

PLAN, PREPARE, DEPLOY....RETURN

Communications:

- Who is your spouses/significant others/dependents source of support during deployment?
Do they understand your Family Care Plan?
- Did you leave a copy of your orders and deployed address with your loved one?
- Have you discussed forms of communication available?
- Include communication activities for children i.e. Postcards, drawings etc.
 - Consider a videotape series of book readings or special messages.
- Do your loved ones know emergency notification procedures?
 - Who is the squadron point of contact?
 - Do they know your Social Security Number and unit of assignment?
 - Do they have the Red Cross Phone # (1-877-272-7337)
- Do you have e-mail connectivity? What is a good alternative?
- CONTACT THE KIDS SCHOOL...Make teachers and counselors aware to the situation.**
- Make arrangements for special days that you will be gone ahead of time.
 - Birthdays, anniversaries and holiday celebrations can be shopped for in advance.
 - Local flower shops will make arrangements well in advance to assist your situation.

Finances:

- Do you have a BUDGET? Have you reviewed it with your dependent(s)?
- What arrangements have you made for paying your bills?
- Do you have an address book listing your creditors addresses and phone numbers?
- Did you include account numbers and balances in the above book?
- Where are your assets located? Bank accounts, bonds, mutual funds.
- Have you used allotments to pay major expenses?
- What are the changes in your pay going to impact and how?
- Have you considered on-line banking?

Medical issues:

- Where are the medical and shot records?
- Are all immunizations up to date?
- Are you enrolled in Tri-Care? What benefits are available?
- Key phone numbers available and understood

Vehicle concerns:

- What is the condition of your vehicle?
- Where should the vehicle be taken for repairs if needed?
- Can you get reduced insurance while you are away? (Each company is different)
- Is your registration current? How about your tags? Insurance?
- What is your vehicle tire condition and correct tire inflation?

Important documents:

- Have you listed important documents and their location and provided this information to a trusted family member? **Perhaps a safe deposit box?**
- Does your spouse understand SGLI insurance and the significance of a will?
- What insurance is in force and where are the policy (ies) numbers?
- Did you discuss Power of Attorney requirements? Many financial institutions require Special Power of Attorney in lieu of a General POA for account access.
- Do you have a letter of instruction (not to be confused with a will)? This instrument is not a legal document. It simply clarifies your thoughts and can ease decisions if you die unexpectedly by providing insight into your feelings.
- Where are the car title and other important property documentation located?
- Where are the marriage certificate, birth certificates, and adoption paperwork (if applicable)?
- Where is the TAX information? Federal and State.
- Do your dependents have a current ID card?
- Location of ALL-important legal papers.
- LEAVE A COPY OF YOUR ORDERS WITH YOUR FAMILY!!!!**

For the single Service Member

Communications:

- Did you leave a copy of your orders and deployed address with your loved one?
- Have you discussed communication frequency and forms available?
- Do your loved ones know emergency notification procedures?
 - Who is the squadron point of contact?
 - Do they know your Social Security Number and unit of assignment?
 - Do they have the Red Cross Phone # (1-877-272-7337)
- Who is handling your mail? Will it be held or forwarded?
- Is your phone service on and if so who has access? Same for Internet service.

Finances:

- Do you have a BUDGET?
- What arrangements have you made for paying your bills? Who knows about them? Rent, electric, cable, gas and insurance
- Do you have an address book listing your creditors addresses and phone numbers?
- Did you include account numbers and balances in the above book?
- Have you used allotments to pay major expenses?
- What are the changes in your pay going to impact?

Vehicle concerns:

- Who will look after your wheels? Where will you park your vehicle?
- Can you get reduced insurance while you are away? (Each company is different)
- Is your registration current? How about your tags?

