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During Deployment for  
the Circle of Support  
**WORKBOOK**

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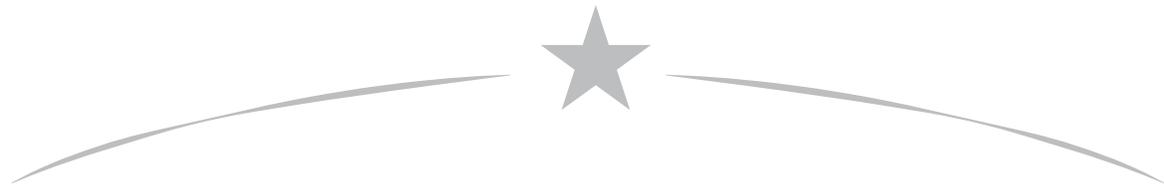


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# During Deployment for the Circle of Support WORKBOOK

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## During Deployment for the Circle of Support WORKBOOK

Your loved one has left on deployment and now the dynamics of daily life have changed. Deployment can be a time of growth. You may discover new skills and strengths. However, change often creates stress. Although you may have been through a deployment before, you may soon discover that each deployment is different and has different challenges. Relationships with other family members and friends may alter. Daily routines change, and chores are redistributed. You may need to seek outside help to accomplish all your family had been able to do before deployment.

The changes of deployment can be seen, heard, and felt by everyone. This state is sometimes called ambiguous absence because the Soldier is not physically at home but is not emotionally absent. This unique set of circumstances can cause stress and uncertainty for not only you but also other family members.

You, as the person remaining at home, will be making the day-to-day decisions and managing problems largely on your own. If you have children, you will be primarily responsible for helping them adjust while dealing with your own concerns about the safety of your loved one. You may become overwhelmed or feel anxious, or you may only need logistical support. Each person deals differently with deployment. Hopefully, this book will provide the tools necessary to meet the challenges you face and capitalize on your strengths.

The purpose of this book is to offer ways to adjust to deployment that will have a positive impact on you, your loved one, and your family. You are important to the mission of the Army and are part of the military family. We hope to provide the necessary support to assist you in undertaking the challenge of deployment. Each chapter will identify ideas, actions, and resources that you can use to face the challenges of physical separation.

For all intents and purposes, the word “spouse” has been used to encompass all significant others of deployed Soldiers. You may be the husband, wife, or life partner of the deployed person you love. Regardless of the title or term you prefer, please know that this publication is for you with the intent of supporting and guiding you through what can be a challenging time in your life and relationship.

## Topics...

This Workbook was designed based on the input of those like you who have experienced deployments and on the results of research on military families. The topics included are those that your peers felt are most important to making deployment more manageable. The chapters are divided into five sections, as shown below.

### Problem Solving

**Basic Problem Solving: Application to Everyday Life.** One of the most important strategies for a healthy relationship is problem solving. Good problem solving skills can be learned and then applied in your daily life.

**Practical Issues.** Dealing with day-to-day activities, including finances and legal issues, is an important part of having a successful deployment.

### Communication

**Communication Skills: How to be Effective.** Communication is more challenging during deployments. There are different forms of communication available during this time and many suggestions to improve communication. Active listening and learning how to communicate expectations of yourself and others in a positive way can help.

**Assertive Communication.** There are many ways that assertive communication can be beneficial to you and your family. Understanding how to clearly and assertively ask for help is essential and can improve communication in all your relationships.

**How to Find and Receive Help.** There are many resources available to you, your loved one, and your family. Knowing how and when to ask for assistance and where to find help can be critical for you and your family.

**Social Media.** The technology social media provides is amazing, and its use as a communication, entertainment, and education tool keeps growing. Unfortunately, overuse and misuse of social media can impact your mental health and relationships. Learn more about how to make the most of this modern marvel.

**Conflict Resolution.** Regardless of how hard we try, conflicts will occur that need to be resolved. Learn the characteristics of great conflict resolution, and apply them to your day-to-day life.

## Resilient and Capable You

**Emotional Adjustment to Deployment.** Deployment can have an emotional toll on you, but there are positive coping skills you can practice to help manage.

**Recognizing Resilience.** Resilience is our ability to bounce back after a difficult situation and our ability to face challenges confidently. You have shown resilience in handling multiple tasks and responsibilities while going through deployment. Learning strategies and tips can build even greater resilience.

**Understanding and Managing Excess Stress.** You may not be aware of ways that stress is affecting you. There are strategies to short-circuit the negative effects of stress through creative relaxation techniques.

**Taking Care of You First.** Learning ways to honor and appreciate yourself and set personal goals are critical skills for a healthy life.

## Relationships

**Family and Relationship Role Changes.** Many relationships you have with friends and family will go through changes during deployment. Finding ways to negotiate your roles in the family and community can make deployment easier.

**Enhancing Your Commitment.** It is important to find ways to express commitment to your relationship as a couple during deployment and to strengthen your emotional intimacy.

**Parenting.** Deployment challenges are multiplied when there are babies, children, or teens to care for in addition to caring for yourself. Review strategies for making the deployment experience as positive as possible.

**Deployment Changes and Preparing for Post-Deployment.** Deployments can bring on many expected and unexpected changes in your loved one, family, and you. Being knowledgeable about any changes your spouse may experience is the best strategy to be prepared.

## Red Flags

**Red Flags** are more serious issues that may require immediate assistance, along with resources for further evaluation and assistance for you, your spouse, and your family. Depression, grief, anger, abuse, alcohol or drug dependency, and suicide prevention are some Red Flags that signal a need for help or special concern.

## Common resources to help you...

**Dial 911.** Immediate help is needed for threats of suicide or harm to you, your spouse, or any member of your family. In cases where you or others feel unsafe, please contact professionals who will be able to assist you. It is always best to contact emergency personnel when a situation feels threatening to you.

**Suicide Prevention.** There may be someone in your family who is feeling hopeless or who is threatening suicide. You should seek help immediately from the Suicide Prevention hot-line phone number: 800-273-8255 (800-273-TALK). Press 1 for military or Veterans. There are trained individuals who are qualified to help immediately.

**Poison Help.** If you or a family member may have ingested a harmful substance and you are uncertain if it is toxic, you have two options. Contact 911 if there is any physical reaction that is causing immediate distress. Contact Poison Help at 800-222-1222 if you have questions about the antidote or substance you believe may have been ingested.

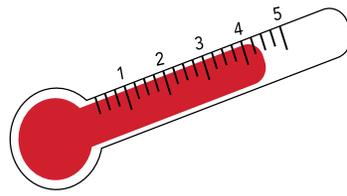
## Rate your level of tension or stress...

It is helpful to learn to rate your level of tension both before and after a relaxation exercise, be it Deliberate Breathing, exercising, meditating, or participating in another activity that you find relieves stress. Awareness of your state of being and learning to relax are skills that can be learned and improved upon. It typically takes time and practice to benefit from relaxation exercises. A Stress Diary can help you see patterns of improvement.

### **Deliberate Breathing...**

Deliberate Breathing is a relaxation technique that can help you gain composure, refocus inward, and hit the “pause button” in any given situation. Before you read each chapter or listen to a learning module, practicing this skill may help you gain more by bringing you to the present moment and focusing this time on you.

## Use this Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension



- 1 = Not at all tense
- 2 = Slightly tense
- 3 = Moderately tense
- 4 = Really tense
- 5 = Terribly tense

### 1. Rate your current level of tension.

Before the relaxation exercise, I feel I am level \_\_\_\_ (Rate from 1 to 5).

### 2. Take a deep breath. Don't breathe so deeply that it is uncomfortable.

### 3. Breathe out slowly while saying a word or phrase to yourself. You may want to use the words "Relax" or "Peace" or the phrase "Calm down." Any word or phrase will do as long as it is comforting to you.

### 4. While exhaling, try to let your jaw, shoulders, and arms go loose and limp.

### 5. Repeat these steps 2 more times.

### 6. After the Delierate Breathing, rate your current level of tension.

I feel I am level \_\_\_\_\_ (Rate from 1 to 5).

## Stress Diary Worksheet

For each day select one situation to record. Try to do a stress management exercise (such as Deliberate Breathing) while you are in a stressful situation. If you can't do that, record as much of this as you can.

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
<b>SITUATION</b>		
<b>COMMENTS</b>		

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
SITUATION		
COMMENTS		

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
SITUATION		
COMMENTS		

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
SITUATION		
COMMENTS		

## Taking action, committing to a positive plan...

You are invested in making your deployment experience better. In order to help make your investment pay off, make a personal commitment to practice the skills and techniques that are reviewed in this book. You know from experience that practice improves your ability. At the end of each chapter you will have the opportunity to decide what skills or techniques you will practice. As you progress through the book, keep track of what works, what doesn't work, what improves, and what gets easier. Monitoring your own growth and success will help you meet new difficulties with a plan of action that will hopefully lead to success.

On the following page, there is a Take Action commitment sheet. There is also one at the end of each chapter. By completing the commitment sheet with your signature and the date of your commitment, you are making a promise to yourself to improve and grow during this deployment.









## BASIC PROBLEM SOLVING: APPLICATION TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Problems are a fact of life. Whether big or small, simple or complex, problem solving is a daily event for everyone. When your Soldier is deployed, you will have to solve day-to-day problems without the benefit of your loved one to consult. The physical separation disrupts the way you communicate with your loved one, which may make a problem worse.

How we view problems impacts our ability to move forward in solving them. Are they opportunities for growth or insurmountable obstacles in our way? Sometimes we label a situation as a problem when, in reality, it is not. Then our labeling becomes the problem, not the situation. Being optimistic is difficult in many situations, but trying to remain positive and focusing on problem solving will resolve problems more quickly and easily.

