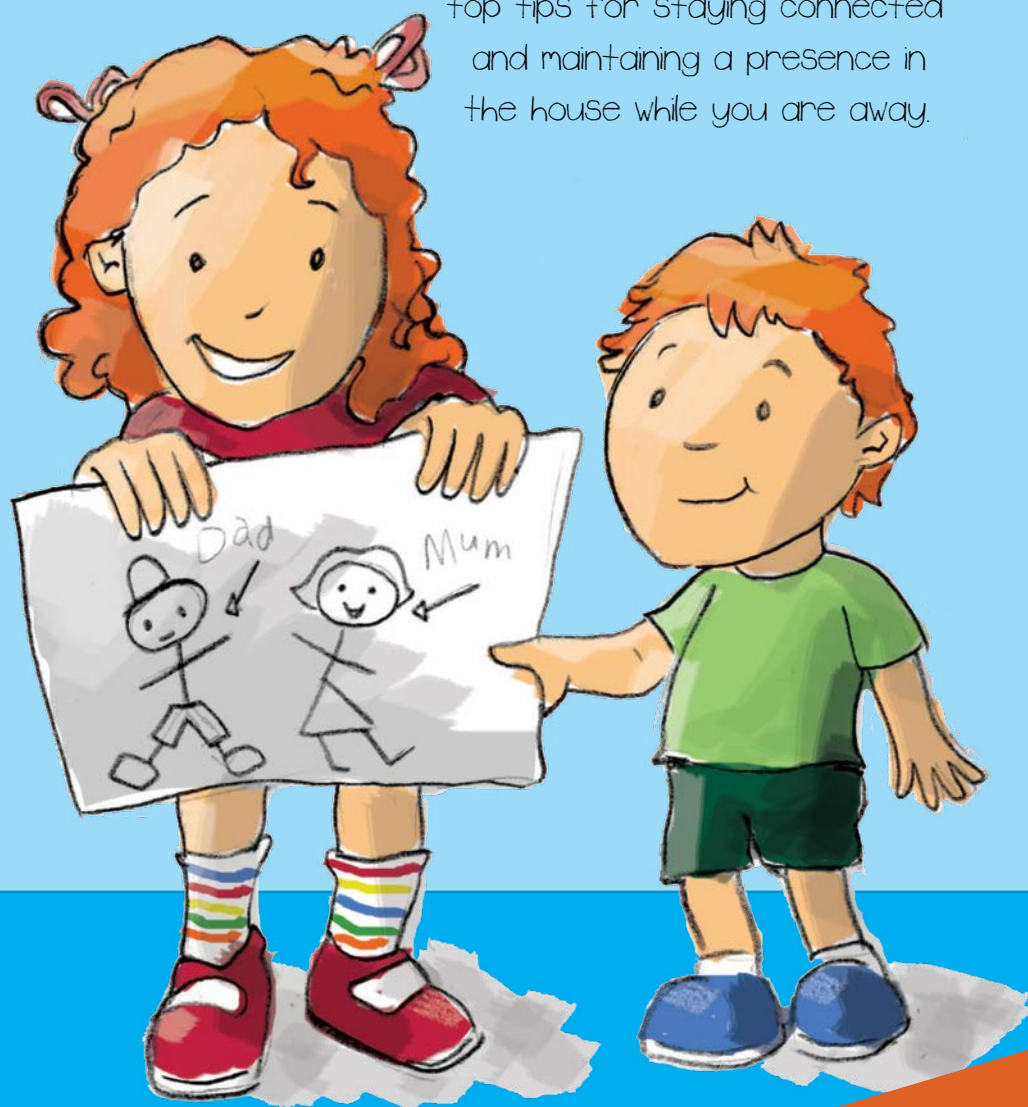
my **fif@** family

Tips for staying connected
during times apart



Parenting can be challenging at the best of times, at My Fifo Family we believe that good parenting stems from building good relationships, being well connected and in tune with your child and looking after yourself.

Having one parent working away can make parenting an even greater challenge and so we have compiled our top tips for staying connected and maintaining a presence in the house while you are away.



Pregnancy

Bonding starts from conception. Allowing the father time to bond with your unborn child will make for easier bonding once the baby has been born.

- Keep a journal, not only is it great fun to go back and read at a later date but it allows your partner to look through and feel part of how you are feeling and what you are experiencing.
- Try to book consultations or appointments for when your partner is home, if possible.
- Record books, sayings and greetings to play to your baby bump or have your evening conversation on speaker phone, it works a treat for voice recognition.
- Although the working away partner may not have access to shops allowing them to shop online for a few items will really help them feel involved.