Important documents:

- Have you listed important documents and their location and provided this information to a trusted family member? Perhaps a safe deposit box? Access?
- Do you have a letter of instruction (not to be confused with a will)?
- Where is the car title and important property documentation?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: The Air Force now provides a superb facet of an employee assistance program for active duty, Guard / Reserve members and their families regardless of where you live. It's called Military One Source. This benefit provides information, referral and follow-up for life's journeys and challenges. Military One Source has got your back when information is required on life's topics from finances to raising a child as a single parent and anything in between. It's **FREE** and available **24/7**.

Either dial in or log on to get connected to Master's level counselors waiting to assist you in problem solving and references. Contact Military One Source in the United States at 1-800-707-5784, outside the US call 1-800-7075-7844. E-mails should be directed to www.militaryonesource.com

This list is not totally inclusive; however it's designed to have the member reflect on the importance of preplanning for deployment contingencies. **Are you really ready?** For additional information and recommendations please contact A&FRPM.

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HOMECOMING: RESILIENCE AFTER WARTIME: **Prepared by the American Psychological Association**

Even when the war is over, stress and uncertainty can require the skills of resilience both from those coming home and from those who stayed home. Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or other significant sources of stress.

Homecoming Can Be Stressful

Reuniting with family often is idealized as a quick, smooth return to "normal." The reality may fall short of that ideal.

Those returning from military service often are hit right away with a laundry list of problems, including bills, family disputes, and expectations that family interactions and intimacy will spring back to pre-war levels.

Stress and anxiety can be the result of culture shock, with a quick flight from the foxhole to the front porch and no time to decompress en route.

It may take some service members and family members time to readjust--and the failure to effectively manage during this period can create a great deal of stress, anxiety, frustration and anger.

For National Guard and reservists:

Returning to work creates other tensions. Employers of reservists may tend to underestimate how long it will take someone who's been away to shift gears.

Some employers may feel that they kept jobs open to do their part for America--now they want to get back to business as usual.

Fellow workers may want to talk about the war when the returning employee wants to forget. Or conversely, fellow workers may not provide an opening for a service member who does need to talk.

Stress Will Be More Difficult for Some

How much stress returning military personnel experience may be affected in part by many factors:

- Extent to which their duty was dangerous (even if they were only awaiting this danger).
- Death or serious injury in their military unit.
- Possibility of exposure to chemical warfare or other weapons of mass destruction.
- Length of time they spent overseas.
- Exposure to dead and wounded (including enemy combatants and civilians).

- Past traumas, which can be heightened by the stress of war.
- Degree to which family dynamics have changed during their absence, such as increased dependency or independence on the part of children and a spouse.

Families have been stressed, too. The families of deployed personnel have had their own set of problems during the conflict, such as:

- Fear for the deployed family member's safety.
- Disruption of established patterns and routines.
- Reduced income and increased financial worry.
- Negative reactions from children to sudden changes in the family environment.
- Need to develop new resilience skills, renewed family relationships, new friends and support groups.
- Being overburdened by new roles and responsibilities.

Many families will continue to have pressures during the homecoming period, including:

- Being second-guessed for decisions made while a family member was away because of the war.
- Conflict over new relationships--such as a new baby and new friends.
- Shifts in decision-making.
- The fact that the family dynamics can never return to the idealized version of how they were before deployment.

There Are Many Roads to Resilience

The number and intensity of stressful experiences notwithstanding, most returning personnel and their families should be able to bounce back successfully.

Even those who have learned resilience skills, however, should not expect homecoming to be effortless or free of emotion. It is quite normal to experience days or even several weeks of mild to moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and anger, even if the initial homecoming was full of joy.

Children, for example, reassured with the safe return of a parent or sibling, may now feel they can express some of their negative feelings of fear or anger over what they may feel was abandonment.

Normal is what works for you. There are no standard or normal stages for reentry. The process varies from person to person.

Understanding that homecoming has its own brand of stress is a first step in the process of a long-term successful reentry for military personnel, their families, and the community.

