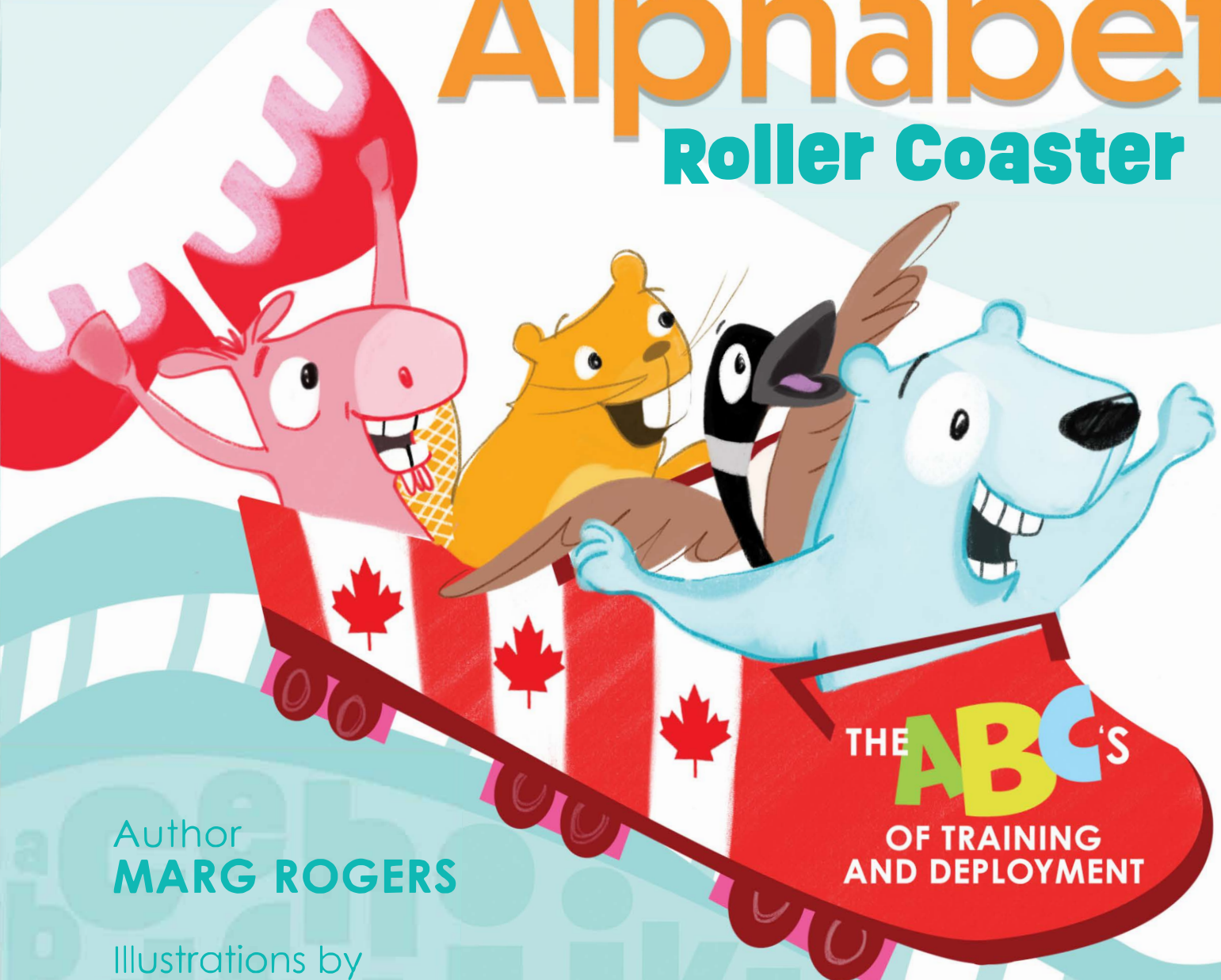


# Our Alphabet Roller Coaster



Author  
**MARG ROGERS**

Illustrations by  
**JAN DOLBY**

## – Foreword –

Military families face a distinct set of circumstances, marked by frequent relocations, extended separations, and the ever-present reality of change. In our military world, children are the unsung heroes, navigating challenges and embracing unique experiences with unwavering courage and resilience.

Here at CIMVHR, the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research, we are very pleased to present our Canadian adaptation of this book, entitled *Our Alphabet Roller Coaster*, for children from Canadian military families. What makes this book, and this entire series, unique is that these children's stories are all based on research evidence informed by military parents and children, collected in the work of Dr. Marg Rogers and her colleagues at the University of New England, in Armidale, Australia, and now informed by Canadian military parents and children in Canada. Our mission here at CIMVHR is to enhance the well-being of military and Veterans families through research, and this beautiful book series is a fabulous example of how sound research, together with international and national partnerships can help improve the lives of those who serve our country.

This book serves as both a mirror and a beacon for young children, reflecting their realities while guiding them through a roller coaster of emotions that comes with their journey in a military family. This beautifully illustrated, colourful, ABC's book provides an opportunity for the youngest military children to see their own families and emotions reflected in children's literature. It offers an important opportunity for children and parents to read together and to discuss the frequent absences of deployment and training that are common in a military family, to help build resilience, emotional recognition, and coping methods together as a strong military family.

**Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger, CD, PhD**

**Professor, Royal Military College of Canada**

**Associate Scientific Director, CIMVHR**





# “Hi, we are here to share this story with you!”



**KYE** loves reading,  
swimming, drawing.  
My Dad is in the Navy.

**AMIK** loves  
crafts, building things  
and playing in the park.  
My Dad is the Joint Task  
Force Unit (JTF-2).



**MAPLE** loves  
running, naps and playing  
games.  
My Mom is in the Army and  
my Dad is in the Army Reserves.



**CLOÉ** loves  
colouring, sports and  
airplanes.  
My Mom is in the Air Force.



Come with us on our alphabet roller coaster,

**up**  
and  
**down,**  
**down**  
and  
**up.**

As we move past the letters,

**A** to **Z**,  
this is what deployment  
and training means to me.



We'll start with **Airport**,  
and end with **Zulu**.



**Come join in and  
we will have some fun!**



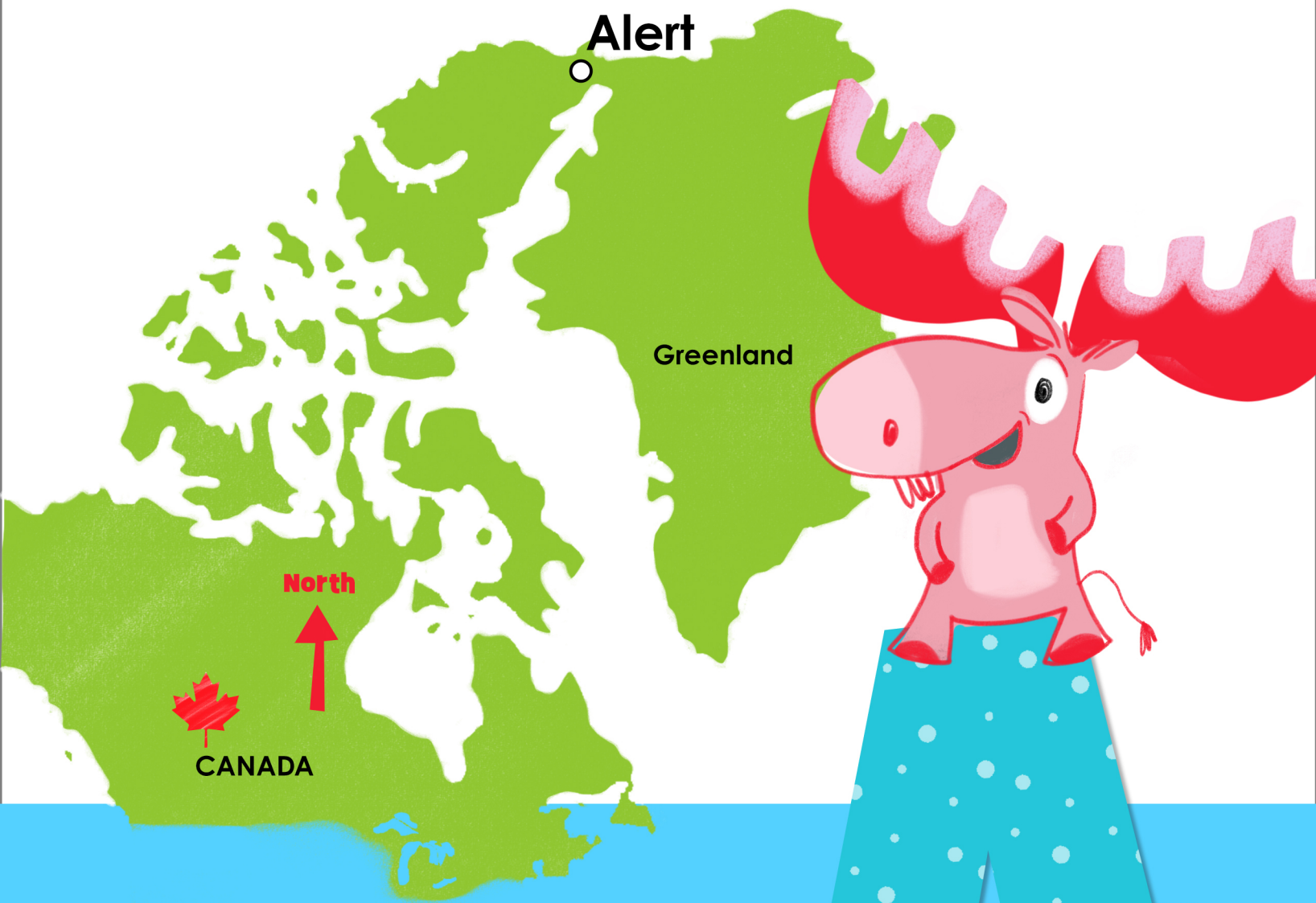
Aa



A is for Air Force  
and airport...

a a a





...Army and Alert.

