

A stylized illustration of a child with curly brown hair, wearing a yellow and green striped shirt, waving their hand towards a yellow car in a parking lot. The car has a license plate that says 'FLORIDA'. In the background, there are several other cars and houses with green trees. The title 'While We're Apart...' is written in large white letters across the top of the scene.

While We're Apart...

Ideas and activities
for creating and
maintaining closeness
and communication with
kids while living apart.

By Carole Gesme, M.A., CFLE



By Carole Gesme, M.A. CFLE

Published by Pine Tree Press, Minneapolis, MN

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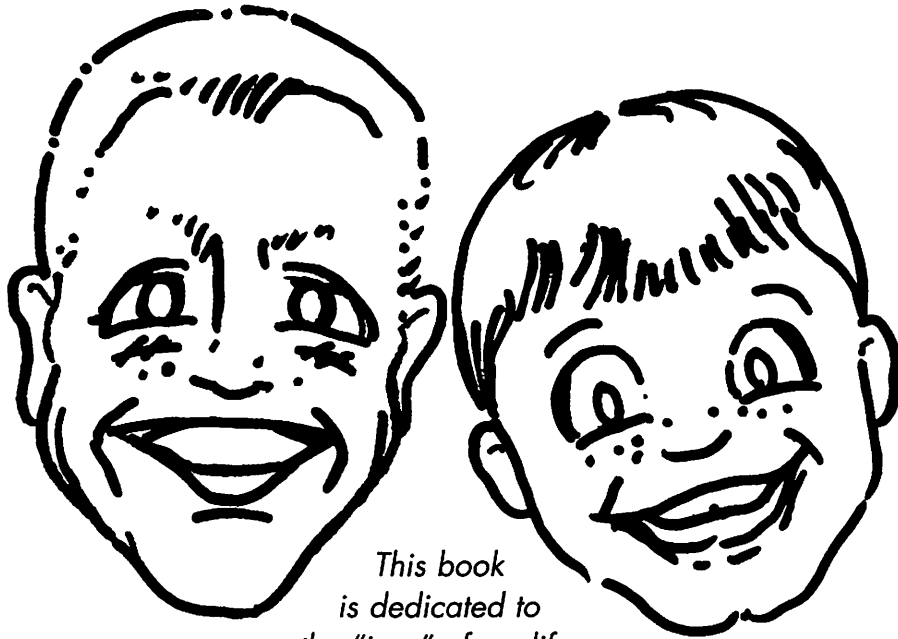
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Designed & Illustrated by: J Campbell/ArtVille, Inc., Minneapolis 952-927-9400,
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*This book
is dedicated to
the "joys" of my life,
my grandsons, Charlie and Tommy.*

A special thank you to Joan Comeau, Ph.D. who encouraged me to continue this work by recognizing the importance of keeping in touch while we are apart, and to Chris Ternand, M.D. who recognized the value of this work for hospitalized children.

Introduction

Connecting with Children

For the past seventeen years, I have taught parenting classes at the Women's Correctional Facility in Shakopee, Minnesota. Through the years, I listened to the women talk about telephoning their children. Often their experiences were less than satisfying. The women would eagerly anticipate these calls, only to be disappointed because their children were gone, too busy to talk or would have nothing to say except "yes" or "no." Sometimes a child would be angry and take it out on the mother. After these conversations, the women would be left feeling disappointed, sad and angry, blaming the foster family or other parenting person for their frustrations. They would often say, *"I don't know or understand anything about my children."*

I tried to think of a way for these women to keep in contact with their kids. I began to bring activities for the women to mail to their children every week. Sometimes the correspondence would require a reply from the children. Initially, the responses from the children were slow; however, the women were having a wonderful time sending the activities every week. It usually took about six weeks before the children really believed their mother would continue to send them things and would begin to respond to the materials they were receiving. We experimented with different types of materials and activities and soon realized that both mother and children were getting to know each other through these mailings. Because they now had something to talk about, phone conversations began to improve. Children made a point to be home

when their mother was to call and actually had meaningful conversations.

A few years ago, my grandchildren moved to a small town about four hours from my home. I missed my daily contact with them and began to send them the same materials the women at the prison were sending to their children. My oldest grandson, who was four years old at the time, enjoyed getting mail and I loved receiving his responses. Some of the activity sheets had partially completed pictures for him to finish and send back. One day my daughter-in-law called and said, *"Charlie will not send the pictures back. He wants to keep all the mail he receives from you."* I began checking with the women at the prison and soon discovered that their four-year-olds did not want to return the mail their mothers had sent to them either. They would complete the pictures but keep them for themselves. Shortly after Charlie turned five, he began sending me his own half-finished pictures with instructions to complete them and return them to him!

Recently a friend who works with hospitalized children began to encourage children and parents to use these tools. Some of these children require hospitalization far from home for several months at a time. She reports the activities have been very useful in helping children feel loved and cared for when their families are distant. Children who are in the hospital for a short time enjoy receiving and sending them daily to their friends and siblings, too.

What is Separation

One of the most important things we do in our life is to build, maintain, and enjoy the relationships we have. At times, these relationships become stressed because a parent, grandparent, or friend must move away. The parent may be transferred to a new job in a new city while the family stays behind to finish school or sell the house.

Grandparents who live in a cold, snowy climate may decide to spend winters in a warm climate. In the military this occurs when one parent is sent away to work and the family stays behind until the work is finished and the parent returns home. This creates separation. We can explain to children that there are two kinds of separation: *short and long*.

Sometimes, what we think of as a short separation from our families will seem like a very long separation to our kids. When I decided to go to Arizona for a short time to get away from the snow and cold, I had only planned to be gone for a month. I continued to think of it as a short period of time compared to those who spend up to six months in a warm location.

I told my grandchildren I would be gone for a short time. Charlie, nine years old at the time, said he thought I was going to be gone for a very long time because I would miss two important events at his school. I realized what seemed like a very short time to me seemed like a very long time to him. I called one night after I had been gone for only a week and Tommy, my six-year-old grandson, asked if I had moved to Arizona because I'd been gone for such a long time. Together we made up several activities to help us keep in touch.

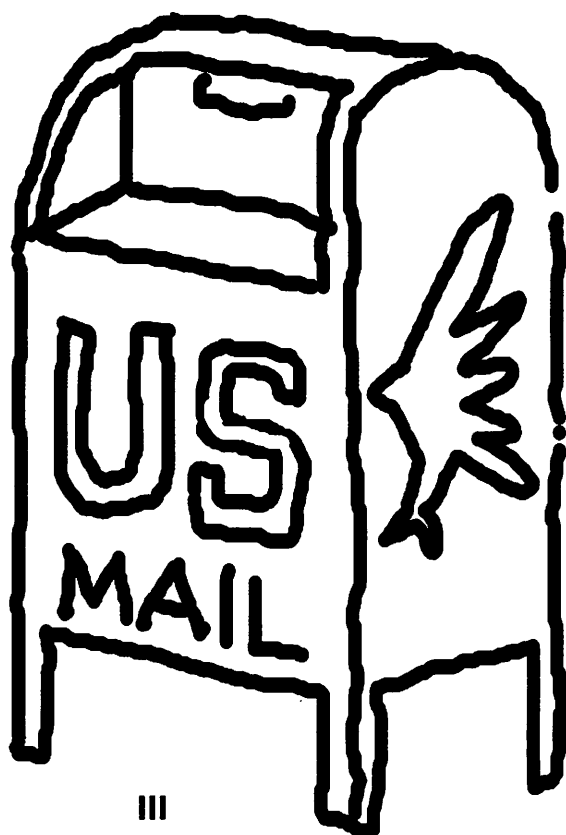
A *long separation* is when an important person in your life goes away and you may not see them for a long period of time. This happens when you move away from someone that you care about or when someone you love goes away for a long time. Sometimes a parent or loved one has an addiction like drinking too much and has to go away to a treatment center to get better. Long separations can happen when a child is taken away from his family and put into a foster family to make sure the child is safe and taken care of. Sometimes a parent goes to jail or prison or parents decide to separate and get a divorce. If a mom or dad works for the military, they might have to go to another country to work and be separated from the family. In each of these situations, it is important for children to know that long separations are because of adult problems or responsibilities and are not the child's fault.

Sometimes people go to places like hospitals to help them become healthier. Sometimes parents go, sometimes grandparents go, sometimes even children go to hospitals. Usually hospitalizations are short, but depending on the illness, they may last weeks or months.

The pages of this book are filled with ideas and activities you can do with a child or children you're separated from. Enjoy them. Have fun with them. Be creative and flexible and use your imagination.

These Activities are Important Because:

- Adults need to reassure children they are *lovable* and that the adults will *always* love them.
- Relationships with children need constant nurturing. The relationship with your children or grandchildren who are at a distance can be nurtured by letting them know that you will still be connected with them even though you are physically separated.
- Using these activities show children you value the importance of staying connected. This will encourage them to learn the joys and experience the reassurance of staying connected even when distance separates people physically.
- You can continue to know about each other. You won't feel like strangers when you are together again. You know what the other has been doing, what they think about, what they like and who they are. They know the same things about you.
- It gives adults an opportunity to share and pass on their beliefs, family traditions, history, and values with a child who is at a distance.
- Regular contact by mail and telephone can go a long way to show love to children who live far away.
- Receiving mail lets children know the adults think about them often and still love them.
- Children love to receive mail
- It's easy and fun!



How to Use this Book:

By using the activities in this book you will create memories and pass on family traditions while you are apart from a child. This will demonstrate commitment to the relationship by both parties. These are tested activities for maintaining close ties.

The pages are fun to do and take a short period of time to complete.

What you'll need:

- 1) You will need one activity book "While We're Apart..." for each person who'll be corresponding.
- 2) Pencil, pens, crayons and/or markers.
- 3) Stamped, self-addressed envelopes and post cards so the child can send their materials to you.
- 4) You may want to send a phone card to be used at predetermined times.

How to use these activities:

Decide with the child how often you will do these activities; each day, every two weeks, or once a month. Be consistent.

Decide on the page you will do, do it, and send it to the other person when you are finished. You may decide to be the one to choose the page and the child will match it or the child may be the one to decide. **There is no wrong way**, just decide before hand.

Enjoy. Collect the pages you receive from each other in the pockets in the activity books or display them on your refrigerator or bulletin board. As you collect the finished activities you will begin creating a book of information about the other person.

Use the pockets to keep pictures, spelling

tests, special school papers, drawings, etc. that are sent to you.

Never, ever make any kind of corrections to the pages you receive.

All spelling and answers are correct in this case and make the pages even more personal and special. Let the educational system teach grammar, spelling, handwriting, etc. Remember that this is an opportunity to create a connection based on unconditional love and acceptance.

For older children you may want to:

- 1) Send a gift certificate to your favorite restaurant. Choose a certain day and time for both of you to go to the restaurant nearest each other at the same time. Afterward, call on the phone and talk about your experience, what each of you ate, what you saw, etc.
- 2) Send their favorite food or treat by mail.
- 3) Learn what their interests are and send objects that are related to that subject. News clippings about their favorite sports teams, recipes you've recently enjoyed, etc.
- 4) Send a copy of your favorite tape or CD. Have them send you theirs. Let each other know what you enjoyed about the music.
- 5) Share a magazine subscription in a subject you both like.

****For younger kids who don't write:**

The adult they live with may want to read the questions and write the child's answers for them. The pages marked with a crayon in the right-hand corner are especially designed for pre-schoolers to do more independently.

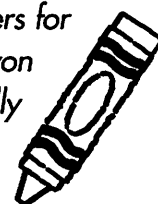


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While We're Apart...

Dear _____

Because of the distance that separates us we can not be together on a regular basis. I love you and miss you very much and am not with you now because _____

_____.

There are still many ways we can keep in touch while we are apart. We can talk on the phone.

My number is _____.

I can be reached on these days or at these times _____

_____.

My e-mail address is _____.

I like getting cards and letters and I would enjoy hearing from you by mail *every week* or as often as you can write. I am sending you this book so you can do *one page a _____*. I will do the same thing and send my pages to you. Our daily relationship will be different now, yet, we can become even closer to each other while we are apart.

I miss you and love you,

What My Life is Like Today

(Send this page often at different times during the separation.)

Dear _____

The date today is _____.

The weather outside is _____.

When I walked around outside this week or looked out my window I saw _____

_____.

Something special I did this week is _____

_____.

An act of kindness someone did for me or I did for someone else this week was _____

_____.

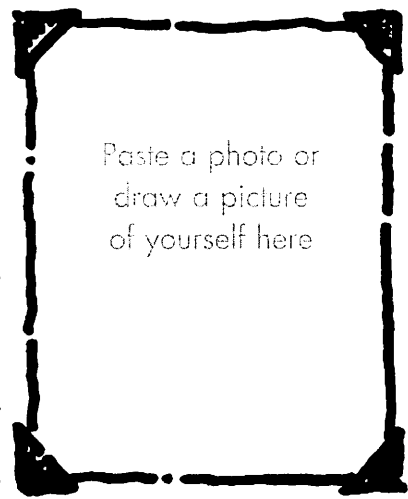
Something I love about you is _____

_____.

See you in _____ days!

Love,

Me, Myself and I



My name is _____

I am _____ **years old, and I live at**

Some things I like to do are _____

When I'm by myself I like to _____

My favorite TV shows are _____

My favorite restaurant is _____

and I like to order _____

My favorite sport or game is _____

because _____

Some of the things I'm good at are _____

Some things I like about myself are _____

One time I felt really special was _____

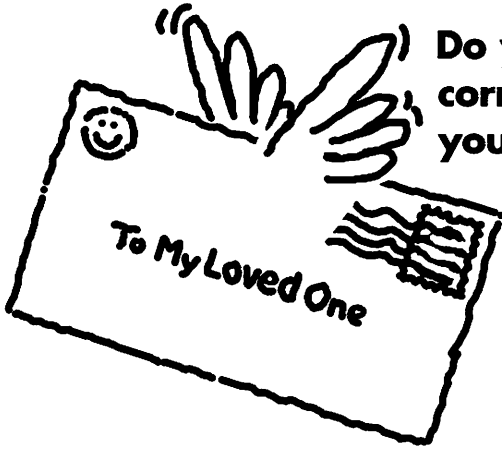
A mistake I made one time was _____

_____ **and what I learned from that mistake was**

My most embarrassing moment was _____

I wish that _____

How Do You Send Mail?



Do you drop your letters in a mailbox on the corner? Does a mail carrier pick letters up from your house? Do you go to the post office?

Draw a picture of how you mail your letters.

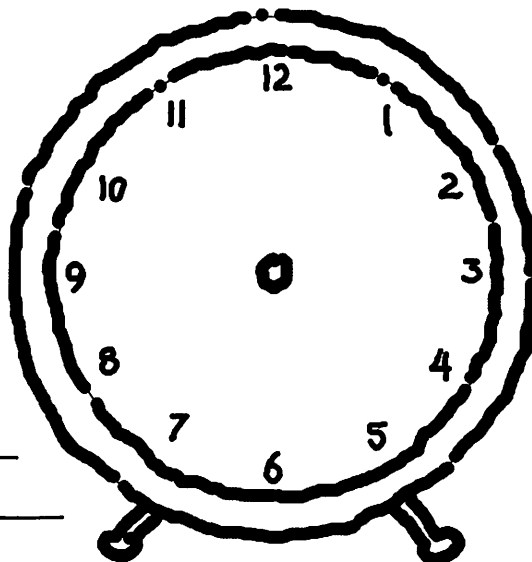
Is your mail carrier a man or woman? _____

Do you know their his/her name? _____

Do they walk or ride in a car or van to deliver your mail? _____

What time of day do you get your mail? Draw hands on the clock that show the usual time your mail comes every day.

Do you know what time zone you live in? _____



My Family

Draw a picture of the people you live with today.

(Each family is special and unique. A family can be you and the people who live with you and take care of you.)

My family is special because _____

When I am with my family I enjoy _____

This is how my family celebrates holidays _____

If I could spend a day with just you, this is what I'd like to do:

(draw a picture or write about what you'd like to do)

Where I Live

Can you draw an "x" on this map to show where you live?



I was born in the country of

I live in the state or province of

I live in this city

My street address is

I have visited these other cities

I've been to those cities because

I have visited these other states

I've been to those states because

I have visited these other countries

Someday I would like to visit

Why?

The Governor of my state is

The leader of my country is

The Days of My Life

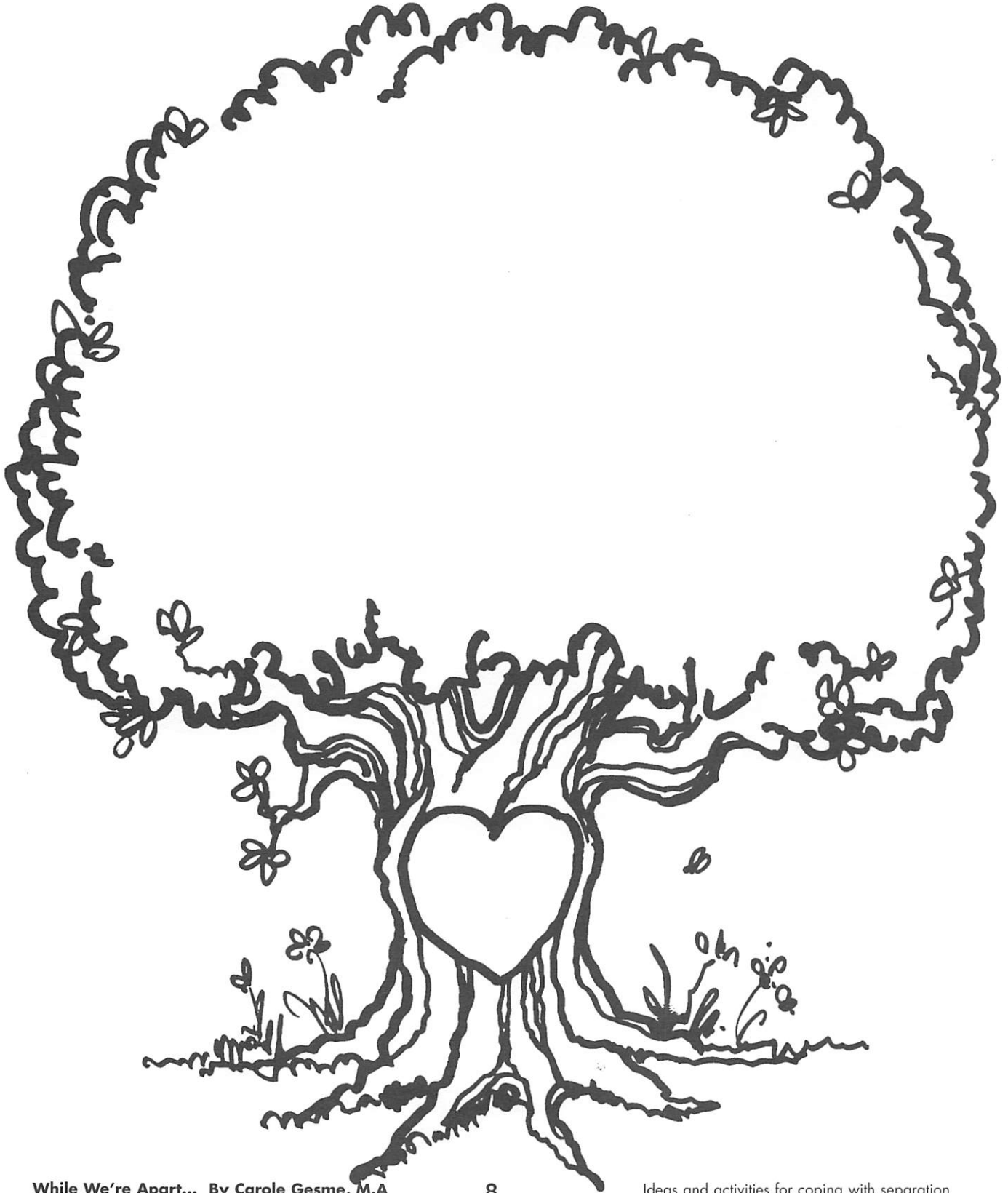
Create your own calendar and when it's full, mail it to your friend so they'll know what your days are like. Write down things that happened every day, both big and small. Include what you ate for breakfast, things you saw, feelings, thoughts, or memories you had. No event is too small.

| | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Week of _____ - _____ Month _____ Year _____ | |
| Monday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Tuesday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Wednesday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Thursday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Friday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Saturday | The best thing I did today was: |
| Sunday | The best thing I did today was: |

I Love Growing with You!



