

Twist Real Life:

# "My Dad's in Afghanistan"

How one reader coped with her dad serving overseas during the holidays.

Olivia lies in bed trying to sleep, but she can't stop thinking about her dad. Is he safe? Will he be able to come home for Christmas? Her dad has been in the Army her whole life, and this is the third time he's been deployed to a dangerous war zone. "I worry a lot that he isn't safe," Olivia tells TWIST.

## "It was the last fun day"

When Olivia's dad was ordered to Afghanistan, she spent as much time with him as she could, trying to fit a year's worth of fun into just a few weeks. They spent hours playing video games and went to their favorite restaurants, like Outback. "The day before he left we had a lot of fun, but it was sad because it was the last fun day we would have for a while," she says.

## "It's like he's listening"

Before he left, Olivia's dad gave her a journal, telling her to write in it when she misses him the most. "It's like he's listening," she says. Keeping in touch over Skype also helps. "We talk almost every day at 2 pm," she explains. But sometimes it's

just not the same as having him home, especially during the holidays. Last year, Olivia's dad was in Afghanistan during Christmas, so they celebrated in a new way. "He sent me, my brother and sister a book and we read it over the phone," she says. "He would read some pages and my mom would read some pages. It almost felt like he was there." This Christmas, her dad will be able to read to her in person. After being gone for a year, he's coming home.

## "You have to have faith"

Now, she's helping others who are going through a similar situation. "My friend's mom just left for Afghanistan," she says. "I tell him it's important to have faith (that she'll be safe)," Olivia says. This Christmas, she doesn't have a long wish list. She's just happy her whole family can be together for the holidays. \*

\* Olivia worries about her dad's safety when he's away from home.

\* Before he left, Olivia spent as much time with her dad as she could.

Olivia misses her dad so much!

## How You Can Get Involved

- ✓ To arrange a care package at your school, go to [HeroHugs.org](http://HeroHugs.org).
- ✓ For fundraisers in your area, check out [kidsareheroes.org](http://kidsareheroes.org).
- ✓ Learn how to help military kids at [operationmilitarykids.org](http://operationmilitarykids.org).

## How One Teen Is Helping Soldiers

**You're never too young to help others!**

Growing up near an Air Force base made Bailey appreciate the troops from an early age. She was only 7 when she founded Hero Hugs, helping kids across the country make care packages and cards for soldiers overseas. "I want to help kids send as many care packages as I can!" Bailey, now 14, tells TWIST. One day, a group of soldiers who received care packages surprised her at school. "It was awesome," she gushes. "I got to see how thankful they were." She wants kids to know anyone can make a difference! \*

\* Hero Hugs has sent over 51,000 care packages!

What a hero!



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Olivia misses her dad so much!

Hero Hugs at work



Making care packages!

Thankful soldiers!