Canada has troops way up North!

**B** is for **brave**.

It's also for **bags**.

I help pack them  
before they go away.



C is for **Canada!**







**D** is for **deployment**

- a word that makes me  
sad because it means  
my parent is going away.

It's also for **difficult**.  
It's hard to say goodbye.



d d d



**E** is for **excitement**

- when I see them home again!



**F** is for  
family  
and  
friends.

f ff





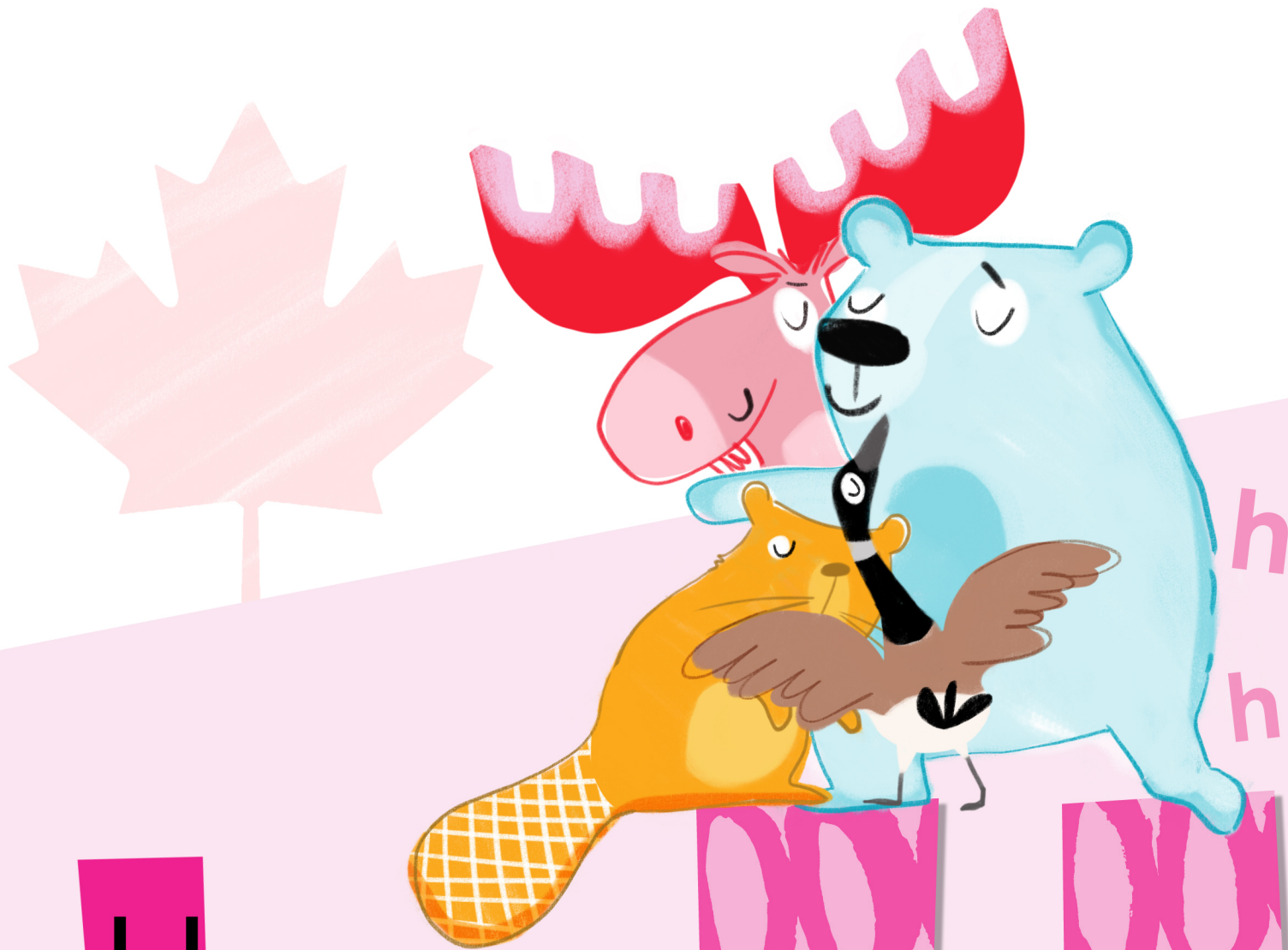
**G** is for  
**games**

and

**going** on adventures!

We go on special outings when  
my parent is away on deployment.





**H** is for **home**  
(together again) and **hugs!**

h

h



I is for **impatient**

to have everyone home.



**J** is for **Jet lag.**

Dad is tired when he first comes home after a long day of travel.



j

j j

K is for kisses.

Kk



**L** is for **love**.

I **love** my family.





**M** is for **messages** from Mommy and Daddy  
when they are deployed.



We share letters,  
emails, and  
sometimes parcels!



m

m m

m



And **M** is for **moon**.  
We all look up at the  
same **moon** in the night sky.

**m** m m m

N is for navy.



**N** is also for **new**.

We meet lots of **new** people  
and see many **new** places  
in our military families.







is for **ocean** and **overseas**.

