



# Our Family and the Sea

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A CHECK YOUR PULSE WELLBEING GUIDE  
FOR SEAFARERS & THEIR LOVED ONES



## Preface



### Why Family Support Matters

Life at sea is unique. It brings challenges and rewards that few outside the maritime world truly understand. Long voyages, time apart, and the pressures of work on board can be difficult, not only for seafarers but also for the loved ones they leave behind. At The Swedish Club, we believe that behind every strong seafarer is a solid support system and that starts with family.

As part of our *Check Your Pulse* wellbeing initiative, we've seen firsthand how vital family support is to a seafarer's mental and emotional health. A reassuring message, a familiar voice, or simply knowing that someone is waiting at home can have a powerful impact. These small but meaningful connections help crew stay resilient, focused, and motivated while navigating the demands of life at sea.

This Family Guide was created together with Mental Help Support Solutions to help bridge the distance between ship and shore. It offers insights into the seafaring life and practical tips for staying connected, so that both crew and their families feel informed, supported, and united no matter how many miles are in between.

"Supporting a seafarer means supporting the whole family. When families feel seen and heard, seafarers feel stronger and more secure. That's what true wellbeing looks like."

— **Loss Prevention Team, The Swedish Club**

Whether you're sailing or waiting at home, this guide is for you. Thank you for being part of the journey.





# Strengthening the Foundation of Family Bonds

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A career at sea is a demanding path, not just for seafarers but also for their families. While the vast oceans connect the world, they also separate loved ones, posing challenges to relationships and emotional well-being.

This guide serves as a beacon, offering practical tools and strategies to help seafarers and their families navigate through times of separation and reunion.

By enhancing communication, fostering resilience, and cultivating meaningful connections, we aim to empower families to support one another, regardless of distance. Whether you're preparing for deployment, managing daily life at home, or welcoming your loved one back, we hope this guide will be your companion.

Let's embark on this journey together to strengthen the bonds that connect us all.

# Table Of Contents

## 01 Understanding Separation

- Preparing for the Conversation with Children
- General Tips for Communicating with Children of All Ages
- Age-Specific Explanations for Understanding the Embarkation of the Seafarer Parent
- How Children May React
- Example Scenario about the Embarkation of the Seafarer Parent
- Collaborating with Your Child's School

## 02 Best Practices for Communication for Seafarer Families

- Techniques for Clear, Compassionate Communication for Parents
- Understanding Emotions
- Exercises for Developing Empathy and Active Listening Skills Within Families
- Case Examples Illustrating Successful Family Communication

## 03 Building Emotional Resilience for Children

- Signs of Stress in Children by Age Group
- Tips for Recognising and Managing Children's Emotional Stress
- Activities to Maintain Children's Emotional Security and Routine
- Mindfulness Practices for Families

## 04 Self-Care and Social Media in Maritime

- Emotional Self-Care Practices for Family Members at Home
- Social Media: Benefits and Mindful Use for Seafarers
- The Impact of Social Media Posts on the Well-being of Seafarers
- Practical Guidelines for Mindful, Respectful Social Media Usage for Seafarers

# Table Of Contents

## 05 Navigating Reunion

- Practical and Emotional Preparation for a Crew Member's Return
- Methods for Managing Expectations and Smoothly Reintegrating Routines
- How to Address Common Challenges Faced During Reunions
- Common Feelings After Reunions
- Stages of Reunion: Understanding the Process

## 06 Additional Resources

- Useful Links for Mindfulness Meditation
- Book Suggestions to Read to Your Children
- Book Suggestions for Parents
- Article Suggestions for Parents
- Web Resources for Children
- Contacts for Further Assistance and Professional Support Services

## 07 Interactive Elements Throughout the Guide

- Commonly Asked Questions from Maritime Families About Separation
- Seafarer's Emotional Well-Being Checklist
- Social Media & Well-Being Checklist for Seafarers and Families
- Tracking My Feelings Worksheet for Children
- Feeling Reflection Checklist for Children



# 1

## Understanding Separation

Separation is an inevitable aspect of life for seafarers and their families. While the physical distance can be challenging, understanding and addressing the emotional impact of separation can strengthen family bonds and provide a sense of stability during these periods. This section offers practical strategies and activities to help families navigate the emotional landscape of extended time apart.

### 1. Preparing for the Conversation with Children

When preparing to tell your child that one parent will be leaving to go to sea, it's essential to approach the discussion with empathy, clarity, and openness. Rather than telling them as soon as the leaving date is confirmed, it's recommended to wait until about five days before departure. This timeframe allows space for emotional preparation without prolonging anxiety, and still provides an opportunity to spend meaningful time together before the separation. It's important to help your child understand what's happening and why, while making sure the explanation feels safe and manageable for them.

Below you can find some practical tips to guide the conversation.



**Be Honest and Clear:**

Use simple, straightforward language. Explain that being a seafarer means spending some time away from home as part of the job. Let the child know that every profession has its ups and downs. For seafarers, one of the hard parts is being away, but one of the best parts is having longer, uninterrupted time together when back home. Reassure your child that they are always loved and missed, no matter where you are. For an example explanation, please check page 4.



**Listen Actively and Patiently:**

Allow your child to express their feelings without judgment. Listen carefully and patiently, acknowledging and validating their emotions.



**Appreciate and Approve Emotions:**

Affirm that feelings of sadness, anger, or frustration are normal and understandable. Children need to understand that their emotions are valid.



**Offer Assurance:**

Let your child know that although the parent will be physically away, emotional connections remain strong. Discuss tangible ways to stay connected, such as regular phone calls, written letters, and shared rituals. Remind your child that the parent still loves them deeply and that they remain a family despite the distance.



**Age-appropriate Communication:**

Tailor your explanations to your child's developmental stage. Young children may need concrete visual aids, such as calendars or pictures, while older children may appreciate detailed explanations and open discussions.

## 2. General Tips for Communicating with Children of All Ages

Be mindful of how you express emotions in front of your children. Sharing too much, such as losing control or expressing overwhelming distress, may cause anxiety, while sharing too little or appearing emotionally detached may signal that emotions are not open for discussion. Instead, acknowledge your feelings in a calm and reassuring way, letting your child know that it's okay to talk about emotions and that they are not alone in their experiences. Children take their emotional cues from you, so modelling healthy emotional expression helps them develop resilience and openness in communication. Below are general tips for communicating with children of all ages:



### **Establish Routines:**

Maintain consistent family routines. Stability can significantly ease anxiety. Activities such as games, schooling, and bedtime are essential to maintain regularity. Continue to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions with enthusiasm and joy.



### **Visual Aids:**

Use calendars or visual countdowns to illustrate timelines clearly.  
Regular Check-Ins: Establish regular times for communication between the child and the parent who is at sea.



### **Special Watch:**

Consider getting your child a special watch set to the time zone where the seafaring parent works. This helps your child feel connected and aware of what the parent might be doing at different times of the day.



### **Stuffed Animal Adventures (for ages 3 to 8):**

Choose a special stuffed animal or another meaningful item together with your child (typically between the ages of 3 and 8), which the parent can take when they are away for work. Give it a fun and memorable name. Before leaving, take photos of the child, parent, and the chosen item together. During the parent's absence, have them photograph the stuffed animal in interesting places or situations wherever they go. Sharing these pictures regularly via messages or social media helps maintain the emotional bond.

For example, Alex and Mia chose matching teddy bears named "Sunny" and "Moon." Alex took Sunny on his travels, taking photos of him aboard ships and in fascinating spots around the globe. Mia hugged Moon every time she saw Sunny's adventures, helping her feel closer and comforted until her parent returned home.



## Remember

As you prepare your child for the transition of a parent leaving for work at sea, it's essential to also take care of yourself. Prioritising rest, engaging in enjoyable activities, and seeking support from family or friends are not just personal necessities but also key to maintaining a stable and reassuring environment for your child. When you manage your own stress well, you model healthy coping strategies, teaching your child resilience in times of separation.

### 3. Age-Specific Explanations for Understanding the Embarkation of the Seafarer Parent

It's essential to communicate in ways children can understand, according to their age:

- **Three- to four-year-olds:** Young children lack a clear understanding of time. Use event-based markers, such as "Mommy will be home before your birthday," and reinforce this with visual aids, like picture countdowns or sticker charts. Maintain consistent routines to help them feel secure.
- **Early Elementary School (5-7 years):** Children this age understand basic timelines. Use a calendar to show when the parent is expected to be at home. "We can mark this day; that's when Daddy will return." Expressive art, such as drawing and storytelling, can also be used with this age group to help children express their emotions.
- **Seven to Eight Year Olds:** Since children at this stage belong to the concrete operational stage, they can now grasp time and understand broader concepts. Mark the return date clearly and provide a simple explanation of the parent's job and the reason. Parents can explain the purpose of their job in simple terms and encourage the child(ren) to share their thoughts and feelings about the separation.
- **Nine to Twelve Year Olds:** At this stage, abstract thinking begins to develop. They can handle more detailed explanations and understand longer periods away. Reinforce their connection with practical tools, such as messages or video calls, while offering them independence in maintaining communication.
- **Older Adolescents:** This is often an emotionally charged age. Teenagers may struggle with the absence of a parent who serves as a significant role model. Offer them open conversations, respecting their maturity while providing a safe emotional environment to discuss their feelings.