When couples are separated by deployment, this adds additional stress and challenge in solving problems. You may become overwhelmed and need to take explicit steps to evaluate a problem and move forward.

This chapter gives you concrete problem solving steps. With practice, you can become more proficient and more comfortable solving problems. These skills may also prevent you from adding unnecessary stress to your relationship with your deployed partner and make you feel more confident as well.

Action expresses priorities. – Mahatma Gandhi

## Problem solving mindset...

- It helps to approach problem solving as an event that will be positive and productive in both the activity and the outcome. This can be difficult, but negativity will limit your ability to create solutions or see less obvious ones. If you discredit a solution before you even try it, you could be setting yourself up for failure. A positive attitude will empower you to utilize more of your strengths and resources.
- When you approach problem solving with another person, it is important to make this conversation a priority, so agree on a good time to talk about the problem. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by other influences, such as the television or children. One helpful hint to remember before you approach the problem is that you can only change your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Understand that the solution is not always finalized in one sitting. A solution may need negotiation, re-evaluation, and more than one attempt to succeed.
- Try to consider the input of everyone involved in the problem without ridicule or anger. At times, unusual ideas may be needed for unique situations, so consider every idea.
- Know what it is you want to gain from solving the problem. What is the goal? Without knowing what the goal is, it will be difficult to evaluate the progress or outcome of the problem's solution.

### **Problem solving as a process**

Some problems are simple; others are complex and will challenge your ability to cope. Below are suggestions to help you organize your problem solving. Ask yourself these questions to help evaluate a problem:

- What is it about the situation that makes me think there is a problem?
- Can I view the problem as an opportunity for positive change?
- Can I look at the problem without reacting emotionally to it?

## A broad perspective

A key skill in problem solving is being able to view the problem from a broad perspective, not just your own. You don't have to view it this way the entire time, but it helps at the onset. This is a valuable coping skill. Next, ask yourself these questions to focus on specifics:

- When, where, and how does the problem happen?
- Who is involved in the problem?
- Who or what is causing the problem?

## Taking steps...

Having a problem solving process allows us to think about the problem in a calm and rational manner. Using these problem solving steps can help you come to a workable solution.

**1. Identify the problem.** What is the problem? It may be something happening now, or what you want to prevent from happening.

- You may want to achieve something from solving the problem. *“How can we save more money each month?”*
- Another reason to solve the problem might be to preserve something such as the way to have dinner together when work schedules change.
- Your problem solving goal might be to avoid something. *“We always argue about who should mow the lawn.”*
- The problem you solve may be how to eliminate something such as ending a debt that you owe.

**2. Define and operationalize the problem.** You need to be clear and specific in describing the problem (who, what, when, where). Difficult or negative emotions are problems, but they need to be analyzed for specific actions or inactions that are creating them.

*For example, “No one ever helps” is not well-defined. Operationalize the problem to “I need help every day after school.”*

**3. Assess previous attempts to address the problem.** What have you tried in the past? What worked, what didn't? For example, did you only try once and then give up?

4. **Determine realistic outcomes.** What is it you want to achieve or change? There are two types of outcomes: problem-focused and emotion-focused. If your outcome is emotion-focused, you must first reframe it to be problem-focused. What actions will help alleviate the emotion?

- **Problem-focused** outcomes seek changes in a behavior or issue:

*For example,* Difficulty in managing your children's activities alone.

- **Emotion-focused** outcomes seek to manage your feelings that are linked to a behavior or issue:

*For example,* You may be angry that no one is offering to help you or recognizing your distress. Your first outcome is to reappraise your feelings – to understand why you feel this way. Your second outcome is one of action – “asking for help” instead of assuming others know how you feel and how to help.

5. **Make a list of potential solutions or options.** This is often referred to as brainstorming. Do not decide which options are best, just record as many as you can. Potential solutions know no limits. Don't worry about whether or not your ideas are realistic. Ask for ideas from others as well. With the above issue, options might include: hire a babysitter who can drive, move closer to family members, utilize day care, form a co-op with other parents to carpool children to same activities.

6. **Look at each of the potential solutions or options you have listed.** Consider the positive or negative things about each idea. Don't cross any off the list. If one idea doesn't work, you will return to your list.

**Evaluate your options and trust your instincts. Work through your list placing a (+) or (-) sign next to each.** You can always revise and add solutions as you proceed. Be flexible, you may think of a way to implement an idea you previously thought was bad.

*For example,* Some solutions may be too expensive (-). Some may be good (+) ideas, but you are not sure how to implement them... yet.

7. **Choose the solution you think will be the most effective.** This will likely be a solution with a (+) sign and the one you feel has the most potential to succeed. Review and troubleshoot the solution. Are there any barriers? How can you address them?

8. **Try out the solution you have chosen.** This is not a make-or-break situation. It is an opportunity to solve the problem. Will it help you to practice implementing your solution?

*For example*, If you are going to ask a family member for help, you could practice asking by roleplaying what you want to say with a friend or using a mirror.

- 9. Decide if the solution worked.** Did this solve the problem? Is the problem better or not? If it didn't work, why? Were there obstacles or barriers? What can you do to overcome the obstacles? Give the solution a fair try.

*For example*, Carpool was created to transport children to after school activity. Stress was alleviated. More time was created to tend to other things, and you likely helped another parent with their stress!

- 10. Choose a different solution if the previous one did not reduce or solve the problem.** Go back to Step 7 and work through the process again. It's fine to use a solution that was not originally listed. Not all problems can be solved on the first attempt. If the problem was solved or reduced, feel good about your success.

**Plan to succeed and measure your success.** Be committed and confident in your ability to solve the problem. Don't sabotage your own suggestions or those of anyone who is working with you on this problem. Keep an open mind as you work through these steps. If you are not fully committed to the solution, step back and re-evaluate the solution and why you are not confident in your ability to solve the problem with the chosen solution.

Track and measure your successes, or steps toward success.

## Dealing with anger...

For any problem, but especially for emotion-focused problems, problem solving can be stressful, frustrating and bring on feelings of anger or sadness. Anger can worsen a problem; sadness can inhibit your motivation to solve it. Be aware when counterproductive emotions are creating obstacles.

Learn to listen to the signs your body gives you. Does your heart beat faster? Does your face flush? If your body reacts, slow down. This is the time to utilize Deliberate Breathing from the beginning of the workbook. Perhaps you physically need to step away from the situation.

Review the chapter Conflict Resolution for tips on how to resolve conflict that may occur during problem solving. If you find you cannot control your emotions on your own, seek counseling. Having someone to assist you can have a positive impact on how you feel and help you resolve some of your problems. There are resources through the Army, or your primary care provider can refer you to a mental health provider.

## Remember...

These steps and examples focus on your problem solving skills and strategies. You can involve your loved one if it is practical and feasible. Involving close friends or family members may make the process even stronger. Everyone involved in the problem should have input in solving the problem. They can assist you in any phase of the process or any step of the strategy.

Utilize the Problem Solving Worksheet at the end of this chapter. Look for patterns between problems and solutions. Being able to spot common factors and use previous solutions will speed up your problem solving. This issue is addressed in the chapter Recognizing Resilience.

Unfortunately, we cannot always solve every problem. There are a lot of things that are out of our control. You may not be able to change certain situations. In the chapter Emotional Adjustment to Deployment, there are strategies to change the way we think about situations we cannot change.

If you are concerned about how to state your case check out the chapters Assertive Communication and Conflict Resolution. One of your best resources is other military families. It helps to know you are not alone. Solving some problems takes concerted effort and having a systematic way to approach them is helpful. Be creative, be flexible, and use all the resources at your disposal if necessary!



# Problem Solving Worksheet

**1. Identify the problem.**

The problem may be what is happening. It may be how to prevent it from happening again.

**2. Describe the problem.**

Be as clear and specific as you can.

**3. Assess previous attempts to solve the problem.**

**4. Set goals and determine realistic outcomes.**

**5. Make a list of potential solutions or options.**

Do not decide which are better or worse at this point.

Include as many as you can think of.

**6. Look at each of the potential solutions you listed.**

Think about the positive or negative aspects of each solution.

Put plus or minus marks next to each idea.

**7. Choose the solution you think will be the most effective.**

This will likely be a solution with a plus.

**8. Try out the solution you have chosen.**

**9. Decide if the solution worked.**

**10. If it did not reduce or solve the problem, choose a different potential solution to try.**

## Problem Solving Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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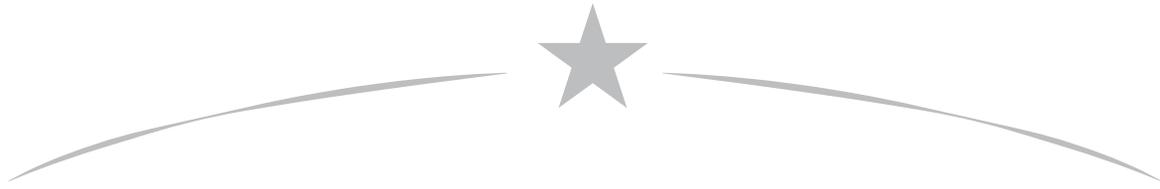
Some other strategies I can try:

- I will utilize the Problem Solving Worksheet and solve an immediate or pending problem, even if it takes more than one attempt.
- Using the Problem Solving Worksheet, I will address a problem I foresee as likely in the future.

*(This could be an event you may need help with, a decision about the holidays without your loved one, or creating a plan for home and car maintenance, if this is something your loved one did while home.)*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## PRACTICAL ISSUES

If this is your first deployment, you may still be figuring out a system to keep up with finances, schedules, house and car maintenance, and all the other things that you previously managed as a couple. Even if it is not your first deployment, practical issues may arise that you have not dealt with in the past. Your military resources will be available to give tips and advice on handling your new roles and responsibilities during deployment. In addition, military families have successfully navigated the process before you; never hesitate to ask them how they dealt with similar situations.