Our parents get to see the world!

Pp

P is for **proud**  
and **protect**.

We are very **proud** of our **parents**.  
They **protect** our country!



**Q** is for **quiet**,  
now that they are gone.

SHHHHH



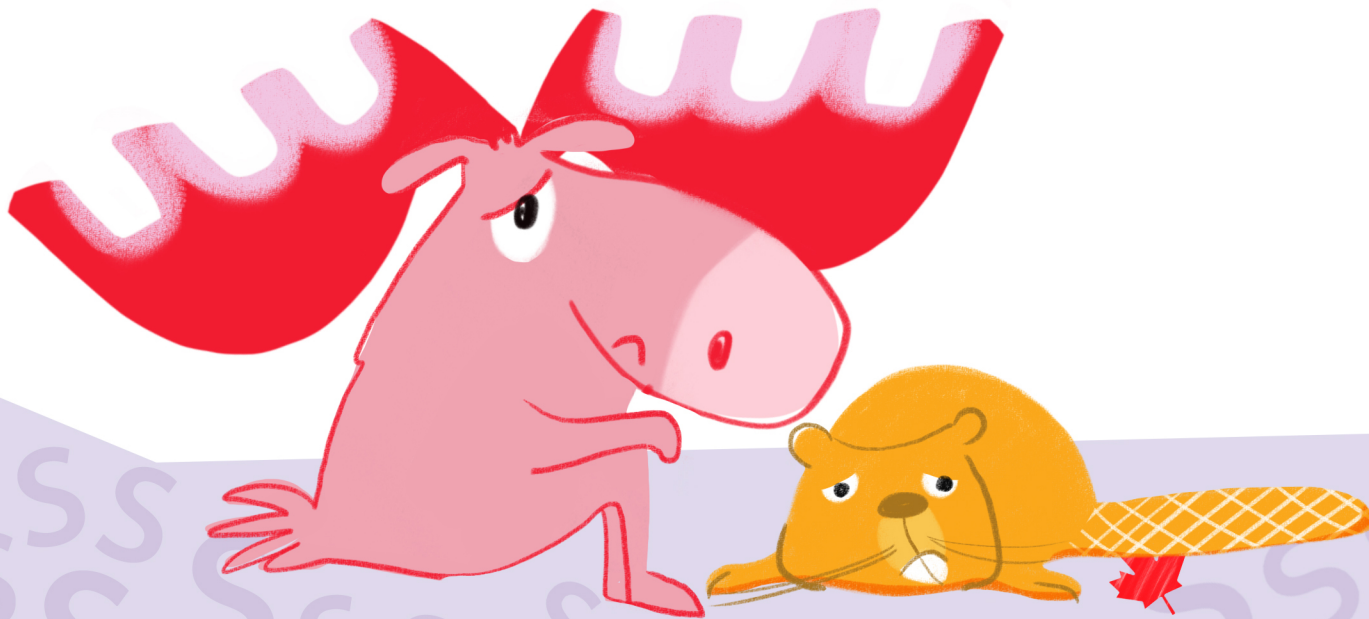


**R** is for **Remembrance Day**.  
Lest we forget.



**S** is for  
siblings,  
support,  
and sad.

We **support** each other  
when we get **sad** or lonely.



**T** is for **training**

where Mom and Dad go  
away to learn new things!



And **time together**,  
when they come home again!



U is for **uniform**.

- They look so cool!





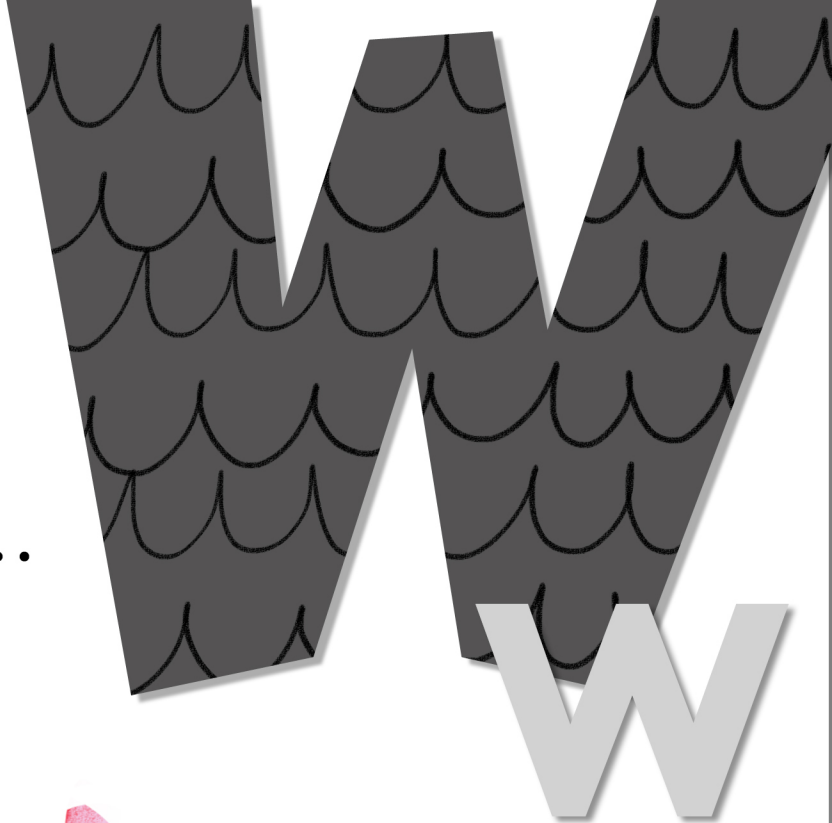


is for **visit**.

