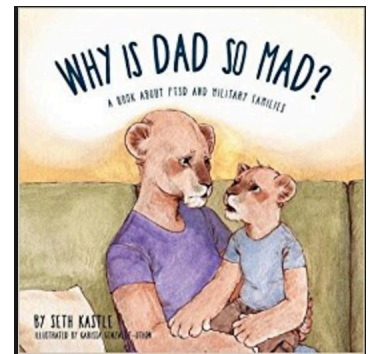


Why is Dad So Mad?

By Seth Kastle

In *Why is Dad So Mad?* a young child recognized a change in their dad's behavior, specifically related to anger, during various routine activities. These observations are validated by the child's mother as she explains that being away at war changed Dad. This book sends the message that despite the anger the father experiences, he still loves his child.



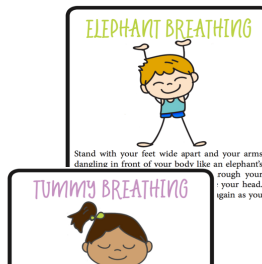
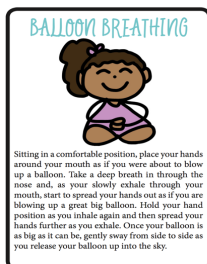
Discussion:

- Understanding the emotions of others is a skill young children are learning. Some children may mirror the caregivers emotional state, while others may attempt to take care of the caregiver, and some children may emotionally retreat.
- Family members can talk about the symptoms of PTSD with their child. This may give the child a chance to express how they feel, as well as help them understand that PTSD is not their fault or a result of something they did.

Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Pasta Feeling Faces**
 - Supplies: glue, paper, various types of pasta
 - Using these materials older children can create feeling faces that relate to the emotions discussed in the book. A conversation about different types of emotions may be helpful along with modeling what a face may look like when displaying a specific emotion.
 - For younger children, these cards could be made ahead of time or with the caregiver assisting in a hand-over-hand manner. While the young child explores the tactile features of the card, caregivers can narrate for the child what the emotion is and what the facial features are doing (i.e., "Look, this person's mouth is in a frown. Can you feel that with your finger?").
- **Put the Fire Out**
 - In the book *Why is Dad So Mad?* the father takes a walk to "put the fire out." With toddlers and preschoolers, discuss ways they can calm or soothe themselves through activities such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing. Try the yoga breathing cards from Christie Burnett of *Childhood 101*, a website designed to assist caregivers, teachers, and others in creating play-based learning environments for children. The breathing cards can be downloaded for free at <https://bit.ly/2RyQ8NE>
 - For younger children, caregivers may find it helpful to hold the child and practice some of the breathing techniques recommended in the cards.



Ages 3 to 5:

- **Story of My Day**

- Using art materials, encourage children to draw or write a book about events or experiences that elicit specific emotions.
- Begin by discussing with the child what kinds of emotions they have and what triggers those emotions. Use a feelings face chart if needed to help the child label the emotion. Once several different emotions and events have been discussed, provide them with a variety of art materials such as crayons, markers, paper, and other supplies.
- Ask the child to illustrate the event that correlates to each emotion. Keep in mind the child may wish to draw how they feel when this event occurs which may result in an image that does not necessarily resemble anything concrete. Encourage the child to express their feeling in a way that makes sense to them.
- If the child is able and desires to share verbally what is happening in the picture, consider captioning it on the page with their consent. Some children may not want anything written on their pages.
- When the child has finished creating images for each emotion, help them bind the book together using a hole punch and brads, string, or other fasteners.

- **I Love You Even When Poem**

- Assist a caregiver (preferably the one experiencing PTSD) and the child in creating short poems about their love for one another that is similar to the one below.
- This can be done using a fill-in-the-blank format between the caregiver and the child. An example is provided.

I love you even when you're (*tired*),

And I love you when you're (*wild*).

I love you when you (*stomp your feet*),

And I love you when you (*refuse to eat*).

I love you when you (*shake your head*),

And I love you when you (*won't go to bed*).

I love you when you (*won't let me help*),

And most of all I love you when you're (*being yourself*).

- When the poems are created, they can be shared aloud. Caregivers and children can decorate the paper or decorate a frame to hold the poem.
- If the caregiver is already deployed, the child can still create a poem that can be mailed to their deployed caregiver. If possible, the caregiver should be encouraged to create one and mail it back to their child.