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(Based on a true story)

Donovan aimed his slingshot at the empty soup can on the stump.

He stretched back the slingshot's rubber tubing.

"What are you doing?" his little sister, Dana, asked.

"Watch this!" he said.

*Thwack!*

The rubber snapped back into place as Donovan let go, sending the small rock flying. Some leaves in a

nearby tree rustled. But the tin can didn't move. Donovan stuffed the slingshot into his back pocket. He had missed. Again!

Dana tilted her head to the side. "What am I supposed to see?"

"Nothing," Donovan said. "Come on. Let's go home." They started heading back to the house.

Donovan kicked a stick out of his way. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't seem to use Dad's slingshot

right. And he *loved* that thing! He always liked using it when Dad was out of town working, like now. It helped him feel close to Dad when he couldn't see him.

He pulled the slingshot from his pocket and spun it slowly in his hand. The rough bark had become smooth a long time ago. Dad had made the slingshot out of a strong tree branch and used it for years before giving it to Donovan.

Dad had pointed at the soup can that day. "When you focus, amazing things can happen." Donovan still remembered what happened next. Dad had aimed the slingshot and hit the soup can. In one try! He made it look easy. Donovan really missed him.

He was still thinking about Dad when he fell asleep that night.

The next morning, Donovan carried his slingshot to his favorite patch of trees to try again.

"Focus . . ." Donovan said as he stared at the can on the stump. He placed another small stone in the slingshot and pulled back.

*Dad keeps trying, even when things don't always work out,* Donovan thought.

Donovan tried to stop thinking about all the times he had missed before. He closed one eye, the way Dad taught him. He *really* focused. Donovan didn't look at anything else but the red soup can.

Taking a deep breath, he let go.

*Thwack!*

*CLUNK!*

Donovan blinked in surprise as the can sailed off the stump. "I did it!" he said. "Yes!"

Later that night, Donovan sat next to Mom after dinner. He held up the slingshot.

"I finally hit the can today," he said, grinning.

"Well done!" Mom said.

"You know, I think this slingshot is my favorite thing in the whole world," Donovan said.

"Oh?" Mom asked.

"Yup. Because it helps me think about Dad and feel close to him."

Mom smiled. "I think he'll be happy to know you feel that way. And guess what? Dad will be home in only three days. You can show him your new skills."

Donovan could hardly wait! "That gives me an idea," he said.

He ran to find Dana. He could teach her to use the slingshot the same way Dad had taught him!

"Hey, Dana," he said. "Wanna learn how to use the best slingshot in Jamaica?" ●

When you focus, amazing things can happen.



# The Best Slingshot in Jamaica

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG NEWBOLD

What special things help you feel close to someone in your family?