Sleepovers at Grandma & Grandpa's,  
and Bubbeh & Zaydeh's house.

**W** is for **waiting...**

it feels like forever before  
they come home.



**X** is for **XOXO**.

- We sign our messages with hugs and kisses!







Y

is for **yellow** ribbons.

We support our troops!







Z

z

z

z

z

**Z** is for **zulu**.

It's a military word that means the letter **Z**, and when I do a great job, I get a big "Bravo Zulu!"



Thank you for coming on our alphabet roller coaster ride.

Now we know our

**a,b,c's**

– and what training and deployment  
means for our military families.



Are you ready to say it backwards?

z y x w v u t

s r q p o n m

l k j i h g f

e d c b a ...





**Now that you have  
finished the story,  
can you find the  
following things?**

Find the  
**Maple Leaf**  
on every page.  
Count them up!

What kind of  
**Animals**  
are  
Kye, Cloé,  
Amik, and Maple?

Find the  
**Upper and  
Lower Case**  
letters  
on each  
letter page.

Why is  
**Remembrance  
Day**  
so important in  
Canada?

On the **V** is for **Visit page**,

**MAPLE** visits his grandma and grandpa,

and **KYE** visits his bubbeh & zaydeh.

**AMIK** is Anishinaabe. His family speaks Ojibwe.

He would say, “I visit my nookomis (grandmother)

and mishoomis (grandfather).”

**CLOÉ** speaks French, and she visits her  
grand-maman and grand-papa.



**What are some  
other names for  
Grandma & Grandpa  
that friends in Canada use?  
Try to think of 5 more!**

# What positive things can I do at home while my parent is away?

Draw a **picture** of your family.

Record a **video** for your parent who is away.

Go for a **family walk** together.

Give someone you love a **big hug**.



**Call** your grandparent, aunt, or uncle, and tell them about your day.

**Sing** your favourite song.

Make a **card** to send to your parent who is away.

**Smile** at one of your friends or a teacher and **wave hello**.

The illustrations and some of the content have been modified for a Canadian audience with permission of the original author, Dr. Marg Rogers. For the original content, entitled *Mary's Alphabet Slippery Dip*, and for additional resources created for Australian audiences please visit [Child and Family Resilience Programs](#).

This eBook and additional online Canadian eBooks and accompanying resources will continue to be created. These adapted Canadian versions can be found on the following websites;

[Military Family Services, Canadian Forces Morale & Welfare Services,](#)

[Canadian Institute of Military and Veteran Health Research,](#)

[Families Matter Research Group,](#)

[The Royal Canadian Legion,](#) and

[Wounded Warriors Canada.](#)



## **How was this research-based ebook written?**

The static eBook was written using research data collected from defence families. The overall research project was titled 'Young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an Australian Defence Force (ADF) family' (Rogers, 2017). The information below and in the next few pages explores research from the eBook, the interactive version of the eBook and the original research project. A focus group made up of Canadian military and first responder parents, together with Canadian researchers with expertise in military, Veteran and families health research, helped to inform this Canadian adaptation.