During deployment, you will be solving day-to-day problems without the benefit of having your loved one to consult. Sometimes the number or type of problems can seem overwhelming. It may be difficult to know how to find solutions.

It is important for you to think about how you will approach problems during and post-deployment. Continue to practice the skills from the Problem Solving chapter of this workbook. With practice, you will be able to identify problems in a way that allows creative and successful solutions to the practical dilemmas you confront without adding stress to your life.

Whether your loved one has been in the military for years or military life is new to you both, there are many reminders that military life is much different from civilian life. You may come across situations that a civilian would not have to consider. This chapter provides helpful hints and resources to help you manage.

Unless commitment is made, there are only promises  
and hopes, but no plans. – Peter Drucker

## Take care of yourself...

It is easy to become overwhelmed taking on the home responsibilities of two people during the deployment. Taking care of yourself is essential so that you can manage other issues more effectively.

### Daily Care

- Get plenty of sleep.** Physicians recommend getting 7-10 hours of sleep per night.
- Watch what you eat.** It is easier to overeat or eat fast food when you no longer eat meals together. Being lonely may trigger you to comfort-eat. Be aware of challenging areas, such as binge-eating while watching TV, late night snacking, over-indulging in foods high in fat and sugar, or not eating enough nutritious foods.
- Reach out to support systems.** Stay connected with friends, even when tired, to counter loneliness.
- Exercise regularly.** Exercise offers mood-boosting endorphins as well as numerous health benefits, both preventive and therapeutic.
- Have fun.** Plan something fun. Put it on your calendar. Have something to look forward to every month or more often if possible. Include your children in some, but not all, of these events. During the event, put the phone down. Be in the moment.

Putting yourself first can be difficult at times, so write it down as a commitment you are making to yourself. You can use the Take Action worksheet at the end of this chapter. Leave this commitment note out where you can see it regularly and hold yourself accountable. Or, make it a reoccurring calendar entry on your desktop computer or cell-phone. Read the chapter Taking Care of You First for more self-care strategies.

### Self-medicating to cope

Some may find themselves using alcohol or other substances to ease the stress and loneliness of deployment. Increased use of substances is not just a problem for Soldiers as a means of coping. Some may report increased usage of prescription medications or alcohol to cope. Responsible use of mood-altering substances and addiction are different things and you may question whether you are becoming addicted.

Heavy use of alcohol is defined as drinking 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days in the past 30 days. No more than two drinks a day, or fourteen in a week, is recommended for men. No more than one drink a day, or seven in a week,

is recommended for women. For more information about drug and alcohol misuse and abuse, please read the Substance Abuse chapter in the Red Flags section.

## Practical dilemmas and resources...

### Day to day problems

If you are already struggling with deployment related problems, review the chapter Basic Problem Solving and utilize the Problem Solving Worksheet found there. Despite all your best efforts, problems will come up from time to time. Think about things you can do beforehand to make day-to-day life easier when problems arise.

- Extra sets of keys.** Give a set of house and/or car keys to a trusted friend, family member, or neighbor to avoid having to call a locksmith.
- Routine maintenance.** Routine maintenance can help prevent major repairs. Consult owners' manuals and the internet for advice on maintaining your belongings. Include servicing the house air conditioner and/or heater before use, changing house air filters in the house, checking batteries in smoke detectors, and cleaning the chimney before use.
- Car maintenance and emergencies.** Follow the oil change schedule for your vehicles to prevent engine problems. Consider purchasing a roadside assistance policy if you do not have one. Plans are inexpensive and will send help 24 hours a day. If you insure your car with USAA, roadside assistance is most likely included.

### Finances

- Budgets.** Budgeting is one of the challenging issues spouses report during deployment. Some spouses take over the finances for the first time during deployment, which can be intimidating. The most important step to handling your finances is to know what your resources are and to create a thorough budget. Websites like [moneycrashers.com](http://moneycrashers.com) have printable budget planners and templates. Your spreadsheet computer program may also include budget templates.
- Reduce interest rates.** You may be eligible for reduced interest rates on your home and credit cards. Under the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act (SSCRA), you are eligible for a reduced interest rate on these obligations during deployment, especially if the deployment affects your family's ability to pay bills. More information can be found at your Military Legal Assistance Office or at <http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/sscra/a/sscra1.htm>.

- Tax-free income.** Your Soldier's income may be tax free while on deployment, especially if the deployment is in a combat zone. Check with your military sources. The taxed money may come in the form of a refund after the paycheck is issued.
- Automatic payments.** If you have trouble remembering to pay bills on time, sign up for automatic payments. If the company you are paying the bill to does not offer this service, many banks will.
- Plan for the unexpected.** You may have no trouble paying the bills you have now but what if the air conditioner goes out in the house or the transmission goes out in the car? Try to save a little money each month for repairs or those unexpected expenses that come up. Some military families utilize the Savings Deposit Program to take advantage of the extra pay during deployment.
- Gather documents.** Gather all important documents and account numbers in case you need to reference them. Make a list of all income and expenses to help you determine how much money is coming in, going out, and is left over. Brainstorm with your family to make sure you've thought of everything, including bills that may only occur once a year.  
 For your total income, make sure you include your salary, your Soldier's salary, and any other income. Common bills include mortgage/rent, loan payments (home, student), taxes, groceries, utilities, car payment, gas, car maintenance, any insurance costs (life, healthcare, house, car), child care, home phone, TV, internet, cellular phone, credit cards, personal care (clothes, school supplies, haircuts), charity/gifts, and savings allocation.
- Keep track.** Along with your budget, create a document or spreadsheet to keep track of all bills. There are many forms available on the internet or you can make your own. Include which bills are paid in full and which you made a payment on and how much. Or use the Tracking Your Expenses Worksheet at the end of this chapter.
- Get advice.** Don't hesitate to get financial advice from a trusted source. Many people report that it is helpful to consult with a financial advisor or to take a debt management course so they are making wise decisions with their money during deployment. The library has books on financial planning and investments. Check book reviews online to see which ones have been most helpful to others. You may also check with your military sources or search online for sources of financial advice in the community. Ask trusted friends for a referral if they use a financial planner. In addition, Military OneSource and Army OneSource have helpful tools, webinars, and consultants to help with financial planning.

## Legal issues

Knowing your legal rights and being proactive are important parts of deployment readiness. Be familiar with the processes already put in place by the military to safeguard your legal rights, such as naming beneficiaries for your Soldier and yourself. Also, know what assistance is available to you if a legal issue does arise.

- Where to get help.** Military legal assistance offices are located on almost every base and installation. Their services are available to active duty military, as well as deployed and full-time guard and reserve. Military legal assistance offices can look over contracts and leases to make sure that you are not subjected to any unfair illegal terms. If you need help finding assistance, you can go to one of the websites that are in the Resources material at end of the How to Find and Receive Help chapter.
- Protect yourself.** Soldiers and military families are susceptible to identity theft just as often as civilians. Be careful who you give information to. Be sure to check your credit card statements and your credit report to make sure there are no fraudulent items. Do not give your social security numbers to any person or group that solicited you, especially online. Information and resources for consumer protection issues that affect members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families are in the Resources material at end of the chapter How to Find and Receive Help.
- Get it in writing.** Talk to a legal advisor about any documents you need to protect you and your family. These documents include a Will or a Power of Attorney. There are several different versions of these documents that give you and your loved one the level of authority you want. For example, you can obtain a General Power of Attorney that will cover most financial and legal issues. A Special Power of Attorney covers a specific, defined situation. Be sure to keep copies, preferably notarized.

## Emergency planning

While you are getting an organizational system in place, one area not to neglect is emergency planning. Create a family plan for disasters and crisis situations that includes what to do in case of a fire, a power outage, a plumbing or electrical emergency, or extreme/dangerous weather such as tornados or hurricanes. Find telephone numbers for your local area and incorporate them into your family plan.

- Getting started.** Make a list of any resources that you've gathered. Consider your network of friends and family, and local resources.
- Make a plan.** Go over the plan for different scenarios, like a house fire, with your children. Physically go through the plan. Walk through the house with your children. Show them how to find the safest way out of the house and where to go once they get

out. Talk to your children about dialing 911. Have emergency items available, like fire extinguishers and rope ladders for second story bedrooms. Keep these items in a specific, easily available location that the children know about. Review this plan at least twice a year. A good way to remember it is during the time change. This is a great time to replace the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and to review the safety plan.

- Emergency leave.** There may be situations that arise when you need your loved one home for an emergency situation. The military has clearly defined guidelines for emergency leave. The Red Cross will assist you with this. Go to [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) to submit a request or call 877-272-7337. These are the usual emergency leave situations:
  1. Death of immediate family (such as parent, sibling, or child) of the service member or spouse.
  2. When the service member's return will improve the welfare of an immediate family member of the service member or spouse who is dying.
  3. Serious illness or injury of immediate family of the service member or spouse.
  4. During a time of severe or unusual hardship that requires the service member's presence.

## Strategies to make your time apart productive...

### Network

Preserve your connection to family and friends and make new friends. Having a group of people to share with and depend on is crucial to getting through deployment.

- Talk to other military families. They may have information about services you have not thought of. Other military families have been through similar situations before. Find a mentor who can guide you. Form a circle of support with other families and share information and resources.
- If you are not on a military installation or if you do not have anyone local, you can find other military families on the internet (through military family forums, websites, and blogs). There are numerous resources listed in the Finding and Receiving Help chapter.
- Talk to your military family advocates. Many are family members themselves and are great sources of support and advice. They can direct you to resources that are available in the military and community.