10 Tips For Resilience During Homecoming

- Early in the process, identify people who can help--a friend, clergy, mental health professional, financial advisor--and seek help if needed. Some of these sources can supply emotional support, while others can provide direct help with day-to-day problem solving. Resolve to be open about problems and work on solving them together, either with family members or those professionals who can help.
- Dismantle big problems into manageable smaller parts. Then attack and solve these parts as a means of rebuilding confidence. A step-by- step approach can eventually resolve the larger problem.
- Social involvement through religious organizations, hobby groups, exercise clubs, social groups, etc. helps individuals rejoin the community. Be an active player, not a passive victim.
- Don't wait to solve problems. Begin to work on them immediately; inaction can reinforce the feeling that a problem is out of your control.
- Seeking solace in drugs or alcohol not only fails to solve the problems at hand, but creates new ones.
- Family readjustment problems are normal. Don't blame others for your distress, and don't blame yourself excessively.
- Cynicism or excessive pessimism about life and the future can become self-fulfilling and have a negative impact on you and others. Keep things in perspective--not every problem is a catastrophe. Although it sounds simplistic, a positive outlook helps raise morale and increases resilience.
- Recall how you met past challenges and use those strategies to meet the stresses of homecoming. By facing current problems with an eye to solutions, you are more likely to achieve a sense of progress, of "getting ahead" with life.
- Realize that the stress of homecoming can magnify other daily stressors. Make allowances for yourself and your family.
- Accept some setbacks in the return to "life as normal" as inevitable, whether they be emotional, financial, physical, or job-related, but be aware that the skills of resilience can help you bounce back.

Children Have Some Special Needs

Children will experience a wide range of stressful emotions and experiences around the war and homecoming, but are less likely than adults to speak directly about what bothers them. Their problems may be displayed in poor school performance; inability to get along with siblings, peers, or parents; or becoming withdrawn or accident-prone.

For a child whose parent(s) went to war, the trauma of separation may have been severe. These children are more likely than adults to act out their feelings, in part because they have less experience in coping with life stress.

To help children deal with war-related stress, parents and teachers should:

- Listen to children's thoughts and concerns about the war in a nonjudgmental fashion.
- Provide warmth and reassurance, without minimizing the child's concerns.
- Avoid imposing their own fears on children. Adult difficulties should be worked out without burdening a child or expecting the child to support the adult for any prolonged period. Children can provide important love and comfort, but they need strong adult support to do so.
- Recognize that children, like most adults, will bounce back successfully. Relate this positive expectation to them, so that their past experience will not lead them to a pessimistic view of the future.
- Remember that a child often will mirror a parent's reaction. If parents demonstrate resilience, the child will have positive role models.
- Seek help from a mental health professional for the family if the family is unable to function on a daily basis.

Warning Symptom Checklist: It's important to recognize the symptoms of stress that has not been effectively managed. Following is a checklist of warning symptoms:

- Guilt about actions or shame over some failure.
- Excessive drinking or drug use.
- Uncontrolled or frequent crying and other extreme reactions to events that normally would be handled more calmly.
- Sleep problems (too little, too much).
- Depression, anxiety, or anger.
- Depending too much on others.
- Verbal or physical family violence.
- Stress-related physical illness (head and backache, gastrointestinal problems, poor stamina).
- Inability to escape from horror scenes remembered from the war.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Suicidal thoughts or plans.

Families, too, may exhibit symptoms of stress that has not been dealt with effectively, including

- Family conflict that is not resolved.
- Family members becoming isolated from one another.
- Overdependency and clinging.
- Scapegoating one or two family members (often children).
- Disciplinary or academic problems in children.

If you or a family member continues to feel stress, anxiety, or frustration, or experiences any of the negative signs of coping discussed here, asking for help can be one of the quickest ways to recover a sense of control and balance. For many people, using the skills of resilience will help

with the homecoming. But for individuals--and for families--who are unable to perform the functions of daily life as a result of stress or trauma, seeking the help of a licensed mental health professional such as a psychologist can help them progress beyond the difficulties of homecoming.

Information contained in this brochure should not be used as a substitute for professional health and mental health care or consultation. Individuals who believe they may need or benefit from care should consult a psychologist or other licensed health/mental health professional.

