

## Stay Connected by Marilyn Suttle



**I**s business travel part of your job? How do you stay connected to your family while away from home? Here are a few tips.

- Include the kids in the process of your departure. Get in the habit of collecting favorite family pictures. Let them see you pack pictures and mementoes into your suitcase. Imagine how you would feel as a child if your father said to you, “I’m taking this picture of you with me so I can see your smiling face every day.”

- Send email to connect with the kids each day. Phone calls aren’t always possible with busy out-of-town schedules. So, send email. When you find free time to call, the kids are likely to be in school or in bed. Just a couple of sentences is all you need to let them know they are important to you.

- Send a postcard. When you find a card that has a special meaning for your child, buy it and save it for the next time you’re away from home. Write about the positive things you see in them or simply write, “I love you,” or “This postcard made me think of you.”

- Hide a few envelopes or notes around the house to let the kids (and spouse) know you are thinking of them. Leave a note on a favorite book: “I’ll read this to you when I get home.” Show that you know what your children like and who they are. Also, leave little love notes for your spouse.

- Consider tape recording yourself reading your children’s favorite bedtime stories. Your voice can then comfort your children every night.

- Form rituals around your departure and return. The familiar routine will help your family feel secure. Make your homecoming an event. Plan a “pizza party” or special treat. This gives the whole family a feeling of coming together in happy reunion.

- Give full appreciation to your spouse or other caregiver at home. Sometimes spouses criticize the traveling parent. Children are hurt by comments like, “He’s never here when we need him.” Redirect negative views to create positive feelings: “Daddy works so hard for his family,” or “It must be hard for mommy to be away from us for so long.”

- When you come home, listen to your children and spouse. Make eye contact, and give them your complete attention. Realize that your family has fended without you. Let them tell you about their experiences while you were gone and their feelings about you not being there. Then share with them some of your experiences.

Your family needs to know that they are your top priority, especially when you’re away from home.

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