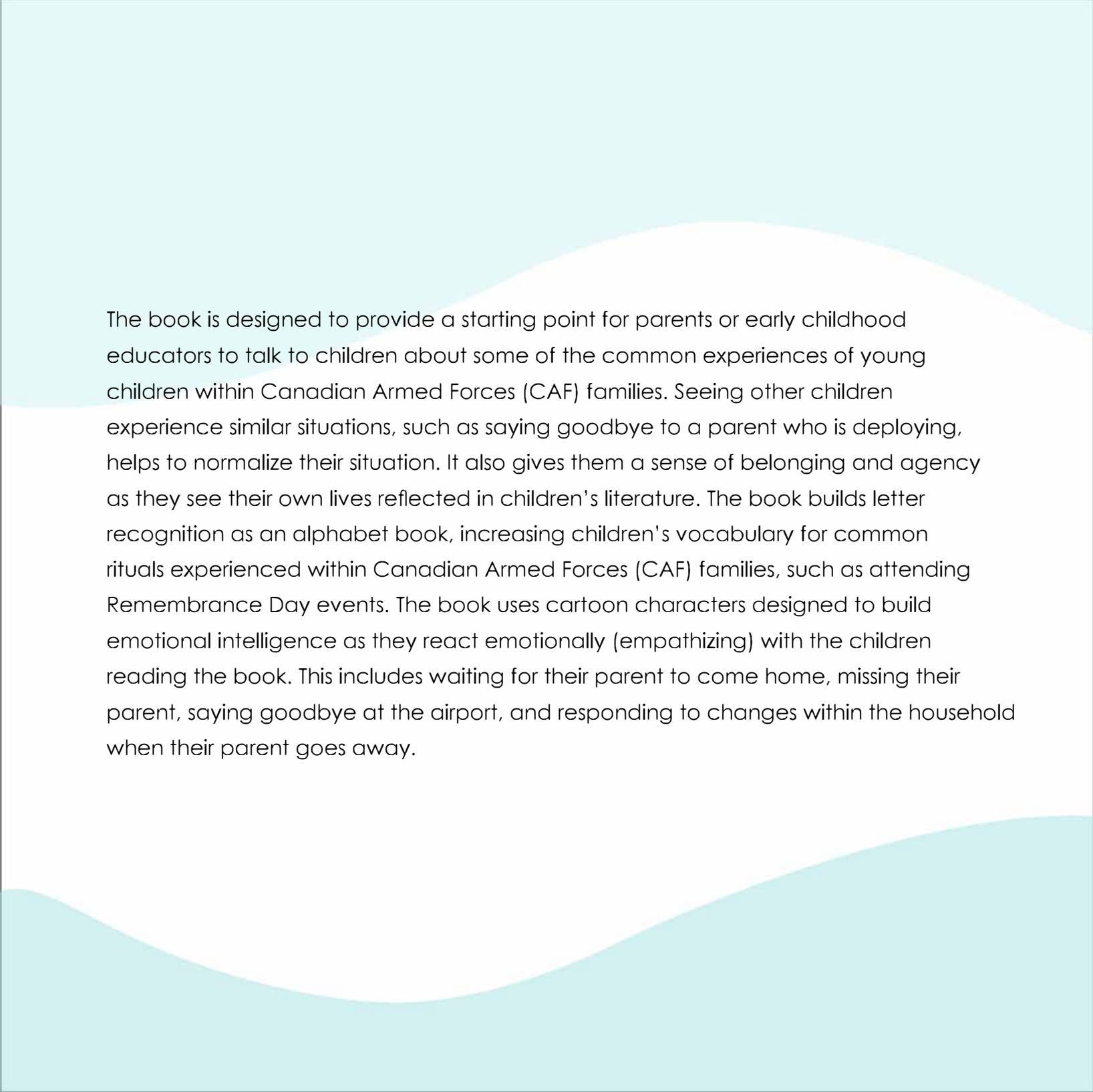
## **eBook research question**

How can the use of a storybook assist children from defence families to build their knowledge and understanding of emotional responses to family transitions they experience?

## **eBook research statement**

This book was designed to build on children's knowledge and understanding of:

- common experiences within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) force families,
- letter recognition,
- common events within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families,
- vocabulary about common rituals within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families and communities, and
- children's common emotional responses to parental deployment.

The background of the page features a light blue color with white, wavy, organic shapes that create a sense of movement and depth. These shapes are layered, with some appearing in the foreground and others receding into the background, giving the page a soft, textured appearance.

The book is designed to provide a starting point for parents or early childhood educators to talk to children about some of the common experiences of young children within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families. Seeing other children experience similar situations, such as saying goodbye to a parent who is deploying, helps to normalize their situation. It also gives them a sense of belonging and agency as they see their own lives reflected in children's literature. The book builds letter recognition as an alphabet book, increasing children's vocabulary for common rituals experienced within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families, such as attending Remembrance Day events. The book uses cartoon characters designed to build emotional intelligence as they react emotionally (empathizing) with the children reading the book. This includes waiting for their parent to come home, missing their parent, saying goodbye at the airport, and responding to changes within the household when their parent goes away.

## **What the literature and research says**

This eBook explores themes identified in the author's PhD thesis entitled “Young children's understanding and experiences of deployment within an Australian Defence Force (ADF) Family undertaken at the University of New England, Armidale Australia.

### **Emotional responses**

Ambiguous loss occurs in military families where young children miss the deployed parent but are unable to verbalize this (Paris, DeVoe, Ross and Acker, 2010). Young children tend to respond to parental separation by regressing in their behaviour (Lester & Flake, 2013; Rogers, 2020a). Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass and Grass (2007) report on increases in emotional displays, including attention-seeking, crankiness, sullenness, impulsive behaviour, moodiness, crying and constant complaining. Among younger children, increases in behavioural issues, along with regressions in milestones are common responses to parental absences. (Williams et. al., 2023).

### **The mental health of the non-deployed parent**

Hollingsworth (2011) describes the higher stress levels of the non-deployed parent during deployment, indicating a higher level of symptoms of depression, feeling lonely and reduced ability to implement effective coping strategies. Mogil et al. (2010) believe that military children lean on the non-deployed parent for more support during times of deployment. The non-deployed parents' ability to cope is often diminished due to increased family duties and their challenges with grief, loss, stress, and sleep deprivation. Parents who can establish a new routine fairly quickly report an increased ability to cope. Many parents are very resilient and find the support they need to enjoy special times with their children when their spouse is away. (Rogers-Baber, 2017).