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The American Psychological Association (APA), located in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. Its membership includes more than 155,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. APA works to advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

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CARE PACKAGE IDEAS

From the 119th Wing Airman & Family Readiness Program

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DON'T BE IN THE DARK...BE READY

OBVIOUS ITEMS

Cookies	Self Addressed Envelopes	Nail Clippers
Joke Books	Cartoon Books	Nail File
Special Occasion Cards	DVD's /CD's	Kid generated items
Disposable razors	Recorded Letters	
Magazines	Puzzles	
Pictures	Newspaper Clippings	

NOT SO OBVIOUS

Favorite TV Show VHS	Sewing Kit	Popcorn Balls
Shampoo	Gum	Hard Candy
Aspirin / Tylenol	Kids Art	Dice
Deodorant	Decorated T-shirt	Beach Ball
Specialty Smoked Meats	Linen	Blank Tapes
Score Pads	Expandable Shoe Tree	Cheeses
Home Movies	Nuts	School Work
Dry Soup Mix	Jerky/ Slim Jim's	American Flags

Things You May Not Have Thought About

Model Kits	Baked Goods (careful)	Stationary
Knitted Gifts	Newspaper subscription	Hand lotion
Seasonal Greetings/Décor	Church News Letter	Mints
Greeting cards	Hand Lotion	Toothbrush
Boxed Munchies	Sun Glasses	Tupperware
Oreos	Film	Sketch pad
Hickory Farms Gift pack	Hygiene Items	Journal
Shoe inserts	Chapstick	Pillow case
Batteries	Wet Wipes	Balloons
Hair locks		

Children and Fear of War and Terrorism

Tips for Parents and Teachers

National Association of School Psychologists

Terrorist attacks in our country and threats or realities of war are frightening experiences for all Americans. Children may be especially fearful that threatened or actual military action overseas will result in more personal loss and violence here at home. Because repeated scenes of destruction of lives and property are featured in the news media, they understand that “enemies of the United States” can cause harm in this country.

Adults need to help children feel safe at a time when the world seems to be a more dangerous place. Parents and teachers in particular must help youngsters understand current events factually, how events do or do not impact their lives, and how to handle their emotional reactions. The degree to which children are affected will vary depending on personal circumstances. Children who have suffered a personal loss from, or had firsthand exposure to, terrorist acts or military actions will be much more vulnerable. Also at greater risk are children whose parents are in the military or in active duty in the reserve forces, and those children whose parents are involved in emergency response or public safety.

All children, however, are likely to be affected in some way by war or terrorism involving our country. For many, the guidance of caring adults will make the difference between being overwhelmed and developing life-long emotional and psychological coping skills. Teachers and caretakers can help restore children’s sense of security by modeling calm and in-control behavior. It is crucial to provide opportunity for children to discuss their concerns and to help them separate real from imagined fears. It is also important to limit exposure to media coverage of violence.

Emotional Responses

Emotional responses vary in nature and severity from child to child. Nonetheless, there are some similarities in how children (and adults) feel when their lives are impacted by war or the threat of war:

- **Fear:** Fear may be the predominant reaction--fear for the safety of those in the military as well as fear for their own safety. Children's fantasies of war may include a mental picture of a bomb being dropped on their home. While their worries are probably exaggerated, they are often based on real images of terrorist attacks or war scenes. When children hear rumors at school and pick up bits of information from television, their imaginations may run wild. They may think the worst, however unrealistic it may be. Any publicized threat of war or terrorism close to home may also add to their fear.
- **Loss of control:** Military actions are something over which children--and most adults--have no control. Lack of control can be overwhelming and confusing. These feelings were experienced by most people in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Children may grasp at any control that they have, including refusing to cooperate, go to school, part with favorite toys, or leave their parents.

