

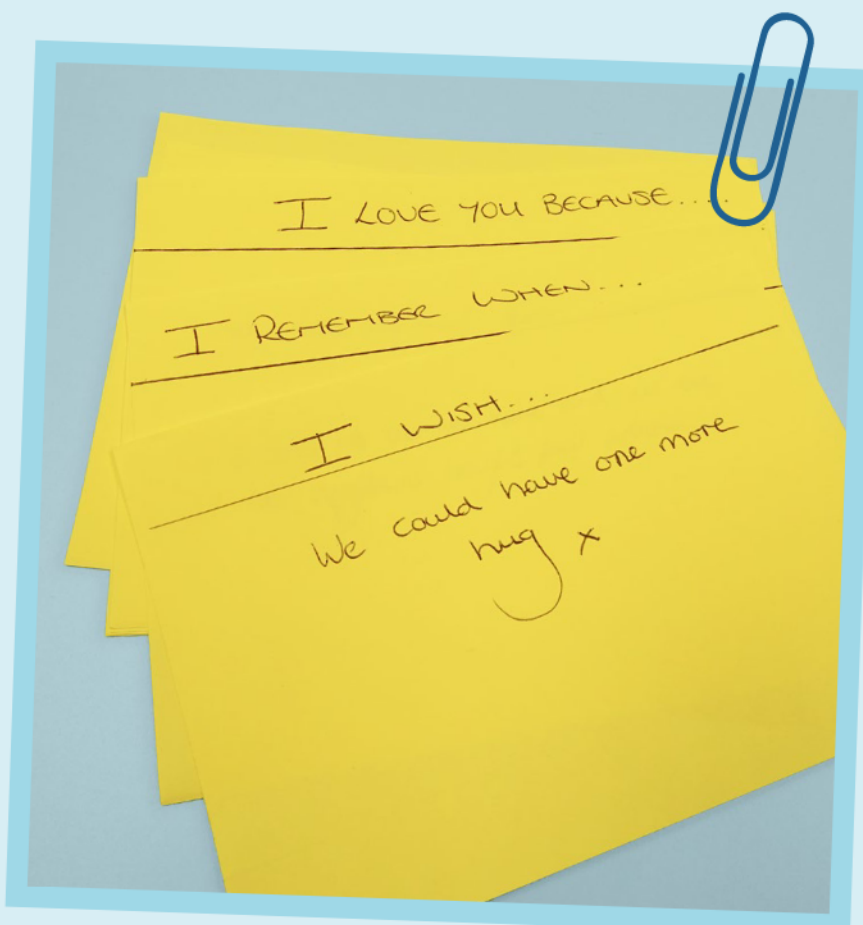
Worksheet:

Little Box of BIG Thoughts

About this activity

Sometimes it's hard to tell people who are important to you how you feel about them. When someone is upset, stressed or overwhelmed by deployments and separation, knowing where to start can be even trickier.

The Little Box of Big Thoughts is designed to help older children or adults have a conversation with someone close by who is important to them, or perhaps to process thoughts and feelings around separation. To aid natural healing in this event, it can be used to show a young person that just because someone is away, their connection to that person remains.



This tool will help by starting every sentence for them. It is simply a collection of sentence starters, which a person can finish on paper or say out loud to you, helping them to voice their feelings and memories as well as processing complex, commonly bottled-up emotions, such as anger, fear and guilt.

Sometimes when life holds such uncertainty, the answers to these simple sentences will feel incredibly important and grounding.

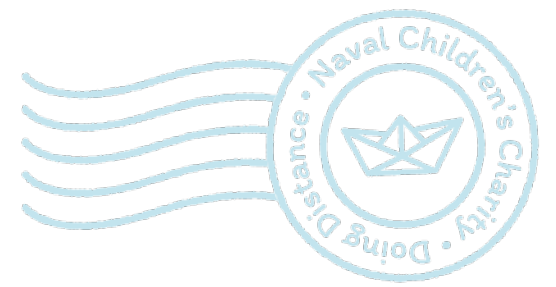
The Little Box of Big Thoughts is one of the most useful tools to help understand the 'unsaid's'; however, it can provoke strong and complicated feelings that you may not expect. Before suggesting it to a child, young person or parent, watch the film on our website and (if possible) sit down quietly and try to do the activity yourself. Do this activity about someone in your own family, imagining that you are separated from that person... you will quickly see how these small incomplete sentences connect you emotionally and why the exercise should not be rushed.

Outcomes

- ✓ To expand the stories we tell ourselves about other people in our family
- ✓ To strengthen the connection between an older child and a parent
- ✓ To promote the continuing bonds that reassure a child separated from family through separation or bereavement

What you will need

- ✓ You can find templates of the Little Box of Big Thoughts on the NCC website that you can copy or print. Try to find a little box to keep all the messages safely together, or if the person wants to give it to someone as a present, it can make a very special gift at a time of great vulnerability.



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What to do

- 1 The first step is to support the child or adult to carefully choose who they may want to have a conversation with.
- 2 It may be a person they feel close to, but it can also help with difficult relationships. Perhaps a child may put one parent on a pedestal as a 'hero' parent if they are away with the military, but may naturally show anger and frustration to those close by. A more balanced view can be created by completing the sentences. For example...

'I want to do this for my mum as I think she is struggling without Dad and although we argue sometimes, I think she is doing a great job'.

- 3 The incomplete sentences are carefully constructed to allow a person to have a different and wider conversation with someone than they usually manage, so this activity can be surprisingly emotional. Many people will struggle to do it alone, and you may want to do it verbally together rather than writing it down, with you leading with the sentence prompt and the other person completing it aloud.



- I hope that you...
- Always know that...
- I feel so proud when...
- I laugh when...
- I wish...
- I remember when...
- I regret...
- It was your choice to...
- Thank you for...
- You shine when...
- When times get tough...
- I love you because...
- If we're not together, what I miss about you is...
- You are special because...
- I hope that I can be more...
- I will try to be less...
- Sometimes I feel we are similar because...
- Something that really matters in family life...
- A favourite memory I will always have is...
- Being separated will not break...