If this was a tree in your yard what would be in it? Do I see you hiding in the branches? Write our names or initials inside the heart. Draw things in the tree, add photos, poems, and anything you want to decorate your tree for me.

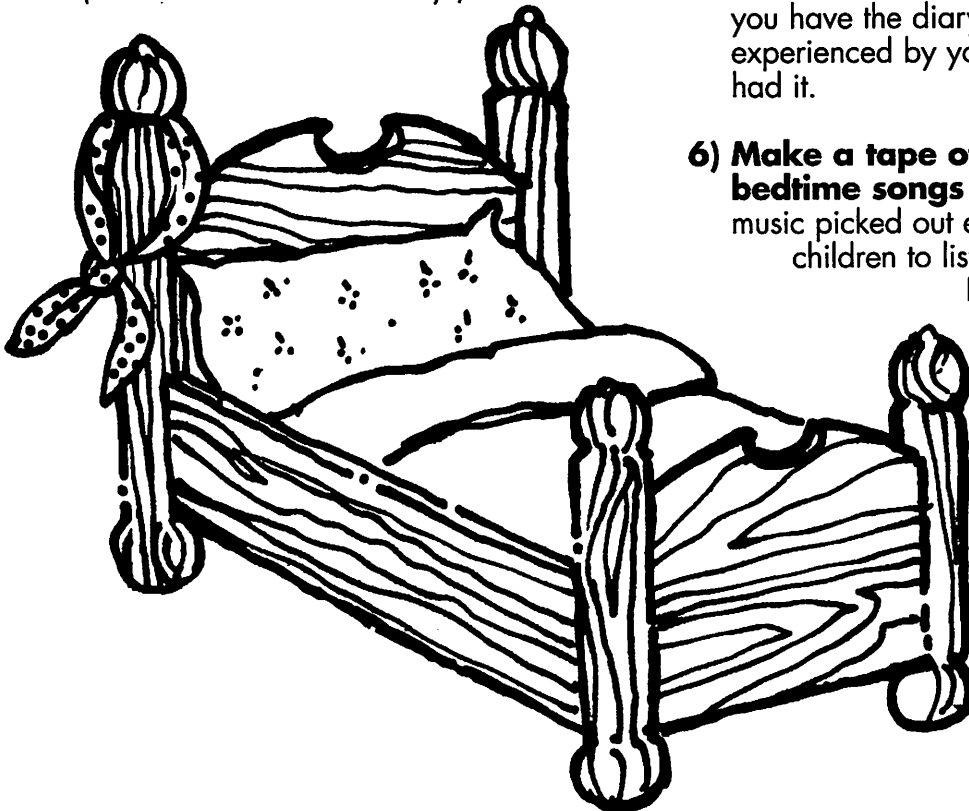


Bedtime Routines

I recently received a letter from a father who is in the military service. He had been sent to another country to work and found he and his family missed the bedtime routines they had created and looked forward to every evening. He wondered if I had some suggestions for continuing those nightly routines and staying close with his children while they were separated. The following are some of those suggestions:

1) Pick out a favorite bedtime story from a book, or family member and get a copy for each person who's keeping in touch. Every night at bedtime, both parties should read one verse or chapter and think about and talk about the other person(s) reading the same section. If phone calls are possible, the distant adult can read to the child over the phone. Younger kids can have a nearby adult read to them and talk about the absent adult reading the same story.

2) Buy a scarf for everyone in the family and have each person wear the scarf for a few days. Send the scarves to each other to put under his or her pillow. (Don't wash the smell away!)



3) Make video or audio tapes of bedtime rituals and activities together before the person leaves. Make two copies so both the children and the person from whom they're separated can listen to or view the tapes. Be sure to include special bedtime prayers or ways of saying "Goodnight" and "I love you."

4) Draw pictures of places you have stayed overnight. Tell why you stayed overnight in those places.

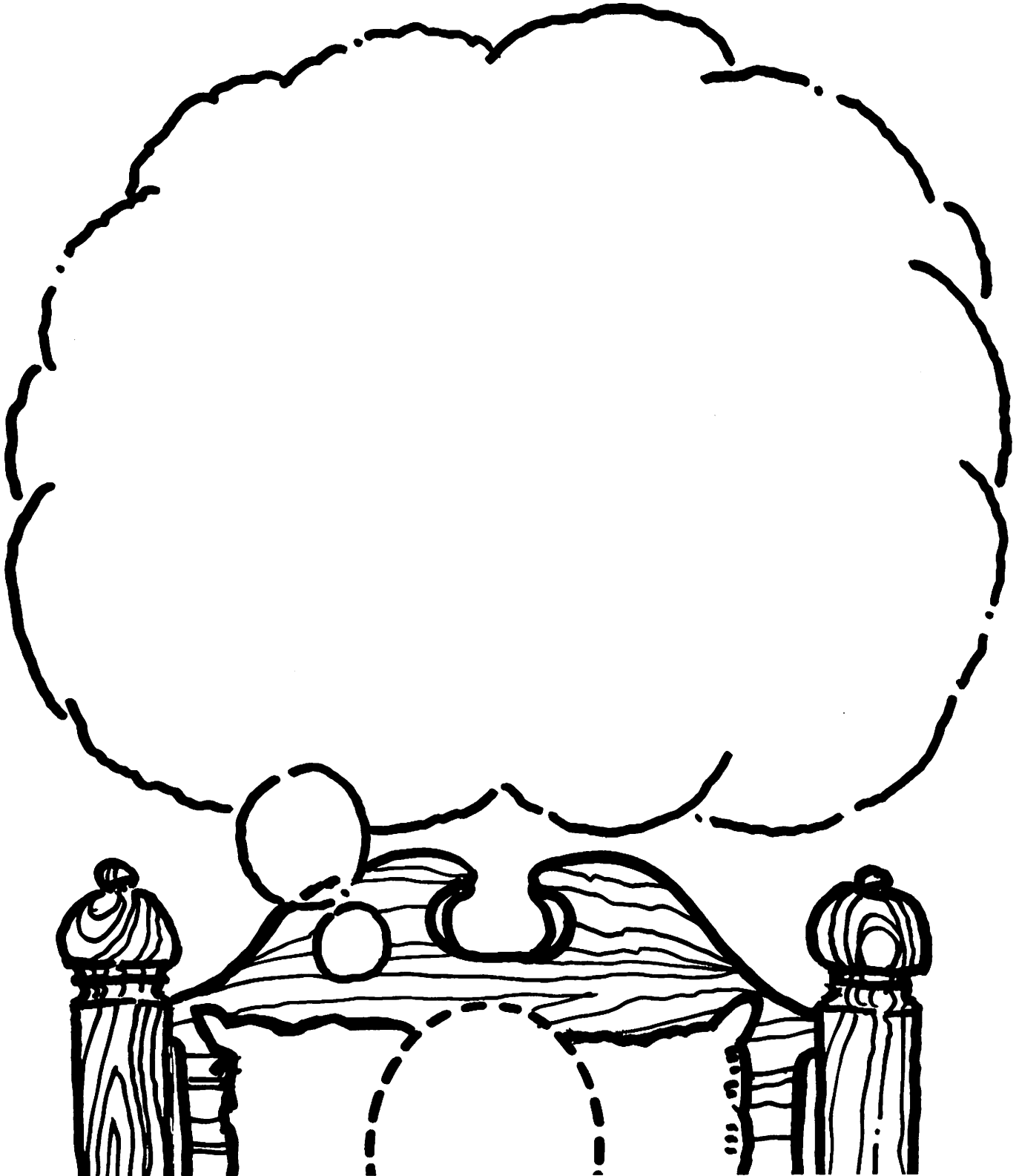
5) Keep a "blessings" diary. Every night at bedtime jot down three blessings you had during the day. Have everybody keep this diary for one week and then send it to the other person. Each night you have the diary, read three blessings experienced by your loved one while they had it.

6) Make a tape of you singing bedtime songs or of soothing bedtime music picked out especially for the children to listen to before bedtime. Have the children send tapes of them singing their favorite songs.

Sweet Dreams



Draw a picture or write about where you sleep, how you get ready for bed, what you dream about, what you do when you can't fall asleep, or things (good and bad) you think about at bedtime.

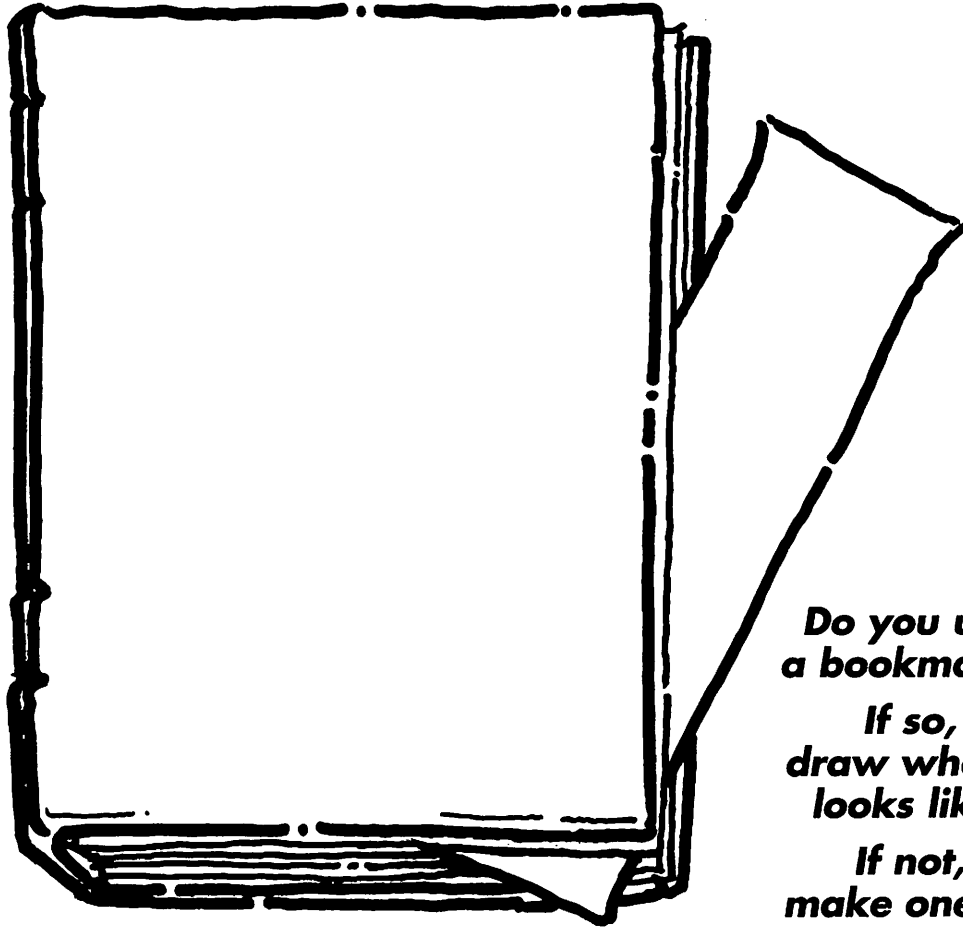


I Love to Read!

The title of my favorite book is

and the author is

This is what the cover of my favorite book looks like



**Do you use
a bookmark?**

**If so,
draw what it
looks like.**

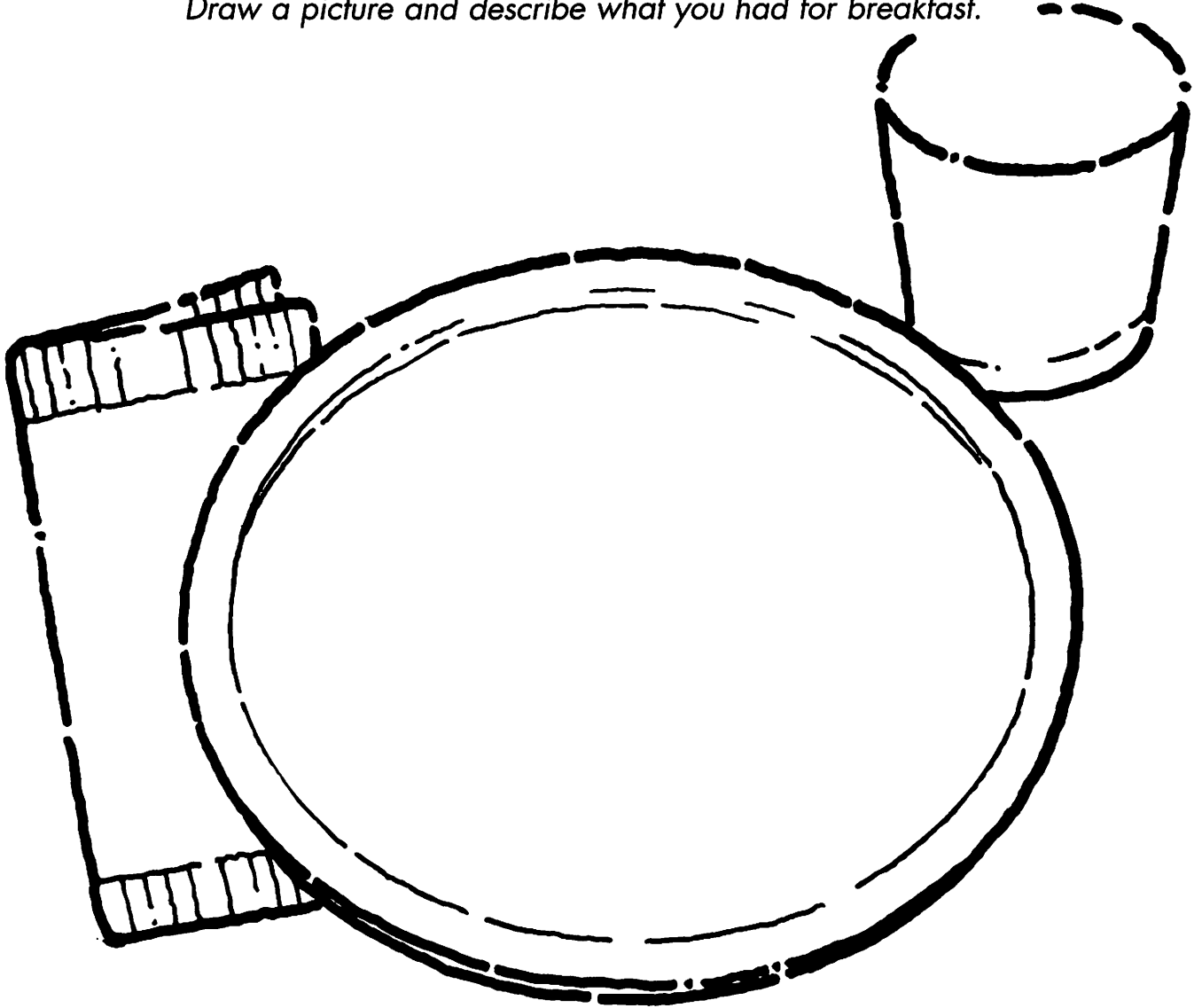
**If not,
make one up**

The best part of the book was

What's for Breakfast?



Draw a picture and describe what you had for breakfast.



Do you know where your breakfast foods come from?
What is cereal made of? Where do eggs come from? What kind of fruit
or vegetable does your juice come from? Where do we get milk?

Rules

We all have rules to live by. Rules help keep us from hurting ourselves or others or from doing the wrong things.