Upload scan images to your phone or computer to share with your away partner, or have them take with them. This is a great way to establish pride in fatherhood in the early stages.



Babies

Your little bundles change and grow so quickly, one of the biggest challenges with working away is feeling as though you are missing out on watching your children grow. Record and capture everything!

- Get to know your babies sleep routine and avoid calling, video calling during this time, what can make a baby giggle when they are fresh and awake can easily make them scream when they are tired!
- Play recorded bedtime books especially rhyming books even if it is just recorded on your phone.
- If your partner has a little extra time at the end of the day give him something to research such as which bottles to get, baby massage or researching local playgroups. You may find he is more efficient than you!
- Record and discuss your home routine, the more the working away parent understands your routine the easier it is to help out when they are back plus they will know the best times to call or skype.
- Be sure to leave your week old PJ's or a worn top for baby to smell and snuggle with.
- Use your at home time to shower with, massage and feed your little one, this will really help you get to know your baby better and give the at home parent a little baby break!
- Sing, sing, sing. It doesn't matter if it's humpty dumpty, ACDC or your favourite TV commercial jingle, sing it over and over again, it will bring a giggle to your babies face every time!
- Sending pictures is not just the job of the stay at home parent, send your baby close up facial shots, especially with different facial expressions.
- Facetime, photstream or any app where you can interact, film or capture what has gone in the day. Babies learn new things so quickly that a lot can change in a couple of weeks
- Make your own place mat or mobile using the working away parent's pictures, your friends might think you're weird but your baby will love it!
- Send a new screen saver every couple of days
- Talk about the working away parent to the child using his/her name often.

If you find a favourite book, buy two and take one away with you to read one over skype, babies love repetition.



Toddlers

Here's the part where you can really have some fun and get creative.

- Have a calendar that you can use to fill in the home and away time together. The My Fifo Family calendar is designed especially for this!
- Place laminated pictures everywhere, you will be surprised how creative they get with them! My personal favourite was watching my child set up a classroom to teach all of her daddy's pictures to sing!
- Leave an item of yours for them to sleep with, something soft like a jumper
- Eat together; many families will set up the working away parent on Skype to "sit" at the table during dinner time.
- Jelly bean jars can be a fun way of counting down the days until mum or dad return, taking one out each day until there is only one left. (Be sure to have a few spare in the cupboard in case you miscount!)
- Discuss feelings, understand how your child is feeling and why, you might be surprised by the response – I once had a family tell me that their 3 year old boy always got upset when dad went to work because he thought he was stuck on a plane the whole time!

Call often. If calling at night try to make it part of your night time routine, i.e. - after bath time call to tell a bedtime story and say good night.



Children

Children love little gifts, whether it is a pen, something from the airport or printed picture of your site. It is a cute way of showing them that you were thinking of them and discussing the story behind it, i.e. - this is from the large plane that I go in to work or this is a picture of where I sleep at night. It helps make them feel a part of your world when you are away.

- Children thrive on responsibility. Lend your child something of yours that they can take care of while you are away like a pen or hat. Finding a special place to put it at bedtime will also help them to keep track of their own belongings
- Start a herb garden together so that they can take responsibility for it and talk to you about while you are away
- Make your own picture book full of pictures that relate to your site, accommodation and travel
- Take a toy away with you such as a hot wheels car or barbie doll (if you are game) that you can use to play with while you Skype
- For those that travel to different time zones or work shifts buy two clocks and place them on the wall. It is a great way of discussing what the working away parent might be doing
- Take pictures away to keep at work
- Set up a blackboard that your child can draw pictures for you on during skype
- Place a special box for drawings, craft items or photos that they can check when they get home
- If away for long periods encourage your child to make the working away parent a care package. Nothing says I love you like a picture of yourself with huge feet, a wonky face and a love heart!
- Know what events are coming up so that even if you can't make it you can still discuss it.

Pick something you would like to cook together when you are home and send the recipe so that they can go to the shops and pick out the ingredients while you are away.

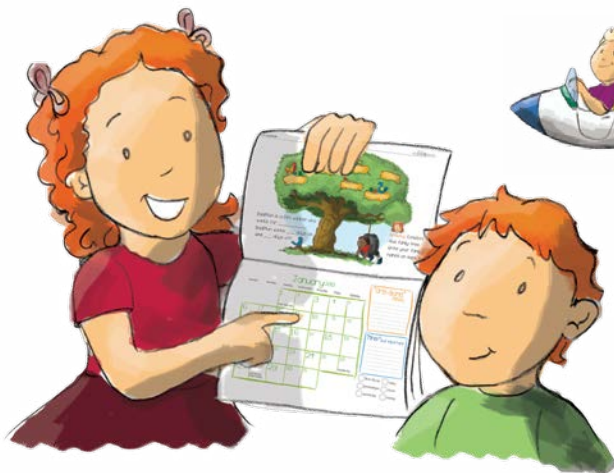


General tips

No matter what you say or do your child will learn about separation by watching you! If your child sees you constantly upset they will find it hard to move on.