## 4. How Children May React

Children's reactions vary greatly depending on age and personality. Common reactions include:

- **Young children (2-5 years):** Confusion, sadness, tantrums, or regressions in behavior.
- **Elementary-aged children (6-11 years):** Anxiety, anger, sadness, and changes in school performance.
- **Teenagers:** Withdrawal, moodiness, anger, or attempts to hide emotions to appear strong.

## 5. Example Scenario about the Embarkation of the Seafarer Parent



Maria and Jose are sitting down with their 5-year-old daughter, Angel, to discuss Jose's upcoming deployment to sea.

**Jose:** "Angel, Daddy will have to leave soon to work on the ship again."

**Angel (frowning):** "But why does Daddy have to go again?"

**Jose:** "My job is on the sea, sweetheart. I feel sad, too, when I leave you."

**Angel (tearing up):** "I don't want Daddy to go."

**Maria:** "I know it makes you feel sad, Angel. It's okay to feel that way. We're all going to miss Daddy a lot, and we can call him and show him your drawings every week."

**Jose (hugging Angel):** "I love you very much. Even when I'm far away, you're always in my heart. And soon, I'll come home again, and we can be together every day."

**Angel (tearing up):** "Why can't you find a job here?"

**Jose:** "My training is to work at sea, and it's not always easy to find a job on shore. Sometimes, when things get tough, we have to look at other options, but for now, I need to return to the ship. Just remember this: no matter where I am, you and our family are what matter most. Nothing is more important than us being there for one another."

**Angel:** "Don't go, please."

**Jose** (*gently*): "I understand, buddy. It's hard for me, too. Even though I'll be far away, we'll stay connected. Remember last time? Mommy helped you call me, and we talked every day. You even sent me your drawings—I printed them and hung them up in my cabin."

**Maria:** "We'll do that again. And when you miss Daddy, we'll create a special book for him to see when he is back. Also, we will mark it on the calendar so you can see when he's coming back home."

**Angel** (*still crying*): "When will you be back?"

**Maria** (*gently*): "Daddy will be back just before your summer holidays start. We can count the days together on the calendar until he's home."

**Angel:** "Can I call you whenever I want?"

**Jose:** "You can call me anytime you need. Due to my job and the time difference, I might not be able to answer immediately, but I promise I'll respond as soon as I possibly can."



### Checking Understanding

Confirm your child's understanding gently:

- You might ask your child what they understand in their own words, especially if you sense there might be a misunderstanding.
- Clarify any misunderstandings immediately.

This thoughtful preparation and communication ensure that each family member is emotionally supported and resilient, making separations easier to manage for everyone involved.

This is particularly helpful with younger children (ages 2 to 6), as they may not have the vocabulary to describe their thoughts or feelings fully. Asking them to express what they understood in their own sentences lets you get a clearer picture of how they are making sense of the situation. For example:

If your child uses a negative or confusing word to describe the situation (e.g., "Daddy left because he doesn't love me"), gently correct it with a more accurate and positive version (e.g., "Daddy loves you very much no matter the distance").

## 6. Collaborating with Your Child's School

When one parent departs for another contract at sea, informing your child's school about the situation is beneficial. Teachers and school staff can offer valuable emotional support, monitor your child's well-being, and help manage any behavioral or emotional difficulties arising from the parent's absence.



- **Notify the School Proactively:**

Inform your child's teacher and school counselor of the seagoing parent's upcoming embarkation and the expected duration of the absence. Schools appreciate advance notice and can better support children when they understand the context of behavioral or emotional changes.

If there are no other children in school or daycare with a seafaring parent, discussing and clarifying how and why our family is different—both the positives and the negatives is important. This should be private conversations—not in the classroom. Many seafarer children don't want to be different from the other children.

- **Encourage Validation of Feelings:**

Teachers can acknowledge and validate children's feelings such as sadness, anger, anxiety, confusion, guilt, or resentment. However, these conversations should be private. Many seafarer children do not want extra attention or to feel different in front of their peers. For example, a teacher might gently say, "Anna, I know your mom is away at sea. How do you feel about that? If you'd like, you can draw, write, or talk about it when you're ready."

- **Facilitate Emotional Expression:**

Teachers can offer structured opportunities and resources for children to express their feelings creatively, such as writing, drawing, role-playing, or performing puppet shows. Providing dedicated time for these activities and inviting children to share their creations helps children process their emotions constructively.

- **Monitoring and Communication:**

Encourage teachers to remain especially observant of your child's behavior and emotional well-being during activities, both indoors and outdoors—prompt teachers to relay any significant changes in behavior, mood, or peer interactions to you.

- **Addressing Concerns at School:**

If you notice concerning behaviors at home, it is essential to communicate promptly with the school. Parents may hesitate to highlight their child's difficulties, but early communication enables teachers to offer targeted support and closely monitor any behavioral changes.

- **Seeking Additional Support:**

If your child continues to struggle with separation, consider speaking with their teacher, school counselor, or mental health professional for additional support. Early intervention can effectively address emotional distress and support your child's overall well-being during periods of parental absence.



- **Remember**

“If you feel that being away at sea for months is becoming too difficult—for you or your family—you’re not alone. Many seafarers share this experience, and support is available.



As a seafarer, it's important to acknowledge the demands and challenges that come with this profession, especially for your children and partner.

Long separations can impact emotional well-being, and no one should have to cope with constant stress, anxiety, or feel like they're always at the edge of their mental capacity. Exploring other career paths or changing your work-life balance is not a sign of failure or giving up—it's a courageous step toward finding a better way forward for everyone. Your health and your family's happiness matter, and sometimes the strongest decision is the one that puts well-being first.”



# 2

## Best Practices for Communication

Effective communication is essential in maintaining healthy family relationships, especially when one parent is away at sea. Clear, compassionate, and empathetic communication fosters trust, reduces stress, and strengthens emotional connections, even across physical distance. This section offers practical techniques, simple exercises, and real-world examples that families can implement immediately.

### 1. Techniques for Clear, Compassionate Communication for Parents

The current examples are tailored for adults and older children, including teens, but younger children (ages 3-7) have limited abstract thinking and need simpler, more concrete explanations and communication. Consequently, you will find example sentences for younger children following the current examples on the next page.

**Use “I” Statements:** Express your feelings by starting with the word “I” to clearly state your emotions and perspectives without blaming the other person.

**Examples:**

**Instead of saying:**

“You never call when you’re away!” Try: “I feel worried and miss you when we don’t talk regularly.”

**You can also add:** “I’d love it if we could find a routine that works for both of us. I will try to call more regularly—what time works best for you?”

**Instead of saying:** “You’re always distracted when we talk.” Try: “I feel disconnected when our conversations are short. I’d love it if we could set aside some special time to talk.”

**You can also say:** “I feel really connected when you ask how my day was or when you share something small about your day—it helps me feel close to you.”

**Instead of saying:** “You don’t understand how hard it is for me to manage everything alone.” Try: “I sometimes feel overwhelmed handling things at home. It helps me when we discuss these challenges together.”

**You might also ask:** “How can I support you better while you’re away? Should we think together about getting some extra help with certain things?”

**Other helpful phrases might include:**

- “How are you really doing? Is there something you’d like to talk about but haven’t had the chance?”
- “When you listen without trying to fix things right away, I feel truly heard.”
- “I’m doing my best, and I know you are too. Let’s figure this out together.”
- “Would it help if we made a list of things we both need support with and find ways to manage them as a team?”



**For younger children:**

Instead of “I feel disconnected when our conversations are short,” parents could say: “I love and enjoy talking to you! Let’s make a special time to chat every night before bed.”



### **Remember:**

Younger children rely more on nonverbal cues (e.g., tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures) than on verbal explanations. Consistency is also a key factor among children, especially younger ones. Therefore, for younger children, regularly using pictures, drawings, emojis, or video messages can help reinforce the parent's words. A short recorded message saying, "Good morning, I love you!" can help them feel connected. However, some children may not want to talk on the phone or appear in video calls because it makes them miss the parent even more. It's important to respect their feelings and not pressure them to talk or participate if they're not ready.

### **Speak in Short, Clear Sentences:**

This is especially important during phone or video calls. Brief, clear statements help avoid misunderstandings.



### **Validate Feelings:**

Always acknowledge each other's emotions openly.

### **Example:**

"I can see how tough this situation is for you. It makes complete sense that you feel sad right now."

"It's okay to feel angry about me leaving. I'd probably feel the same way if I were you."

"Your feelings are important, and I understand why you feel upset. Thank you for sharing this with me."

"It's perfectly normal to feel worried when we're apart. Let's talk about things we can do to help you feel better."

"I appreciate you telling me how much you miss me. Knowing you feel that way helps me, too."

"Feeling lonely is hard, and it's understandable that you'd feel this way during embarkation. Let's think of some things to make the days more manageable."

**Stay Calm and Patient:**

Even during stressful conversations, maintaining a calm tone and patient demeanor helps resolve issues constructively.

**Be Fully Present:**

Minimise distractions during conversations. Set aside specific times for discussions so that both sides feel valued and heard.

**Use Positive Language:**

Express ideas in a positive and optimistic manner to reinforce family support and care.

**Example for adults:**

"Don't forget me!" could become "I'm always thinking of you, and I look forward to our next conversation."

"Don't worry about me." could become "Remember, I'm trained to be safe, and I'll be thinking of you every day."

"I hope this separation doesn't hurt our relationship." could become "This separation is challenging, but I know our family bond is strong enough to handle it."

"I don't know how we'll manage this time apart." could become "I'm confident we'll find creative ways to stay connected and support each other."