One rule we have where I live is _____

We have this rule because _____

This is what happens if I break the rule _____

My *(the people you live with now)* **like(likes)** it when I _____

My *(the people you live with now)* **don't (doesn't)** like it when I _____

I help where I live by _____

Three more rules we have where I live are _____

A new rule I think we should have is _____

The reasons we need rules are _____

Valentine's Day



On Valentines Day I will _____

I hope I get valentines from _____

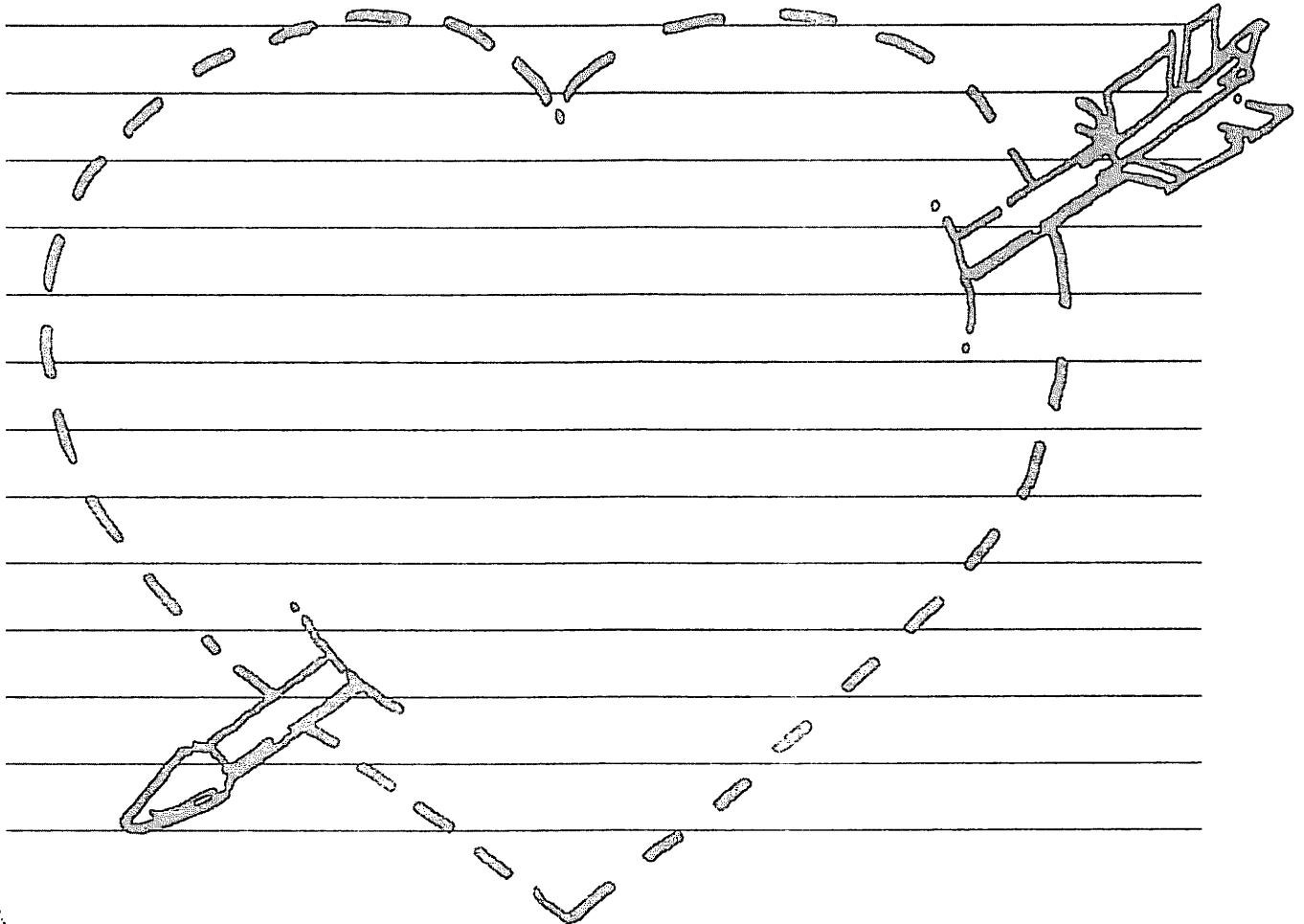
My favorite valentine treat is _____

Things I love about you are _____

What are some things you love about me? _____

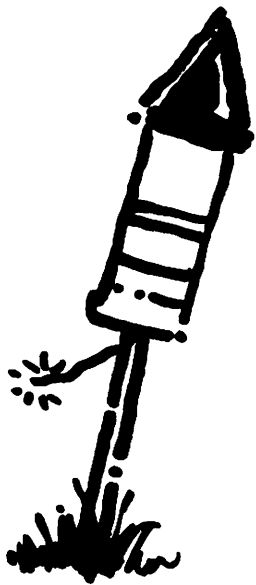
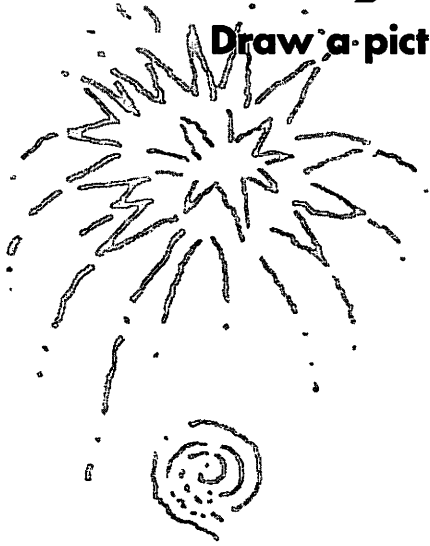
How do you celebrate Valentine's Day? _____

Draw a Valentine or write a Valentine's Day rhyme or poem.



July 4th is a Blast!

Draw a picture of your favorite fireworks!



On the 4th of July I like to

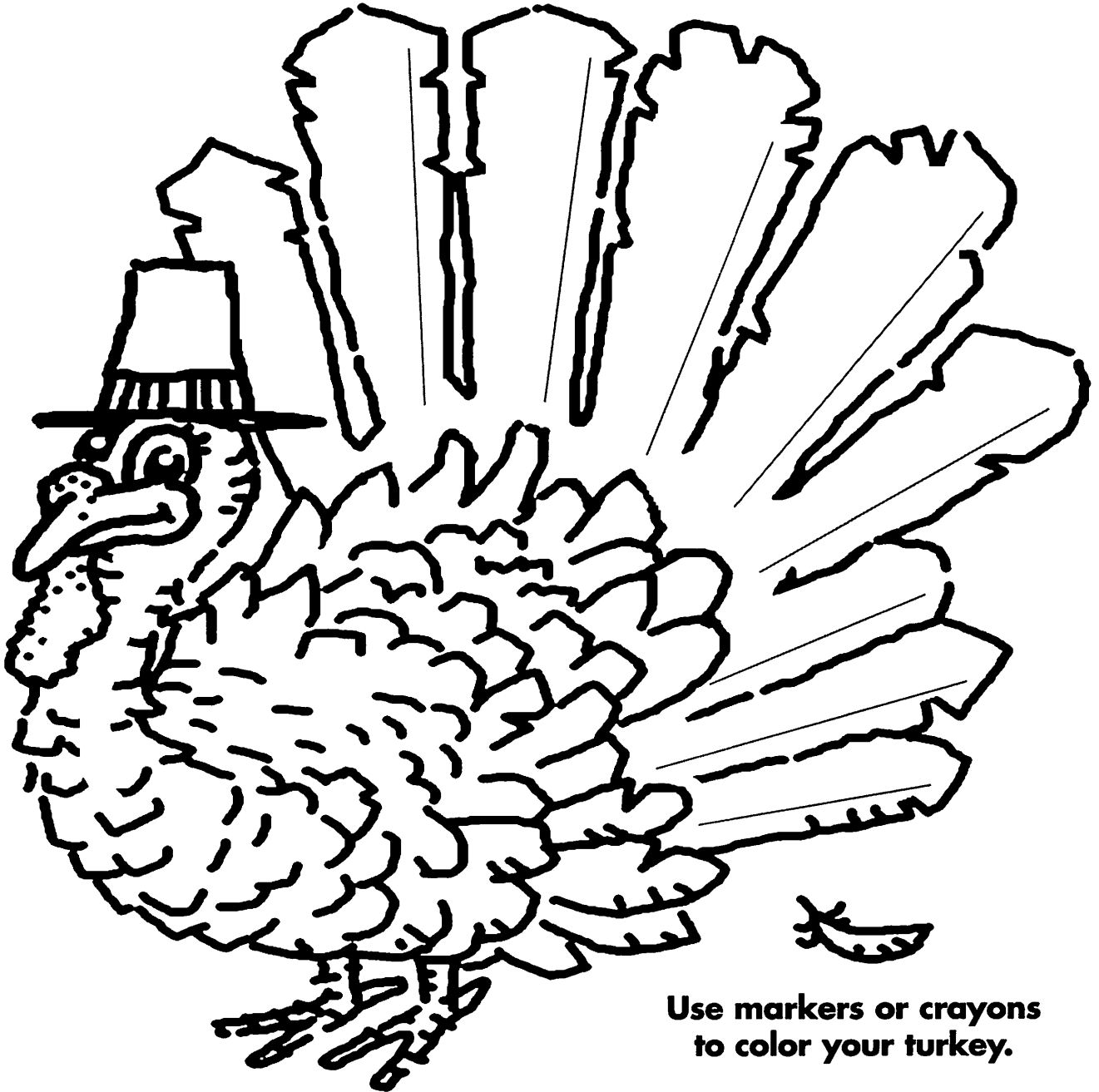
To watch fireworks I go to

and I watch them with

Happy Thanksgiving!



We all have lots to be thankful for.
Write what you're thankful for in the feathers of your turkey.



Use markers or crayons
to color your turkey.

What do you eat on Thanksgiving?

Merry Christmas to All!

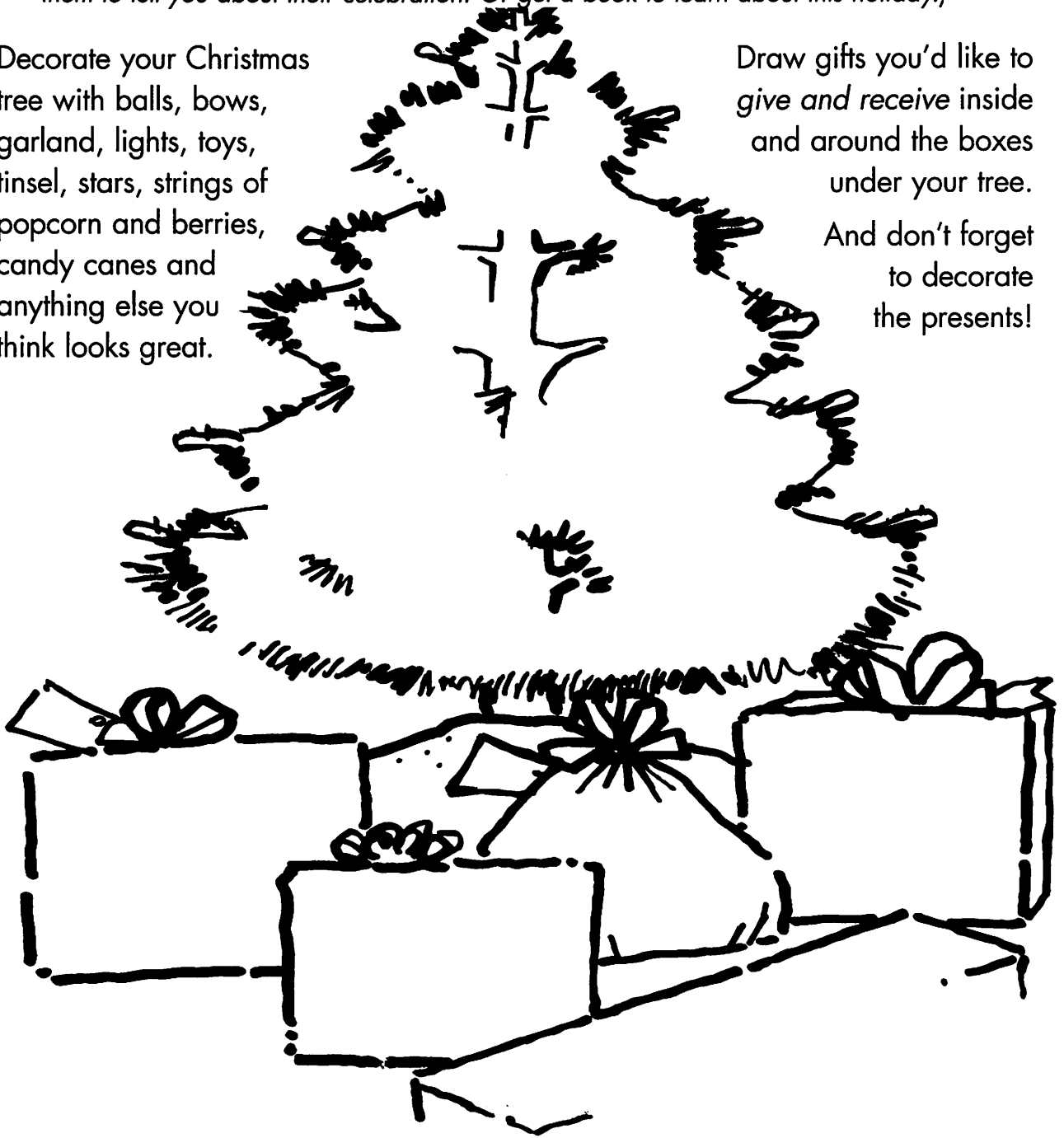


(If you and your family don't celebrate this holiday, find someone who does and ask them to tell you about their celebration. Or get a book to learn about this holiday.)

Decorate your Christmas tree with balls, bows, garland, lights, toys, tinsel, stars, strings of popcorn and berries, candy canes and anything else you think looks great.

Draw gifts you'd like to give and receive inside and around the boxes under your tree.

And don't forget to decorate the presents!



My favorite Christmas songs are

This year at Christmas I will

My favorite Christmas foods and treats are

Kwanzaa

(If you and your family don't celebrate this holiday, find someone who does and ask them to tell you about their celebration. Or get a book to learn about this holiday.)

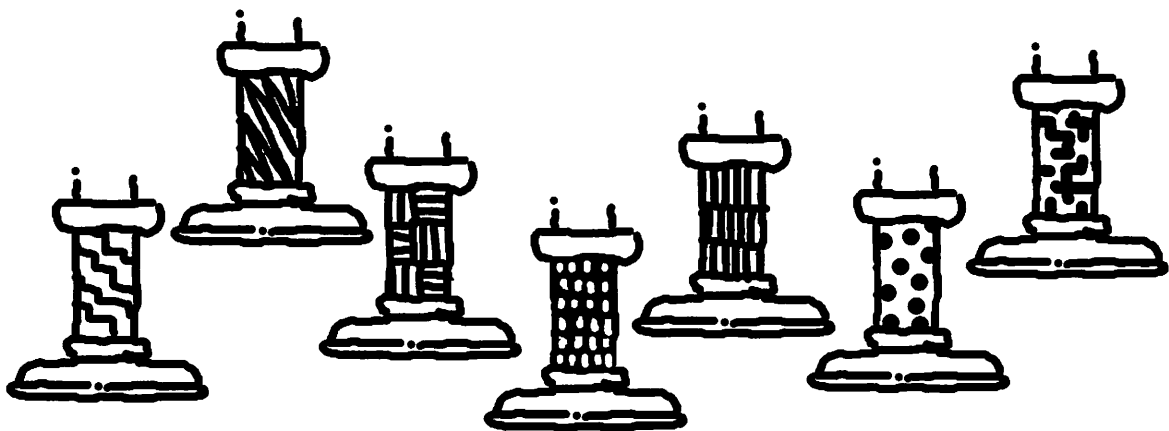
At Kwanzaa I like to _____

My Family likes to _____

Describe the Kwanzaa clothing you wear _____

My favorite Kwanzaa meal is _____

The best Kwanzaa I can remember was _____

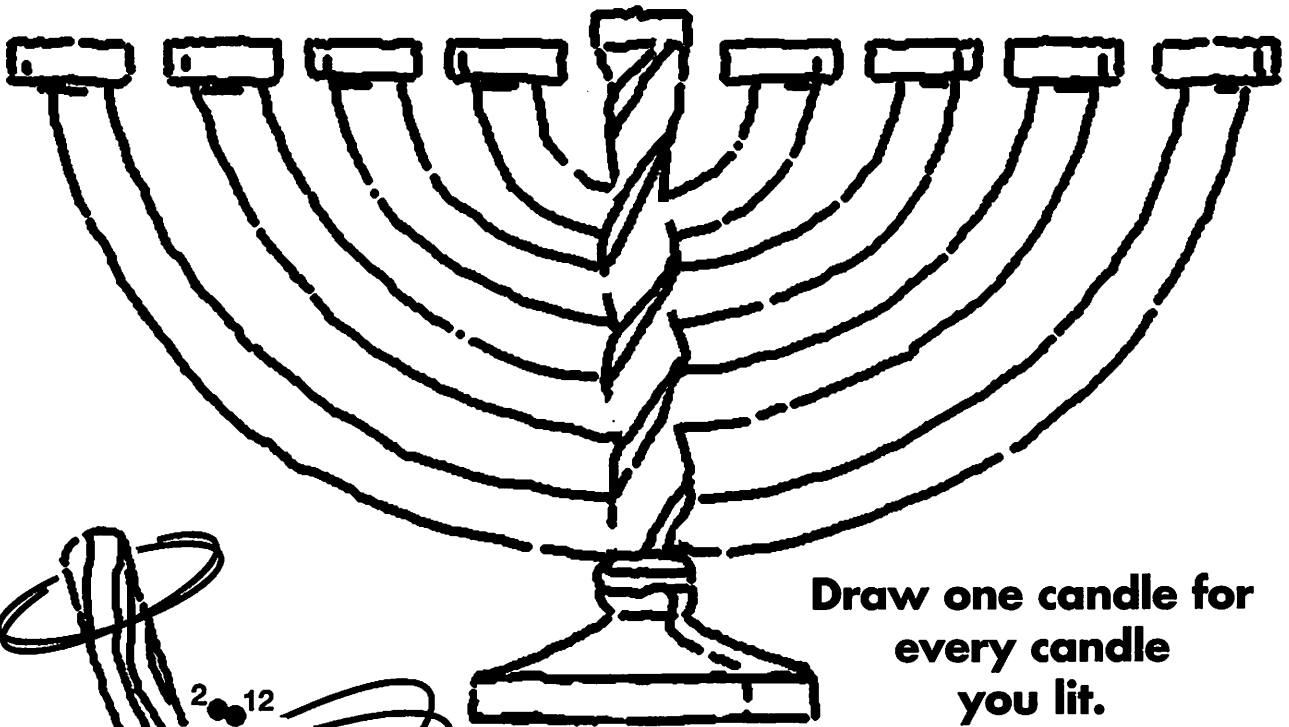


Draw a picture of the Kwanzaa candles you light.

Happy Hanukkah!



(If you and your family don't celebrate this holiday, find someone who does and ask them to tell you about their celebration. Or get a book to learn about this holiday.)



Draw one candle for every candle you lit.



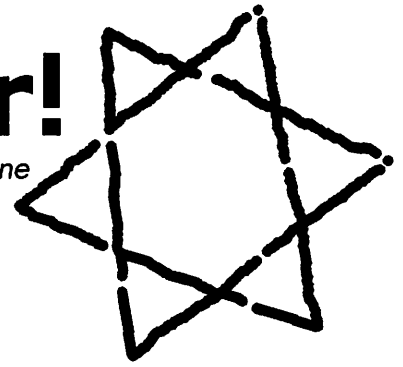
Connect the dots to finish the dreidel.

