

EFFECTS OF DEPLOYMENT AND REDEPLOYMENT ON MILITARY FAMILIES



PURPOSE

- To give an overview of the various effects of deployment and redeployment on the military family and discuss appropriate responses.





OUTLINE

- Observations of Impact on Family
- Four Processes that Effect Families
- Tips and Recommended Prevention Measures

The Deployment Adjustment Stages

Pre-Deployment

1. Anticipation of Loss
2. Detachment & Withdrawal

Deployment

3. Emotional Disorganization
4. Recovery & Stabilization
5. Anticipation of Homecoming

Post-Deployment

6. Renegotiation of the Marriage Contract
7. Reintegration & Stabilization





OBSERVATIONS OF IMPACT ON THE FAMILY (CHILDREN)

- New child-care arrangements (or no child-care arrangements)
- Increase in minor illness and Doctor's visits (colds, flu, etc..)
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Developmental regression



OBSERVATIONS OF IMPACT ON THE FAMILY (CHILDREN)

- Increase in disciplinary problems at school
- Increase in aggressive behavior
- Depression
- Most severe time of symptoms actually immediately after service member leaves and when he or she returns



OBSERVATIONS OF IMPACT ON THE FAMILY (SPOUSE)

- Increased number of visits to medical doctor for minor injuries
- Fighting/arguing over small things
- Increase in impulsive behavior (spending, eating, substance abuse, pornography)
- Increase in number of affairs
- Jealousy/questions of doubt/suspicion
- Depression

FOUR PROCESSES THAT EFFECT FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- **Grief**
- **Security**
- **Family Function**
- **Stress**





GRIEF AND FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Pre-Deployment - Anticipatory Grief "We will miss each other!" "What will we miss?" and "Why do you have to go again?"
- Deployment - "I miss you!" "I missed another..." and "Why did you have to leave now?"
- Post-Deployment - "I really missed you!" and "What all did I miss?" Also can be some anger for what was missed. "You were not there when I needed you!"



GRIEF AND FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Everyone is grieving in some way and in various stages.
- Family rituals help facilitate healthy grieving and allow people to move on toward acceptance.
- Healthy communication about what we are grieving is important.
- Parents need to join children in play to understand their grief.



SECURITY AND FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- People organize their life around significant caregivers
- Emotions are the primary organizer and are natural, spontaneous, and focused on maintaining our security
- Loss of a significant caregiver causes one to be alerted by the emotions and enter into a state of disorganization



SECURITY AND FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Deployment results in spouses and children feeling disorganized and feeling the need to reorganize their lives for security
- Redeployment results in spouse and child having to reorganize again to accommodate returning spouse
- Involves recurring disorganization and reorganization



SECURITY AND FAMILIES DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Key questions - "What will this do to us?" and "Will there be something happen that I can't handle?"
- Previous experiences with deployments serve as the template for predicting future outcomes and estimating security risks during deployment.
- Multiple resources and supportive people in life enhance security.



FAMILY FUNCTION DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Families are structured for functional purposes to maintain a status quo
- When a spouse deploys, the remaining system must accommodate the change in functional roles and rules
- Healthy families retain flexibility in rules and roles to continue to function



FAMILY FUNCTION DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Families adapt by changing rules and roles to share the “load” of the family member's departure
- Changing these rules establishes a new status quo that the family will seek to maintain
- Redeploying spouse often changes the status quo upon re-entering the family and insists on returning to the old status quo



FAMILY FUNCTION DURING DEPLOYMENT

- Families must learn that change brings stress, even the good change of reunion.
- Families need to be intentional about what will change with deployment and how to change roles and rules after reunion.
- Families should aim to be flexible and expect it to take time for the family function to resume to “normal” after reunion.

Monitor Your Stress

- Recognize the signs of stress in yourself
- Review the negative and positive ways of dealing with stress
- Ask for help when you need it



What are some Signs of Stress?

- change in eating habits or significant weight gain/loss
- change in sleep habits, either excessive sleep or inability to sleep
- loss of energy, fatigue
- complaints of memory loss, inability to concentrate
- irritability
- withdrawal from family or friends
- drastic mood swings

Maintain Yourself

- Stay healthy and in good physical condition
- Eat balanced meals
- Get plenty of sleep (you may need more than usual)
- Keep in touch with positive people
- Avoid people, places, and activities that make you feel worse

Manage Your Schedule

- Set daily goals and make lists to stay focused
- Become a volunteer
- Organize a support group, or host a FRG social
- Know your limits; simplify your life
- Avoid spending sprees



Negative Changes in Children

	Ages	Behavior	Moods	Remedy
Infants	< 1 yr	Refuses to eat	Listless	Support from parent, pediatrician
Toddlers	1-3 yrs	Cries, tantrums	Irritable, sad	Increased attention, holding, hugs
Preschool	3-6 yrs	Potty accidents, clingy	Irritable, sad	Increased attention, holding, hugs
School age	6-12 yrs	Whines, body aches	Irritable, sad	Spend time, maintain routines
Teenagers	12-18 yrs	Isolates, uses drugs	Anger, apathy	Patience, limit-setting, counseling



Tips for Handling Stress in Children

1. Be consistent with your discipline
2. Help children write letters to the deployed parent
3. Spend social time with the children
4. Make sure the children get plenty of rest, exercise, and good food
5. Encourage them to visit their friends



Tips for Handling Stress in Children

6. Encourage them to discuss their feelings with you
7. Praise your children sincerely and often
8. Comfort and hug them often
9. If you can't adjust within 1-2 months, seek some help

RECOMMENDED PREVENTION MEASURES

- Normalize the difficulties involved.
- Help families develop a communication plan.
- Help anticipate what the journey will be like and plan for successful reunion.
- Look at deployment as a growth opportunity for both individuals and families.
- Emphasize that families address key issues of grief, security, function and stress.



RECOMMENDED PREVENTION MEASURES

- Identify Resources:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Family Readiness Group
 - Rear Detachment Commander
 - School Counselors
 - Social Workers
 - Mental Health Professionals
 - Chaplains
 - Local Churches



Questions?



Conclusion

With wise, intentional preparation, a caring attitude, and some good old-fashioned determination, you can make it through this deployment separation!