"Don't forget to call me." could become "I'm really looking forward to our calls. Hearing your voice makes my day."

"This job makes everything difficult." could become "This is my job at the moment, and it helps our family in important ways, even though it's hard to be apart."

"It's hard to feel close when we're so far away." could become "Every call and message brings us closer together, no matter how far apart we are physically."

### **Example for speaking with children:**

**Child:** “Why can’t you just stay home like other parents?”

**Adult:** “I know it feels unfair sometimes. I really wish I could be home more, too. But even when I’m far away, I always think about and love you.”

**Child:** “You missed my birthday again.”

**Adult:** “I’m so sorry I couldn’t be there. That must have felt really disappointing. I want to hear all about your day and when I’m back, let’s celebrate together, just the two of us.”

**Child:** “I don’t want to talk to you right now.”

**Adult:** “That’s okay, buddy. Sometimes, we all need space. Just know that I’m here when you’re ready, and I love you no matter what.”

**Child:** “I forgot what your voice sounds like.”

**Adult:** “That makes sense. We couldn’t do video calls for a while since the internet wasn’t good. I’ll send you a voice message today, and we can start sending them more often, just like our own little radio show.”

**Child:** “You’re never here for important stuff.”

**Adult:** “I’m really sorry about this, and you are right. It feels really hard for me, too. I want to be part of those moments, even from far away. Can we think of a way to share them—like pictures, videos, or a story you tell me?”

**Child:** “I don’t want you to leave again.”

**Adult:** “I understand. Saying goodbye is really tough. I feel that way, too. Let’s talk about ways we can stay close while I’m away.”

**Child:** Looks upset but doesn’t say anything.

**Adult:** “You seem a little sad today. Would you like to tell me what’s on your mind? Is it about missing Dad?”

**Child:** “I hate when he leaves!”

**Adult:** “I hear you. It’s really hard when someone you love is far away. Would you like to talk more about what’s bothering you?”

## 2. Understanding Emotions: No Good, No Bad, Just Human

Every emotion we experience has a purpose. Emotions aren't good or bad—they're natural signals that tell us something important about our experiences. No one should ever feel ashamed or guilty about feeling sad, angry, or scared. What's essential is guiding children in managing their emotional responses constructively.



Imagine you're feeling incredibly upset after a tough day. Perhaps a coworker undermined you in a meeting. If your partner says, "Just forget it!" you might feel unheard or even more irritated. But if instead they say, "That sounds really frustrating. Would you like to talk about it?" you immediately feel validated and calmer. Children experience the same relief when their parents acknowledge and validate their emotions, helping them process and express their feelings healthily.



### Exercise: Naming Emotions, Let's Play to Understand

Children often struggle to understand and verbalise their feelings clearly. They naturally turn to play to express their inner emotional worlds.

If you directly ask, "How do you feel?" many children might respond vaguely or become silent. Instead, observe your child's body language and behavior closely. Notice signs of restlessness, anger, sadness, or anxiety. Respond gently, using neutral observations that help them name their emotions and pair them with playful suggestions for emotional release.

Emotional understanding develops over time—while a 3-year-old may only express big feelings through actions, a 6- or 7-year-old might begin to use words like "nervous" or "left out" when supported gently. Tailoring your responses to your child's age and stage helps them feel seen and supported.

"You seem energetic and a bit frustrated. Shall we jump around or have a race outside to help shake it off?"

"You look a bit down today. Do you feel like coloring together or maybe blowing some bubbles outside?"

"You seem quiet and thoughtful. Are you missing someone special? I feel like that sometimes, too. How about we draw a picture together to send to them?"



When you acknowledge your child's emotions openly, you help them feel safe and understood. This reassurance enables them to engage in activities that constructively relieve stress or sadness.



### **Remember:**

#### **All Emotions Are Okay; All Behaviors Aren't**

Recognising and accepting emotions doesn't mean endorsing all behaviors linked to those emotions. It is crucial to address any inappropriate or harmful actions calmly and clearly as soon as possible.

This applies to both children and adults. When overwhelmed by emotions, people might have undesired behaviors. It's important to model emotional regulation and acknowledge when we, as adults, also react in ways we're not proud of. For example, you might say, "I was really stressed and raised my voice. That wasn't okay. I'm sorry. I'll try to take a deep breath next time." This teaches children that even grown-ups make mistakes and can choose better responses.

If your child acts out, first manage the situation gently but firmly. Then, once the situation is under control, revisit the emotions behind the behavior. Provide comfort and understanding and discuss healthier alternative responses. For example, "I know you felt really angry when your friend took your toy. Being angry is okay, but throwing things is not. Next time, you can use your words to ask for help or come to me instead."

### 3. Exercises for Developing Empathy and Active Listening within Families

#### Exercise 1: Mirroring Activity

**Goal:** Strengthen empathy and active listening by repeating and validating what is heard.

**Instructions:**

1. Sit face-to-face with your partner (or via video call if at sea).
2. One person shares their thoughts or feelings for 2 minutes without interruption.
3. The other person then summarises what they've heard, beginning with "What I heard you say is..." and then adding their thoughts using 'I' sentences.
4. Switch roles and repeat.

**Benefit:** Enhances emotional understanding and shows that you genuinely value each other's experiences.

#### Exercise 2: The Emotional Check-in

**Goal:** Encourage open emotional expressions in a structured yet relaxed way.

**Instructions:**

1. Set aside ten minutes each evening for a week. You can do this exercise during dinner when everyone is together. Parents should participate too!
2. Each family member answer:  
*"Today I felt happy when..."*  
*"Today's best thing was..."*  
*"Today I felt sad or frustrated when..."*  
*"Tomorrow, I am looking forward to..."*
3. Listen without judgment and acknowledge feelings explicitly.
4. As a parent, it's important to share your emotions openly (e.g., 'I felt a little stressed at work, but I was happy when we had dinner together').
5. Provide feedback to one another after completing the exercise for a week. How was it? Was it beneficial? Would it be worth continuing?

**Benefit:** Reinforces daily communication and normalises sharing a full range of emotions.

**Adjustment for younger children:** Children aged 3-6 years old may struggle to verbalise emotions but can express their feelings through drawings or facial expressions. Shy or slow-to-warm-up kids may need a warm-up question or a fun format to feel at ease. For example, you can encourage the younger children to draw how they felt today or use a feelings chart (happy, sad, mad, excited).

### Exercise 3: Story Exchange

**Goal:** Foster empathy by understanding the unique perspectives and experiences of family members.

**Instructions:**

1. Family members take turns telling a short personal story about their day or week.
2. Listeners actively listen without interrupting.
3. After the story, listeners ask questions like, "How did that feel?" or "What did you learn?"
4. Rotate roles, ensuring everyone shares and listens.

**Benefit:** Deepens emotional bonds and teaches active listening skills by showing genuine curiosity about each other's lives.

## 4. Case Examples Illustrating Successful Family Communication

### Case Example 1: Empathetic Communication with a Teenager

**Scenario:**

Fourteen-year-old Clara has recently become withdrawn and distant. Her father, Marco, has just departed for a 6-month contract at sea. Clara's mother, Sofia, gently approaches her daughter to explore how she's coping.

**Sofia (calm and gentle):** "Clara, I've noticed you've been a bit quiet lately. Would you like to share how you feel—is it about your father being away?"

**Clara (hesitantly):** "I don't know. I just miss Dad, and you're always busy with work, and everything feels different."

**Sofia (validating feelings):** "I am trying to understand your feelings. It's really tough to adjust when Dad's away, especially now that you're older and I am mostly busy with work. It sounds like you're feeling alone in this. What has been the hardest part for you?"

**Clara (opening up):** "Yeah, kind of. It feels like no one gets it. My friends' parents are always here, and it feels unfair."

**Sofia (empathetically):** "That makes complete sense. It must feel lonely and frustrating. Thank you for sharing this with me—I really appreciate your honesty. Sometimes it might feel easier not to say anything, but sharing these feelings helps both of us."

**Clara:** "Sometimes I don't want to talk because it makes you feel bad, too."

**Sofia:** "I see why you'd think that, but Clara, I want you to know it's never a burden to hear about your feelings. It helps me to understand you better. Would it help if we planned more one-on-one time, even when things get busy? Maybe a special dinner or a movie night?"

**Clara (softening):** "Actually, yeah. I'd like that."

**Sofia (reassuringly):** "Great. Let's pick a night each week to be together—no distractions. And remember, we can always talk, whether it's good, bad, or even when you're not sure how you feel."

**Outcome:**

By empathetically validating Clara's emotions and clearly offering structured emotional support, Sofia reinforces trust, provides comfort, and helps Clara feel less isolated. This thoughtful interaction helps foster open communication and strengthens their emotional bond during challenging times.

## Case Example 2: Compassionate Communication with a Young Child

**Scenario:**

Six-year-old Miguel gets upset after a call with his mom, Anna, who is working onboard a ship. Miguel's dad, Carlos, addressed the situation gently.

**Carlos:** "Miguel, I see you're feeling sad after talking with Mommy. Can you tell me what's causing you to feel that way?"

