

FEATURE



> long stretches, sometimes up to a year, without seeing her best friends in Houston and Phoenix. The Fites work hard to explain the realities of space and time to a child less than half a decade old. “We always get a map out,” Lamar said. “We explain to her that ‘we are here, they are there and it would take this long to drive to where they are.’”

Because the external world outside the van is never stable, parents emphasize keeping their kids to a schedule. Cat Ferrara, a mother living in a 1978 VW, maintains strict bed, waking and meal times for her five-year-old to give him some sense of routine. Lindsay Keller, living in a 1986 VW Westfalia, has put her four-year-old down for a nap every single day at 1.30pm for over a year while on the road.

“Certainty in some ways is something you owe your children,” Robin Schanep said. “But it’s something you can’t always give them [on the road].”

To provide a sense of stability Schanep implemented a quiet time every day on the bus for her four children. It was also a way to give them a little time away from each other, if not physically at least mentally. Teaching them how to hold their own space in such close quarters.

MAKING SPACE

Living on top of one another is the hardest adjustment for most families moving into a van. It can be overwhelming and extremely draining to have no escape and little personal space. “In a house, so many little things just get swept under the carpet, and you don’t deal with things,” Barr said. “But because here you are in such a small space, everything is exacerbated. Your mood affects everyone so much more.