Did you sing songs? If so, what were they? _____

What gifts did you get? _____

Hey! It's Passover!

(If you and your family don't celebrate this holiday, find someone who does and ask them to tell you about their celebration. Or get a book to learn about this holiday.)



Did you clean the house of bread products?

Did you have seder both nights? _____

Who was there? _____

Who found the Afikoman? _____

Was it you? _____

What was the prize? _____

Who asked the four questions? _____

Was it you? _____

Did you have Matzo ball soup? _____

Can you write your name in Hebrew?

Happy Birthday to Me!



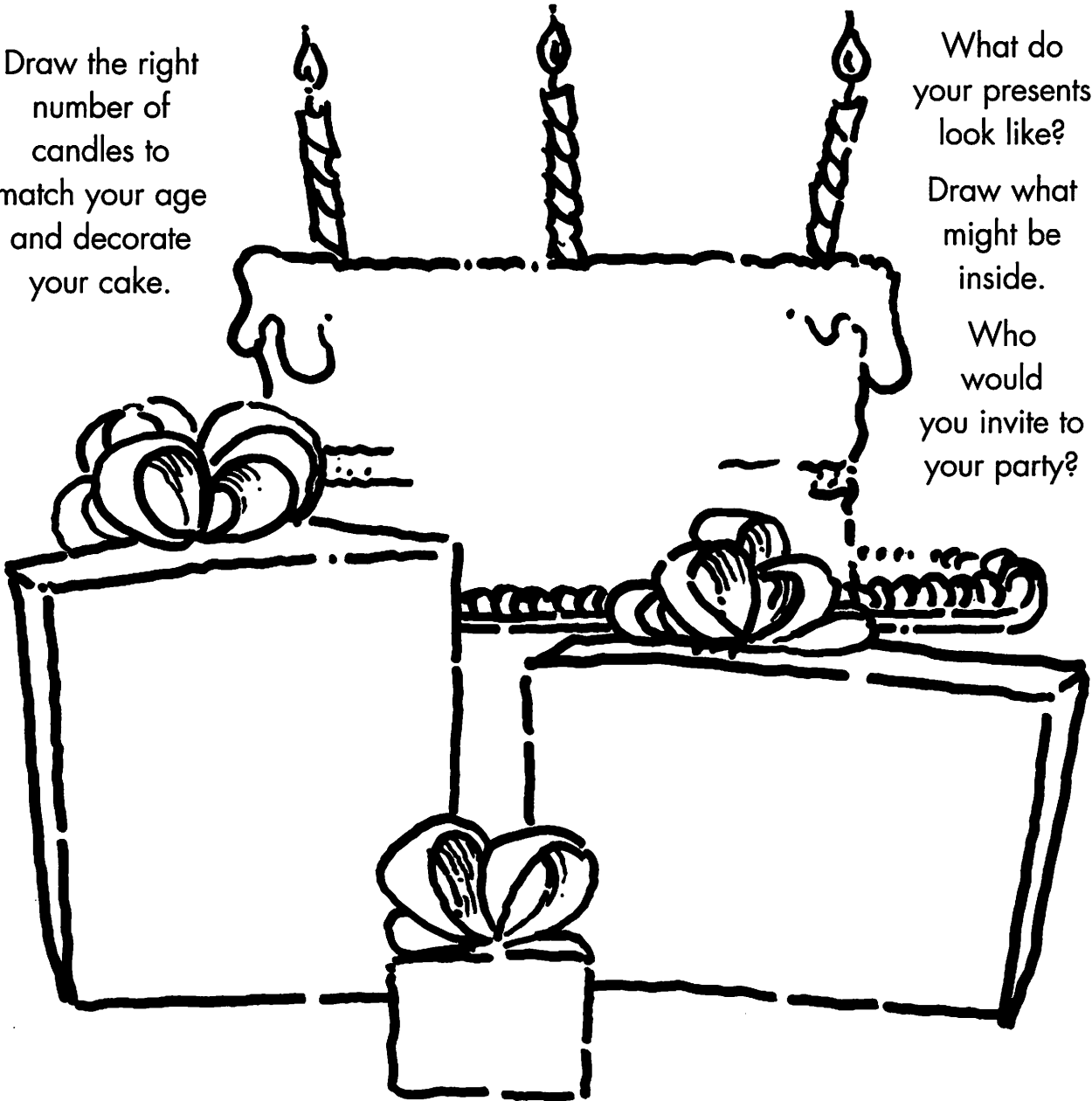
My Birthday party would look like this:

Draw the right number of candles to match your age and decorate your cake.

What do your presents look like?

Draw what might be inside.

Who would you invite to your party?



The thing I like about my age right now is

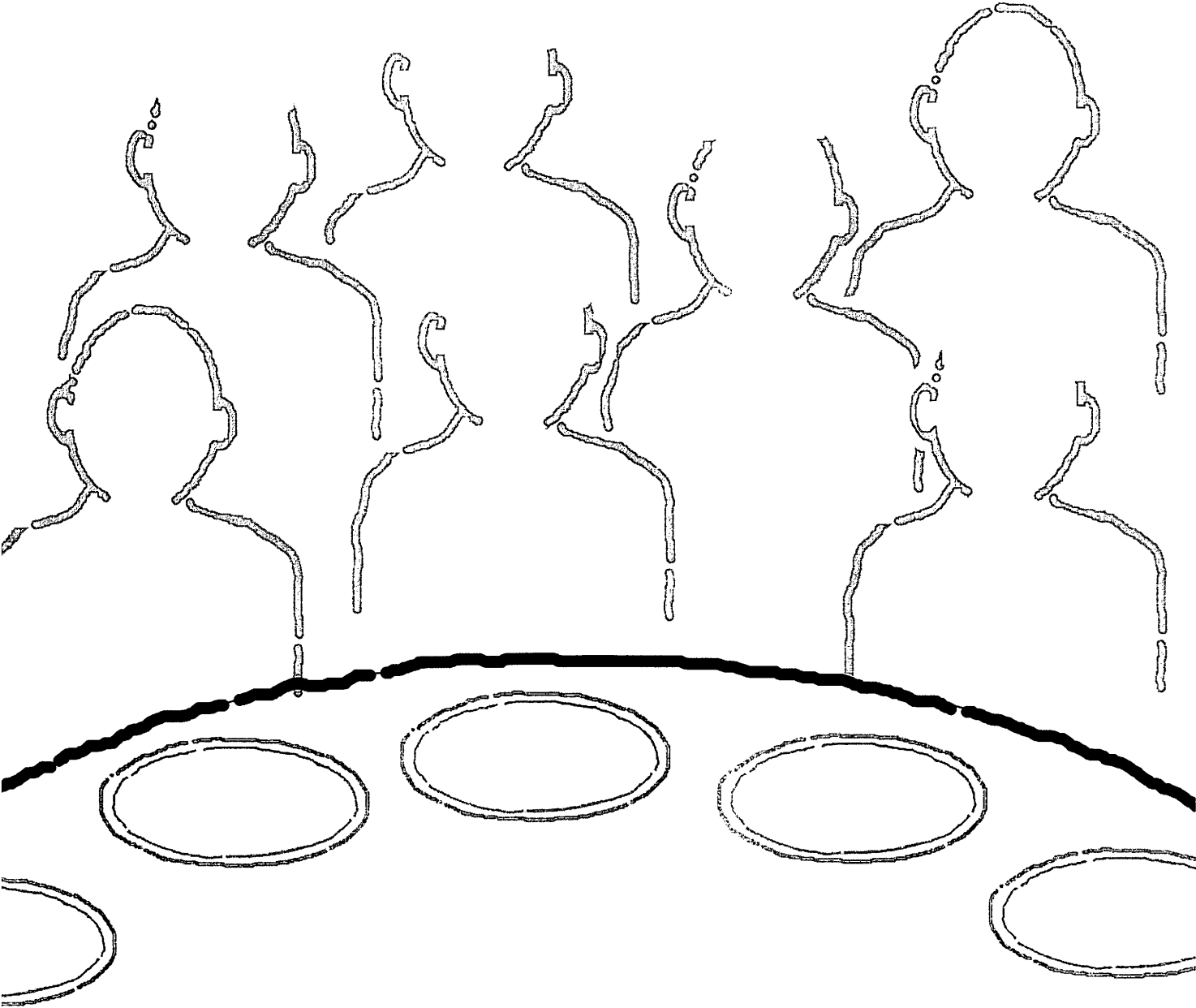
Something I don't like about my current age is

If I could change my age, I'd be _____ years old because

Who Would You Invite?



If you were having a party or large dinner, who would you invite to sit at your table? Draw a picture or write a story describing your table, the guests, the decorations and food you would serve.



School Spirit

The name of my school is _____
and I am in the _____ grade.

My school looks like this:

and when I go to school
I look like this:

The way I get to school is _____

At school I like to _____

My teacher's name is _____

My teacher is _____

My friends at school are _____

At school I don't like it when _____

In school I'm good at _____

but I'm *not* good at _____

At recess I like to _____

My favorite lunch is _____

You could help me by _____

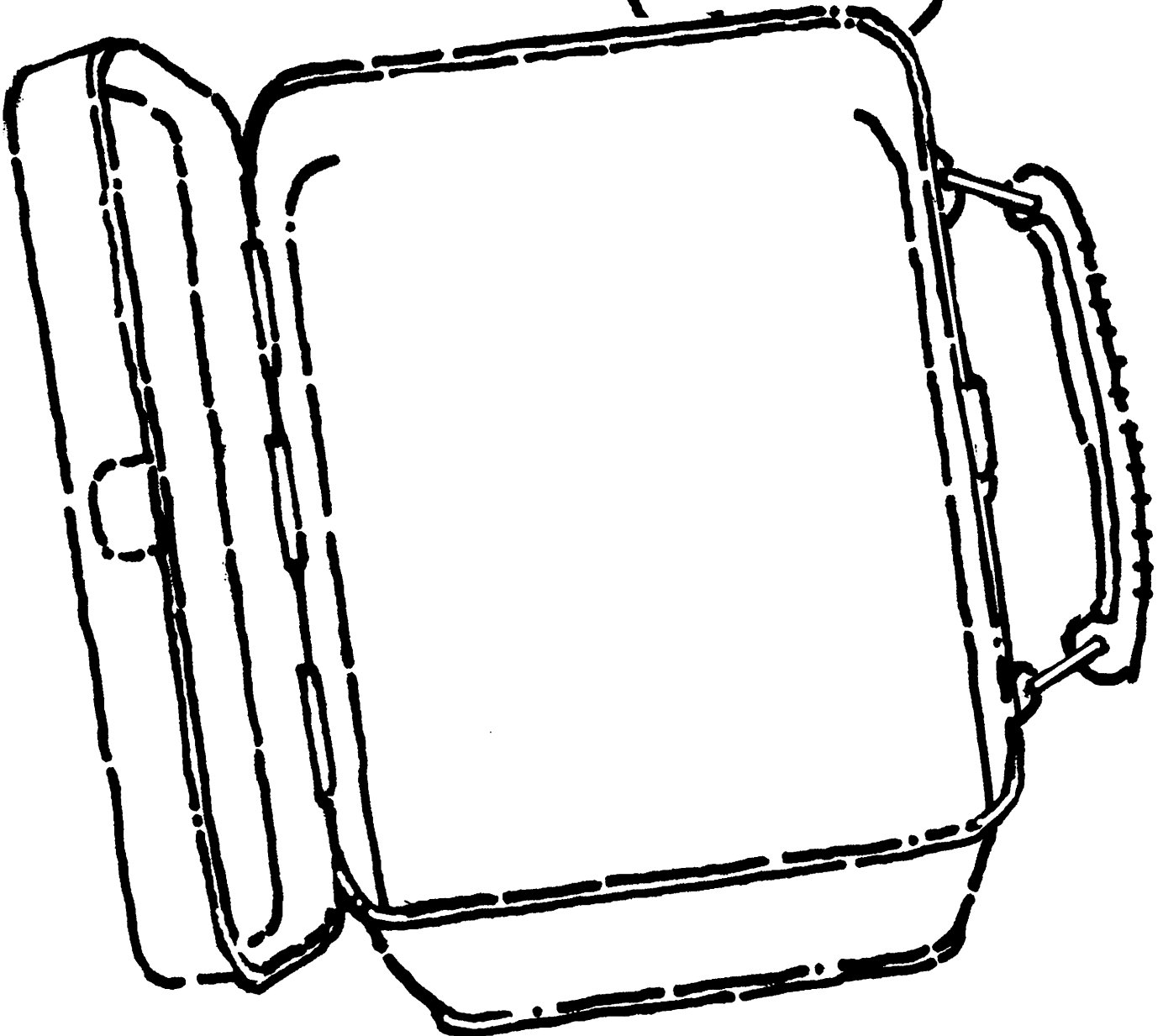
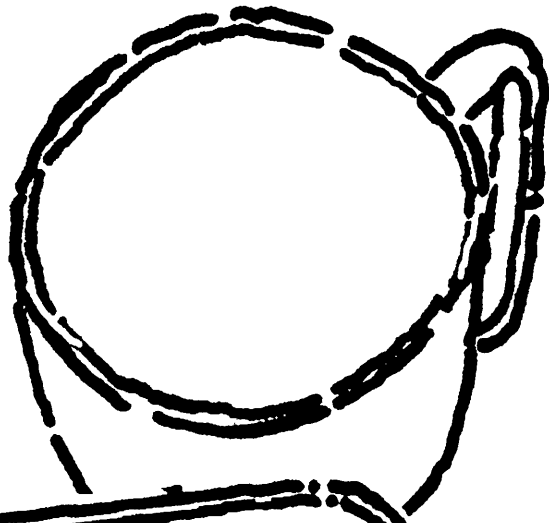
What's for Lunch?



**What's your favorite food
to have for lunch?**

**Draw it inside your lunchbox.
Don't forget to give yourself
something good to drink!**

**Decorate your lunchbox
and cup with your name,
stars and planets, cartoon
characters, sports graphics,
or anything you like.**



School Days

Things I like(ed) about school:

**Things I don't (didn't) like
about school:**

**If I could change one thing
about school I would:**

**My best friends at school
are (were):**

Show & Tell!

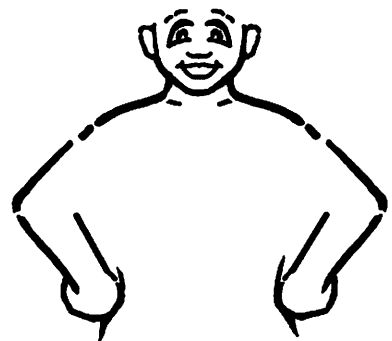
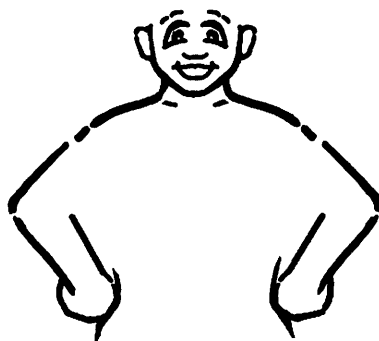
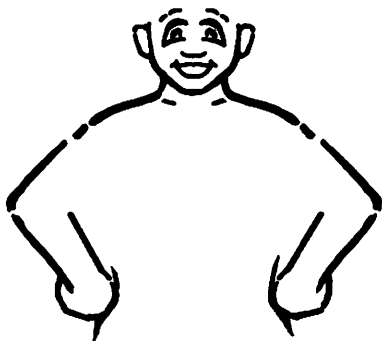
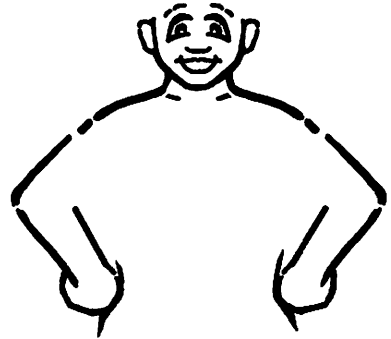
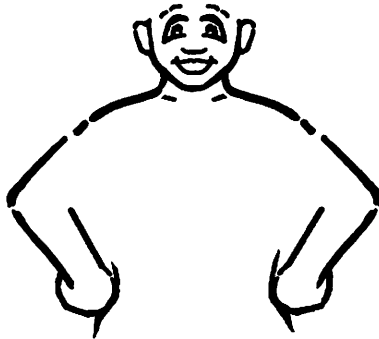
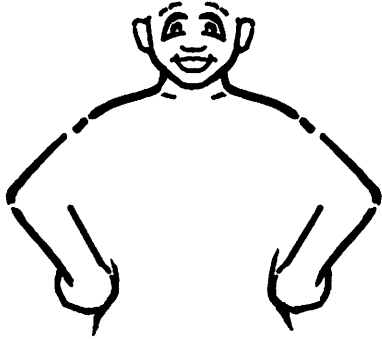


What would you bring to school for "Show & Tell if you could bring anything in the world? A dragon? The Man-in-the Moon? Daniel Boone or maybe the Rugrats? Draw it or write it.

What's your favorite thing to do at recess? Can you draw it?
(Adults: What WAS your favorite thing to do during recess?)