**Miguel:** "I just really miss Mommy. When I talk to her, I remember that she's not here."

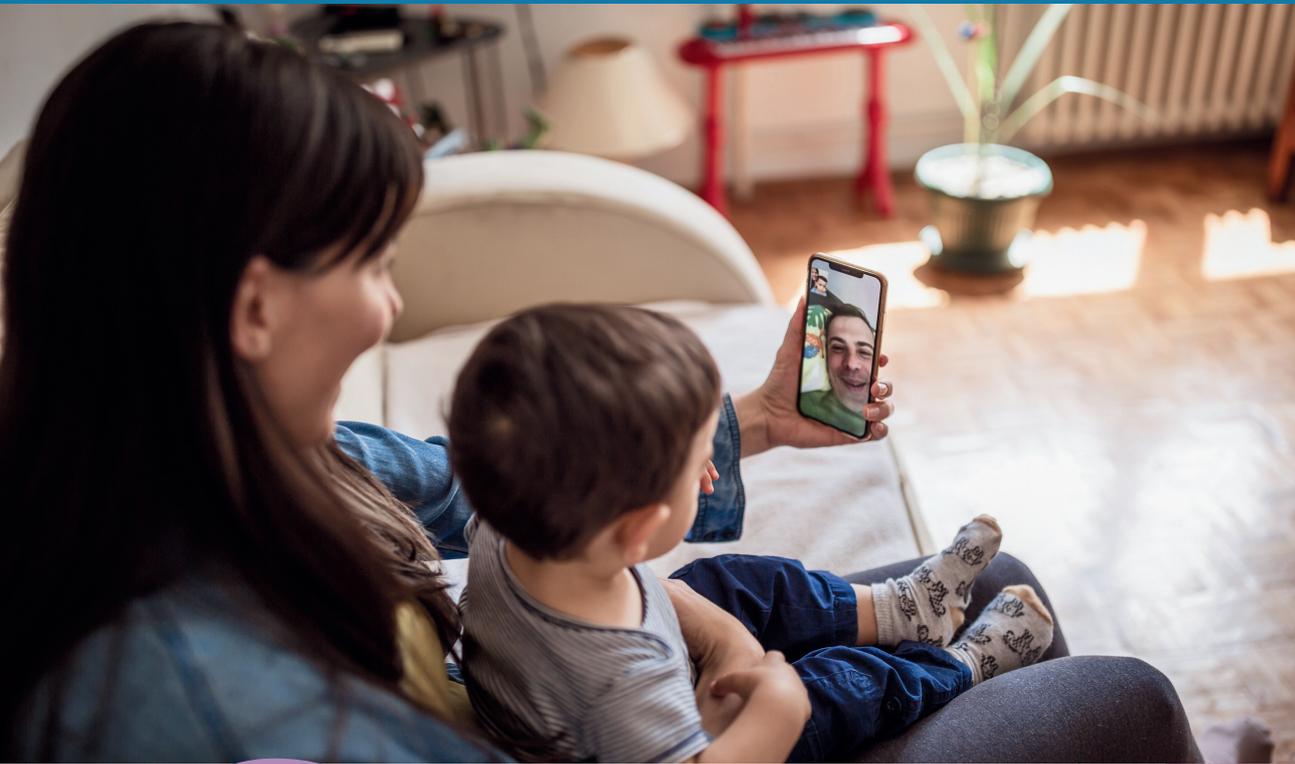
**Carlos (validating feelings):** "I know, sweetheart. It's okay to feel sad. Mommy misses you just as much, and talking helps us all stay close even when we feel sad afterward."

**Miguel:** "Can we call her again tomorrow?"

**Carlos (reassuring):** "Yes, we'll call Mommy again tomorrow. Would you like to make a 'Mommy Box' where we can keep drawings, notes, and other fun things to show her next time we talk?"

**Outcome:**

Carlos's compassionate and clear communication validates Miguel's feelings, reassuring him and providing tangible comfort.



# 3

## Building Emotional Resilience for Children

Emotional resilience helps children to cope successfully with challenges such as separation, stress, anxiety, and loneliness. By understanding and applying practical strategies, parents can help their children feel secure, valued, and emotionally balanced, even during prolonged periods of separation.

## 2. Signs of Stress in Children by Age Group:

| Age Group          | Behaviors   | Emotional Reactions  | Communication Patterns   | Social Interaction   |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Infants to 5 years | <p>Clinginess, crying, fussiness</p> <p>Unusual tantrums</p> <p>Regression (bedwetting, thumb-sucking)</p> <p>Sleep problems or nightmares</p> <p>Changes in eating habits</p>                    | <p>Helplessness</p> <p>Generalised anxiety</p> <p>Fear of abandonment</p> <p>Heightened sensitivity</p> <p>Confusion about absence</p>                           | <p>Difficulty expressing feelings verbally</p> <p>Trouble understanding explanations</p> <p>Frequent questions about absent parent</p>                                   | <p>Increased attachment to caregivers at home</p> <p>Separation anxiety</p> <p>Fearfulness around separations</p>  |
| 6-11 years         | <p>Withdrawal or isolation</p> <p>Irritability or angry outbursts</p> <p>Difficulty concentrating in school</p> <p>Physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches)</p> <p>Regressive behaviors</p> | <p>Anxiety and worry</p> <p>Feelings of guilt ("Did I do something wrong?")</p> <p>Sadness and mood swings</p> <p>Feelings of responsibility or helplessness</p> | <p>Quietness and reluctance to talk about absent parent</p> <p>Frequently asks about parent's return</p> <p>Imaginative scenarios ("What if something bad happens?")</p> | <p>School avoidance or decreased interest in social activities</p> <p>Reluctance to engage in play or group activities</p> <p>Difficulty maintaining friendships</p> |

|             |  |  |  |   |
|-------------|--|--|--|---|
| 12-18 years | <p>Increased withdrawal or isolation</p> <p>Changes in academic performance</p> <p>Increased risk-taking (substance use, rule-breaking)</p> <p>Changes in sleeping and eating patterns</p> <p>Anger, irritability, and mood swings</p> | <p>Feelings of loneliness or depression</p> <p>Increased anxiety about family stability and future</p> <p>Frustration over parents' absence</p> <p>Feelings of increased pressure and responsibility</p> | <p>Avoidance of emotional conversations</p> <p>Preference for peer interactions over family discussions</p> <p>Expressions of anger or frustration in communication</p> <p>Difficulty openly discussing feelings</p> | <p>Retreat into intense friendships or romantic relationships</p> <p>Withdrawal from family and group activities</p> <p>Conflict or rebellion at home or in school settings</p> |
|-------------|--|--|--|---|



**Remember:**

It's so true that a child's emotional state often mirrors that of their parents. If you're feeling uptight, angry, or withdrawn, your child might feel unsafe or anxious, which can create a cycle that's hard to break. Recognising this connection is a crucial first step in fostering a healthier environment for both of you.

## 2. Tips for Recognising and Managing Children's Emotional Stress

Children may not always say when they feel stressed, but their emotions often show through their actions.

By noticing these signs early and providing a safe space for expression, parents can help their child feel understood, secure, and resilient. Here are practical tips on how to recognise stress indicators and manage them effectively:



### Be Attentive to Changes

- Regularly observe your child's behavior and mood. Notice shifts such as withdrawal, mood swings, unusual quietness, or unexplained aggression.
- If you observe that your child's behavior feels different, trust your instincts. A simple, caring question can open the door for them to share what's on their mind.

#### Practical Example:

*"I've noticed you're spending more time alone than usual. Do you want to talk about anything that's bothering you?"*

### Maintain Open Communication

- Establish regular, calm conversations where your child feels safe sharing their thoughts and emotions.
- Listen actively and patiently without interrupting or judging their feelings.

#### Practical Example:

*"Can you help me understand what's making you feel upset? I'm here and ready to listen."*

### Validate and Normalise Their Feelings

- Clearly acknowledge your child's emotional responses. Let them know that feelings of sadness, anger, or confusion are entirely normal when a parent is away.
- Avoid dismissing or minimising their feelings. Reassure them that you understand and that it's okay to have mixed emotions.

#### Practical Example:

*"It's okay to feel angry that Mommy has gone to sea again. It's very understandable, and many kids would feel exactly the same way."*

## **Create Consistency and Security**

- Maintain stable daily routines (meals, bedtime, homework) as consistently as possible to give your child a sense of security and normalcy.
- Introduce comforting routines or rituals, such as regular calls, bedtime stories, or weekly family activities to look forward to.

## **Encourage Emotional Expression Through Activities**

- Provide opportunities and materials for your child to express emotions through drawing, journaling, storytelling, or play activities.
- For younger children, imaginative play or puppet shows can help them express emotions they cannot yet verbalise.
- Use the worksheets provided at the end of this booklet to help your child track their emotional well-being and progress. These age-appropriate worksheets will help your child express and manage their emotions. This simple emotion and activity tracker is designed to help children identify emotional triggers and recognise positive moments in their daily lives.

### **Practical Example:**

*"Let's draw how you're feeling today, or maybe you'd like to act out a story about when Daddy comes home?"*

## **Communicate with Teachers and School**

- Keep your child's teachers informed about the family situation. Teachers can help identify behavioral changes, provide additional emotional support, and suggest useful coping strategies.
- Regular communication between home and school helps create a unified support network, making it easier for children to cope effectively.

### **Practical Example:**

*Ms. Reyes, we wanted to let you know that my husband will be leaving again soon. Could you keep an eye on Mia and let me know if you notice any changes at school?"*

## **Use Creative and Emotional Outlets**

- Provide children with age-appropriate creative activities such as drawing, journaling, or storytelling.
- Encourage older children to write letters or emails to their absent parent regularly.



## Crying is Healthy and Healing

Encourage and support your child when they cry. Crying is a natural, human way of expressing emotions, whether sadness, frustration, stress, or even joy. Let your child know that crying is okay and that you are there to support them.