- Become a mentor. If you have been through a deployment already, even if you are struggling now, you can support a new military spouse's transition to the experience and possibly gain a friend.

## Using your time well

When you are home and your loved one is deployed, you may experience periods when time seems to drag. Even when your work or family responsibilities seem to take up every waking moment, there are some days when time seems to stop and you are constantly watching the clock or the calendar. Here are some practical ways that you can make the time you spend away from your Soldier more productive and satisfying.

- Network with a purpose.** The key is to stay in touch with others. Use networking skills to talk to other families. Find areas of common interest and plan an event. Events can be as simple as meeting others for coffee and conversation once a month. This is a kid-free zone.
- Share companionship.** Consider joining an online chat group. You may want to join a community group who shares your interest in hobbies, events, or causes. Visit an older or shut-in neighbor or even a nursing home to offer cheer and encouragement. You might find a wonderful mentor by doing this.
- Volunteer.** Volunteer one hour a week or even a month to work in your community. You can sort food at the local food bank, weed the community garden and share the rewards of your labor, or spend one hour reading to children at the local library. By doing good for others, your time will pass in a productive and satisfying manner.
- Plan to play.** Make plans for a day of fun with family and friends. Create easy crafts, play board games, have popcorn and movie marathons, or go to a local park for a picnic.

## Remember...

Use this chapter as a guide to prepare for and manage the issues that arise during deployment and life in general. Being organized and proactive are key to helping prevent mishaps and feeling confident that you can manage whatever comes your way. Reach out to others for help, and offer others assistance when you can. Life happens. Having a plan for all the contingencies makes it easier.

## Put it into Practice

What method do you currently use to stay organized? Are you up-to-date?

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Who would you include in your network?

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What advice would you give other military family members?

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Think of a topic that you would like to know more about (for example, legal issues or financial issues). List them and where can you go to find out more.

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What will you plan to do to make your time apart productive and satisfying for you?

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## Practical Issues Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will seek out and record information to document the household finances and budget.
- I will engage in a social activity with friends or volunteer for a local organization.

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

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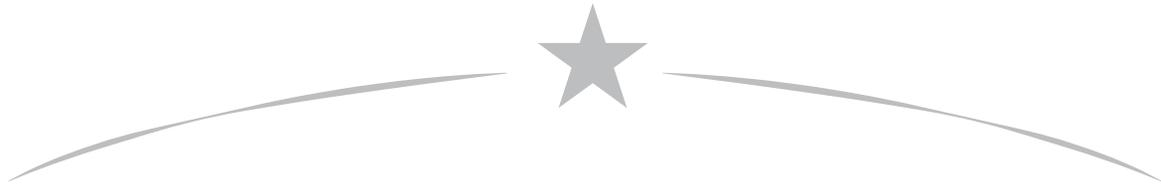
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





1 NEW  
MESSAGE



## COMMUNICATION SKILLS: HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE

Communication during deployment can be challenging. You may be ridiculously busy now, but nothing compares to the physical and verbal reassurances you received when your loved one was present. Although you will not physically be with your loved one during deployment, it is important for the well-being of both of you to continue to emotionally support one another.

Though communication technology has improved significantly, there will be roadblocks to the amount and quality of communication you had before deployment. Calls or video conferencing may be sporadic and may come at odd hours. Emails or letters may be brief. It is important to know what communication tools are available to you both. Because of the unpredictable nature of the contact, it is important to be able to communicate effectively when the opportunity arises. You may also find this chapter's communication strategies help you improve communication with friends and family, helping you to receive the necessary support you need.

During this time, closeness in relationships is sustained by the amount and types of communication between the two of you. All couples have different patterns, types, and frequencies of communication. During deployment, it is essential for the two of you to determine what works best for you as a couple.

Have realistic expectations for frequency of contact and the specific things your loved one would like to know about. Some couples find it possible to communicate every day, some once a week. It depends on the nature of your spouse's duties and access to communication technology. The goal of this section is to help you make that communication effective and supportive for you both.

Courage is the commitment to begin  
without any guarantee of success. – Goethe

## Methods of communication during deployment...

There has been amazing progress in the number of tools available for communication and in the reliability of these tools. No longer do loved ones have to rely only on hand-written letters that come weeks or months after being mailed. Keep in mind that not all the following methods will be available. Even if they are, satellites and other technology sometimes fail, creating times when you cannot make contact.

### Telephone

Most Soldiers will have some access to a telephone during deployment. Your loved one may be sharing a phone with the unit and it may not always be available or your calls may have to be brief. Calls may come at odd hours of the night due to time zone differences. Phones are often located in common rooms allowing other Soldiers to overhear your conversations. Because of this, you may want to exclude some personal topics or anything that your Soldier would not want others overhearing. Cell phones may or may not be available. They can be prohibitively expensive overseas, and there may be security restrictions on their use.

If you have a phone number to contact your Soldier or their unit, in keeping with Operation Security, do NOT share it. If you must share it with a family member for emergencies, please reinforce the importance of not sharing it.

### Video conferencing

Video conferencing is one of the newer technologies available to Soldiers and their families. This allows the Soldier and family to hear and see each other, which is especially good for young children who are very visual. Depending on the program you use, calls may be between you and your loved one or several different people can be conferenced in. If this is the case, you may want to choose some days for just the two of you to talk and some days for family and friends.

### Email

Email is a good tool for communication because emails can be sent and read at any time and both parties do not need to be online at the same time. Some report trying to send or exchange a short email each day to keep their loved ones informed of what is going on at home. It is best to keep the emails in a text format and avoid unnecessary graphics or attachments which may inhibit the ease of the email getting through cyberspace.

## **Social networking**

Social networking sites are extremely popular. Soldiers who are allowed to use these sites can keep their family updated about how they are doing, when they will be expecting R & R, or when they will be returning home. These sites are good for keeping everyone informed without overwhelming the Soldier or you. Consider setting up a private account for you and your loved one. Family pictures and good news can be seen by your loved one first before they are shared with your friends and family.

Be aware that social media access for your Soldier may be blocked or suspended during critical times to ensure the safety of your loved one. Make sure that the security of the mission is not compromised or undermined in any way by information posted. Consider the internet public access regardless of your privacy settings. For example, do not post injuries, deaths, or deployment extension rumors. Make sure that your posts or posts by friends will not worry your loved one. There are Facebook® and Twitter® accounts whose sole purpose is to support military families.

## **Letters**

Even if other methods are readily available, hand-written letters are a personal way to communicate. Studies indicate that receiving hand-written letters from home can alleviate some of the mental health issues that may arise for Soldiers. Unlike electronic media, letters are tangible items that can be carried around and reread at any time. If you have a particular perfume or after-shave you often wear, give the letter a spritz right before you seal it in the envelope to personalize it even more.

## **Care packages**

A care package is a great way to show your Soldier and the unit that you care. Families will sometimes send items that are more expensive or hard to obtain overseas or anything they know the Soldier may miss. Care packages can be great morale boosters. Check with your Soldier before you send items, but some common things to send are photographs, reading materials, favorite snacks, powdered drink mixes for water, toiletries, games, and music. Use your creativity to make the care package personalized.

Many families enjoy being creative and making themed care packages. These are a great way to stay connected – you can enjoy finding things to fit the theme, and your loved one will enjoy seeing how you keep the theme going. The packages can even build to a conclusion. However, if you are struggling with inspiration, there are web sites that contain great suggestions, as well as tips for securing your package. There are numerous sites that provide care packages already made and will have them shipped. Some sites have ratings by users which can be helpful in making a choice.

## Recorded audio and video tapes

Other good items to send in a care package or alone are audio and video recordings of you and the family. You may send a video of your child's first steps or reading a favorite book. You may send a special message affirming your love and commitment. Your Soldier can let you know which format works best, be it a zip-drive USB format, a CD, etc.

## Communication considerations...

### Be patient and understanding

Communication may be one-sided as Soldiers are often forbidden from sharing certain information to preserve the integrity of the mission. Remember that workdays are long and usually seven days a week. Your Soldier may just be back from a stressful operation, may be exhausted, or may not feel like talking at times. This can make it seem as though your loved one is uninterested when this is not the case. You may be tempted to question this behavior, but try to resist. You will both have times when you have energy to be engaged and supportive and times when you don't.

### Don't compare

You may learn from other families that they are able to communicate more often than you and your loved one. There can be a number of reasons to explain this, including different posting location or duties. It is not helpful to compare your situation to others. As hard as it is, try not to take it personally. Everyone's communication patterns and situations are different.

### Plan ahead

To optimize the communication time you have, think about what you want to share *before* you begin the conversation with your loved one. You may want to jot down important things you need to tell your loved one during your next conversation. Try to temper your communication. Asking your loved one for input about a situation at home may be appropriate while venting about it may not be. Some Soldiers like to hear the day-to-day details of what is going on at home so they feel connected. Others may become frustrated or sad that they cannot participate or help. Make sure the time spent in the conversation meets both your needs. Consider your relationship to know how the conversation should go.

Consider what kind of decision-making process you will use during deployment. Spouses of deployed service members report that many decisions, particularly those involving

financial expenditures and major household decisions, such as purchasing a new heating system, are made together, even during deployment. Minor household decisions, such as repairs, and decisions about children are more often made by the spouse during deployment.

### **Share feelings**

During separation, you both want to feel loved, appreciated, and missed. You may feel that you cannot talk to your loved one about difficult feelings, and this may be best at given times, especially if your loved one is serving in a combat zone. Again, your personal relationship with your loved one will be the key to what and how much you share. This does not mean that you should hide your feelings from everyone. Find healthy ways to express your difficult feelings, whether in the form of therapy, talking with a friend, joining a support group, or participating in an online blog or forum. However, remember that privacy is compromised on the internet.

