

DADDY'S HERO



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HUMANE
PUPS4PATRIOTS™

DADDY'S HERO

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Introductory Note

When a parent returns from military service with an invisible wound, a service dog can be an effective tool in helping live with Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). However, a service dog is different than a family pet and this can be difficult for younger children to understand. Written by a clinical specialist working to help veterans with PTS and the president and CEO of American Humane, the country's first national humane organization that also trains dogs in need of forever homes, this book is designed to help the children of veterans diagnosed with PTS or TBI understand the role of a service dog and how s/he will help their family.

My daddy went to war for his work and to keep us safe. I missed my daddy the whole time he was gone, and I couldn't wait until he came back. Everyone called my daddy their 'hero,' but to me, he's MY DADDY.

I was scared he might come back injured or hurt, but when he calls me every week, he tells me he is safe, we joke, and he talks to me about my day.

Some soldiers on base come back from war in wheelchairs, and some come back and they look okay. I hope my daddy comes back looking okay!

Today I found out he's coming home!!!! I am going to clean my room and make the biggest sign I can make so he can find me right away.





Daddy is different. He isn't in a wheelchair, and he has his arms and legs....but he's different. I dropped my sign and it made a loud noise. Daddy got really scared and then a little mad. My dad looks the same, but he acts different.

Before daddy went to war, we used to play, we could go to the park, play sports, and we liked to watch movies together. Now, daddy stays quiet most of the time. He gets angry really fast, and we stay home all day.

I don't think my daddy is trying to be mean. My mommy says that daddy has PTS. I asked my teacher what PTS is and he told me it means that daddy's brain is scared of things because that's how he stayed alive during the war.



When daddy gets scared, he stays scared for a long time. He doesn't talk about what he's thinking. A lot of the time I see him just staring. I wish I could make him laugh and play. I want to play soccer with him so bad.

I don't think daddy is sleeping very much. Last night when I got up to use the bathroom, daddy was still watching TV. When I woke up, he was still sitting in the same spot and wearing the same clothes. Why can't I make my daddy feel better?

Daddy is going away for a week. He got accepted into a program that helps daddies with PTS, but I don't exactly know how. Mommy said that daddy is going to bring a big surprise home.

I wonder what it could be!?!?!?

I got a call from daddy this week and guess what?!?!?!?!?! When I saw him on the screen, he had a dog with him!!! His dog's name is Layla, and daddy says she is a very special dog.



Layla is daddy's service dog, and she stays with daddy all day long. She even goes into the bathroom with daddy. Daddy explained that dogs can understand and sense things that people cannot.

When I asked daddy what Layla does, daddy explained that Layla can smell changes in daddy's body if he feels scared or uncomfortable, and Layla is trained to help daddy feel better. Layla also wakes daddy up in the middle of the night if he is having a scary dream.

Since Layla is a service dog, she can go anywhere with daddy to help daddy do the things he used to do before he went to war and his brain got hurt. Daddy showed me how we will be able to go the park now, and even to the movies with Layla. I am so excited that daddy might be able to go to my baseball game!



These are only a couple of rules Daddy and I have to follow:

1) We cannot distract Layla from doing her job. Even if she is sleeping next to daddy, Layla needs to be able to focus on daddy and only daddy.

2) We have to help daddy continue to train Layla. The trainers told daddy that Layla is trained to meet all of the laws that say she can be a service dog, but daddy has to keep reminding Layla that she can do so many amazing things.

3) I'm not allowed to feed Layla, because daddy said that service dogs are fed as part of their training. I would feel so bad if I messed up Layla's training!!!



Playing with my dog Ben is very different than how Layla gets rid of energy. Ben gets the zoomies and runs around the house like his bottom is on fire. Layla gets really tired from working all day and helping daddy. Both of our dogs are happy, so I am going to play with my friends, Ben, my mommy, and my toys so that Layla can get rid of her energy by paying attention to daddy.

The last rule is the hardest and I was a little sad. I am not allowed to sleep with Layla. She is daddy's dog and I finally decided that I'm okay with Layla only being daddy's dog....want to know why?!?!?!? Because I GOT MY DADDY BACK!!! He doesn't need a wheelchair like soldiers that lost a leg, all he needs is a sweet dog named Layla. Layla is his hero!!!



Picture of Your Family with their Service Dog

Daddy said something funny to help me remember why Layla is HIS dog. If daddy was using crutches, it wouldn't help daddy if I played with his crutches when he really needs them. So Layla is daddy's dog, and I'm okay with that.

Daddy and Layla are coming home today. When I meet Layla I want to be as calm as possible. I am going to try really hard not to stare in her eyes because I think it will distract her. I am also going to wait until daddy gives me instructions on how to say hi to Layla. I would never want to get in the way of a hero who is helping someone!!!



Draw a Picture of Your Dad's
Hero Service Dog





Now that Layla has been with daddy for a while, I can see how much she helps. My daddy still has trouble sleeping sometimes, and sometimes he still gets quiet, but it doesn't happen very much anymore. Daddy, Layla, and I go to the park, we play games together, and we even went to a football game together....just like we used to! Daddy laughs and helps me with my homework. Layla helped my daddy feel better!



Other ways to help:

Never go in the dog's crate. It's his or her safe space. They need time to relax and rest, so make sure to leave them alone if they are laying down, sleeping, or eating.

If you want to help your friends learn how to be as mature as you are around a service dog, make sure to tell them they can't pet the service dog and give them tips on how you love your daddy's service dog without touching or distracting it.

It takes a while for a dog to get used to a new home. Just like you need time to get used to the dog, you'll need to give your daddy's new service dog some time to get used to the house, you, and her new life.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Auzadeh Harvey, LPCC (NM), LPC (CO), LPC (OR), MS, CEO, NCC, is a mental health advisor for American Humane's "Pups4Patriots" program. Harvey's clinical specialties include the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans who have served during wartime, correctional mental health, program management and development, supervision, teletherapy, as well as talk therapy. She uses humor and education to empower her clients and create unconditional positive acceptance of current abilities and strengths. In addition to her work with American Humane, she operates as the mental health director for multiple correctional facilities and manages a private psychotherapy practice. Harvey holds licensure in numerous states and has served nationally on scientific advisory committees focusing on veterans and service dogs.

Robin R. Ganzert, PhD, is president and CEO of American Humane, the country's first national humane organization, which has been working for more than 100 years to support U.S. veterans and military animals. Through American Humane's "Pups4Patriots" program, the organization identifies dogs in need of forever homes and trains them to become lifesaving service dogs for veterans coping with Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injury. For more information or to support this work, please visit: www.AmericanHumane.org/military.

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