The Many Ways I Look

Most of us change the way we dress from time to time, depending on what we're doing. Here are some of the ways I dress:

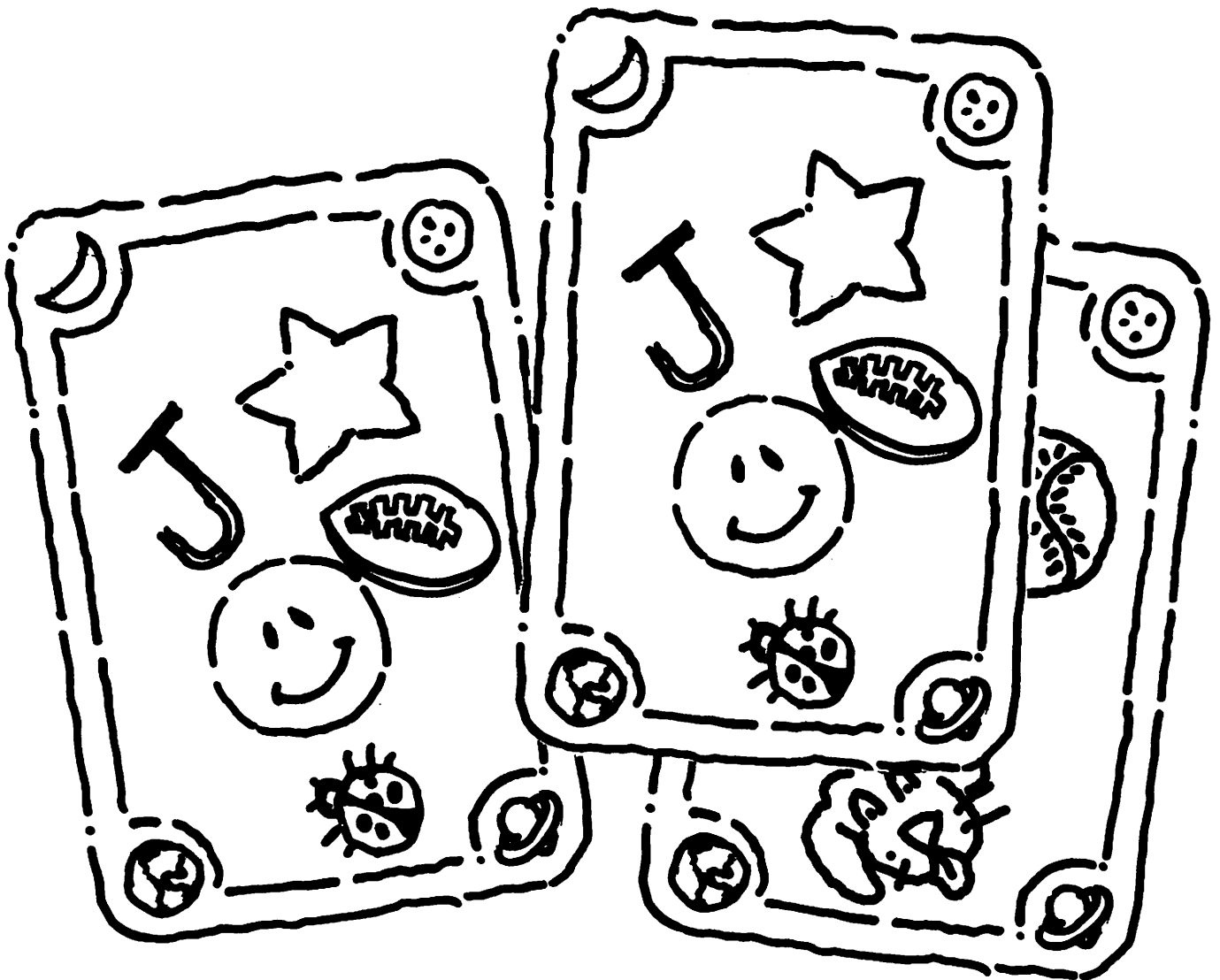


Make a Card Game

You'll need 30 unlined index cards, markers and stickers. Take fifteen cards and decorate with stickers, markers, words and drawings. Make a second set just like the first set. Shuffle the two sets together, count out fifteen mixed-up cards and mail them to me. Keep the other mixed up set for yourself.

The object of the game is to collect cards that match. Pair any matching cards in your set. Send three of your unmatched cards to me in the mail and I'll send three of mine to you at the same time, so they cross paths in the mail. Match the cards I send with yours to make new pairs and then, send me three more of your unmatched cards.

The first person to have only pairs of cards wins!



Sshhh—It's a Secret!

Use the code to figure out the secret message below

18

14

18

8

8

2

12

6

Secret Code Secret Key

A=26

F=21

K=16

P=11

U=6

B=25

G=20

L=15

Q=10

V=5

C=24

H=19

M=14

R=9

W=4

D=23

I=18

N=13

S=8

X=3

E=22

J=17

O=12

T=7

Y=2

Z=1

Use the same code above to write your own secret messages.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Permission to Feel-O

Objects of the game:

- To read and hear positive messages called "People Permission Messages".
- To be the first person to remove all of the "People Permission Messages" from your house.
- To have fun.

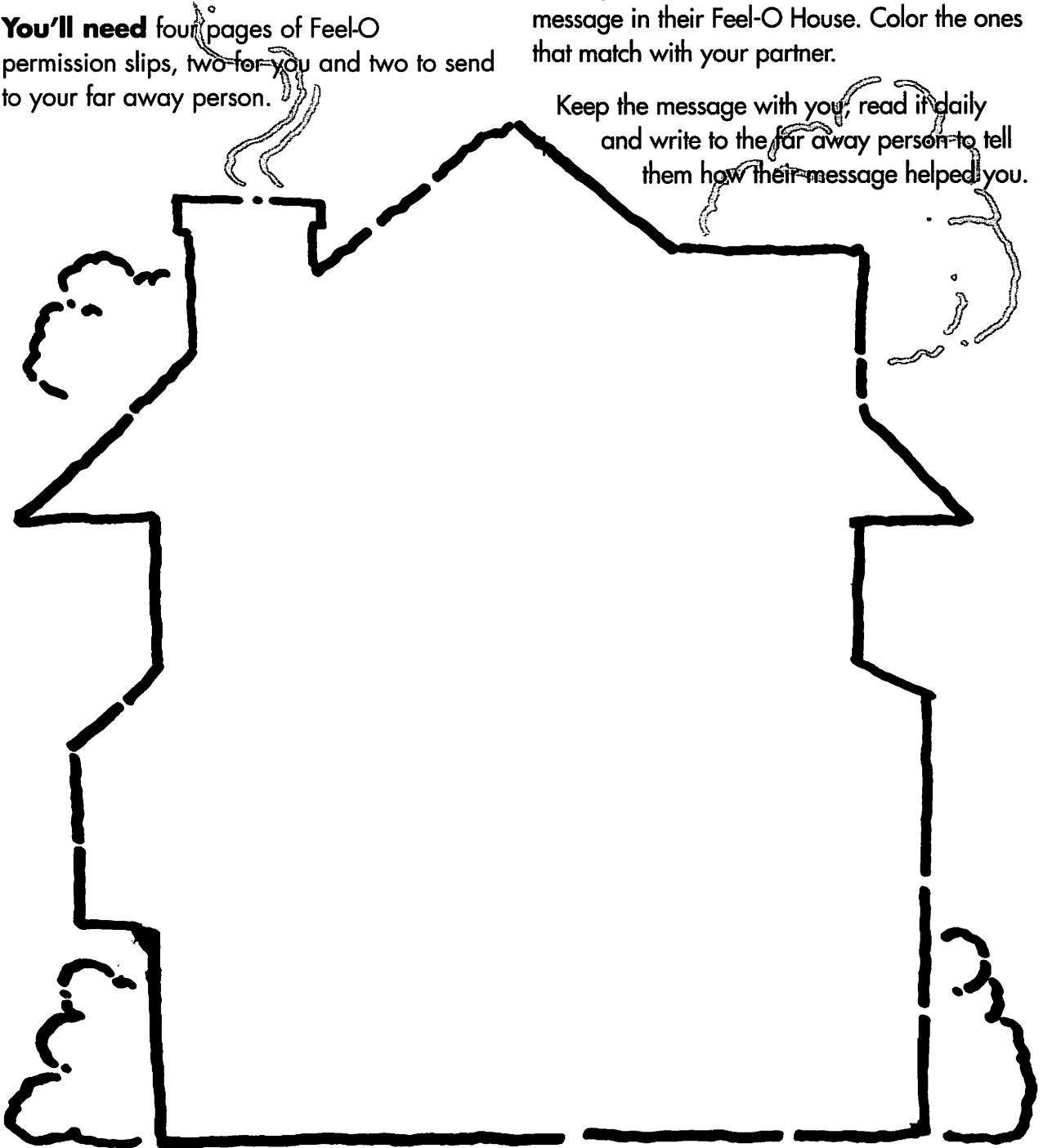
You'll need four pages of Feel-O permission slips, two for you and two to send to your far away person.

How to play:

Read the "Feel-O Slips" on the next page and find ten messages that you like. Cut them out and place them inside the Feel-O House.

Each week choose one message to send to your far away, person. When they receive the message, they'll check to see if they have that message in their Feel-O House. Color the ones that match with your partner.

Keep the message with you, read it daily and write to the far away person to tell them how their message helped you.



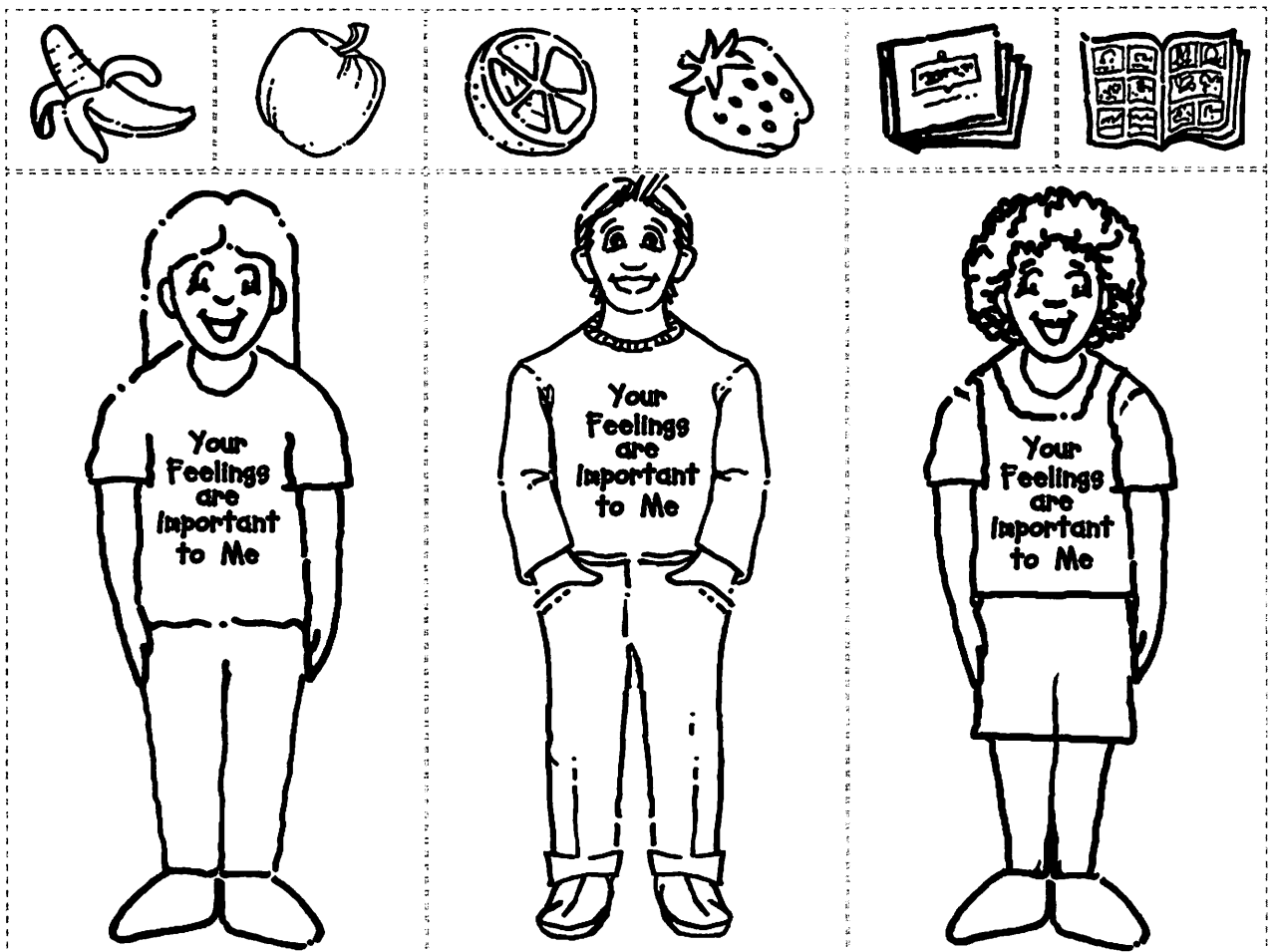
Feel-O Slips

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| You can tell the truth | You can be angry | You know what you are feeling | You deserve love | You can have fun | You are lovable |
| You can express all of your feelings | You are a terrific person | You can be a good friend | You are important | You can celebrate life | You can learn the rules |
| You can ask someone to help you | You can do many things | You can think clearly | You are loving | You are special | You can be sad |
| You can learn new skills | You can be responsible for your behavior | You can keep yourself healthy | You can learn many new things | You can say hello | You are kind |
| You can change your behavior | You belong here | You deserve care | You can help others | You can like yourself | You can be scared |
| You are capable | You can choose your friends | You can have friends | You can be happy | You can follow the rules | You can say goodbye |

Pocket Pals Play

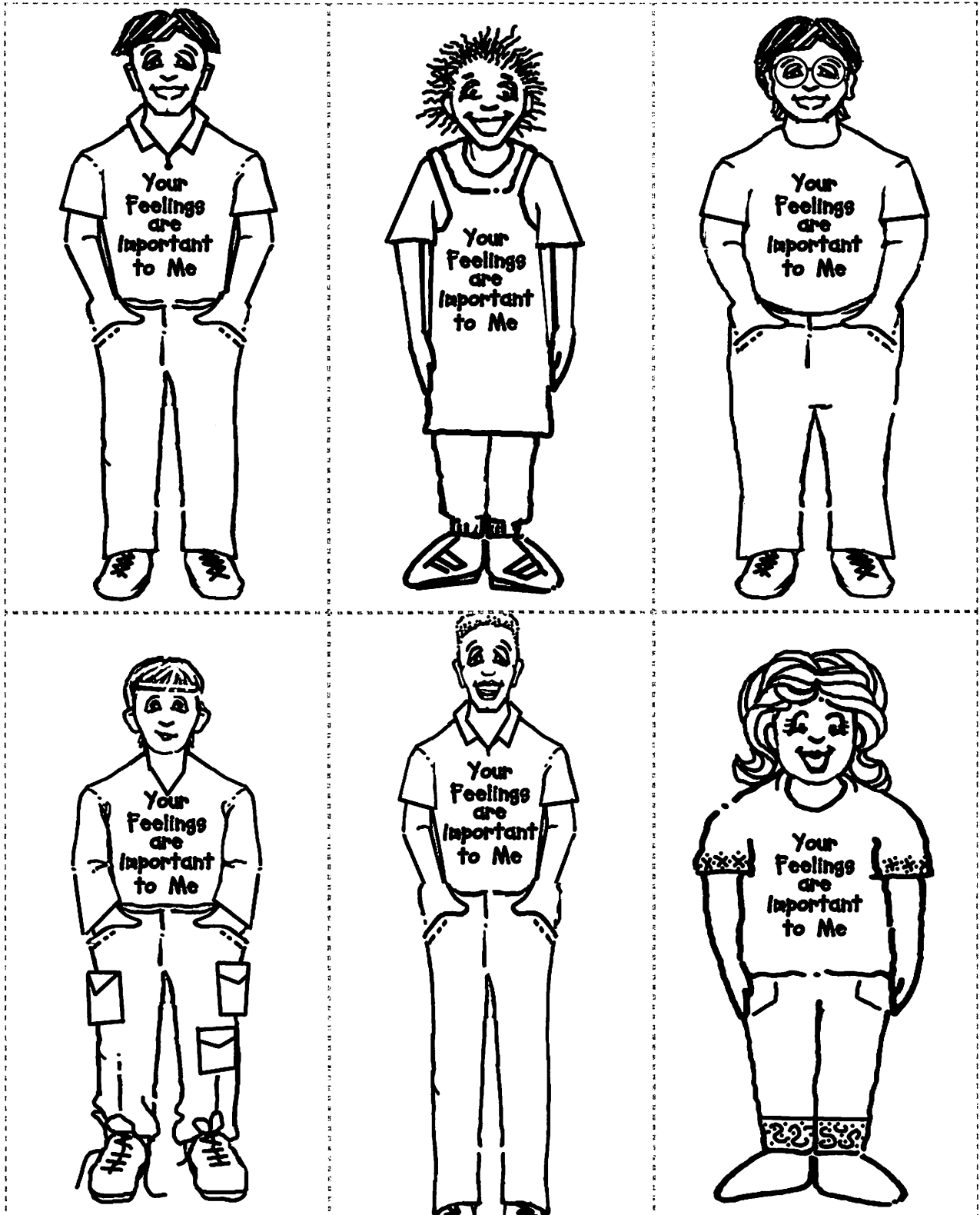
This is the **Pocket Pal Family**. They have been working very hard and would like a vacation. I was going to send them by airplane but they'd rather travel by mail. Please put them in your pocket and take them on an adventure. You decide whom you want to bring with you. I'm sending books and a fruit snack with them but I'm sure they'll be hungry by the time they reach your house. While they're with you, please send me a postcard or letter letting me know the places you've visited and how they're doing. Have a great time!

Take the **Pocket Pal Family** on an adventure and mail back a postcard or letter telling what they've been doing. If the parent or child is traveling a long distance you may want to include a map to trace the areas they visit. If you cannot be with a child for a holiday or birthday, send a **Pocket Pal** to carry in their pocket for the day. Have the child write, call or draw pictures to tell you what the **Pocket Pal** did each day. Have the adult also put a **Pocket Pal** in their pocket for the same day, write about it and exchange information. Use your imagination!

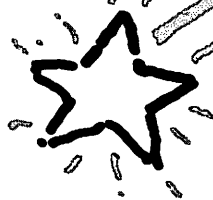


Pocket Pals

Cut them out and color them. You can change their clothes, glue them to popsicle sticks, tell a story, make up a puppet play or use them as bookmarks. Be creative!



Wish Upon a Star!



Star Light, Star Bright, first star I see tonight.

**I wish you may, I wish you might,
grant the wish I wish tonight.**

(Draw or write what you wish for.)