- Prepare your children, if working away is going to be new for your family prepare your child as to what to expect, this is important also if work situations and or rosters change
- Talk. Question and discuss your FIFO/DIDO routine. Where is the working away parent, when are they coming home, what are they doing at work, when will they call, what shall we make for them. My Fifo family calendar comes with a host of activities to help children understand the lifestyle. Never underestimate what your child understands or misunderstands about your working away lifestyle
- It is often the small things that are long remembered, a secret note wishing them luck for their sports carnival, a postcard in the mail or a date night when you are back can mean the world to a child
- With today's children immersed in such a stimulating and distracting environment you are competing with a world of superheros on TV, fun games to play on their tablet and endless toys, don't expect your child to always respond to your calls with the same enthusiasm as you. Don't be disheartened
- Patience is a virtue! Just like moving to a new place children need time to adapt
- Positive communication is a must. When things get stressed try to keep issues not appropriate to a child away from them; conflict associated with working away is not their problem. Communication within the child's environment should be positive and not include blame making
- Focus on the positives that FIFO can offer. How many full time employed parents get to do parent rosters, school pickups and the occasional child free lunch!
- You don't always have to be in the same space, but you do need to be listening
- Presence not presents. Your presence is more important than presents to make up for a parent's absence and helps with bonding. Overcompensating for a parent being away can be confusing for a child
- And remember each child is different and will respond in different ways to having a parent away. Find what works for your child.

Maintain a good family structure, if your partner leaves early in the morning say goodbye the night before and try to keep meal, sleep and homework routines the same during times apart and together. You can still have fun by getting involved in the day to day stuff.

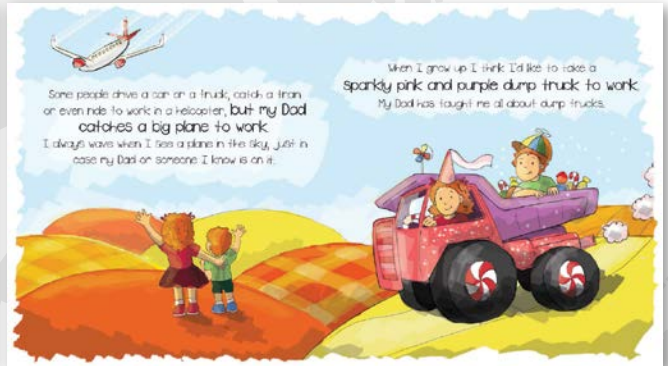
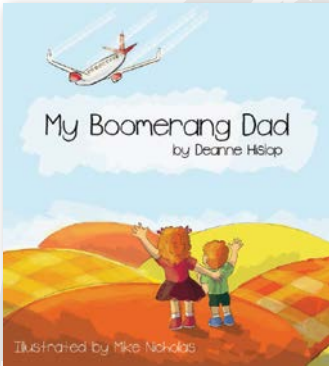


CHILDREN'S BOOKS

As featured on Today Tonight and shortlisted for a BIBLY award, see the launch of our first book "My Boomerang Dad".

My Boomerang Dad tells the tale of two fifo family children Lilly and Bob who describe the emotions both parent and child encounter when they are part of a working away program.

A percentage of the profits from this book will be donated to the **Aboriginal Literacy Foundation** helping to supply books to remote communities.



OTHER FUN FIFO FAMILY PRODUCTS!

Sick of the same old bottle openers and belt buckles?

My Fifo Family has great resources, such as bracelets, notebooks and stationary packs your employees can use to make working away easier for the kids while supporting the organisations that help to support the industry.

With joint workshops partnering with Ngala, **My Fifo Family** aims to increase the awareness and importance of ensuring children fully understand the reasons behind being part of a working away family and the benefits it can bring.

With FIFO, DIDO and BIBO industries being responsible for a growing number of jobs in Australia it is becoming increasingly important for the **younger generation** to be able to adapt to the changes that occur in the family unit.

MFF supports the view that becoming a working away family can be a **positive and rewarding lifestyle choice** which is why we donate generously to not for profit organisations that help support working away employees and their families.

To show your support to the children of working away families please log on to www.myfifofamily.com to see how you can contribute.

WOULD YOU LIKE MY FIFO FAMILY AT YOUR NEXT EVENT?

Check out our corporate events hire offers at
www.myfifofamily.com.au/corporate

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