



COPING WITH DEPLOYMENT SEPARATION



Tips for both the deployed parent and the stay-at home parent (or designated care-giver)

- Establish and maintain supports that help the family to cope.
- Plan for family stress relievers like fun outings and get-togethers.
- Plan opportunities for the at-home parent to get away from the children to revive emotionally and physically.
- Encourage family members to share feelings and give assurances.
- Honestly discuss the Soldier's deployment. Share information about Soldier's work and what he/she is doing for our country. Answer questions openly and honestly, using words your children understand.
- Provide a method for your child to count the days the parent has been deployed.
- Maintain a structured and safe emotional and physical environment.
- Mention the deployed parent in everyday conversations.
- Help your children sort out their feelings about what they hear and see in news reports. Find out what they know and understand, and talk with them about their feelings.
- Follow your child's lead. Give a little information at a time and see how your child responds before deciding what to do next.
- Provide your child with ways to communicate to the deployed parent, e.g. letter writing, e-mail access, sending pictures or tapes. Make it creative and fun.
- Maintain family routines and traditions at home and long distance.
- Involve your child in outside activities; communicate with school.



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Tips for couples (e.g. spouse, parent, roommate, close friend)

- Anticipate arguments prior to deployment. Arguments reflect the distress of pending separations. Try not to take them too seriously.
- Prior to deployment, discuss expectations for managing finances, care-giving concerns (e.g. children, sick relatives, pets), personal conduct.
- Expect changes in departure and return dates.
- Avoid listening to or spreading rumors as they usually cause distress and harm to someone.
- Accept growth and change in all family members and relationships.
- Reserve serious disagreements for face-to-face discussion.
- Put existing, unresolved relationship issues on hold until homecoming.
- Communicate regularly and creatively. Always end on positive notes.
- Keep other important people informed and give mutual support.

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