## **Importance of support**

Many factors impact the resilience of families experiencing military deployment including the importance of relationships and connections both within and outside of the family (Hollingsworth, 2011; Rogers-Baber 2017). Canadian military families commonly face challenges due to frequent relocations and absences from home due to deployments and training. (Manser, 2020). To help increase military families' resilience, a combined effort is needed, utilizing effective strategies and resources based on research. Initially, we need to listen to and learn from children's experiences of parental deployment within a CAF family using a child-centred approach (Cramm et. al, 2020). Both Hollingsworth (2011) and Flake (2013) believe resilience can be increased with effective community support. Relationships with community support organisations are social capital and can strengthen the capacity of the community to nurture its' members. For families to experience a stabilized family life in the face of military challenges, they need to be aware of, and able to advocate for services that are available and aligned with when, where and how they need them. (Manser, 2020). Providing adequate communication access between the deployed parent, the at-home parent and the children is key (Rogers, 2017; Rogers, 2020b). Research has demonstrated early childhood educators can be an excellent source of support to defence families (Rogers, Dovigo & Doan).

## **Relationships and self-soothing**

A family's internal relationships are important to support each other and the children through the emotional turbulence of the deployment cycle. The relationships within families are thought to be an integral part of children's emotional experiences (Connell, 2013). Research shows the escalated significance of objects as the holder of relational memories for the child (e.g., photo albums and stuffed animals) in the absence of a parent during long-term training or deployment (Rogers, 2019). As a coping strategy, children will occasionally transfer their fondness to a person or object during their parents' absence. This transition object is given the traits of the parent, as babies and toddlers do with a comforting toy or blanket (Straker, 2014).



## **Interactive eBook research question**

How do you build very young children's knowledge and understanding around various issues within defence families through a web-based interactive eBook that contains educational games, interactive learning activities and art-based activities that reflect early childhood philosophies?

These issues include:

- emotions,
- numeracy,
- defence family and community rituals,
- family communication,
- care for members of their family, and
- familiar words and concepts within CAF families?

## **Interactive eBook research statement**

To do this we have designed activities from the static version of the eBook to build these skills and create a starting point for conversations between the child and the parent, caregiver, or the educator. For example, emotional intelligence is fostered through the children's exploration of the concept of familial love and the literacy surrounding emotions such as love. Care for family members is encouraged in the way that the characters express emotions, hug, and care for each other, and in the activities suggested at the end of the book for children to do with their parent at home.

Numeracy skills are developed through counting maple leaves on each page and calendar creation activities. Family communication skills with deployed members of the family are encouraged through drawing, painting, and building activities which can be shared or sent online (via email or text) to their deployed parent. Within these creative activities, children can also add a photo of themselves and decorate it to send to the parent. Knowledge of rituals within CAF families and communities is built when children learn about Remembrance Day and Yellow Ribbons. The CAF has many words that children within defence families will hear, so this book helps them gain a concrete understanding of some of these abstract concepts, like deployment and overseas, through activities such as building a navy ship or Remembrance Day wreath.

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For more research on the impacts of military life on children from military families visit the JMVFH at this link **Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health: [Vol 5, No S2](#) and [Vol 10, No 2](#)**

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Pseudonyms have been used in this book. Ethics approval was gained from The University of New England (UNE).

Rogers, M. (2023). *Our Alphabet Roller Coaster: The a, b, c's of training and deployment*. Child and Family Resilience Programs. Children's literature. Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Education (HASSE). University of New England. Armidale, Australia.

ISBN: 13: 978-1-55339-687-1 (Print Softcover)

ISBN: 13: 978-1-55339-688-8 (Electronic)

ISBN: 13: 1-978-1-55339-727-4 (French softcover)

ISBN: 13: 1-978-1-55339-728-1 (French electronic)



## Acknowledgements –

The author would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved in the Canadian adaptations project. A special thank you to the military, Veteran and first responder parents who have made themselves available to inform this project, generously giving their time, ideas, photographs, and honest feedback throughout the adaptation of this book. These books were developed for you and your families, and your direction in creating them is invaluable.

Thank you to Amy Doyle at the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) for envisioning this international collaboration and for your leadership in adapting these evidence-based Australian books for Canadian military, Veteran, and public safety personnel families. Thank you to Military Family Services, Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS) for your contributions to this series of Canadian adaptations, in particular Anne Cartier, Carly Juett and Lynda Manser.

Thank you to our Scientific Advisors in Canada, who worked with CIMVHR and myself to help guide the adaptations, Dr. Heidi Cramm, Dr. Stéphanie Belanger, Dr. David Pedlar, Lynda Manser and Dr. Suzanne Bailey.

Thank you to our fabulous Canadian children's illustrator, Jan Dolby for creating our Canadian characters and bringing this version of *Our Alphabet Roller Coaster* to life in such a vibrant, colourful, and happy way for children from Canadian service families.

Special thanks to Canadian landscape photographer Mark E Hopper for permission to use his photograph of poppies in a field on the outside back cover.

