

WORKBOOK

TRUCKERLIFE

PARENTING FROM A DISTANCE



Has parenting from a distance been a challenge for you? Do you think parenting long-distance is challenging for your child/children? What do you think the challenges are for your child's caretaker, whether it's your spouse, a co-parent, grandparent, or other caregiver? Have you had conversations or a family meeting where you talked about the challenges of your unique situation? Did everyone get to share their perspective and needs?

before you **LEAVE**



communicate love

What are ways that you can communicate love for your child before you leave? How does your child hear, “I love you”? Do they hear it best through words, notes, time spent together, little gifts, or big hugs? Be sure to say “I love you” in the way that best communicates love to your child.



stay connected

How can you be intentional about communicating your hopes and expectations before you leave? For example, in order to stay more connected to your child, is there a book you can both read while you’re apart and then share about it when you talk on the phone? Or, if you have a younger child, could you video yourself reading a book and send it to them? There is something very comforting about a child hearing their parent’s voice in the midst of their absence.



express expectations

Are your expectations simple, clear, and easily remembered? Can they be hung on the refrigerator, child’s room or bathroom mirror? Maybe you will want to come up with some specific things that will happen while you’re away and have everyone sign the piece of paper. Then place it on the refrigerator and on your truck dash so everyone can remember their personal commitment.

while you're **GONE**

Rituals

Call, text, FaceTime, or Skype at important times of the day like when your child wakes up, gets home from school or goes to bed. *Have rituals and do your best to stick with them but don't forget to be spontaneous and surprise your child with a quick text or phone call.* Each day you can text each other- What was your "high" today? What was your "low" today?

The road often brings with it a lot of unpredictability. "Undersell and over deliver" can be a great way of looking at things in terms of what you say you will do. *The goal is to try and avoid setting up expectations where your child will consistently end up disappointed.* For example, instead of saying, "I will call you every morning," it might be better to say, "I will talk to you every day." That way, you give yourself some wiggle room/margin.

Routines

What is your child's daily routine? Is it possible for you to check-in before and/or after school events or sport team games? *Setting up routines for chores, homework, meals, and family time if you haven't already done that could help decrease unnecessary drama.*

It's really helpful if you know your child's friends. *Have you met or communicated with their friend's parents?*

Consistency

Parenting from a distance can really be complicated while on the road. Is there one thing you want to be more consistent about while you are gone? One parent who was on the road all the time would receive phone calls from his kids complaining about the other parent. They would get the other parent on the phone and instead of being supportive of the parent who was at home, they would pick apart everything they did, which made the at-home parent feel unsupported. *After a number of months of this, the traveling parent realized how they were undermining the authority of the parent at home.* The next time they went on the road and the kids called, the traveling parent asked to speak with the at-home parent and asked how they could be supportive. This was a major game-changer for the parenting team and the kids.

Choosing to do one thing differently can change the dance big-time when it comes to parenting.

Structure

In a previous video we talk about the importance of family culture. This is pretty similar. Basically this is *a spoken understanding of how your family operates while one parent is absent.* Your family may operate one way with everybody home, but with one less parent things may have to be different because there is one adult trying to do it all.

One thing you want to be very clear about is *the parent/child boundary.* For example, if dad is leaving, you would not want to tell your child they are now the man of the house, but you would want them to be helpful with additional chores and to be helpful with siblings.

RITUALS, ROUTINES, CONSISTENCY AND STRUCTURE WILL HELP MAKE PARENTING FROM A DISTANCE EASIER.

don't forget **FUN!**

What are some fun things

you can do together while you are on the road to stay engaged with your child? What is your child passionate about at the moment? Can you connect through that while you're gone? Let them pick a TV show to watch or a book to read while you are gone, and then discuss it when you are back. Let them pick a game to play together on your phones or online. Games like "Words With Friends" or "QuizUp" are other great ways to stay connected! You can even root for a sports team together.



Even though you are separated by miles of highway, you can still cultivate a strong connection through games, books, TV shows and other shared interests or hobbies.

embracing technology

THE FUTURE IS HERE!

You may not consider yourself very good with technology, but today it's possible to stay connected in so many ways. You can use technology to stay connected with your child wakes up, gets home from school, and goes to bed.

You can still help with homework - use email or the cloud to check on assignments. Be sure to talk about how they performed at a game or school event.

With technology you can SEE their game or school play, possibly even LIVE! You can send little electronic gifts in the form of credits to download a song or credits for their favorite online game.

REMEMBER: There are a thousand ways to stay connected.

when you **RETURN**

How do you typically re-engage with your family when you get home? Do you have a routine or ritual for when you get home?

Have real conversations with your children. Ask open-ended questions like: *“What was the best thing that happened while I was away?”* (Don’t forget to share YOUR answers to those questions!)

How can you make the most of your family time when you are home?

Don’t try to do everything all at once. Pick one or two things to work on and build healthy family habits.

The ultimate goal is
**FOR YOUR CHILD TO FEEL SAFE, SECURE, AND
LOVED WHILE YOU’RE AWAY!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TIPS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS, CHECK OUT:

FIRSTTHINGS.ORG