My Wish for the Future



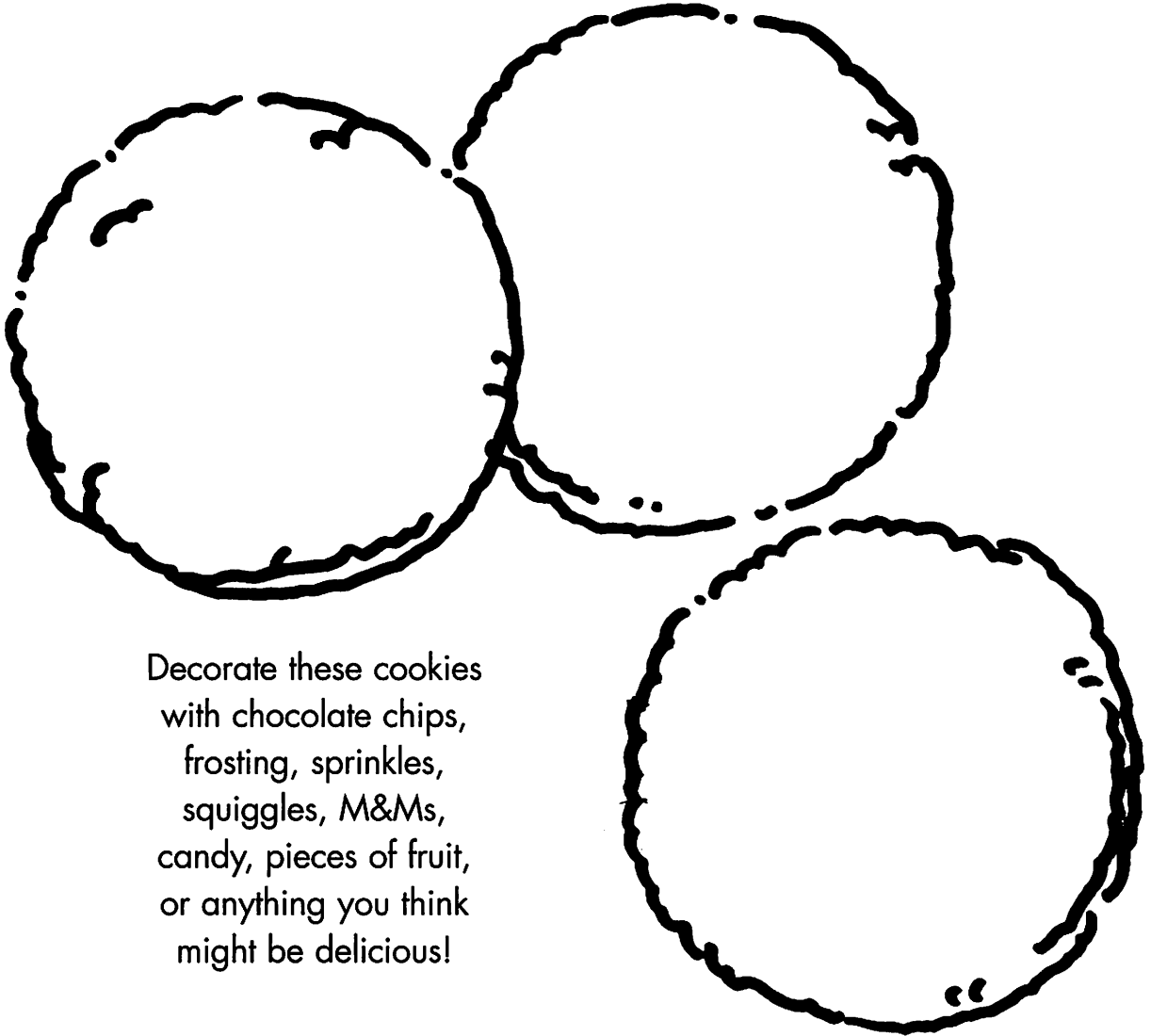
Draw your wish for the future.



Cookies & Milk



I decorated these cookies just for you!



Decorate these cookies with chocolate chips, frosting, sprinkles, squiggles, M&Ms, candy, pieces of fruit, or anything you think might be delicious!

I wish we we could enjoy a glass of milk and cookie together.

My favorite kind of cookies are _____

If we were out of milk, I'd like to drink _____

Some of my other favorite snacks are _____

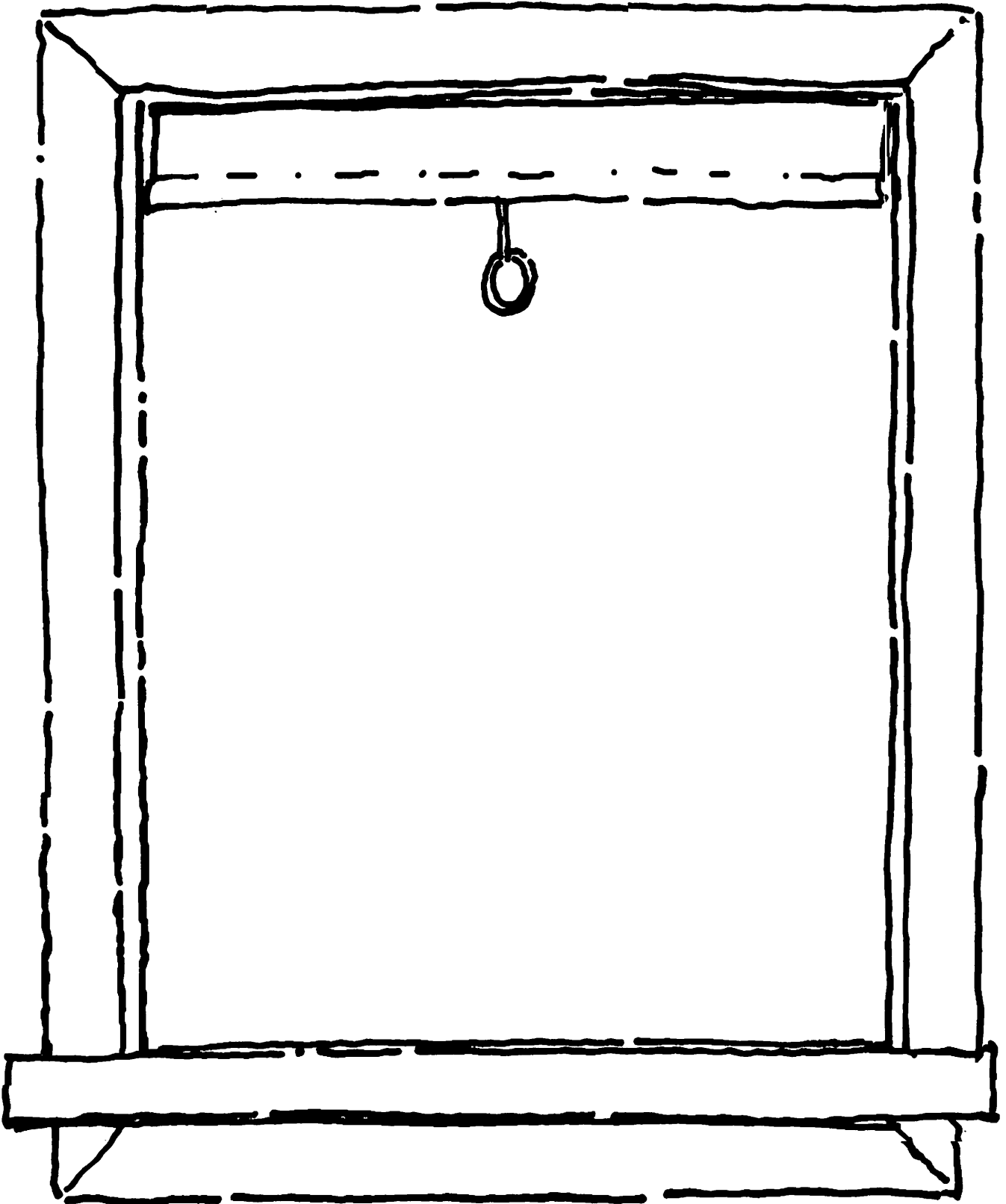
My favorite meal is _____

Out My Window



When I look out my window, this is what I see...

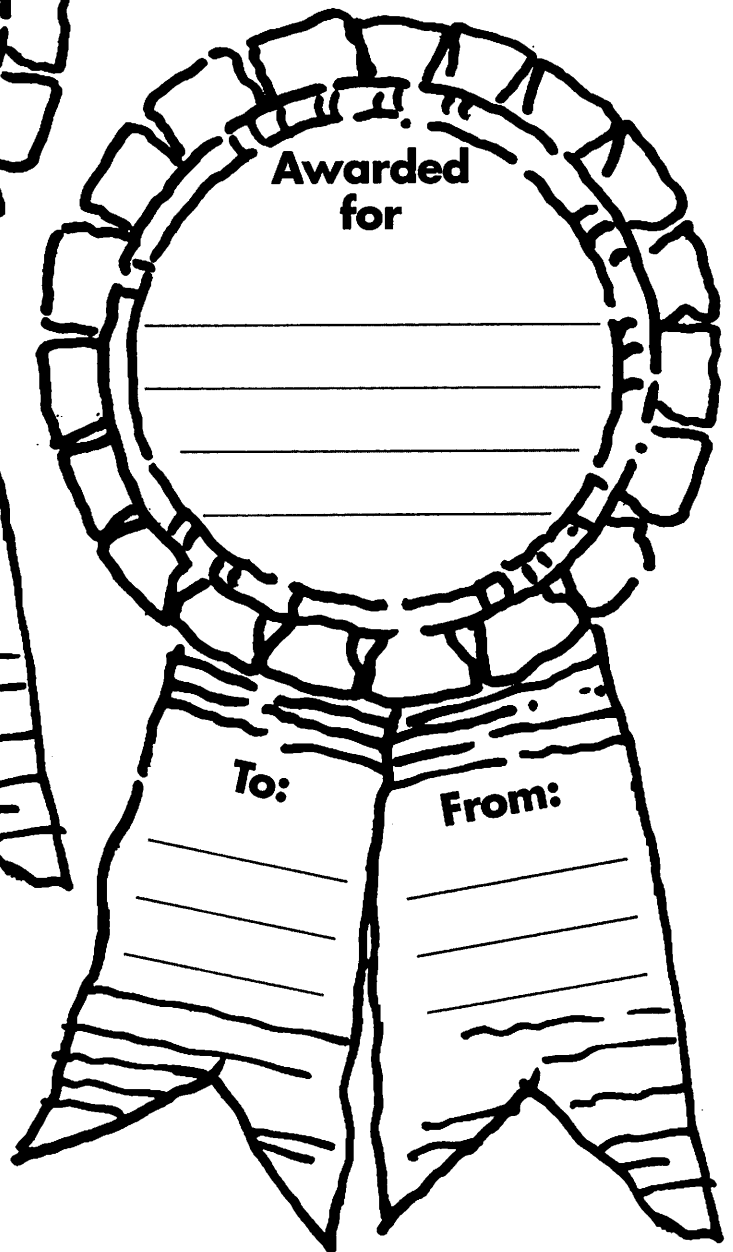
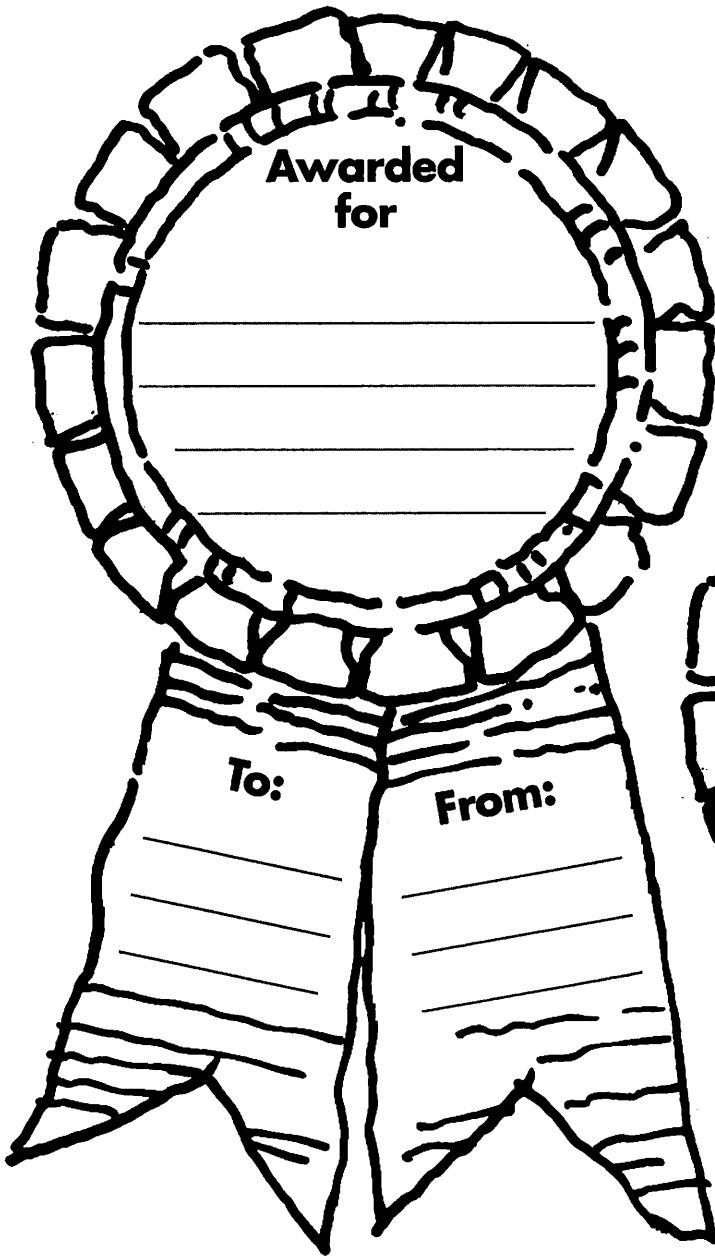
Draw a picture or write about what you see out your window.



You're the Best!

Cut an award out and give it to someone special for doing something great!

Be sure they know how much you appreciate what they do and why.

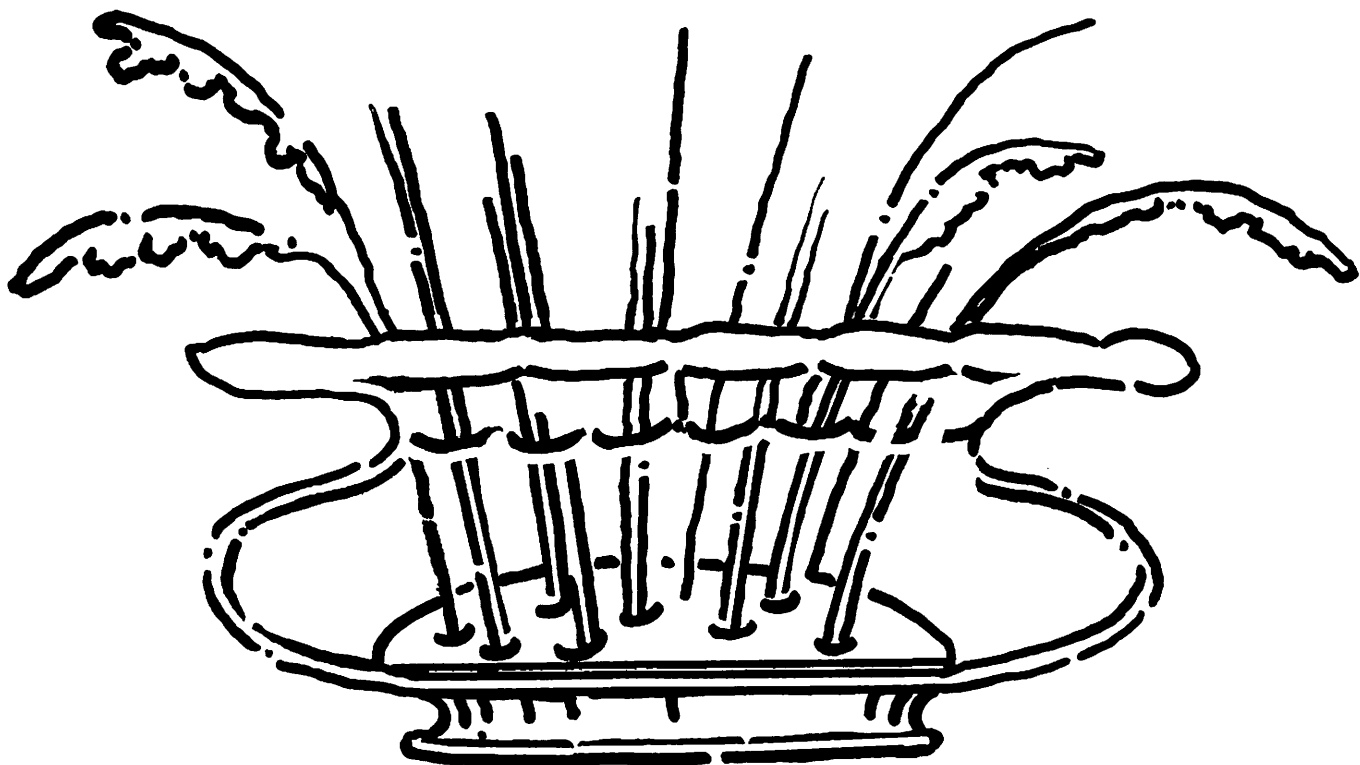


You can also color the award ribbon before you give it to your special person or ask them to color their award after you give it to them.

Everyone Loves Flowers!



You can send a bouquet of flowers to each other anytime you feel like sending one. Just draw a bouquet or cut flower pictures from magazines to create a beautiful bunch.



One More Thing...

**Is there something else you'd like to write or talk about?
Anything at all? Here's your chance to get it out!**

It Feels Great to Give


Fill these out and give them to someone who deserves them.

Goody Coupon

To: _____

This Coupon is redeemable for:

Given by: _____

 Date: _____

Thank You!

To: _____

For:

From: _____

 Date: _____

Rrrriing! Rrrriing!