Crying is not just for children; adults cry, too, and it's equally healthy and healing. When a parent or caregiver cries, it can be a powerful opportunity to model emotional expression. Take a moment to explain it to your child in simple terms, such as, "Dad is crying because I feel sad right now," or "Mom is crying because I'm really happy and touched." This helps children understand that all emotions are valid and that even grown-ups have them.

When your child cries, respond compassionately: "It's okay to feel sad. I'm here with you. Cry as much as you need." Your calm and reassuring presence gives your child space to experience and work through the emotion fully. Afterward, once their tears have passed, you can gently transition them toward a more uplifting activity to help them move forward positively.

## Seek Professional Support if Needed

- Seeking support doesn't mean something is 'wrong' with your child, it's a way to help them develop healthy emotional coping skills. Just as we visit a doctor when we feel unwell, talking to a counselor can give children the tools they need to manage their emotions.

### Indicators of professional support that might be beneficial include:

- Persistent emotional or behavioral issues
- Significant drop in school performance or social withdrawal
- Physical symptoms without clear medical cause

Pay attention to these indicators and take action as soon as you notice them.



### Projects Together

- Family Scrapbook
- Memory Boxes
- Family Calendar



### Weekly Family Traditions

- Sunday Pancake Breakfasts
- Movie Night
- Special Dinner



### Create Connection Activities

- Drawing
- Writing Letters
- Journaling



### Children's Emotional Security & Routine



### Relaxation & Mindfulness

- Soothing Music Sessions
- Quiet Reading
- Storytelling



### Communication Rituals

- Scheduled Video Calls
- Story-time Recordings
- Goodnight Voice Messages

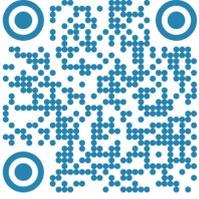


### Physical & Play Activities

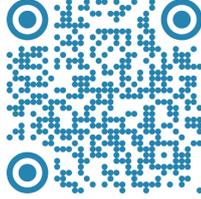
- Sports
- Outdoor Play
- Yoga & Guided Breathing

### 3. Mindfulness Practices for Families

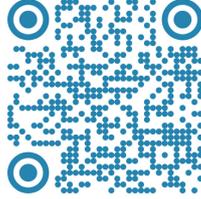
Balloon  
Breathing



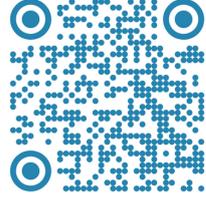
Starfish  
Breathing

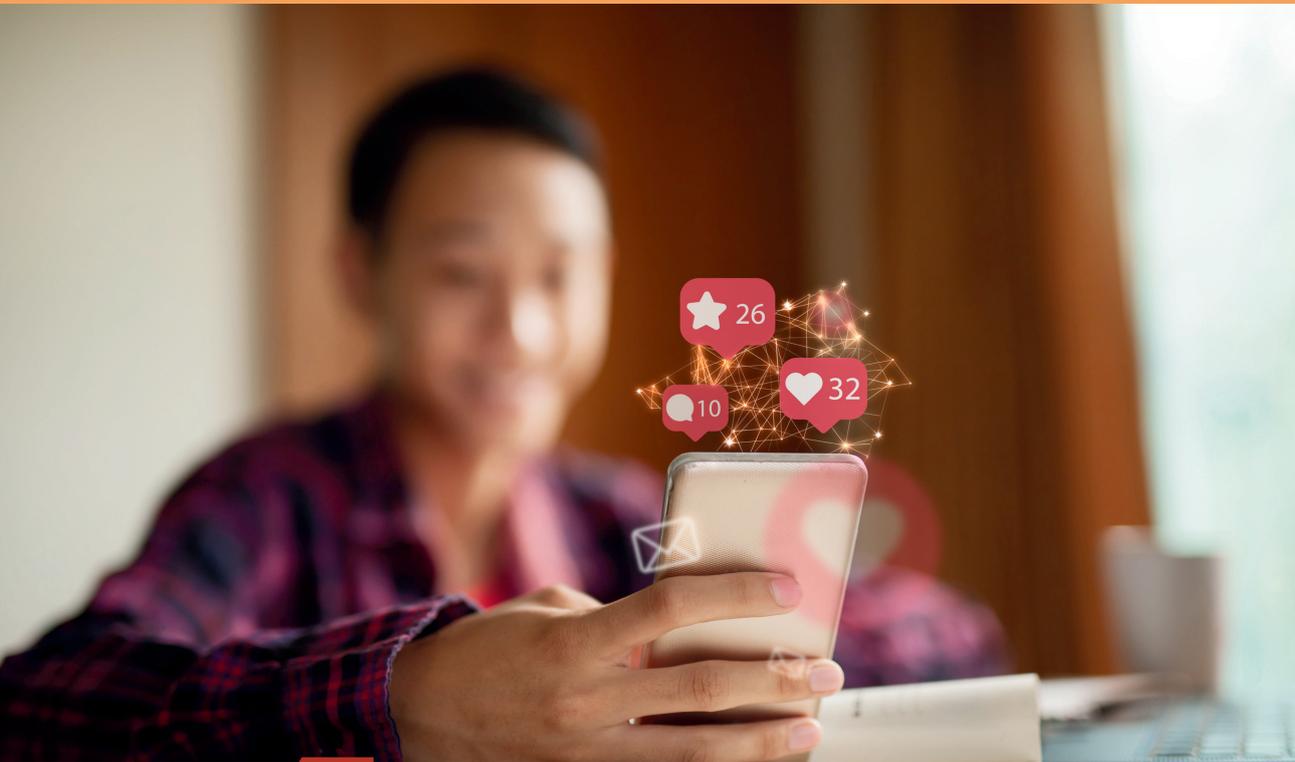


5 Senses  
Exercise



Breathing  
with a Buddy



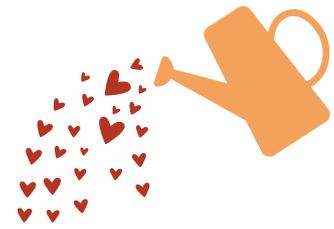


# 4 Self-Care and Social Media

Family members at home often carry significant emotional and practical responsibilities when a loved one is away at sea. Practicing emotional self-care is essential for maintaining mental well-being, reducing stress, and enhancing resilience during prolonged periods of separation.

## 1. Emotional Self-Care Practices for Family Members at Home

Implementing effective self-care strategies ensures that your emotional needs are met, enabling you to support both yourself and your family more effectively.



### **Seek and Build Social Support:**

Engage with friends, family, or community groups to receive emotional encouragement and practical assistance. Building a reliable support network, such as connecting with fellow maritime families, allows for shared experiences and mutual support.

#### **Example:**

*Schedule regular meet-ups or virtual calls with friends or family members to share experiences and maintain strong social bonds.*

### **Prioritise Personal Well-being:**

Incorporate activities into your routine that promote relaxation and joy. Whether it's daily exercise, reading, or pursuing a hobby, setting aside time for yourself is essential.

#### **Examples of Self-Care Activities:**

- *Morning meditation or yoga sessions*
- *Engaging in creative pursuits like painting or writing*
- *Participating in local community events or workshops*

### **Set Boundaries:**

Acknowledge when you're feeling overwhelmed and understand that it's acceptable to seek help. Practice saying "no" to additional responsibilities that may compromise your well-being.

#### **Example:**

*"I appreciate the invitation, but I need some time to recharge this weekend. Let's plan for another day."*

**Stay Present:**

Engage in mindfulness techniques to manage stress and maintain emotional balance. Practices such as deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, or mindful walking can enhance your overall well-being.

**Simple Mindfulness Exercise:**

*Spend a few minutes each day focusing on your breath, observing each inhale and exhale to center your thoughts and reduce anxiety. Refer to page 26 to find videos suitable for beginners.*

**Physical Health:** Ensure adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, and regular physical activity. These foundational health practices have a significant impact on emotional resilience.

**Example:**

*Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week, such as walking, cycling, or swimming.*

## 2. Social Media: Benefits and Mindful Use for Seafarers

**Remember:**

Life at sea presents unique challenges, including extended periods away from home and the pressure of operating in a high-stress environment. Just as you take care of your physical health, your emotional well-being also needs attention.

Ignoring stress and emotions can lead to burnout, frustration, or even impact your performance onboard. Below are simple, practical steps you can take to stay emotionally strong while at sea.



### **Establish a Daily Routine**

A daily routine can give structure to your time onboard and help maintain a sense of control. Small, consistent habits such as exercising, journaling, or reading help break up the monotony of long voyages. For example, setting aside ten minutes every morning to stretch or listen to music can improve your mood and energy levels throughout the day. If you find yourself feeling low, try identifying one small thing you look forward to each day, such as a coffee break or a quick chat with a crewmate.



### **Practice Mindfulness and Stress Management**

The ocean itself can be a great tool for mindfulness. Take a few moments to breathe deeply and watch the horizon. The simple act of being present, whether it's listening to the waves, focusing on your breathing, or taking a moment before starting a shift, can help reduce stress. Some seafarers also find meditation apps or breathing exercises useful in staying calm during challenging moments.

Signals to look out for: If you catch yourself using words like "I can't handle this," "I'm completely alone," or "I'm always exhausted," these may be signs that your stress levels are too high. Recognising these thoughts early allows you to take action before they escalate.