- **Anger:** Anger is a common reaction. Unfortunately, anger is often expressed at those to whom children are closest. Children may direct anger toward classmates and neighbors because they can't express their anger toward terrorists or countries with whom we are at war. Some children may show anger toward parents who are in the military, even to the extent that they do not want to write letters. Knowing that those who are involved in the military are volunteers only helps to justify anger. Patriotism and duty are abstract concepts, especially for younger children who are experiencing the concrete reality of separation from a loved one.
- **Loss of stability:** War or military deployment interrupts routines. It is unsettling. Children can feel insecure when their usual schedules and activities are disrupted, increasing their level of stress and need for reassurance.
- **Isolation:** Children who have a family member in the military, but who don't live near a military base, may feel isolated. Children of reserve members called to active duty may not know others in the same situation. Such children may feel jealous of friends' undisturbed families and may strike out at signs of normalcy around them. Another group of children who may feel isolated are dependents of military families who have accompanied a remaining parent back to a hometown or who are staying with relatives while both parents are gone. Not only do these children experience separation from parents, but they also experience the loss of familiar faces and surroundings.
- **Confusion:** This can occur on two levels. First, children may feel confused about terrorist attacks and war, what further dangers might arise, and when the violence will stop. Second, children may have trouble understanding the difference between violence as entertainment and the real events taking place on the news. Today's children live in the world of *Armageddon*, *Independence Day*, *Air Force One*, and cartoon Super Heroes. Some of the modern media violence is unnervingly real. Youngsters may have difficulty separating reality from fantasy, cartoon heroes and villains from the government soldiers and real terrorists. Separating the realities of war from media fantasy may require adult help.

What Can Parents and Teachers Do?

Everyone, including adults, feels stressed during times of crisis and uncertainty. If your children or students seem to need help beyond what is normally available at home or school, seek mental health services in your community. School psychologists, counselors and social workers can help identify appropriate services and help with the referral process. For most children, adults can provide adequate support by the following actions:

Acknowledge children's feelings:

- Knowing what to say is often difficult. When no other words come to mind, a hug and saying "This is really hard for you/us" will work. Acknowledge that you don't like war either, but we hope that our military can stop the terrorists or help bring peace to other countries.
- Try to recognize the feelings underlying children's actions and put them into words. Say something like, "I can see you are feeling really scared about this," or "It is hard to think

that your dad had to go so far away to help our country, ” or “I know it will feel great when your mom comes home.”

- Sometimes children may voice concern about what will happen to them if a parent does not return. If this occurs, try saying, “You will be well taken care of. You won’t be alone. Let me tell you our plan.”
- Some children will be afraid that the United States will be attacked. Tell them this is a real concern and life offers no absolute promises. Nonetheless, reassure them that our government has taken many steps to prevent attacks from terrorists and that the military conflict is very far away. For younger children, saying that you love them and will keep them safe is often sufficient. For older children, you can discuss specifics such as heightened security in airports and significant public buildings.
- At times when your children or students are most upset, don’t deny the seriousness of the situation. Saying to children, “Don’t cry, everything will be okay,” does not reflect how the child feels and does not make them feel better. Nevertheless, don’t forget to express hope and faith that things will be okay.
- Older children, in particular, may need help clarifying what they believe about war and the role of the United States in the specific conflict. Questions such as, “Could my parent shoot someone?” and “Are we killing innocent people in other countries?” are issues which may need discussion.
- Always be honest with children. Share your fears and concerns while reassuring them that responsible adults are in charge.

Help children to feel personally safe:

- Differentiate between terrorism and war. Our homes and schools are not at risk. Only a very few people in the world are terrorists. The war itself will be carried out far away.
- Help children understand that precautions are being taken to prevent terrorism (e.g., bomb-sniffing dogs, passport checks, heightened airport security) or attacks on the United States. While these efforts might seem scary or frustrating to children, explain that these precautions might actually make them safer now than they were before.
- Deal with fears such as the end of the world. Discuss what is realistic modern technology of war versus science fiction. If children are imagining Star Wars-type battles, help them to understand that even the most sophisticated weapons available are not capable of reaching distant targets as seen in the movies. Let children share their fears regarding war in our own country, most of which are unrealistic and a result of rumor and anxiety. Put these fears in perspective as to what is realistic.
- Let children who are worried about a loved one know that the chance of returning from a war against terrorism is very high. Advances in medicine and technology have greatly reduced potential losses from military actions. Our military is very powerful and many other countries are helping us as they did in the Gulf War, during which the U.S. lost very few lives. Acknowledge that the loss of any life is sad, but that their individual family member is likely to be fine.
- If participation in a faith community is part of your family life, talk to your faith leader about how to help your child think about the concepts of death and killing, in age-appropriate terms. This can be very important to calming children’s fears for their own safety and that of loved ones.