Here are my phone numbers and addresses.
Tape this to your refrigerator or keep it near your phone
so you'll be able to find me when you need me.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Call between _____

Cell Phone (_____) _____ E-Mail _____

Home Address _____ Aptmt # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Workplace _____

Work Phone (_____) _____ Call between _____

Direct Line (_____) _____ E-Mail _____

Business Fax (_____) _____ Use Between _____

Work Address _____ Suite # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please fill in your information below and send it back to me.
I'll keep it in a safe place too, so I can keep in touch.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Call between _____

Cell Phone (_____) _____ E-Mail _____

Home Address _____ Aptmt # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

School _____

School Phone (_____) _____ Grade _____

Home Room Teacher _____

Principal _____

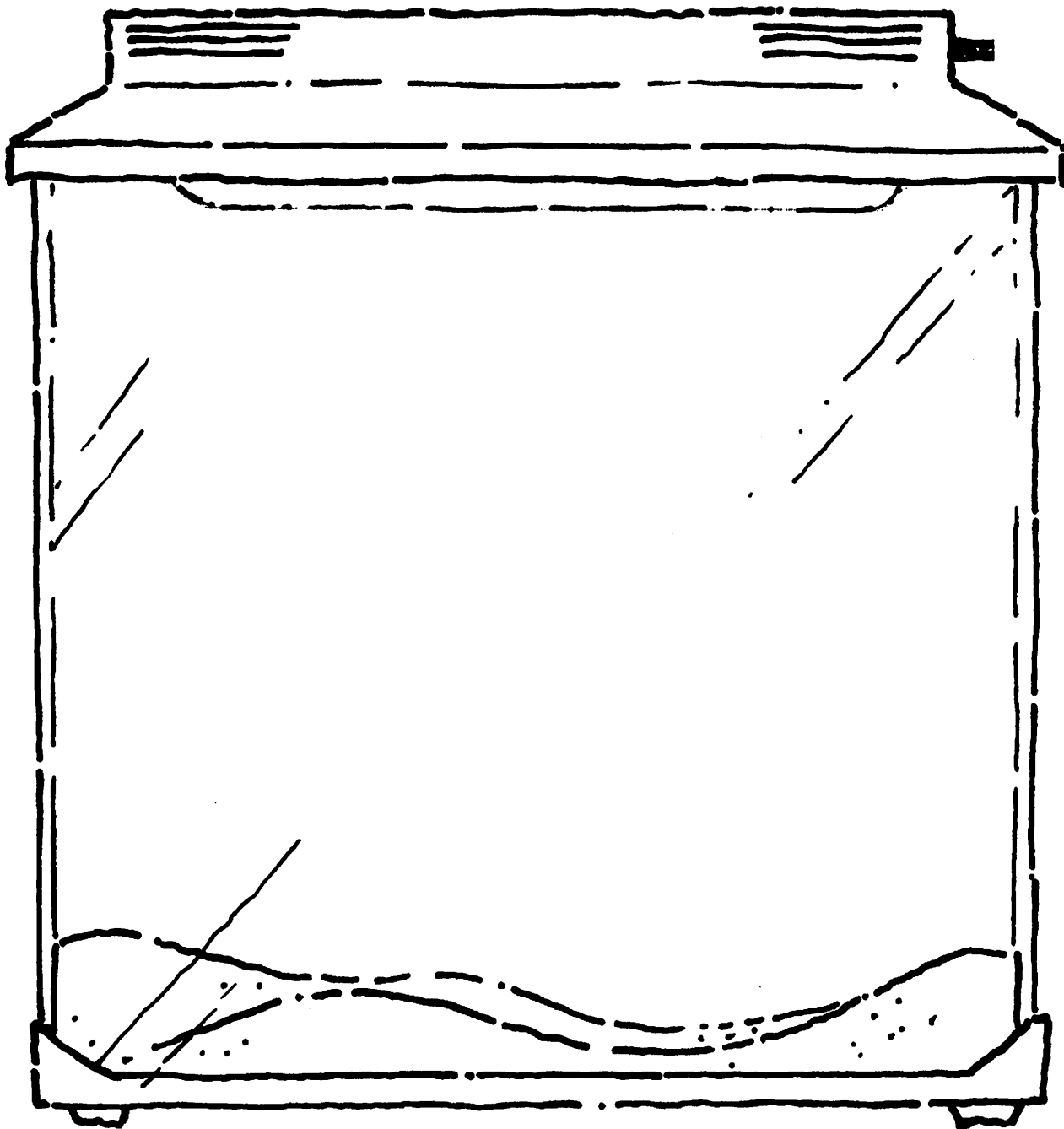
School Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Whatcha Got There?



What kind of pet(s) would you keep in this glass tank?



Do you have a pet now? If so, what kind? What's its name?

What kind of pet would you like to have someday? Why?



I'm Thinking of You!



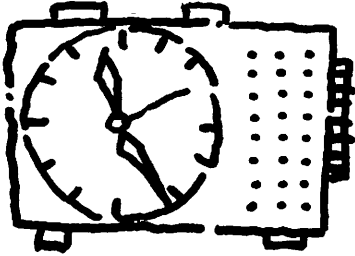
Here's a picture of my hand I traced when I was thinking of you. **Trace your hand holding** mine with a different colored pen or marker. Look at it often and remember I'm thinking of you and miss you.

Musical Notes

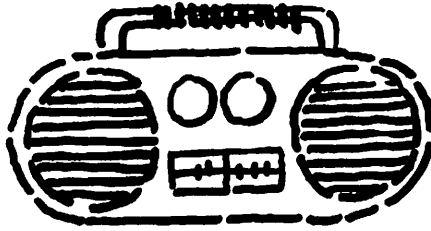
Music is a huge part of some people's lives.

When I listen to music, I listen to it on:

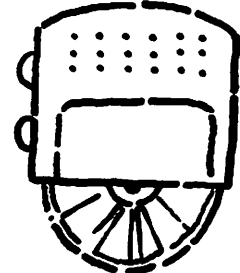
(Circle your answer)



Clock Radio



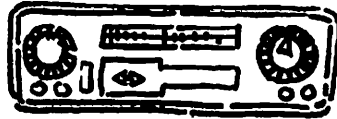
Boom Box



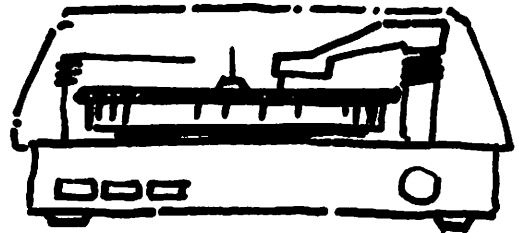
CD Player



Walkman



Car Stereo



Record Player

My favorite songs are:

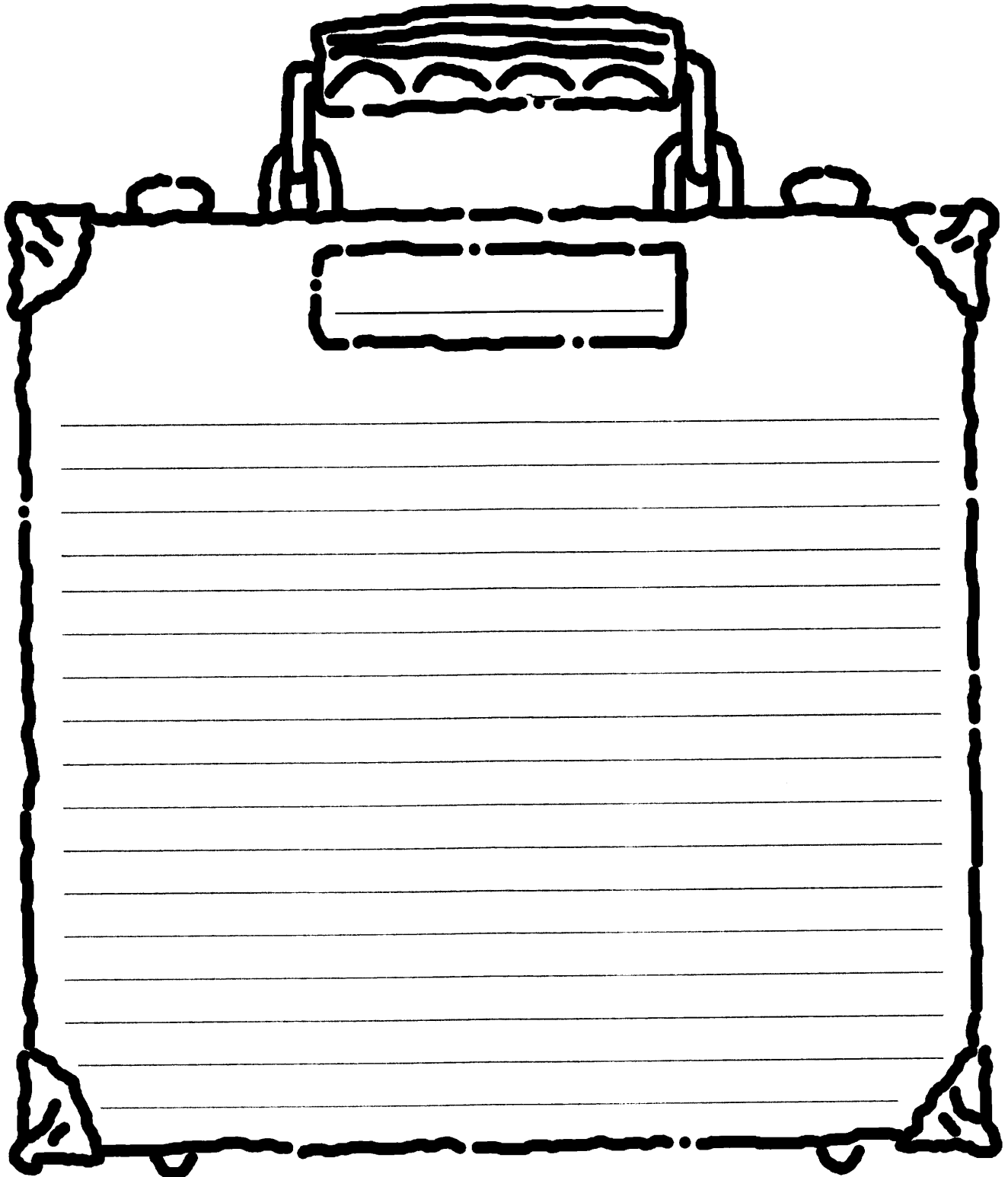
My favorite musical groups are:

If I could be any music star who would it be and why?

What Would You Take?



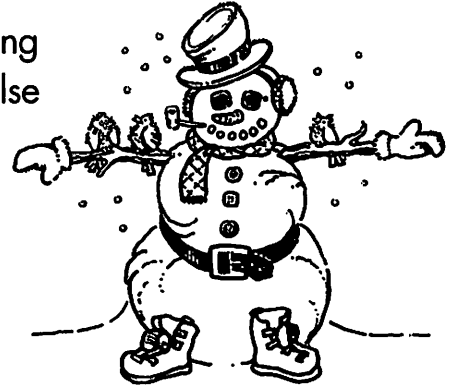
If you had to leave your home in a hurry, what would you take with you? Write your name in the suitcase name plate then draw or list your important possessions in the suitcase.



Let's Build a Snowman!



How would you build a snowman? You'll need something for eyes, a nose, a mouth, a hat, arms, and anything else you wish to use to complete your frosty friend!



Snow Globe!



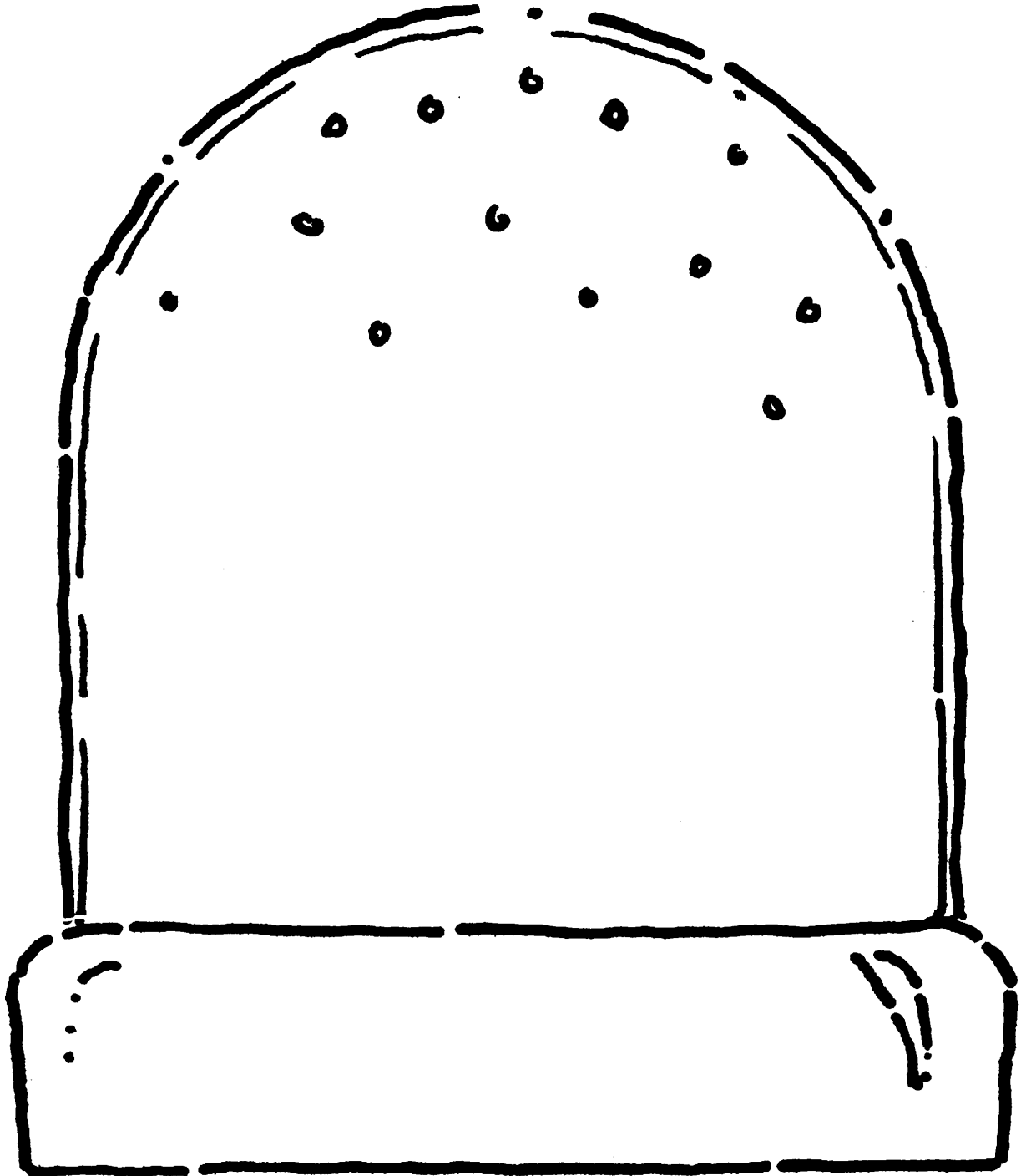
When you shake it, it makes a blizzard.

What's inside your snowglobe? Is it your house or school?

A tiny little city? Maybe it's a Christmas tree or snowman.

How about a mountain with ski slopes or rivers?

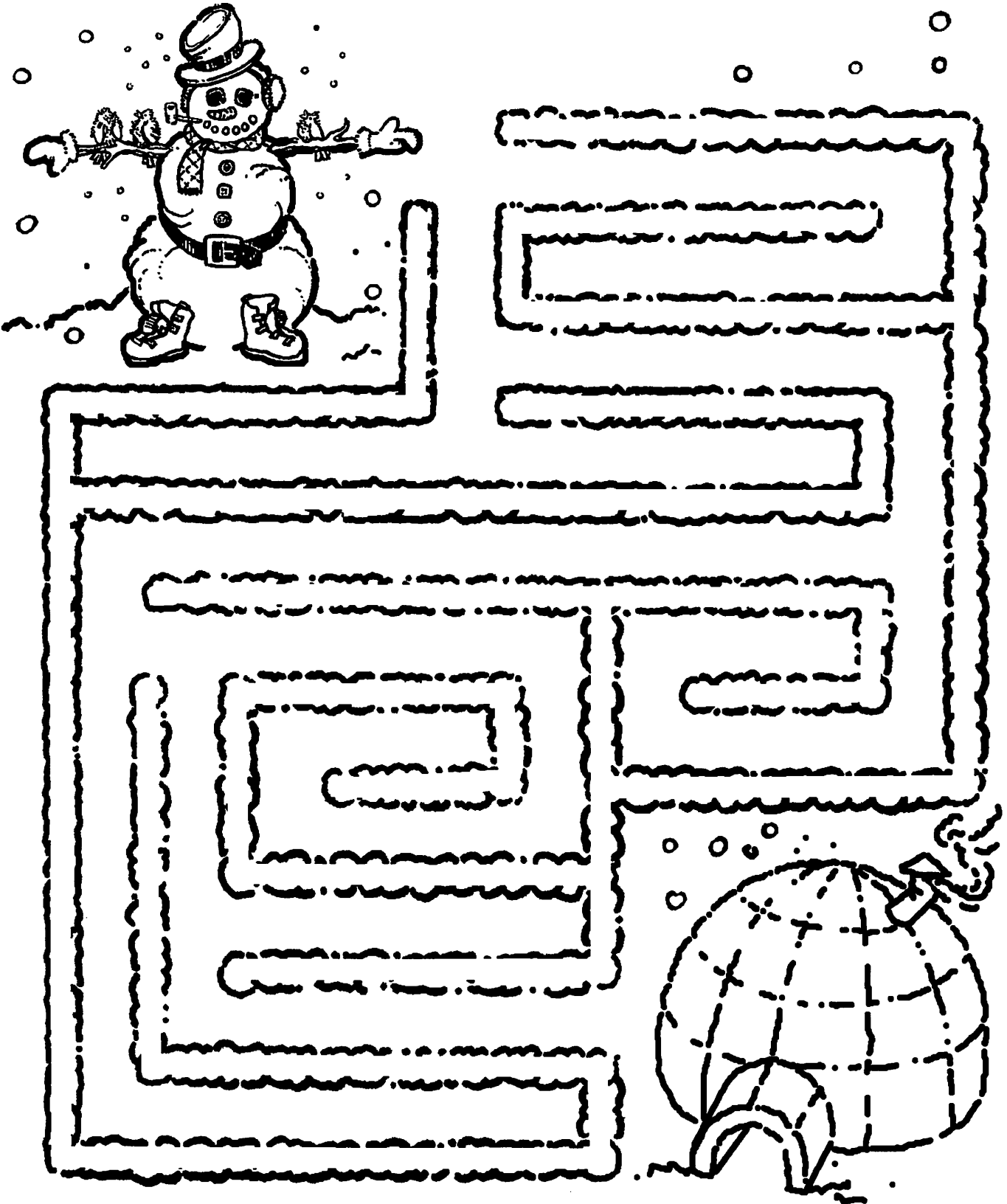
Draw whatever you want inside your snow globe
and add as many snowflakes as you'd like.



Snow Maze



Can you help the snowman find his way to his igloo?



Your Pictures are Worth 1,000 Words

Write a letter using drawings or pictures instead of words. Substitute as many pictures for words as you can.

For example:



am



today.



2



+ got there



4 the



!

(Dear Mom, I am happy today. I rode my bike to school and got there before the bus!)

Quick Connections

Cut apart the strips below, fill in the answers to the questions, and **mail them one at a time** to your child. Ask them to send their answers and drawings back to you. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to help them reply.

My favorite color is _____

What is your favorite color? _____

Draw a picture or write a story to describe something you saw this week that was your favorite color.