### **Emergency situations**

For emergency communication situations, the Red Cross will assist you in reaching your Soldier. Go online to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) and submit a request or call Red Cross Emergency Communications Services at 877-272-7337.

## Active listening skills...

Due to the artificial and sometimes rushed nature of communication during deployment, it is very important to be direct. Tone and other cues are more difficult to pick up on, especially when there are no visual cues. Following are general guidelines to using active listening and communication skills that can be applied to any situation, not just with your Soldier. They will help you make the most of the brief communication you may have. Use the Active Listening Checklist at the end of the chapter for reference.

### Body language

**Use body language** that fosters active listening. Body language is made up of the messages we convey with our bodies. One of the reasons that communication across distance or without visuals is difficult is because body language and other parts of nonverbal communication, such as tone, are such an important part of how we normally communicate. It is the first impression we give when we meet someone. If you are using video conferencing to communicate with your loved one, it is particularly important to be aware of what you say with your body language.

Face the person, have an open posture, lean towards the sender, maintain eye contact, and relax while you are listening. This is an important technique to master so that it becomes second nature. When you put these things together, it relates that you are willing and open to the topic and the speaker. When on the phone, although you cannot be seen, your relaxed posture and interest will translate into your voice and tone.

**Practice using your ideal body language.** Try to monitor it when you interact with others on a daily basis, your children, friends, family, co-workers, and people in the community. Does your nonverbal message match your verbal message? One way to check your body language is to use Gerard Egan's SOLER model for nonverbal communication. Used together, these behaviors can help your communication skills.

- S** Squarely. Sit squarely facing the other person. Do not angle your body, but rather face the speaker to indicate she or he has your undivided attention.
- O** Open. Use open posture – don't cross your arms or legs. Keep your feet on the floor and knees together.
- L** Lean. Lean slightly inward toward the other person. This communicates interest.
- E** Eyes. Maintain eye contact, but in a relaxed manner. Avoid the extreme of staring.
- R** Relax. Try to relax while you are listening and speaking.

## Listening and responding skills

- **Paraphrasing** is a good technique that indicates to the other person you understand his or her message. When listening ask yourself, “*What is the speaker’s basic message?*” and “*What is the basic feeling of the message?*” Paraphrasing is restating what the other person said, but in your own words. This helps both of you know whether or not you understand what was communicated. This tool allows for correction of information in a non-confrontational way, while making sure everyone is on the same page. Also, it lets the speaker know that the listener is listening and is attentive.  
*For example, If your loved one says, “I don’t feel like anyone cares about me,” you can paraphrase by saying, “It sounds like you are feeling alone.”*
- **Clarification** can help you get more information or correct a misinterpretation. Clarification is different from paraphrasing, because in addition to repeating back what the other person said, you are trying to go further and illuminate the reason or point of what the person is saying. It can also deescalate a situation before it becomes a misunderstanding and a problem. Clarification can utilize paraphrasing, but it involves a request for more specific information to clarify what you heard.  
*For example, If your loved one says, “I feel as though you don’t need me there anymore,” you can clarify by asking, “Do you feel like we are excluding you from what we are doing?”*
- **Perception checking** is a way to make sure you received the message and its intent. This allows you to help the speaker clarify exactly what is being said. It can also avoid misunderstanding. It involves three steps:
  1. A description of the behavior you notice
  2. Your interpretation of the behavior
  3. A request for clarification  
*For example, “When you said ‘I don’t feel like anyone cares about me’ (behavior) I wasn’t sure if you were feeling like we were not including you enough (first interpretation) or if you felt we didn’t need you (second interpretation). Can you help me understand? (request for clarification)”*
- **Summarizing** means putting together the key points of what you heard to get a sense of the general outcome of the conversation. In doing this, you verify your understanding with the speaker. Repeat back, in general, the points that were made in the interaction.

*For example, “From what we have talked about, you feel cut off from us and would like to be more involved in decisions. That way, you would feel more a part of what is going on.”*

- **Empathy** involves reflecting on the content and feelings expressed by the speaker during your conversation. The speaker may not express the feeling outright, but you can infer it from the words chosen or the tone of voice. Empathy often gets confused with sympathy. With empathy, you are attempting to understand what the other person may be experiencing and reflect that back to the other person. To be empathic is an active process, as you are seeking to understand an experience from another person’s perspective while incorporating active listening skills. Sympathy is compassion for another person but does not necessarily involve the active processes that empathy does.

*For example, “I know you are feeling frustrated. It must be hard to not be with us and not be able to help the family in day-to-day decisions. You are still a valuable member of the family and have a lot to contribute.”*

## **Filtering**

During deployment, some topics might best be avoided to save your loved one from unnecessary worry. Use your discretion as to the immediate importance of difficult topics. You will already have talked about what topics your spouse wants to hear about and what decisions you will make together. There may be some decisions that you continue to make as a couple (such as major household decisions and financial decisions) and there may be some that you may handle more on your own (such as minor household decisions and decisions about the children). Are there other topics your spouse would or would not like to know about? Keeping those agreed upon things out of the conversation with your spouse is called **filtering**. Openness during deployment is a delicate issue, and finding a balance that works for you and your family is important. There are obviously some topics that are more difficult to talk about than others. Consult the chapters Assertive Communication and Conflict Resolution for more help.

The biggest obstacle to your communication with your Soldier – and perhaps some other people in your life – will be time. The two of you will have very little of it. Because it is limited, you want to make the most of it by making it positive, supportive, and understanding. When we filter something, we take out some of the unnecessary or unpleasant aspects of it. Keep communication with your loved one enjoyable and something you BOTH look forward to.

- Don’t begin by sharing with your loved one all the bad things that have happened since you last spoke or wrote.

- Let the first thing you say or share be something positive.
- **Hunt the Good Stuff.** One technique that helps us find the positive in each day is a skill you learned in your Pre-Deployment training: Hunt the Good Stuff. With this strategy you try to find THREE good things or events that happen to you each day and record them. However, for each good thing, ask yourself: “*Why did this happen? What does it mean to me? What can I do tomorrow to enable more of the good thing? How did I or other people contribute to making this good thing happen?*” It can be something little – the perfect cup of coffee, the children letting you sleep 30 minutes later, or a tree blooming you notice. It can be a friend who always listens, or the fact that you ran one mile without stopping. Anything. Focusing on good things will help blot out the annoying little negative things in life, instead of letting them have power over your mood. In addition, sharing the good stuff may lift your spouse’s mood and make your conversations a bright spot in the day. You can use the Hunt the Good Stuff Worksheet in the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter.
- **Listen** to whatever your Soldier wants to share with you and use your Active Listening skills to help your loved one feel understood and supported. You may feel the need to share something bad that has happened, because you need some empathy, but don’t let bad things dominate your conversation.
- **End on a good note!** Don’t end communication with something counterproductive, a complaint, or a sad story. End by telling each other “*I love you, I’m proud of you, I miss you, I can’t wait for you to come home, I’ll talk to you soon.*” You both want to feel happy and lifted by your communication, not dumped on.
- **Avoid mixed messages** which can be distracting. Your words and the way you say them should agree with how you feel and what you mean.  
*For example,* The words you say may be neutral, but the tone of your voice may be upset. An imbalance can be detected by the listener and cause anxiety or misunderstanding. This is particularly important if you are using video-conferencing.
- **Avoid rumors** which may be based on false or misleading information. Avoid listening to and spreading both rumors and gossip. Focus on the quality and content of your own communication and appreciate the time you have.

## Communicating with civilians...

One of the challenging issues families of deployed Soldiers must deal with is talking to non-military individuals about deployment. You may be faced with uncomfortable or even inappropriate questions and comments. Some people will use deployment as an excuse to share their views with you about the war, the military, or the government.

It may be helpful to think about how you will address these questions and statements before they come up. Some of the commenters have no experience with military life and do not know what to say. Will you try to educate them? Or be non-committal and change the subject? Your response may depend on your relationship with the questioner. Here are some common, but annoying, questions and statements you may hear:

- Do you miss him? Aren't you afraid that she'll be killed?
- I know just how you feel ... (non-military spouse)
- I don't know how you manage. I don't think I could do it.
- Has s/he killed anyone? How much longer does he have until he can get out?
- Don't you hate the military/president/war for sending her over there?
- I'm glad my spouse isn't in the military.
- Aren't you worried about her missing out on the kids' lives?
- I wish I could send my spouse away for a few months.

## Remember...

Using effective listening skills can enhance our relationships with all our family. Communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. Good communication can prevent the occurrence of many problems and misunderstandings in relationships. Communication gains increased importance during deployment, which means that there are many more opportunities for preventing problems and misunderstandings, and even increasing resilience.

## Put it into Practice

What methods of communication have you tried or do you know will be available?  
Which do you prefer? Which would you like to try out?

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What is, or might be, a difficult thing to talk about with your loved one during  
deployment? How will you handle it?

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What types of decisions will you make together? Which will you take responsibility for?

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What is a difficult question you have been asked about your loved one's deployment?  
How did you handle it? Would you handle it the same way if asked again?

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## Active Listening Checklist

If possible, face the speaker with open posture, lean toward the speaker, maintain comfortable eye contact, and relax to listen openly. If speaking on the phone, monitor your body language to one of comfort, attention to your speaker, and openness. During your conversation, practice these strategies:

- **Paraphrase** what you heard. State back, in your own words, what the speaker told you.
- **Clarify** the information. Ask questions or ask for more information.
- **Perception Check** to make sure you received the message the speaker intended. This may involve some interpretation of what you heard.
- **Summarize** in order to make sure you and the speaker agree on the key points of the conversation.
- **Show empathy** by reflecting the feelings expressed by the speaker during your conversation. You as a couple are a team. Expressing empathy indicates your support for and understanding of your loved one.