Special thanks to CIMVHR staff, Major (Ret'd) Paul Hook and Sarah Fee, and the CIMVHR summer students whose work helped shape these Canadian versions of the books, OCdt Aidan Dauphinee, Princess of Wales' Own Regiment, and Pte Lena Wang, 23 Field Ambulance, of the Canadian Forces Primary Reserves.

Thank you to our French language translators, Cdr (Ret'd) Jean Léveillé and Dr. Maxime Valsalmas and Stéphanie Christophe.

Special thanks to the [Families Matter Research Group](#) (FMRG), [Wounded Warriors Canada](#) and [Military Family Services, Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services](#) (CFMWS) for hosting these eBooks on their websites, so that they may be accessible to more Canadian public safety personnel, military, and Veteran families.

Thank you to **CIMVHR** and [The Royal Canadian Legion](#), for your generous funding to support these Canadian adaptations and for your ongoing commitment to building resilience in Canadian military families.

Thank you to our Australian partners, [The University of New England](#) in Armidale, Australia and [The Manna Institute](#), a Commonwealth Government funded Mental Health and Wellbeing research training institute, for their ongoing support of the [Child Family Resilience Programs](#).



Together, we acknowledge the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people, the traditional custodians of the land on which the adaptations for this book were completed, and where Queen's University and CIMVHR are situated. We offer our deep respect to their Elders past, present and emerging from across Turtle Island and express our gratitude and commitment to the process of truth and reconciliation.

The Royal Canadian Legion's mission is to serve Veterans, including serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote Remembrance, and to serve our communities and our country.

Whether helping local Veterans, supporting seniors, providing youth sports programs, raising funds, volunteering to help those in need, or simply offering a place to gather for fun and celebration, Legionnaires are here to help.

Visit [www.legion.ca](http://www.legion.ca) for local services.



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Whether you're facing a recent stressful experience, transition or deployment struggles, relationship, family, or financial issues, we can help you with life's ups and downs.

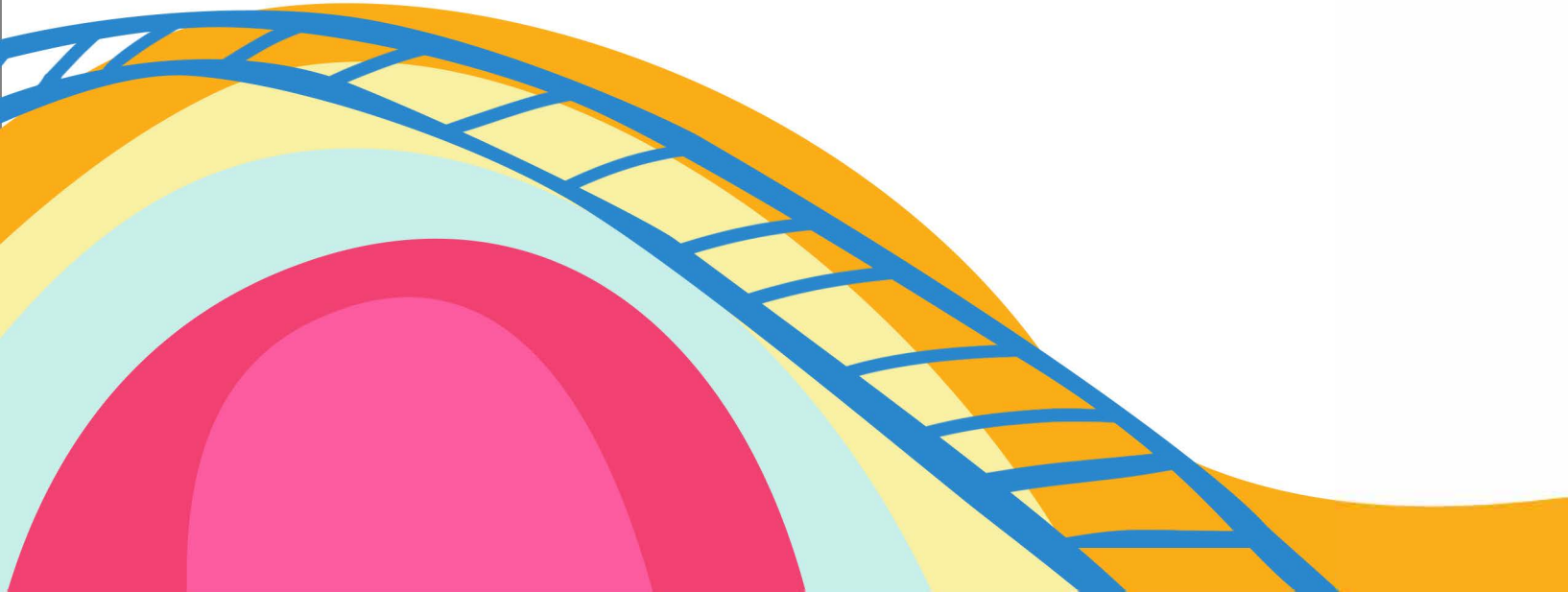
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**True strength is the courage to ask for help.**

To Military Moms: For your love, wisdom, guidance, strength, knowledge,  
humour and unending dedication — THANK YOU!









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