- Try to maintain normal routines and schedules to provide a sense of stability and security.
- Stop children from stereotyping people from specific cultures or countries. Children can easily generalize negative statements. Adding tolerance curriculum to school lessons during this time can help prevent harrasment of students and improve their sense of safety.

Help children maintain a sense of control by taking some action:

- Send letters, cookies or magazines to those in the military and public safety jobs.
- Help older children find a family who has a parent on active duty and arrange some volunteer babysitting times for that family or offer to provide meals occassionally.

If a family member is away, make plans for some special activities:

- Gatherings with other families who have a loved one on active duty can help provide support for you as well as for your children.
- Special parent and child times can provide an extra sense of security, which might be needed. Let your child know that you will set aside a particular half hour each day to play. Make the time as pleasant and child centered as possible. Return phone calls later and make your child the real focus of that special time.
- Involve children in planning how to cope. Control and ownership are fostered when children help to plan strategies for dealing with a situation. Children often have practical and creative ideas for coping.

Pay special attention to children who may feel isolated:

- Children who are new in school due to relocation may benefit from a special network of “friends” to help orient the student to new school routines and encourage participation in school activities.
- Children who are one of a few with parents involved in the military may need extra attention to their feelings of separation and fear of loss.

Expect and respond to changes in behavior:

- All children will likely display some signs of stress. Some immature, aggressive, oppositional behaviors are normal reactions to the uncertainty of this situation.
- It is important to maintain consistent expectations for behavior. Be sure children understand that the same rules apply.
- Some children may have difficulty at bedtime, particularly those whose parents are on active duty. Maintain a regular bedtime routine. Be flexible about nightlights, siblings sharing a room, sleeping with special toys, and sitting with your child as they fall asleep. Doing so typically does not cause life-long habits.
- Children may play “war,” pretend to blow things up, or include images of violence in artwork and writing. This may be upsetting to adults under current circumstances, but it is a normal way for children to express their awareness of events around them. Gently

redirect children away from violent play or efforts to “replay” the terrorist attacks, but don’t be overly disapproving unless the play is genuinely aggressive. Talk with children about their art or written images and how they feel. Share your reactions. Help them to consider the consequences of war or terrorist acts—what happens if a building blows up or a bomb explodes? For children who seek pretend play as an outlet, encourage role playing of the doctors, firemen, policemen, etc. who have helped to save lives. If a child seems obsessed with violent thoughts or images for more than a few days, talk to a mental health professional.

- Some children may be at increased risk of suicide because of their emotional reaction to increased stress and any pre-existing mental health problems. Consult a mental health professional immediately if your child shows signs of suicidal thinking or talk, or other self-destructive behaviors. (See www.nasponline.org for information about helping suicidal children.)
- Extra support, consistency, and patience will help children return to routines and their more usual behavior patterns. If children show extreme reactions (aggression, withdrawal, sleeping problems, etc.), talk to your school psychologist regarding the symptoms of severe stress disorders and the possible need for a referral to a mental health agency.

Keep adult issues from overwhelming children:

- Don’t let your children focus too much of their time and energy on this crisis. If children are choosing to watch the news for hours each evening, find other activities for them. You may also need to watch the news less intensely and spend more time in alternative family activities.
- Know the facts about developments in the war and protections against terrorism at home. Don’t speculate. Be prepared to answer your children’s questions factually and take time to think about how you want to frame events and your reactions to them.
- Try not to let financial strains be a major concern of children. Although the economic impact of the terrorist attacks and resulting military action may result in job cutbacks, or going from a civilian job to active duty in the military may cut family income, children are not capable of dealing with this issue on an ongoing basis. Telling children that you need to be more careful with spending is appropriate, but be cautious about placing major burdens on children.
- Take time for yourself and try to deal with your own reactions to the situation as fully as possible. This, too, will help your children and students.

