



WEEK 5

Play, Joy & Shared Experience

Protecting friendship, laughter, and positive family memories during separation

Connected Across Distance

Practical, age-responsive tools for preserving emotional connection through separation and reintegration.

Luminous Pathways International
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Play, Joy & Shared Experience

Week 5 • Family Connection Practice

Core idea

Joy is not denial of deployment stress. Shared play gives the nervous system relief, strengthens attachment, and reminds families that they are more than schedules, problems, and separation.

Why it matters in deployment

Calls can become interviews or household briefings. This week deliberately creates low-pressure experiences where family members can enjoy one another.

Growth focus

Build this capacity through brief, repeatable practices that fit the family's ages, operational tempo, and current stress level.

Spouse connection practice

Schedule one date-style connection with no problem-solving for the first half. Share a meal, playlist, game, show, or memory.

Whole-family practice

Create a weekly "same experience, different place" activity: eat the same snack, wear the same color, photograph the sunset, or answer the same funny question.

This week's family actions

- Schedule one shared family activity.
- Start a joy bank.
- Let one child choose the weekly fun question or game.

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Age-responsive activities: birth through age 9

Infant (0-12 months)

- Use peekaboo, songs, clapping, and facial imitation.
- Repeat the same playful sound so it becomes familiar.
- Let the infant lead; stop when attention fades.

Toddler (1-3)

- Copy movements, animal sounds, or dance motions over video.
- Play “find something red” or “show me your favorite toy.”
- Use a short recorded story with exaggerated expression.

Preschool (4-5)

- Do a simple scavenger hunt or drawing challenge.
- Take turns adding to a pretend story.
- Use puppets or stuffed animals to make the call playful.

School-age (6-9)

- Play charades, twenty questions, drawing games, or simple online games.
- Build a shared joke collection.
- Create a photo mission for the week.

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Age-responsive activities: preteens through adult children

Preteen (10-12)

- Cook or assemble the same snack.
- Play a cooperative game or work on a shared digital project.
- Let them teach the deployed parent something they enjoy.

Teen (13-17)

- Share playlists, memes, sports highlights, gaming, or a watch party.
- Allow humor without turning every interaction into a lesson.
- Let the teen choose the activity sometimes.

Adult child (18+)

- Share a hobby, recipe, book, fantasy league, or streaming event.
- Create adult family traditions that do not depend on living in the same home.
- Use fun contact as connection, not an obligation.

When contact is interrupted

Keep a “joy bank” of photos, jokes, videos, and stories to send or save when live contact is unavailable.

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Family Reflection & Growth Plan

Complete these prompts individually or as a couple, then invite children to participate in developmentally appropriate ways. The goal is understanding and one realistic next step - not perfect agreement.

What activities make us feel most like ourselves as a family?

When did our communication become too serious or task-focused?

How can we create joy without adding another burden?

Seven-day micro-plan

- Schedule one shared family activity.
- Start a joy bank.
- Let one child choose the weekly fun question or game.

End-of-week family review

What helped us feel closer? What felt difficult? What should we continue, adjust, or stop next week?