## Communication Skills Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will practice at least one of the following Active Listening skills:
  - Body language
  - Paraphrasing
  - Clarifying
  - Perception checking
  - Summarizing
  - Empathy

Record the outcomes of my actions:

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

Learning to be more assertive can help you understand, recognize, and effectively express your feelings when communicating with others about difficult issues. It also enables others to know what they can do for you. Being assertive can help prevent future conflict and reduce stress. It helps formulate clear and concrete objectives to obtain your goals. It can help you keep people from walking all over you. On the flip side, it can also help prevent you from steamrolling others. It is socially appropriate and not passive, aggressive, or hostile. Assertive communication considers your needs and the needs, feelings, and welfare of others. Because of this, using assertive communication can build your confidence, create win-win situations, improve your decision-making skills, and ultimately create stronger, more honest relationships.

There are some basic steps to learning how to communicate in an assertive way. If you apply these steps when you need to ask for help from your family or friends, you will also find you can use them to ask for resources in the community. The more you practice these steps, the more comfortable they will become for you.

Commitment is an act, not a word. – Jean Paul Sartre

## Components of assertive communication...

### Content

Content is what is being said. Make sure it is to the point and on topic. If you must confront another person, focus on the behavior of the individual, not the individual. Focus on specific, concrete things that ARE changeable.

*For example, If your family member or friend repeatedly forgets things at the store, say “I get frustrated when you go to the store and forget important items.” Instead of “You always forget stuff; what is wrong with you?”*

### Using your voice effectively

Certainly, saying “always” and “what is wrong with you?” will make a listener defensive, which hinders communication. Choose your words intentionally. You can convey a message without insulting the other person.

Use *I* statements. Take responsibility for your thoughts and feelings by using *I* statements instead of *you* statements. You can only change yourself. Telling another person that they are wrong or telling them what to do is counterproductive. Implying that there is something wrong with them as a person (not the behavior) is not assertive or effective communication.

Not assertive: “*Why are you late? You are so inconsiderate.*”

Assertive: “*I am upset that you are over an hour late.*”

Speak in a firm clear voice. Watch your tone and word choice. Do not be demanding or hesitant; do not beat around the bush instead of getting directly to your point. Do not be apologetic when you have done nothing wrong. Beginning a statement with “*I’m sorry but...*” is not assertive. Research indicates women are more likely to do this, and it weakens your communication.

## **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal communication is as important as verbal communication.

- Eye contact is an important component. Use direct contact, but avoid glaring or staring or looking downward (a passive behavior).
- Posture is important. Stand or sit up straight. Do not slouch or be rigid. Adopt a strong but comfortable posture if possible.
- Facial expressions can be difficult to control. They should be open – not angry – and should match how you are feeling and what you are trying to say.
- Body gestures and movement should be used deliberately. Avoid fidgeting, touching your face, hair, or mouth. These are passive or nervous behaviors. Pointing your finger can be intimidating and accusatory. Moving into someone's personal space can also be counterproductive. Both gestures can be inferred as disrespectful.

## **Assertive behavior myths and reality**

- Myth: Assertive behavior may offend others.

Reality: Expressing negative or positive feelings is not offensive if you regulate your tone and word choice.

- Myth: Assertive behavior can seem aggressive.

Reality: Aggressive behavior disregards the needs and feelings of others and puts one's own needs first. Assertive behavior considers the needs of everyone involved.

- Myth: Passive behavior is kind and helpful.

Reality: Passive behavior is weak and indecisive and can annoy others who genuinely want to help you. Passivity relays that your needs are less important than others' when, in fact, they are of equal importance. Assertive behavior indicates this equality.

- Myth: Being assertive means people will agree to help me.

Reality: People still have a right to say no regardless of how polite and respectful your behavior may be. Do not be discouraged by someone telling you no. They may not be able to help now but can help in the future or can help with some other task. Remember, they are saying no to your request, not you as an individual.

## Using assertive communication skills...

### Practice

The more you practice assertive communication, the easier it will become.

- Mirroring.** Look in a mirror and see what you look like when you speak. Make a request. Practice the verbal and non-verbal elements of your communication. Use the How to Find and Receive Help Checklist at the end of the How to Find and Receive Help chapter to be ready to ask for help.
- Modeling.** Is there someone you admire who is assertive? Observe this person and practice behaving in a similar way.
- Get advice.** If you know someone who behaves and communicates assertively, talk with them and get advice on how you can improve.

Consider this example. A spouse of a deployed Soldier has become inundated with work and family responsibilities and has little time for social activity. She wants to reach out and spend time reconnecting with a close friend.

- Passive.** *“It would be nice to get out sometime.”* The woman hopes her friend will pick up on the hint and offer to go on a social outing. If she does not, she will not tell her directly how she feels. She does not want to feel like she is imposing or is being needy.
- Aggressive.** *“You never call or visit me. I expected more from you. You’re supposed to be my friend.”* The woman might become very upset and yell. In the future, the friend may be even less likely to call or visit.
- Assertive.** *“I need to get out. Would you like to go to lunch sometime next week?”* The woman told her friend her need. She told her what she would like to do within a certain time frame. She has done a good job of communicating.

### Assertive communication and technology

The above behaviors are important for face-to-face communication. However, technology has created new issues. You have probably received more than one text message in which the tone was ambiguous or confusing. Consider the benefits of communicating via text, email, and social media, by thinking about your purpose and topic and weighing them against the shortcomings. Can your message be misinterpreted? Could the emotion be distorted? Written words do not disappear on the internet, and words can be charged with emotion – intentionally or unintentionally.

You might prefer the luxury of email and having time to consider your response and think an issue through instead of responding immediately. Do you need an immediate response to your message? How do you feel when others don't respond to your text messages and later claim they did not receive them? In person or speaking on the phone may be your best option when in doubt, despite the convenience of technology.

## Asking for help...

### When do you need to ask for help?

- Taking care of yourself.** Being the loved one of a deployed Soldier and the support for your family can take a toll on you emotionally and physically. It's important you devote attention to your needs. Remember, you deserve time for yourself.  
*For example, You might try saying, "I would like to go to the military support group. I need someone to sit with the kids. Would you be able to help for three hours on Friday?"*
- Errands.** The demands of managing may increase. You might experience times when you could use help with errands. Most people are willing to help, but you must ask first.  
*For example, You can ask, "Would you mind picking up some milk for me when you go to the store?"*
- Staying in touch.** You may realize that you are not keeping in touch with others and are beginning to experience increased social isolation.  
*For example, If you find that your social world is shrinking, you can say, "I would really enjoy it if you would visit me. Let's pick a day. If it's not a good time for me, I will tell you."*
- Accepting help.** Even when others offer to help, you may be reluctant to accept it. It can be easy to think that others are only being kind and are not really interested in helping you or that you are being a burden. If you need help and others offer it, accept. Don't second guess them.  
*For example: Your friend might offer to shop for you. Instead of refusing, say, "Thank you, I will have the grocery list and money ready for you before noon tomorrow. Does that work for you?"*

## Asking for help from agencies and organizations

- Be direct and assertive.** This saves time and confusion. Clearly state your issue.
- Ask questions.** Be curious. Don't be afraid to ask as many questions as you can think of. You may want to write them down before contacting the agency.
- Discuss resources.** Your loved one has been provided information about helpful resources. Discuss these before deployment if possible. The Online Communication and Support and Helpful Resources for Military and Community Worksheets at the end of the How to Find and Receive Help chapter provide resources to help you.
- Be proactive.** Do not assume others will recognize your needs or contact you. Identify what you need and seek/ask for help. Attend information and education sessions for military families to stay informed about issues and legislation that may affect your family.
- Be informed.** Explore resources via the internet. Contact the resource or organization to become more familiar with its services.
- Ask for recommendations.** Other military families may have more experience or expertise with the issue.
- Be your own advocate.** Ask respectfully and firmly for the help you deserve. If you do not find help through one resource, try another.
- Don't worry.** Your assertiveness communication skills will work.

*For example, With a community or military agency you might say, "I need assistance with filling out some papers. Who can help with this?" Then go ahead and use the resource. It's why it exists.*

## Remember

Learning to communicate assertively is a skill. Be conscious of how you communicate with others. Are you being aggressive and ignoring the needs of others? Are you being passive and allowing others to ignore your needs? Or, are you being assertive and treating your needs and the needs of others equally? Practice the skills in this chapter and watch what happens in your daily life and in your relationships. Effective, respectful communication enhances whatever you do.

## Put it into Practice

What is your main communication style?

- Assertive
- Aggressive
- Passive

If you selected aggressive or passive, why do you feel this happens? What do you think you need to do to improve?

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Which of the following skills do you think you can improve on?

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Focus on actions not the person or person's character

- Practice using "I" statements
- Be more calm and non-judgmental
- Use more engaged, relaxed body language
- Be more specific and direct

Think of some topics that you find difficult to communicate about (someone else's upsetting behavior, admitting you are wrong, sex, your goals or hopes, your feelings, asking your loved one or friend about issues, asking for what you want, asking for help...).

Record some "I" statements about any of these topics. Example,

"I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_."

"Would you mind telling me about \_\_\_\_\_?"

"I need help with \_\_\_\_\_."