Coordinate between school and home:

- Parents and other caregivers need to let school personnel know if a family member is being called to active duty or sent overseas. Tell your child’s teacher if he or she is having difficulties and what strategies make your child feel better. If necessary, seek the help of your school psychologist, counselor or social worker.

- Teachers should let parents know if their child is exhibiting stress in school. Provide parents with helpful suggestions or information on community resources. Maintain general academic and behavioral expectations, but be realistic about an individual child's coping skills.
- Teachers should share with parents information about social studies/history lessons and other relevant discussions that take place in the classroom. This will help parents understand what their children are learning and can foster thoughtful discussion at home.
- Invite parents with relevant professional experience to come to school to talk about their jobs, in age appropriate terms, and how their skills contribute to the war effort or safety at home.
- Create a sense of collective security between home and school. This will help children feel safe and provide a sense of protection.

Resources

There are many organizations and agencies with helpful information about helping children and families cope with the stress of war, terrorism and other crises:

American Psychological Association www.apa.org

National Association of School Psychologists www.nasponline.org

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs_children.html

Adapted from Children and War—Responding to Operation Desert Storm by Debby Waddell and Alex Thomas (Helping Children Grow Up in the 90s, National Association of School Psychologists, 1992) and modified from material posted on the NASP website following the September 2001 terrorist attacks.

NASP has made these materials available free of charge to the public in order to promote the ability of children and youth to cope with traumatic or unsettling times. The materials may be adapted, reproduced, reprinted, or linked to websites without specific permission. However, the integrity of the content must be maintained and NASP must be given proper credit.

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PREPARING FOR REUNION!

Things to think about...

Changes in yourself -- how have you changed? Attitudes, behaviors, physical appearance? Think of some examples of your changes...are they positive changes?

Changes in your spouse -- how can you imagine that your spouse has changed? Perhaps in some of the same ways; attitudes, behaviors, physical appearance. How will you react?

Changes in the relationship -- until you have navigated through a deployment/remote tour separation, you don't really *know* if your relationship can make it. You can be 99.9% sure and still be concerned on an emotional level. This worry, obvious or not, can add to the stress of reunion.

TRUST -- did each of you follow through on promises for writing letters and/or phone calls? Sometimes it only takes one person receiving a "Dear John" or a "Dear Susan" letter to start everyone in that unit/squadron worrying about their relationships. Reassurances of love and commitment might need to be stated.

INDEPENDENCE -- often spouses at home discover many skills and an ability to keep things running while the other spouse is away. This can frighten the returning spouses, who may believe they must be needed. Couples can talk about the difference between being needed and being wanted.

HOME LIFE -- during deployment, you might have simplified life a bit; using paper plates, ordering out, etc. Perhaps your schedule has changed. For example, taking a class, or maybe getting a job. Maybe new friends are taking up some of your time. Your spouse may need some time to get used to your other (new) commitments.

CONTROL -- you may have discovered that you like having control over household decisions and do not look forward to sharing any of them. Or, perhaps you cannot wait for your spouse to return home and hand it all over. Many of us fall in-between! It would be nice that you and your spouse like to do different tasks. Sometimes negotiation and decision making needs to take place on who is responsible for what. After the deployment probably will be different than before the deployment.

