

Duncan Family Communication Plan

Clara

My Rules

- We will not talk about Ted being in danger. When I need to talk about this, I will call my sister. I do not want to hear about terrible things that Ted might be seeing or doing in the war zone, but I want to feel confident that he has someone he can share this with if he needs to.
- We also will not talk about problems around the house that Ted cannot solve from Afghanistan. If I am having problems with Josh or some household issue, I will get help from friends or family members.

My Goals

- I want Ted to stay present in our lives and for the kids to feel like their dad is still there. I do not want Michelle to forget what Ted looks like or sounds like. Therefore, our communications during his deployment will focus on keeping him informed about everyday things going on with the kids and me.

My Plan

- I'll send Ted regular emails to tell him what is happening with family and friends, how the kids are doing in school, what's going on with Erica's and Josh's sports teams and what new tricks Michelle has learned.
- When we talk on the phone, I will try to focus on positive things and keep the conversation "light."
- When we Skype, the kids and I will try to show Ted something special that will help him feel like he is here with us. Ideas could be a new hairstyle for me, a new cheer Erica learned, or new words that Michelle can say.
- I will send Ted a package once a month that has the kids' school papers, cards, and other things that will make him feel like he is home with us.
- When I am stressed or down, I will try turning to friends or family whenever possible. I might share some of those feelings with Ted but not to the point where he is worrying about us a lot.

Backup

- Ted and I will check in and be honest about how our plan is working out. If we are feeling frustrated or upset (e.g., if he reads something into one of my emails that I did not mean), or, if something is not working (e.g., if it turns out that he cannot use Skype), we will address this and revise our communication plan.

Ted

My Rules

- I won't ask about major problems around the house or with the kids because I know Clara can take care of things and find other resources if she needs to, and I won't be able to solve any of those problems from Afghanistan.
- I will not talk about combat or any really bad, war related things with Clara. If I need to share that stuff outside of my unit, I will talk to my dad or my brother.

My Goals

- I really want to stay connected with Clara and the kids and not feel like I am totally out of the loop with what is going on at home. Because Michelle is just a baby, I am worried she will forget me completely, so I want to keep in touch in a way that keeps that from happening.
- I also want to keep the spark going between Clara and me and not let our marriage suffer.

My Plan

- When we get phone time, I'll try to catch up with her, Erica, and Josh individually, and I'll ask the kids questions about stuff Clara puts in the emails so that they know I'm staying current with their lives.
- I will try to figure out what we can do on Skype. If possible, I want to read books to Michelle and play little games with her. If Josh has been good for his mom, maybe I can watch and cheer for him while he plays an Xbox game; that is what we usually do together. Erica loves cheerleading, so maybe she can show me her cheers.
- If something really bad happens or if I'm feeling stressed out, I'll try to find another way to deal with it besides talking to Clara. If I do share stuff with her, I will try to do it in a way that keeps her from worrying about me.

Backup

- Clara and I have agreed to be honest with each other about whether or not this plan is working. She will also check in regularly with Erica and Josh to make sure it is working for them. If something is not working or one of us feels upset about it, we will let each other know and try to figure out changes that could improve things.

Erica

My Rules

- I will try to help mom while dad is away.
- If things get stressful while dad is gone, I will talk to my Grandma or Aunt Jane about it, but I will not talk to dad about it because I do not want him to worry.
- I also will not talk to dad about how worried I am about him being hurt or killed in war since he says that kind of talk just distracts him.
- When we talk with dad, I will try to focus on positive things.

My Goals

- I want to stay in touch with my dad and for him to know about my cheerleading and grades and all the other stuff I am doing.
- I want him to give me advice about stuff going on at school, like topics for school projects and things like that, just like he always does.

My Plan

- I will help mom get the care packages ready for dad every month, and I will write letters and pull out special school stuff and pictures to send to him.
- I will plan something special for when we get to Skype with dad. I will practice my cheers so I can show him on camera, and I will help Michelle practice her counting and help her learn little songs so she can sing them to dad.
- When we talk on the phone, I'll tell dad everything I've been doing, plus I'll give him a report on all the ways I'm helping mom since I know that is important to him.

Backup

- I promise to let mom know how things are working in terms of trying to communicate with dad while he is gone. If I feel upset or frustrated about it, we can try to change our plan.

Josh

My Rules

- I know dad is worried about me behaving for mom while he is gone, and I do not want him to worry. So, I will try really hard to listen to mom and Erica.
- If I am having a problem at home or at school, I will call my Grandma or my Uncle Ken, but I will not make dad worry about it.
- I worry about dad getting hurt in the war, but we agreed not to talk about that because dad does not like it. But, my Uncle Ken says I can talk about it with him all I want, and his cell phone number is taped up on our refrigerator.

My Goals

- I want him to know about my baseball and basketball games and about special things at school like field trips and assemblies. I want dad to play with me like he does every night, but I know he can't. Instead, I really want him to watch me play our favorite games, so I can feel like he is still home.

My Plan

- I will help get stuff ready for the care packages mom is sending. I will save special papers from school and videos from my baseball and basketball games.
- Every time I talk with dad on the phone, I will think of three things to tell him that are going well and three ways I am being helpful at home.
- Whenever we Skype with dad, I will plan on something fun and exciting to show him. If he has time, maybe he can watch me play one of our favorite Xbox games.

Backup

- I promise to let mom know how things are working in terms of trying to communicate with dad while he is gone. If I feel upset or frustrated about it, we can try to change our plan.