## Assertive Communication Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will practice Assertive Communication Techniques.
  - “I” statements
  - Voice control
  - Stay on topic
  - Focus on behavior, not character of the other person
  - Ask questions for clarity
  
- I will practice using one or more of the following non-verbal communication skills:
  - Eye contact
  - Posture
  - Facial expressions
  - Gestures

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







## HOW TO FIND AND RECEIVE HELP

Everyone needs help at some point. Needing help doesn't mean you are weak or incapable. Trying to do too much without the help of others can lead to anxiety and depression. Our society often gives mixed signals. We value self-sufficiency, but also honor helping others. People are social by nature and need a sense of community with others who are experiencing the same situation. Giving and receiving help when it is needed makes us part of that community. This chapter provides you with many resources for getting the help you need.

The military and your community have numerous resources available for you, your loved one, and your family members. Knowing how to find those resources and how to ask for help using assertive communication skills will make the most of the benefits available to you. Being organized and purposeful will enable you to make the best use of your resources.

The most effective way to do it is to do it. – Amelia Earhart

## Preparing to ask for help...

Pride and fear of rejection may be the biggest roadblocks to asking for help. Some people feel vulnerable asking for help. You may not want to burden others, or you may feel it is your responsibility to handle the situation on your own. While these feelings are real, they may not be accurate assumptions. There are situations that arise in which you will need assistance or specialized support. Military families may feel they are letting their loved one down if they express a need for help. There may be a complicated or urgent situation you have not encountered before for which you need advice in a timely manner. Knowing who to call and ask is invaluable.

Negative ideas about asking for help create barriers to getting what you need. You may be hesitant to relinquish control of a problem and trust the person helping you. You are not imposing, you are seeking to handle a situation in the most responsible, correct way possible with information from the most reliable source.

### Make a plan

Once you confront your barriers to asking for help, make a plan. Use the How to Find and Receive Help Checklist at the end of the chapter.

- Identify who is likely to help you.** Who can help in a crisis or emergency? Who might be available to help you with an everyday request such as babysitting? Who is available if there is an emergency?
- Begin to contact people.** Contact those who can help *before* you suspect you will need them, if possible. If necessary, assign someone in your life to make decisions on your behalf if you are unable to, and sign proper consent and authorization forms.

*For example,* Your child's school may require written consent for anyone other than a parent to pick up your child. How can you assign someone to make medical decisions for your child if you are unavailable?

- Communicate with identified helpers.** Even if you don't have a specific need in mind at this time, building a network of support in advance will give you immediate contacts should a need arise.
- Activate your network.** When the time comes that you need someone, ask your identified helpers. If one turns you down, simply move on to someone else in your network. Stay focused on the task, not a person's refusal to help at the given time. Remember that people have the right to say no. They are not rejecting you; they may not be able to help at this time or with this task.

- Ask for help and offer help in return.** This creates a relationship of comfort on both a social and practical level. The help you give and take does not have to involve the same action, but returning a favor gives the relationship balance.
- Try to broaden your circle of support.** Network with other military families, neighbors, friends, your community of faith, clubs or groups you belong to, and other parents from your children’s school. Extend your help to others if possible. There may be tasks that you could share, such as picking up children.
- Set limits.** Know your limits on what you can ask of others and of yourself. Say “yes” when you can, but say “no” comfortably, too. Do not offer help that will burden you, but be considerate.
- Reach out.** Remember, it is not wrong to ask for help, but it is wrong to need help and not seek it. You will wear out if you don’t reach out to others.
- Practice if necessary.** Set the stage to ask for help. Practice so that asking for help becomes more comfortable. Use the strategies from the Assertive Communication chapter to make your asking clear and effective.

## Help from organizations and agencies...

What if you need more help than your personal support network can provide? As a member of the military family, when the time comes to ask for help you have many organizations to assist you and your family. There are also community agencies that can help. Many of these resources are found in the supplemental material at the end of this section. Here are some steps to take to ask for help from agencies and organizations, either military or community.

- Be informed.** Explore resources through the internet. Information about services and practical hints can often be found online. Remember that resource information can change and websites can be out of date. Contact organizations to become familiar with their services and hours. The Online Communication and Support and Helpful Resources for Military and Community worksheets at the end of this chapter will get you started.
- Ask others for recommendations.** Other military families and family advocates can be excellent resources for identifying where you can find the help you need.
- Be proactive.** Do not wait for someone to realize you need help. Assess your situation, identify what you need, and ask for help.
- Be your own advocate.** If one resource is unavailable, find another. Ask respectfully and firmly for the help you need.

## Help over the telephone

Contacting resources over the phone can be more successful if you follow these steps:

- Avoid distractions.** Make calls when you will not be interrupted.
- Be patient.** It may take many contacts to get the information you need. The first person you contact may not be the right person. Be prepared to be put on hold.
- Be ready.** Have a pen and paper ready before you make the call. Take notes.

Write down:

\_\_\_ The date that you called

\_\_\_ The agency name and phone number

\_\_\_ The name of the person you spoke with

\_\_\_ What the person said

\_\_\_ If there needs to be a follow-up call, write down:

When you should call

Name of the person to speak with

## Organize your resources...

Once you have identified resources and documents, it is important to have a system in place where you can easily locate the information. Knowing where you can easily access important documents can save time and give you peace of mind. Here are some ideas:

- Design a system** that works for you and your family. Be sure that decision makers know where your information is located and have access to PIN numbers in case of need.
- Avoid having to search** for an important document. Have a locked box or filing cabinet set aside for important documents. As you access services in the military system, there are certain documents that you will need. Below are some of the records that you should locate and secure.
  - DD1172
  - DD214
  - Medical/dental records
  - Immunization records
  - Marriage license
  - Insurance policies
  - Divorce decree(s)
  - Birth certificate(s)
  - Mortgage or rental papers

- Organize and secure your filing system.** Using a simple system in a locked file drawer can provide a central record keeping system. You may be able to scan and store your documents securely on the internet.
- Include contacts** in your resources including those for household service providers such as electricians, plumbers, and auto mechanics. This will serve as a ready resource when a breakdown occurs. Check the Practical Issues chapter for more suggestions.
- Phone numbers of helpers** in an easy access list can be time saving. Consider having a list of people who are your informal support network. These are people who you can count on to assist you with an occasional errand, babysitting, or household chore.
- List home maintenance needs** such as changing air filters on the system in your home, changing oil in the vehicles, or cleaning the the rain gutters on your house. These are examples of tasks that should be on a routine schedule of maintenance.
- Create a spreadsheet** to keep records and reminders if it helps you.
- Keep your private information secure and/or password protected.**

### **A family emergency plan**

One other item to develop and keep is a family emergency plan. A family plan for disasters and crisis situations should include what to do in case of a fire, a power outage, a plumbing or electrical emergency, or extreme/dangerous weather such as tornadoes or hurricanes. The family plan can be kept with your filing system or in a location that is known to those who can help you in a crisis or emergency. Find emergency telephone numbers for your local area and list them in your family plan.

### **Remember...**

Everyone needs help at times. Not seeking help can create a bigger problem than existed in the first place. Know which resources are available and which people you can count on for help and utilize them. Be organized and purposeful when you need something specific. Practice your assertive communication skills, and be clear about getting what you need. Deployment can be a difficult time and no one expects you to manage alone.

## Put it into Practice

Who can you call on if you need help?

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How will you ask them for help so they will be ready if a need arises?

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What are some resources you need to explore?

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How do you organize your records for safekeeping?

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## How to Find and Receive Help Checklist

1. Identify who is likely to help you.
2. Begin to contact the people who can help, before deployment.
3. Communicate with identified helpers in your life.
4. When the time comes, remind them of the request.
5. Ask for help and give help in return.
6. Try to broaden your circle of support by extending your help to others.
7. Set limits.
8. Remind yourself to reach out.
9. Practice asking for help!

## Online Communication and Support

Many families find online support to be an effective means of connection during the difficulties of deployment. These are only a few of the available links to help you connect and gain information. Some sites listed may be inactive or suspended.

### Web Pages

**SpouseBUZZ** is a virtual Spouse Support Group, a place where you can instantly connect with thousands of other military spouses. [www.military.com/spousebuzz](http://www.military.com/spousebuzz)

**Military.com** hosts links to support groups and other helpful resources. [www.military.com/spouse/military-life/spouse-groups](http://www.military.com/spouse/military-life/spouse-groups)

**Operation We Are Here** offers online support and resources for military families. [www.operationwearehere.com/GetConnected.html](http://www.operationwearehere.com/GetConnected.html)

**Army Family Readiness Group (FRG)** provides information and a social network for families of deployed soldiers. It also provides community resource links. Check with your local FRG lead.



Facebook® offers numerous support pages, many of them military-base-specific. Use the search function to find the site that most pertains to your needs. Some to consider are:

- Army Wife 101
- Military Spouse Advocacy Network
- Military Spouse
- Military Spouse Central
- Deployment: One day at a time

Consider creating a site/page of your own inviting other families of the deployed Soldiers of your base. As a page or site administrator, create and post guidelines setting a positive, uncritical tone of caring, support, and humor. Social media can degrade into something negative if the site administrator is not vigilant or its members post negative things. Being inclusive in the membership is also necessary in order to promote a strong community.



LinkedIn® has many member-companies that specialize in finding jobs for military spouses who often have to move frequently.

## Helpful Resources for Military and Community

As a member of the military family when the time comes to ask for help you will have many organizations to assist you and your family.

### Military and Veteran Resources

#### Army Community Service (ACS)

Provides on-base support during all phases of deployment, including planning, relocation, employment, and financial services. Programs such as Family Readiness Groups (FRG), Family Assistance Centers (FAC), Army Emergency Relief Agency (AER), Family Advocacy Program (FAP), and Victim Advocacy Program are included.

[www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance](http://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance)

#### Army Emergency Relief (AER)

Provides financial assistance to Army soldiers (active duty and Reserve component soldiers) ordered to active duty for more than 30 consecutive days.