RETURNING SPOUSES -- they are coming from an environment where they were told when to get up, when to work, what to eat, where to go when off duty and what kind of clothes to wear when going off-base. Spouses returning from a deployment might be unaccustomed to watching "American TV" and may at times tune you out when watching the TV. They many want to come home, lock the door and be by themselves. The first few days will be a combination of jet lag and unwinding from a hectic, routine pace. Being faced with many choices to make (what video to rent? where to go out to eat? what time to wake up in the morning? what clothes to wear?, etc.) can be overwhelming at first.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL REUNION

- Agree on plans for homecoming day and the next few days or weeks. Where do the children fit in? Are parents or in-laws coming?
- Realize the day of homecoming usually is very stressful. Returning spouses have had little sleep and lots of food. Perhaps you haven't slept a great deal or feel worn out preparing for the homecoming. Children will be excited and tend to act out.
- Accept that there will be some degree of changes in physical appearance, attitude, behavior and independence (yours and the military member's!)
- Plan time as a couple and as a family.
- Give each other time and space to adjust to one another.
- **Respect each other and the job each other did. Avoid the "I had it worse than you" game.**
- Think about how you handled the deployment; what went well and what you would like to do differently the next time. Discuss this with your spouse!
- Explain changes in your schedule and the family's schedule.

REESTABLISHING INTIMACY

- Allow each other time and space.
- Talk about your love to your spouse.
- Some people wish to be courted again before feeling comfortable resuming sexual intimacy. Others want to have sex right away. And others are a mixture of these two. The key is to talk and let each other know desires and feelings associated with a sexual reunion. It's a good idea to negotiate plans for a sexual reunion.
- Intimacy reducers: alcohol, children awake and active in the house, parents nearby, experimentation without negotiation, unresolved hurt and anger, distrust of your spouse, fear of unintended pregnancy.
- Talk with each other and listen with each other. Sexual intimacy begins with communication from the heart.

HOW WILL THE CHILDREN ACT WITH THEIR PARENT RETURNING?

Many parents worry about this. Feelings children have during and after a long separation from a parent are fear, guilt, fear happiness, excitement and anger. Separation from a parent is stressful for a child. During the early part of the deployment, your children might have acted out this stress by behaving in ways that surprise, or, worry you. About 6 to 8 weeks into the deployment, children will begin to adapt to the parent being gone and returned to their "usual" style.

When a parent returns to the family, all the members will adjust to the change. This can be very stressful for a family, especially for the children. Taking things slowly and following the child's lead in re-establishing a relationship with the newly-returned parent are good places to begin. Again, keeping a routine is important for children.

Developed by Shelly Ariosto

Red Cross Reporting Procedures

In the event of an emergency, critical accident, illness or death in a Service Member's immediate family, families will **call 877-272-7337** to send an urgent message (birth, death, critical illness). This will connect them directly to one of four National call centers staffed by American Red Cross workers. The Red Cross is equipped to verify the situation and to relay an emergency leave request, if necessary, to proper military authorities. It is then up to the commanding officer to decide whether or not to grant leave.

1. Provide information to the Red Cross worker on the soldier's:
Name / Rank / Social Security # / Date of Birth
Training Station (i.e. Camp Ripley, MN) / Military Unit in ND/Military Address

2. Explain to the Red Cross Worker:

Who is requesting notification, and explain the situation.

The caller needs to leave their name and a telephone number that they can be reached at for further information if needed.

If this is a situation of someone in the hospital - you will need to provide the name of the hospital, location of the hospital, the telephone number and name of doctor.

In the case of a death- you will need to supply the name of the deceased, the name and phone number of the funeral home handling the arrangements, and any information you may have on funeral arrangements.

Red Cross Offices

Service Member Name: _____

Rank: _____ SSN: _____ DOB _____

Military Unit/Military address: _____

Deployed To: _____

Minot
20214th Ave NW
Minot, ND 58702-0456
(701) 852-2828

E. Grand Forks
1708 River Road NW
E. Grand Forks, MN 56712
(218) 773-9565

Fargo
2602 12th St N
Fargo, ND 58102
(701) 364-1800

Bismarck
4007 State Street
Bismarck, ND 58501
(701) 223-6700

Dickinson
135 Sims Street
Dickinson, ND 58601
(701) 483-8704

Jamestown
PO Box 944
Jamestown, ND 58401
(701) 252-3550