My favorite food is _____

What is your favorite food? _____

When was the last time you had this food and where were you when you ate it? _____

My favorite game/sport is _____

What is your favorite game/sport? _____

Tell me what you like about this game/sport. _____

Some of my favorite things to do on a rainy day are _____

What do you like to do on a rainy day? _____

I do not like to _____

Tell me about something you don't like to do. _____

Tell me about a time you had to do this and how you felt about doing it. _____

My favorite food is _____

What is your favorite food? _____

When was the last time you had this food and where were you when you ate it? _____

The best gift I ever received was _____

What was one of your favorite gifts and who gave it to you? _____

My favorite hobby is _____

What are your favorite hobbies and are there any new hobbies you'd like to start? _____

20 Ways to Stay in Touch

1) **Growth Chart**

You'll need a tape measure and a pen. Measure your height on a wall. Each month measure yourself again and send a letter or make a call to let your loved one know how much you've grown. Also tell them how much you weigh.

2) **Picture Me**

Take a photo of yourself in the same place every year on your birthday to show how much you've grown.

3) **Puzzler**

Write a letter or draw a picture. Cut it up like a puzzle and send it to your friend and ask them to put it back together.

4) **Family Newspaper**

Create a family newspaper by having everyone around you write about what's going on in their lives, then tape the pages together like a newspaper and send it to your loved one. Ask them to do the same for you. NOTE: If you have a computer to use you could add artwork, cartoons, even photos to your newspaper.

5) **Funny Pages**

Send your friend a cartoon or funny story that you clip from the newspaper.

6) **Seasons Signs**

Ask your loved one to look for signs of spring, winter, summer or fall. Make your own list of seasonal signs you discover. Who can list the most? Mail your lists to each other.

7) **How We See Each Other**

Draw pictures of each other and compare lists of things you like about one another.

8) **Favorite Colors**

Ask your loved one what his or her favorite color is. Write down what you see that day or week that is their favorite color.

9) **Just Ask**

Write a question each week for your distant loved one to answer

10) **Your Day**

Write your loved one a letter describing how you look today and ask them to write back.

11) **Foot Longs**

Trace around your feet with a pen, pencil or marker. Have your loved one do the same so you can compare feet sizes. Draw funny socks or shoes on the tracings and mail them back and forth to each other.

12) Keep a Memories Box

When you remember happy times you spent with your distant friend, write it down or draw a picture and put it in a box. At night take one slip out and read it, look at it, think about us, enjoy the memory. Write a letter to your loved one sharing the memory.

13) Special Events

Keep a list of special events you celebrate while your loved one is gone. For example: birthdays, holidays, sporting events, school or church programs, etc.) Describe how, where and why you celebrate each event.

| Special Event | How We Celebrated | Where we Celebrated | Who was there |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

14) School Days

Draw a picture or write about what you saw on your way to school (or work) today and mail it to your distant loved one.

15) Movie Time

Talk to your distant friend first and pick out a movie that you're both going to see. Try to see the movie on the same day and at the same time if possible. Afterward, call each other and talk about the show. Mail your ticket stubs to each other.

16) Share a Story

Start writing a story about whatever you want. Write at least one chapter and the title for your story. Mail what you wrote to your friend and have them add a chapter and then send it back to you. Continue sending the story back and forth until you finish the story. NOTE: This is a perfect activity for Email.

17) It's great to laugh together!

Call or write each other at least once a week to tell each other three jokes you each heard that week. If you know you'll be calling with your jokes, you'll both be looking for jokes and thinking about your distant friend all week until you make your phone calls.

18) Mix it up!

Write a few short sentences to your friend but mix up the letters in some of the key words and send your note to your friend to unscramble. **Example:** I QVEL You! (I LOVE You!) You might need to give your friend hints on the harder words.

19) Rhyme Time

Write a short poem to your friend and ask them to write one back.

20) Serenade Me!

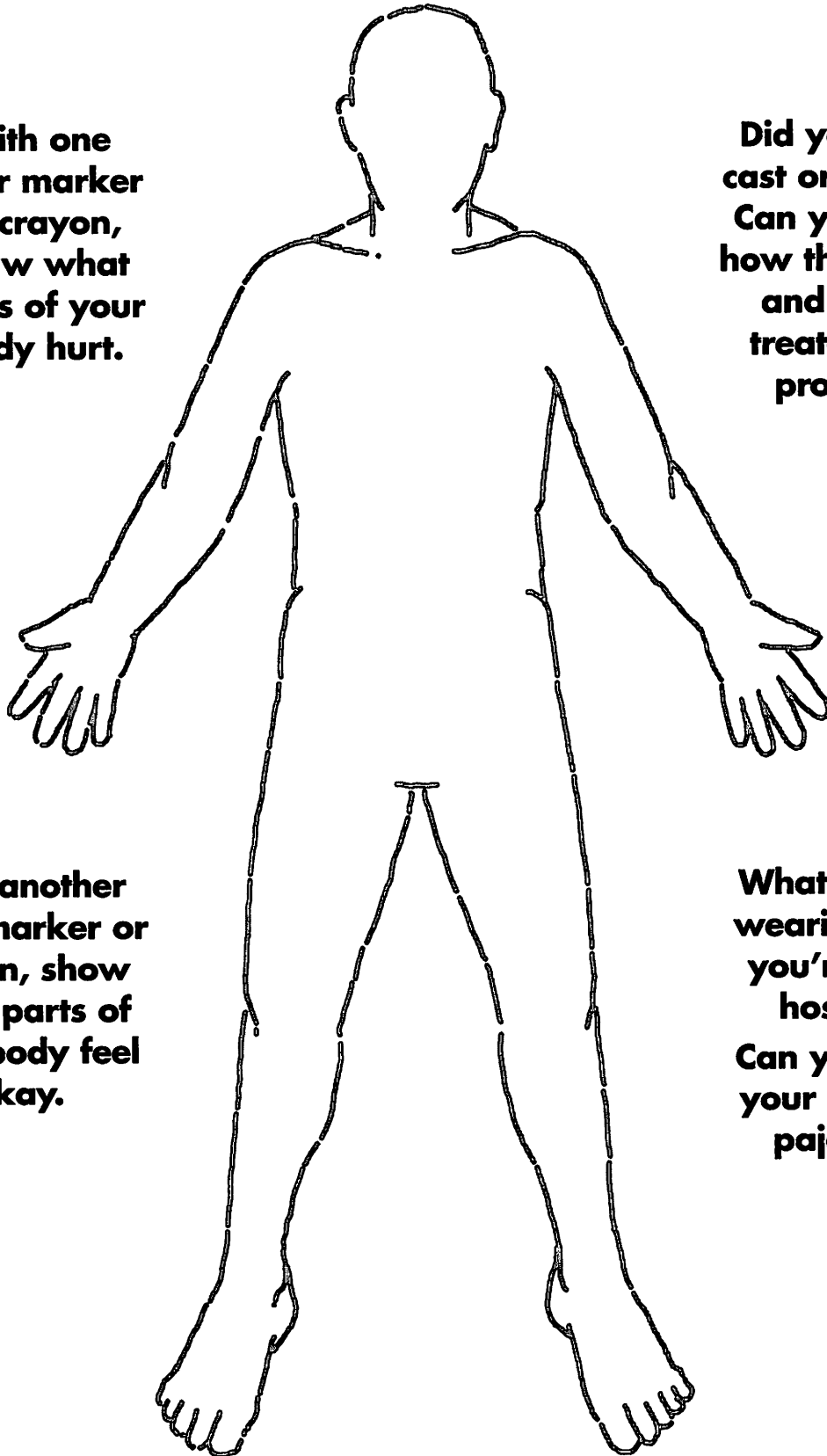
Send a recording of you singing or playing a song to your distant friend. Ask them to send one back. Or sing or play to each other over the phone.

Show Me Where it Hurts

On the drawing of the body below, show where you hurt, where your illness is, or what kind of injuries you have.

With one color marker or crayon, draw what parts of your body hurt.

Did you get a cast or stitches? Can you draw how the doctors and nurses treated your problem?

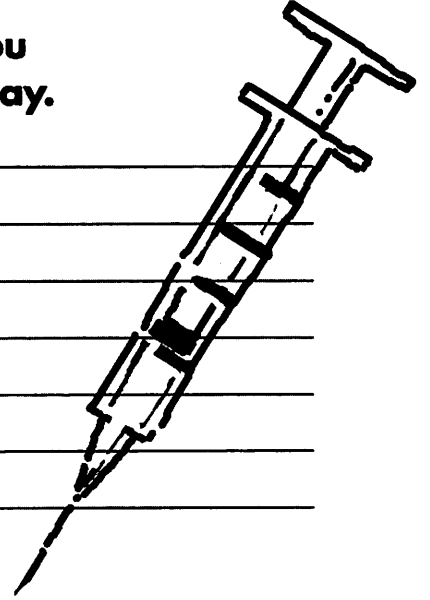


With another color marker or crayon, show what parts of your body feel okay.

What are you wearing while you're in the hospital? Can you draw your gown or pajamas?

My Day at the Hospital

**Describe something that scared you
or made you feel uncomfortable today.**



Describe something that helped you feel better today.

**Did you make any new friends today? Can you name the
doctors, nurses, or other hospital people you saw today?**

About the Author

Carole Gesme, M.A., CFLE, earned her Master's degree in human development from Saint Mary's University. She is a certified family life educator, a chemical dependency counselor and a former elementary school teacher. She is an adjunct professor at Concordia University and Saint Mary's University teaching in the areas of school-age care, psychology and human development. She is also an advisor to graduate students in Saint Mary's Human Development program.



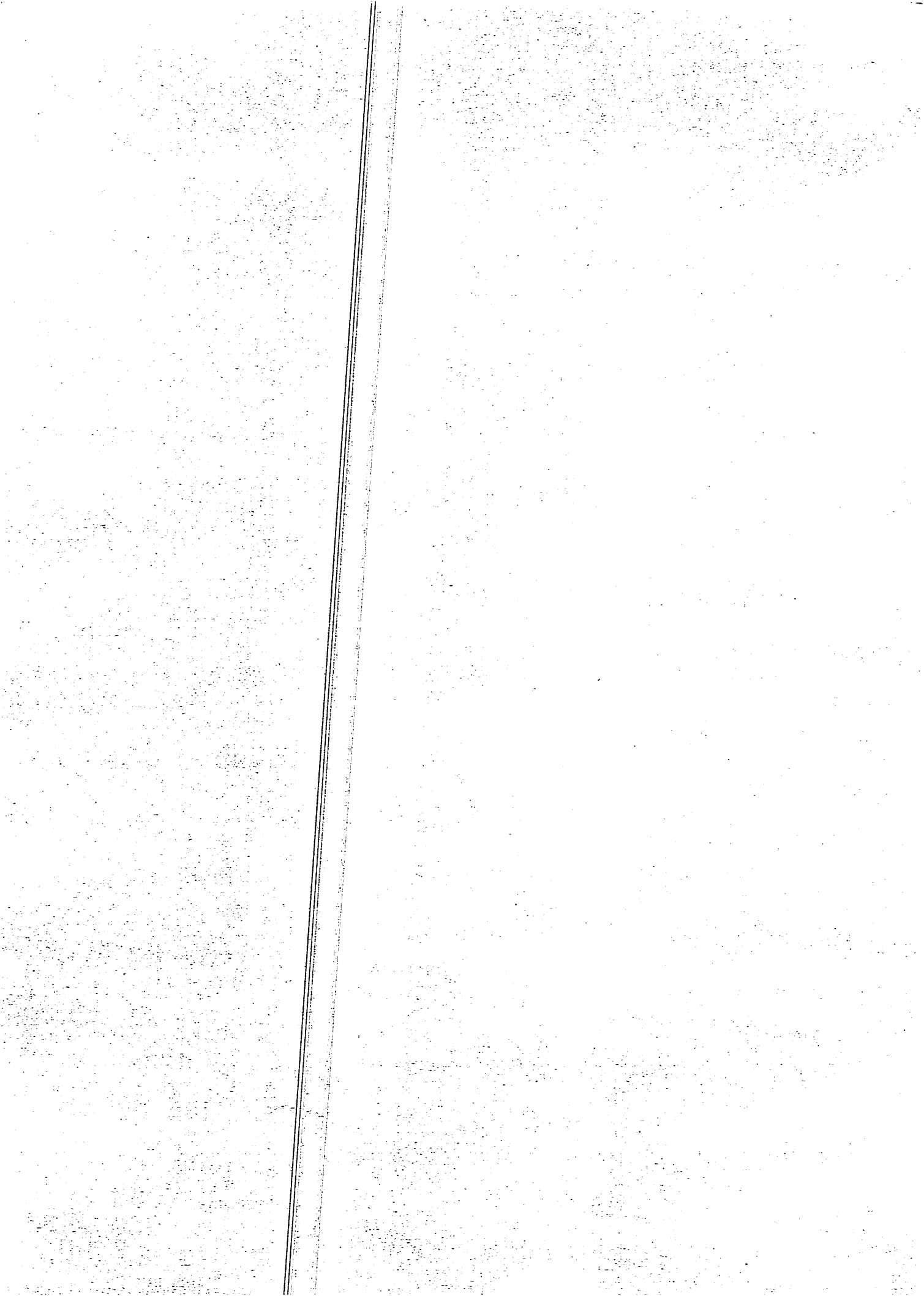
Carole has created several therapeutic and educational games and tools which she markets through her company, **I Wanna Be Me**. These include **The Love Game, Ups & Downs With Feelings, Feeling Faces Paper People, The Self-Esteem Calendar, Capture A Feeling, Remembering Christmas, The Family Puzzle, Keyed-Up For Being Drug-Free** and **Time Together**. She has co-authored **Affirmation Ovals, 139 Ways to Give & Get Affirmations, Help! For Kids and Parents About Drugs**, and **Life is a Celebration**. She is the author of **Help for Kids! Understanding Your Feelings About Moving, Help For Kids! Understanding Your Feelings About Having a Parent in Prison or Jail** and **While We're Apart...**

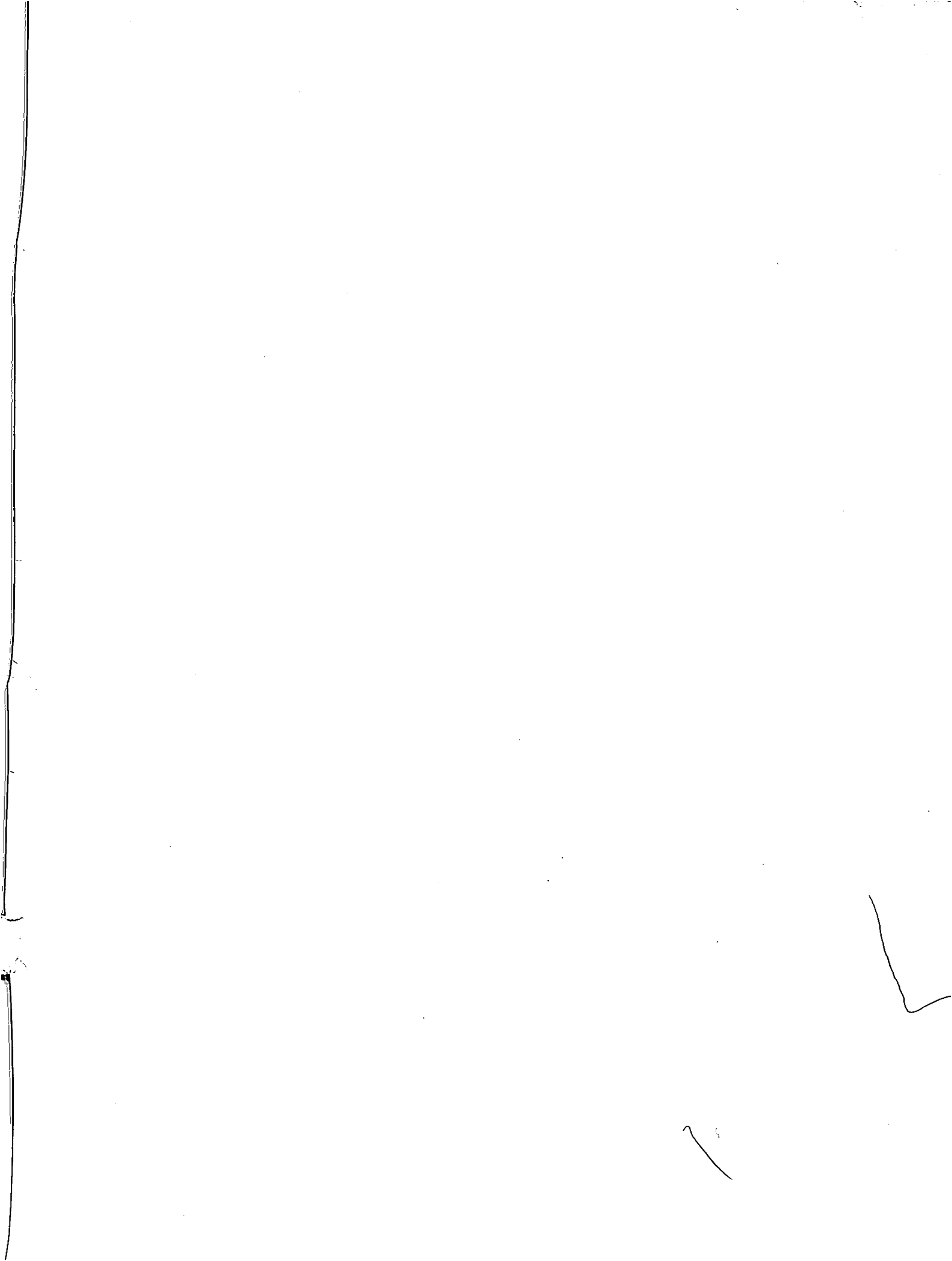
Carole has taught parenting within the Minnesota Correctional System for more than 20 years and teaches self-esteem, parenting and assertiveness classes for HealthSystem Minnesota. She is a trainer for the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System in Effective Parenting Skills and The Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development.

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Phone: (952) 938-9163 Fax (952) 935-2038 Email: cgesme@cs.com

Carole is eager to hear your stories about how you used this book, what kind of responses you received and other ideas for keeping in touch...While We're Apart.





O

ne of the most important things we do in life is to build, maintain, and enjoy the relationships we have. At times, these relationships become stressed because a parent, grandparent, or friend becomes separate from a loved one for some reason:

- **A parent transferred** to a new job in a new city, while the family stays behind to sell the house.
- **Grandparents** who live in a cold, snowy climate decide to spend winters in a warmer locale.
- **Military personnel** sent away to work, while their families stay behind to carry on normal routines.
- **A loved one** is hospitalized, attending a treatment program, or serving a prison term.
- **A child** temporarily placed into foster care.
- **A family** disrupted by separation, divorce, or illness.

Whatever the cause of the separation, this book contains over one hundred fun and meaningful ways for loved ones to stay in touch and even strengthen existing relationships during a prolonged separation.

ISBN 978-0-9633761-2-1



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