### **Stay Connected with Loved Ones**

Staying in touch with family and friends can be challenging at sea, but even small efforts can strengthen relationships. A short voice message or a scheduled video call can help bridge the distance. Some seafarers write letters or record video messages when internet access is limited, then send them when they get the chance.

If you ever feel disconnected, try sharing something small about your day, a funny moment, a meal you enjoyed, or a challenge you overcame. This keeps conversations meaningful even when far from home.



## Recognise and Express Emotions

It's natural to feel homesick, frustrated, or stressed while at sea. The key is to acknowledge these emotions instead of pushing them away. Talking to a trusted crewmate or writing in a journal can help process these feelings.

If something is bothering you, addressing it early can prevent it from becoming overwhelming.

**Trigger signs:** If you find yourself withdrawing from social interactions, snapping at colleagues, or losing interest in things you usually enjoy, these may be signs that you need to take a step back and reassess your emotional well-being.



## Seek Support When Needed

If stress, anxiety, or loneliness start affecting your ability to function, don't hesitate to seek support. Many different organisations offer confidential help or resources specifically for seafarers. If you find yourself thinking, "I don't want to bother anyone with this," remind yourself that reaching out for help is a sign of strength; it ensures that you can continue to do your job effectively.

The earlier you do it, the better the outcome will be!

### 3. The Impact of Social Media Posts on the Well-being of Seafarers

Social media is a powerful tool. It can help you stay connected with loved ones, but it can also have a negative impact on your mental well-being if not used mindfully.



#### Comparison and Homesickness

Scrolling through social media and seeing friends and family celebrating birthdays, holidays, or special events can make you feel like you're missing out. It's easy to forget that social media often shows a highlight reel, not the whole picture. Instead of focusing on what you're missing, try shifting your mindset: reach out to family members directly or plan something special for when you return home.

#### Example:

*Instead of scrolling through photos of a family dinner and feeling left out, send a message to a loved one and ask how their day went. Creating a real connection can be far more fulfilling than passively consuming content.*

#### Misinformation and Unnecessary Worry

Not all news or updates shared online are reliable. False information about the industry, job security, or even family situations can cause unnecessary stress. Before reacting to something you see online, please take a moment to verify it with trusted sources.

Trigger words/phrases to be cautious of: Posts with phrases like "urgent news," "breaking industry changes," or "seafarers at risk" may not always be entirely accurate. Always verify credible sources before allowing such information to affect your peace of mind.

#### Privacy and Professionalism

Posting about life onboard may seem harmless, but sharing work-related frustrations or sensitive information can have unintended consequences. Be mindful of what you post, whether it's photos, personal opinions, or workplace details. It's always best to follow company guidelines and respect the privacy of your colleagues.

## 4. Practical Guidelines for Mindful, Respectful Social Media Usage for Seafarers

### Think Before Posting

As mentioned above, before you share something online, ask yourself: Could this post cause unnecessary stress for anyone else? How will it affect my family? Does it respect workplace confidentiality? Would I be comfortable if my employer or colleagues were to see it? Taking a moment to reflect can help prevent misunderstandings.

### Set Healthy Boundaries

Social media can be addictive, and excessive scrolling can increase feelings of loneliness. Limiting social media use, such as checking it only during breaks, can help prevent it from becoming overwhelming. If you find yourself feeling worse after using social media, it may be time to take a short break or utilise screen time limits.

**Example:** If scrolling makes you feel homesick, consider setting a 15-minute daily time limit and spending more time engaging in onboard activities instead.

### Keep Conversations Positive and Supportive

Social media should be a space for connection and encouragement. Engage in positive discussions, support your fellow seafarers, and prioritise meaningful interactions. If a post or conversation is making you feel anxious or upset, stepping away is always an option.

### Practical tip:

*Instead of venting frustrations publicly, consider discussing your concerns with a trusted friend or writing them down privately. This can help you process your feelings without unintended consequences.*

By taking care of your emotional well-being and using social media with awareness, you can maintain a healthier, more balanced mindset while at sea. Prioritising your mental health ensures that you remain strong, connected, and resilient, regardless of the journey ahead.



# 5

## Navigating Reunion

Returning home after months at sea is an exciting and joyful occasion for seafaring families. Yet, reunions often come with many expectations from both the seafarer and the waiting family. These expectations, while natural, can sometimes lead to emotional or practical challenges.

Understanding these dynamics can help families navigate the reintegration process more smoothly, strengthening relationships and emotional bonds in the long run.

## 1. Practical and Emotional Preparation for a Crew Member's Return

Practical and emotional preparation significantly eases the transition back to daily life:

### **Open Discussions:**

Begin conversations about expectations and possible adjustments early. Clearly discuss any changes in routines or responsibilities.

### **Reconnecting with Family:**

Schedule special family activities to celebrate reunions, allowing everyone time to reconnect in positive ways.

### **Home Environment Preparation:**

Arrange personal spaces thoughtfully. Consider the returning parent's need for rest and quiet alongside opportunities for family engagement.

### **Involve Children:**

Include children in reunion preparations, such as making welcome-home banners or special cards.

## 2. How to Address Common Challenges Faced During Reunions

### **Role and Routine Adjustments:**

Families often experience friction over household tasks, parenting roles, or routines.

**Solution:** *Have open discussions about expectations and be willing to adjust roles as needed. Flexibility and teamwork help ease the transition.*

### **Personal Space and Independence:**

Family members, especially teenagers, may struggle with re-establishing closeness and sharing personal space again.

**Solution:** *Respect each person's need for personal space. Encourage open conversations about boundaries and independence.*

### **Heightened Sensitivity and Stress:**

Emotional stress or heightened sensitivity can occur when expectations aren't immediately met.

**Solution:** *Acknowledge each other's feelings with patience and empathy. If tensions persist, consider seeking professional support to navigate the transition smoothly.*

### 3. Methods for Managing Expectations & Smoothly Reintegrating Routines

Gradual Reintegration

Acknowledge that adjustment takes time. Everyone has grown and changed during separation, and a period of adaptation is completely normal.

Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

Openly discuss changes in household roles or decision-making responsibilities that occurred during the separation period.

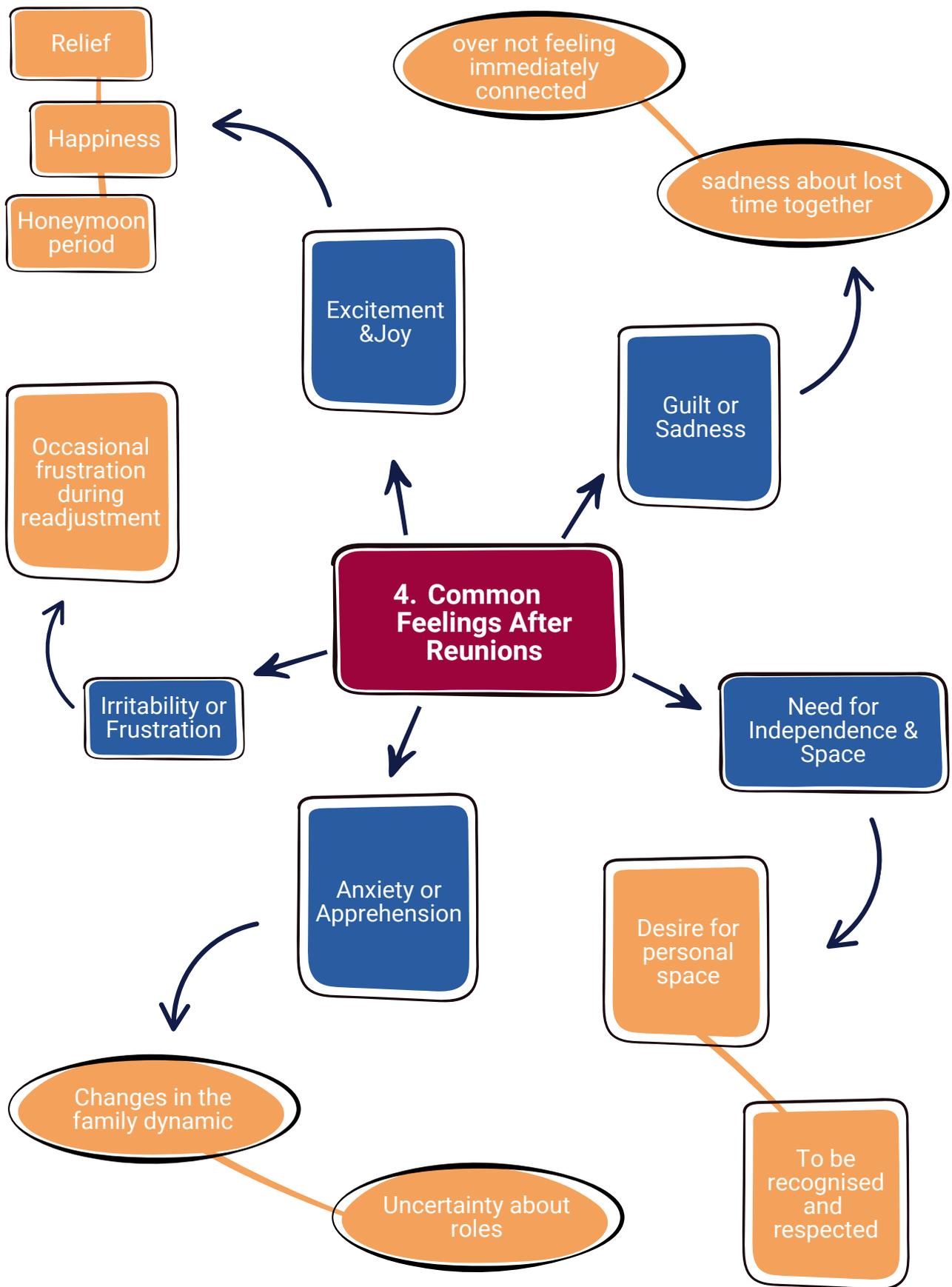
Set Realistic Expectations

Initially, allow the returning seafarer time and space to acclimate. Slowly reintegrate into family routines, avoiding overwhelming expectations.

