

HOME AND AWAY

A sizeable proportion of my couples counselling includes partners where one commutes either to Brisbane, interstate or overseas.

While there are so many upsides to this work, here are some of the common challenges I hear:

- ✗ Relationships become strained and one parent often takes on the role of single parent
- ✗ Children are impacted emotionally, spending time looking forward to mum or dad's return and then having to say goodbye again
- ✗ FIFO workers may find it difficult to adjust from single life to family life
- ✗ Both partners need down time, time with each other and time with their children
- ✗ A sense of isolation and loneliness that can lead to depression
- ✗ Fatigue due to very long shifts (for the parent at home and the person away)
- ✗ Missing significant events such as birthdays and weddings
- ✗ Struggling to feel part of the community due to long stretches away.

Thankfully we have the benefit of the huge variety of phone apps to keep working partners in touch with their family. It

HOW TO KEEP FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS ALIVE AND THRIVING WHEN ONE PARTNER GOES AWAY REGULARLY FOR WORK

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON



certainly doesn't replace touch, but a quick FaceTime at the soccer match is a wonderful tool. Other ideas are:

- ✗ Plan ahead with class teachers to invite the working parent in for a "show and share" about their job
- ✗ Exchange drawings or notes in lunch boxes
- ✗ Plan regular one-on-one breakfast dates with the working parent before school if you have multiple children
- ✗ Arrange for a spontaneous school pick-up by the working partner. It might be infrequent but avoid being too rigid in your roles as these surprises will be memorable
- ✗ Create a special regular ritual such as "Saturday morning pancake cook-up" when

the working parent is home that creates a special connection.

- ✗ Create an online shared photo album or scrapbook of events to share important achievements such as awards or exciting things to share with the working parent
- ✗ Draw up a special calendar featuring input from the children on days when a travelling parent arrives home
- ✗ Importantly, ensure both parents are understanding of hectic times during their schedules such as meetings and evening bath/meal times.

It's helpful for parents to collaborate on an "insurance plan" on how you'll transition again each time you reunite. This can

include:

- ✗ What downtime does each partner require when they return home to rejuvenate from long working hours or long days spent with the children?
- ✗ What roles and responsibilities at home can be clearly allocated to relieve resentment?
- ✗ What are you looking forward to as a couple/family?
- ✗ How are you maximising the financial rewards?

This lifestyle can certainly provide amazing benefits such as greater financial rewards, relief from the standard working hours and, for some, thousands of frequent flyer points. With planning and effort, many commuting parents enjoy a fun and connected relationship with their family.

Listen in to Salt106.5 each Friday morning for my fun chat on this series with the Breakfast crew.

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Superman was raised by foster parents...

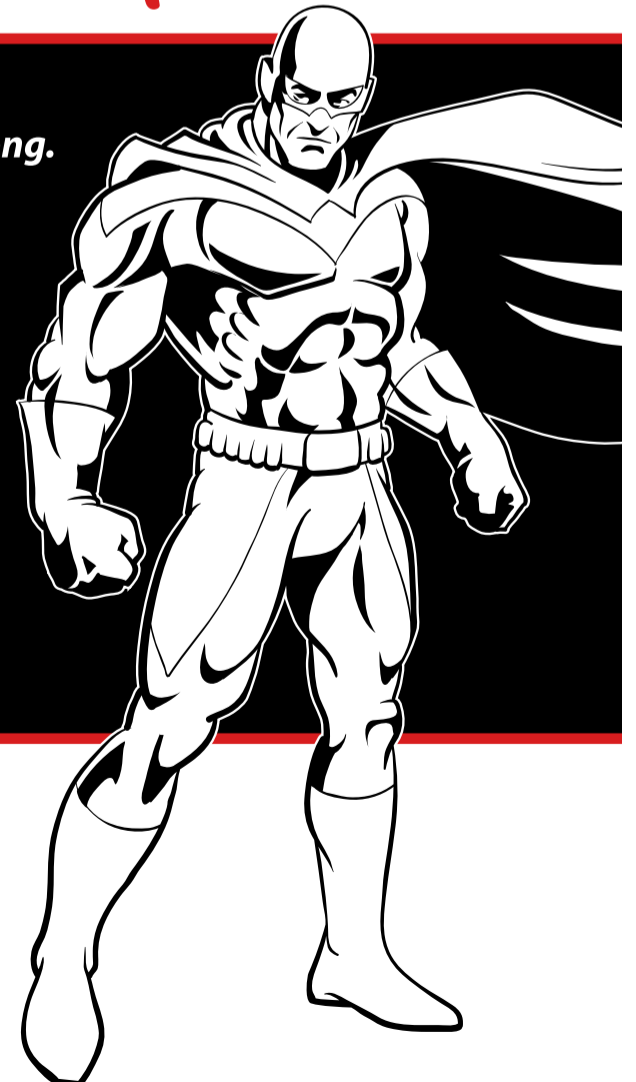
At IFYS Foster Care we know that belonging is fundamental to the human experience and we all have an essential need to be loved, cared for and belong.

As humans, we need to belong. To one another, to our friends and families, to our culture and country, to our world. Belonging is primal, fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being.

When a child is brought into care they can be confused, scared and unsure of what the future holds, they can feel that they don't belong.

At IFYS Foster Care we acknowledge children and young people need to belong, they need to feel that they really matter to somebody, somewhere. A connection with at least one caring adult can make a huge difference in the life of a child or young person.

In the words of Rita Pierson - Every child deserves a champion – an adult who never gives up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.



...Are you prepared to be a champion and help raise the next superhero?



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