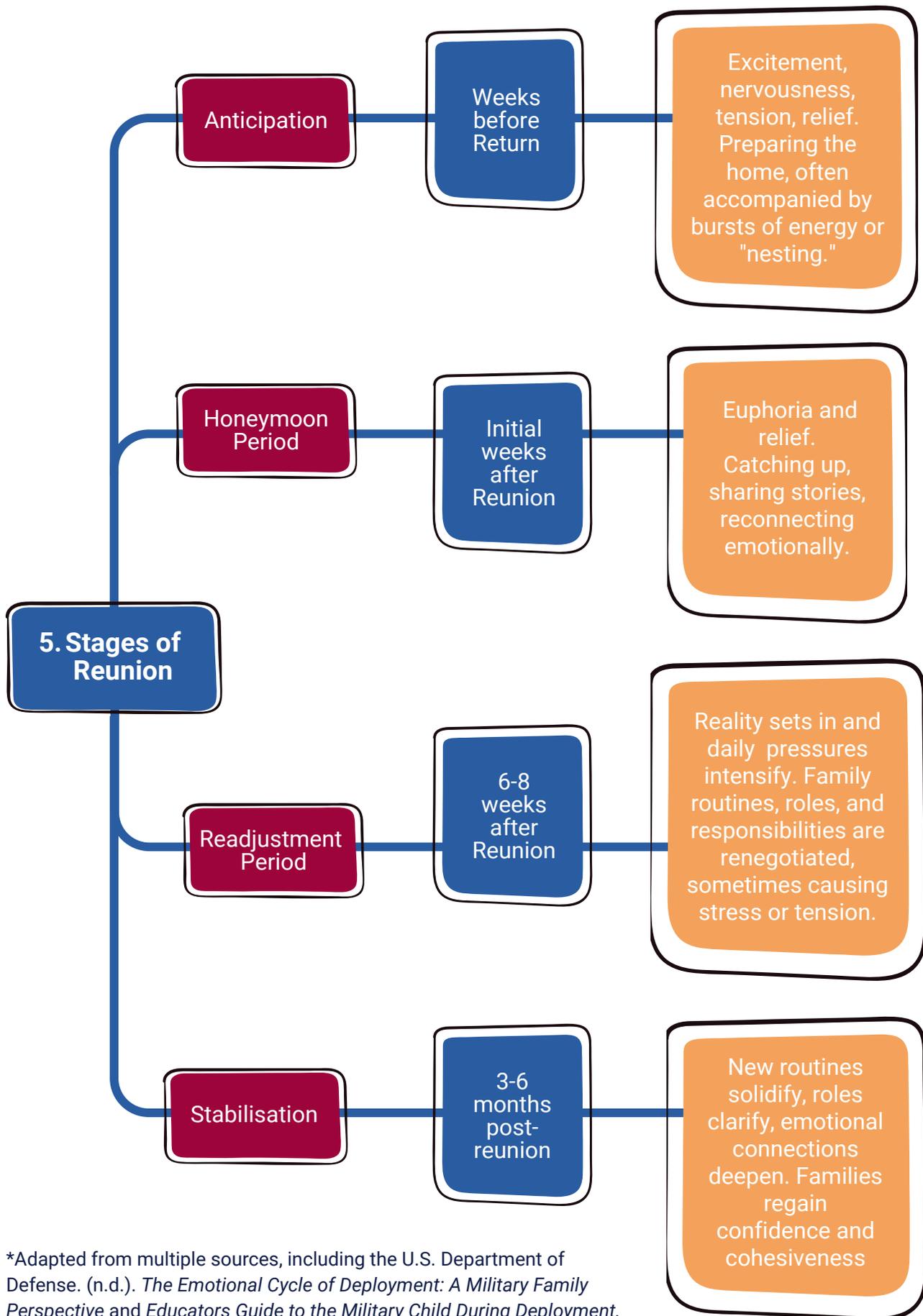
Encourage Patience & Empathy

Remind everyone to approach the reunion with patience, empathy, and understanding as you rediscover daily life together.





\*Adapted from multiple sources, including the U.S. Department of Defense. (n.d.). *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective and Educators Guide to the Military Child During Deployment*.



## 6. Wind-Down Period (Pre-Re-Deployment)



### Remember:

While not formally included in standard deployment cycles, many seafarers and families experience a “wind-down period” – a week or so before the next departure – characterised by emotional distancing and anticipatory stress. This phase mirrors the redeployment stage described in military contexts and aligns with research on seafaring family dynamics (Thomas et al., 2003).

### Common experiences include:

A sense of inevitability, as everyone starts mentally preparing for separation again.

Emotional distancing as a coping mechanism to soften the goodbye.

Unspoken tension, sometimes leading to minor arguments or mood swings.

Bittersweet moments, where routines resume but feel temporarily borrowed.

A mix of gratitude and anticipatory grief.



# 6

## Additional Resources

### 6. Wind-Down Period (Pre-Re-Deployment)

#### **Easy Guided Mindfulness Meditation for Beginners**

An accessible meditation session that guides you through the fundamentals of mindfulness practice, ideal for beginners to meditation. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code.



#### **Ten Minute Mindfulness Meditation**

A short, guided meditation designed for those with limited time, focusing on breathing and relaxation techniques. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code.



#### **Daily Calm 10-Minute Mindfulness Meditation | Be Present**

A daily meditation practice guided by Tamara Levitt focuses on being present and aims to cultivate mindfulness in everyday life. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code.



## 2. Book suggestions to read to your children

- The Magic Box: When Parents Can't Be There To Tuck You In, by Seymour Epstein and Marty Sederman. Illus. by Karen Stormer Brooks, 2003. Grades K–2.
- Daddy, Will You Miss Me? By Wendy McCormick. Illus. by Jennifer Eachus, 1999. Grades K–2.
- When Dad's at Sea, by Mindy Pelton. Illus. by Robert Gantt Steele, 2004. Grades K–3.
- Our Family and the Sea, by Mental Health Support Solutions and The Swedish Club. Illus. by Nikol Dimitrova, 2024.

## 3. Book suggestions for parents

- Raising Mentally Strong Kids: How to Combine the Power of Neuroscience with Love and Logic to Grow Confident, Kind, Responsible, and Resilient Children and Young Adults, by Dr. Daniel Amen and Dr. Charles Fay, 2024.
- Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child by John M. Gottman, Joan DeClaire, Daniel P. Goleman, 1998.
- Helping Children Succeed: What Works and Why by Paul Tough, 2016.

## 4. Article suggestions for parents

Parenting From A Distance, ZERO TO THREE Journal Issue, 2022.  
(Resource offering practical strategies and emotional guidance for parents maintaining strong connections with their children while separated by work or other circumstances.)

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to the article.



## 5. Web resources for children

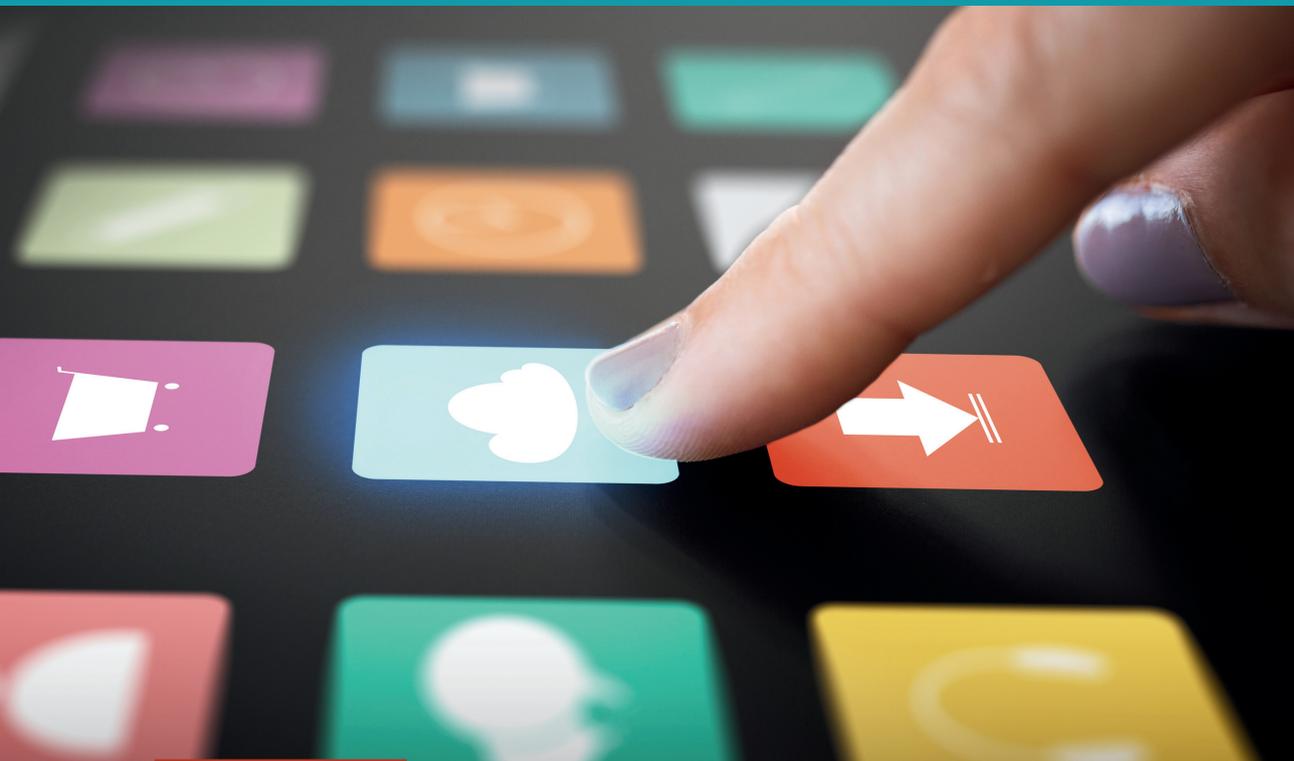
Provides bilingual resources featuring Sesame Street characters.  
Watch in particular the video about the deployment of Elmo's father.  
Click "[Sesame Street](#)" or scan the QR code to view the video.



## 6. Contacts for further assistance and professional support services

Feel free to contact Mental Health Support Solutions using the details below to discuss how they can support and assist you:

Mental Health Support Solutions GmbH  
Email: [info@mentalhealth-support.com](mailto:info@mentalhealth-support.com)  
Mobile: +49 151 540 366 45



# 7

## Interactive Elements

### 1. Commonly Asked Questions from Maritime Families About Separation

#### Q. What is the best way to prepare children for a parent's departure to sea?

A. Be honest and responsibly transparent with your child, use simple and age-appropriate language. Let them know when the parent will leave, why it's necessary, and how they'll stay in touch. If the separation will change your child's daily routine – such as school drop-offs, who will help with homework, or where they'll spend their holidays – explain these changes early. Children feel safer when they know what to expect.

### **Q. How can I reassure my child during this time?**

A. First, take a moment to understand your own emotions before talking to your child. This helps you speak calmly and confidently. Be responsibly transparent about the risks and reassure your child that the seafaring parent is well-trained and knows how to stay safe. Explain that even though they're far away, they're always thinking of home. Make it clear that the family remains strong and connected – no matter the distance.

### **Q. How do children show signs of stress when a parent is away?**

A. Children may not always say they're stressed, but you might notice:

- Headaches or stomachaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Mood swings or irritability
- Withdrawal, low energy, or sudden outbursts over small things

Some children regress to earlier behaviors (e.g., thumb-sucking or bedwetting), while others may try to act "extra grown-up." If you're unsure whether their reaction is typical or needs support, don't hesitate to reach out to a school counselor or healthcare provider. Please check page 16.

### **Q. How can I help reduce my child's stress during the separation?**

A. Children cope better when they feel they have a role. Let them know they are an important part of the family team. For example:

- Doing well in school
- Helping with small tasks at home
- Writing letters or drawing pictures for the seafaring parent

These activities give children a sense of purpose and connection. Remind them that what they do at home supports the parent at sea – they're part of the mission, too. Please check page 17.

### **Q. Should I inform the school that one parent is away at sea?**

A. Yes. It's helpful to inform your child's teacher or school counselor. They can better support your child emotionally and academically if they are informed about what's going on. Some parents hesitate to share personal information, but schools often appreciate being included so they can notice changes in mood, behavior, or performance early. If needed, they can also suggest additional support services. Please check page 7.

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DAY /

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# Seafarer's Emotional Well-Being Checklist

By following this checklist, you can take control of your emotional well-being and create a more balanced, fulfilling experience at sea.

---

**01** Establish a daily routine (exercise, journaling, reading)

---

**02** Identify one small thing to look forward to each day and practice mindfulness by breathing deeply and being present

---

**03** Use meditation apps or breathing exercises to manage stress

---

**04** Watch for phrases like "I can't handle this" or "I'm completely alone"- these can signal emotional distress

---

**05** Stay connected with family and friends through scheduled calls or voice messages

---

**06** Share small details about your day to maintain meaningful conversations

---

**07** Recognise and express emotions-don't bottle them up

---

**08** Watch for emotional triggers like withdrawing from social interactions or snapping at colleagues

---

**09** Seek support if stress or loneliness affects your work or well-being, remember: **asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness**

DAY /

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# Social Media & Well-Being Checklist for Seafarer families

Use this guide to stay mentally healthy and respectful while staying connected online:

---

**01** Be mindful of how social media affects your mood

---

**02** Recognise when scrolling triggers homesickness or fomo (fear of missing out)

---

**03** Avoid comparing your life to others' "highlight reels"

---

**04** Reach out to family and friends directly instead of passively scrolling

---

**05** Limit screen time-set daily time limits (e.g., 15 minutes/day) & take a break if social media starts making you feel worse

---

**06** Think before posting and verify information before reacting-misinformation spreads quickly

---

**07** Avoid sharing sensitive or work-related information

---

**08** Consider the emotional impact on others and avoid venting frustrations online: write them down or talk to someone you trust

---

**09** Ask yourself: "would I be okay if my captain or company saw this post?"

# Tracking My Feelings



This simple emotion and activity tracker is designed to help individual children identify emotional trigger points and moments of positivity in their day-to-day life.

When a child is feeling heightened emotions, they may sometimes find it difficult to identify specific causes. They may also struggle to employ coping strategies that work well for them.

The child can work with an adult to complete this tracker throughout a day at school, naming and scaling their feelings and attributing them to events in the day that may have increased either positive or negative emotions.



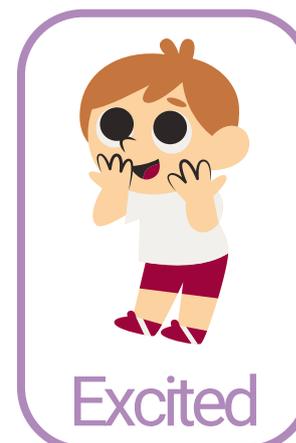
Regularly reviewing with an adult will help to identify points of the day that led to positive or negative emotions and can help pinpoint why this was the case.

The results can then be used to plan further opportunities for positive moments, identify triggers to avoid, and build a bank of coping strategies for the child.

There is a weekly summary box to review how the week went with the child and to identify any patterns.

An example has been completed for guidance, along with a blank version, in order to be adapted to suit the situation for each child.

# Emotions Prompts



**Note:** when tracking feelings children should try and describe the different feelings at that time and to what degree they are experiencing them, for example: *'mainly excited, a bit anxious'* or *'90% excited, 10% anxious'*.

Example

# Feelings Tracker



Please use the below examples to fill out the tracker together with your child(ren). You can also download the printable version of the mood tracker to create more copies for multiple weeks at a time.

## Monday

|   | ACTIVITY                      | FEELING                                       | REASON (OPTIONAL)              |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Coming into class/leaving mum | A bit sad but okay because Ms Dayle was there | I dont like leaving my mum     |
| 2 | Maths                         | Happy   | It is my favourite lesson      |
| 3 | Break time                    | Really angry, annoyed, upset                  | Argument with friends at break |
| 4 | Physical Activity             | Really excited and proud                      | My team won the game           |
| 5 | Hometime                      | Tired and a bit grumpy                        |                                |

# Tracking my feelings

Date:

## Monday



|   | ACTIVITY | FEELING | REASON (OPTIONAL) |
|---|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 |          |         |                   |
| 2 |          |         |                   |
| 3 |          |         |                   |
| 4 |          |         |                   |
| 5 |          |         |                   |

Date:

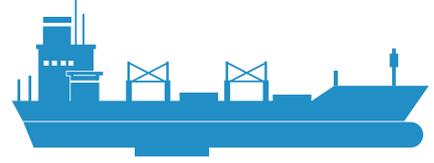
# Tuesday



|   | ACTIVITY | FEELING | REASON (OPTIONAL) |
|---|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 |          |         |                   |
| 2 |          |         |                   |
| 3 |          |         |                   |
| 4 |          |         |                   |
| 5 |          |         |                   |

Date:

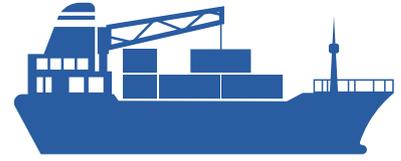
# Wednesday



|   | ACTIVITY | FEELING | REASON (OPTIONAL) |
|---|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 |          |         |                   |
| 2 |          |         |                   |
| 3 |          |         |                   |
| 4 |          |         |                   |
| 5 |          |         |                   |

Date:

# Thursday



|   | ACTIVITY | FEELING | REASON (OPTIONAL) |
|---|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 |          |         |                   |
| 2 |          |         |                   |
| 3 |          |         |                   |
| 4 |          |         |                   |
| 5 |          |         |                   |

Date:

# Friday



|   | ACTIVITY | FEELING | REASON (OPTIONAL) |
|---|----------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 |          |         |                   |
| 2 |          |         |                   |
| 3 |          |         |                   |
| 4 |          |         |                   |
| 5 |          |         |                   |

Date:

# Weekly Summary



A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for writing a weekly summary.



**MENTAL HEALTH**  
SUPPORT SOLUTIONS

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# Check Your Pulse



**Created by MHSS and The Swedish Club to help ensure the welfare of seafarers and their families**

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