[www.armyemergencyrelief.org/](http://www.armyemergencyrelief.org/)

#### Army Family Readiness Group (FRG)

A network of support for deployed troops disseminating command information, sharing advice, and providing community links and often social activities for families at home. Check with your local FRG lead.

#### Army OneSource/Military OneSource Family Programs and Services

Offers private community counseling, including couples counseling, and information on parenting and issues related to deployment and reunion. There is no cost to active duty, Guard members, and Reservists (regardless of activation status) and their families. Army OneSource is on the Army Family Web Portal. [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com),

[www.armyfamilywebportal.com/](http://www.armyfamilywebportal.com/)

#### Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)

Provides on-base services, including education, counseling and rehabilitation, to Soldiers and Family members. [www.armyresilience.army.mil/substance/index.html](http://www.armyresilience.army.mil/substance/index.html)

#### Behavioral Health

The on-base Child, Adolescent & Family Behavioral Health System provides assessment and treatment, including marriage and family therapy.

## Chaplains

Spiritual help is offered through military chaplains and enlisted religious support personnel who are available to help and serve Soldiers and families. Find a military chaplain by contacting the nearest military installation or by calling the Military Chaplains Association at 703-533-5890.

## Ready and Resilient (R2)

Training centers at the unit level provide assessment, training, and self-development tools to build resilience, including problem solving, how to think optimistically, and how to cope with adversity.

## Employer Support of the Guard and Reserves (ESGR)

Informs and educates Service members and their civilian employers regarding their rights and responsibilities. [www.esgr.mil/](http://www.esgr.mil/)

## Family Advocacy Program (FAP)

Provides services to troops and family members experiencing domestic abuse and child abuse through prevention efforts, early identification and intervention, support for victims, and treatment for abusers. [www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/family-advocacy](http://www.armymwr.com/programs-and-services/personal-assistance/family-advocacy)

## The GI Bill

The Department of Veterans Affairs website provides information on all federal benefits available for military personnel. [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)

## Health Insurance – TRICARE

Provides insurance for military personnel and family members. They can be reached by calling 888-585-9378 or at the website [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) or [health.mil/I-Am-A/Caregiver-or-Family-Member](http://health.mil/I-Am-A/Caregiver-or-Family-Member). You can compare the different health insurance plans on the website and enroll for optional plans such as the dental program. For Reservists: [www.tricare.mil/reserve](http://www.tricare.mil/reserve)

## Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)

Dedicated to educating the public about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, advocating on behalf of those who have served, and fostering a community for troops, Veterans, and their families. [www.iava.org](http://www.iava.org)

## Legal Assistance – Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) Corps

Provides online legal information and resources for a variety of situations for military personnel and their families. [www.jagcnet.army.mil](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil)

## Military Families at Real Warriors

Provides information and resources to educate service members, Veterans, military families and health care professionals. They provide information on how to adjust to deployment, support the service member, take care of yourself, and help children adjust. [www.realwarriors.net/family](http://www.realwarriors.net/family)

## Military and Family Life Counselors (MFLC)

Provide short-term, non-medical counseling support for a range of issues including: relationships, crisis intervention, stress management, grief, occupational and other individual and family issues. Psycho-educational presentations focused on issues common to the military family are provided to commands as requested. MFLCs are on each post and can be reached through the wellness center, or accessible through Army OneSource. Some units even have one embedded in their higher headquarters.

## Military HOMEFRONT

Provides quality-of-life information to help troops and their families. <https://operationhomefront.org/>

## Military ID Cards

Contain the information the military needs to identify you, dependents, and your Soldier. They are the key to getting benefits such as health insurance, access to bases, commissaries, and childcare. You and any other dependents must be enrolled in DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) by your Soldier in order to get the ID (unless you have a Power of Attorney, in which case you may be able to do so yourself). DEERS can be reached at 800-538-9552. DD Forms 1172 and 1173 will need to be completed. A system known as RAPIDS (Real Time Automated Personnel Identification System) is in charge of issuing military IDs. You can find a RAPIDS location at [idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/](http://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/)

## National Center for PTSD

Provides information on the clinical care and social welfare of America’s Veterans with PTSD. [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

## National Military Family Association

Provides education to military families concerning the rights, benefits, and services available to them. [www.militaryfamily.org](http://www.militaryfamily.org)

## National Personnel Records Center-Military Personnel Records (NPRC-MPR)

Provides information regarding military personnel and health and medical records stored at the NPRC-MPR. [www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records)

## Rear Detachment

The Rear Detachment Commander (RDC) works closely with Family Support Groups (FSGs) and the Family Assistance Center (FAC) to keep families informed and resolve problems encountered by families during deployment.

## Strong Bonds

Chaplain-based Strong Bonds getaways provide Soldiers and families with relationship education and skills training in a setting that inspires hope, fosters fellowship, and rekindles intimacy. Events are available for singles, couples, families, and for those pre- and post-deployment. [www.strongbonds.org/](http://www.strongbonds.org/)

## Vet Centers

Provide various services to Veterans and their families such as individual and group counseling for Veterans and family counseling for military related concerns, outreach and education, and community events. 877-927-8387 [www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)

## Wellness Centers

Provide on-base health assessment review, physical fitness, healthy nutrition, stress management, wellness education, and tobacco education. The centers also provide metabolic testing, body composition measurements, and fitness assessments.

## Local Community and National Organization Resources

### American Psychological Association (APA)

Offers a practice directory for referrals to psychological services. 800-374-2721 / 202-336-5500 / TTY: 800-374-2721 (x6123). [locator.apa.org/](http://locator.apa.org/)

### American Red Cross

Works closely with all branches of the military to foster the health, welfare, recreation, and morale of military personnel and their families. They can assist with emergency communications, health and welfare inquiries, information, referral, and advocacy, humanitarian and hardship reassignment, discharge review and correction of military records for Veterans, emergency financial assistance, and health and safety courses. Submit a request online at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or call 877-272-7337.

### Consumer Protection

**Military Sentinel:** Provides military members and families an avenue to file complaints and access to the Federal Trade Commission's education and information. [www.military.consumer.gov](http://www.military.consumer.gov)

**FTC (Federal Trade Commission):** Information on consumer alerts and how to handle and identify threats. [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

**During Deployment:** Set up an "Active Duty Alert" to minimize risk of identity threat. [www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0273-active-duty-alerts](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0273-active-duty-alerts)  
[www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0014-identity-theft)

### National Domestic Violence Hotline

Provides information and confidential advice to those experiencing domestic violence. (24-hours / 7 days a week), 800-799-SAFE (-7233) or TTY: 800-787-3224. NDVH will translate into over 130 languages.

### National Association of Social Workers, Inc. (NASW)

Provides referrals to social workers and services. 202-408-8600.

### Sesame Street and Sesame Workshop

Military and Veteran family focused programs, such as Talk, Listen, Connect, Military Families Near and Far, and Transitions provide support and practical education to help children through deployments, combat-related injuries, and the death of a loved one. [www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/veterans](http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/veterans) and [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

## State and Local Human Service Agencies

Provide assistance and information. Search online, or look in your local telephone directory. Examples of community resources include:

- Local churches, mosques, synagogues, or places of worship
- Department of Social Services
- Public Health Department
- United Way
- Salvation Army/Goodwill
- Parents Anonymous
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- YMCA/YWCA
- Area Agency on Aging

## Substance Abuse & Mental Health Assistance

Provides referrals to local treatment options and information. 877-726-4727 and [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov). Make sure you have a referral from your Army or Tricare provider or Army OneSource to ensure the service is covered.

## Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

Provides nutritious food for eligible families. Infants may receive iron-fortified formula, cereal, and juice. Nutritional education and referrals are provided. WIC is free of cost for eligible participants. To determine eligibility and locate the nearest WIC clinic, call 800-345-1942.

## How to Find and Receive Help Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will make a list of people I commonly need to call: doctor, pharmacy, hair stylist/ barber, family members, neighbors and record the phone numbers in an easily accessible place.
- I will create a folder with my important personal and legal documents. Such as:

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Changes and choices in life can bring conflict. As individuals, we each have a unique set of wants, needs, ideas, and perspectives. Occasionally these things may seem incompatible or even in opposition with another person's. We disagree. We may disagree about what happened or should happen, what was said or unsaid, what was intended or unintended, what is true or untrue. How we handle our differences is key to handling the struggles of life. Such differences, when handled well, result in creative solutions, positive interaction, and stronger relationships. When disagreement is poorly dealt with, the outcome can erode relationships and create undesirable outcomes for everyone involved.

In the long term, working through difficulties together will help us live a less stressful and more fulfilling life. Learning effective conflict resolution skills can improve all our interpersonal relationships. Learning to disagree amicably and work through problems is perhaps one of the most important interpersonal skills we can develop.

Another way to think about resolving conflict is that you are negotiating a solution. We all use negotiation every day. The same steps you use in negotiating family roles can be used negotiating with friends, family, and others. This same process can also be used after deployment when your loved one returns home.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. – Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Unhealthy conflict...

### Causes of conflict

In a positive scenario, two people talk together calmly and openly disagree in a productive manner. Each person involved seeks to understand the other's point of view and concerns, and then the two conclude by reaching a solution both parties feel comfortable with which respects both of their needs. Unfortunately, reality often brings other things into disagreement: anger, hurt, fear, self-esteem, past experiences, misunderstanding, assumptions, and sensitivity. None of these intruders help the two parties resolve the conflict.

Conflicts arise for a myriad of reasons including, but not limited to:

- Differences.** Differences in our unique perspectives often clash, not because either person is wrong, but because each sees the situation from a different point of view.
- Judgment.** When you believe the other's point of view is irrational, wrong, or unfair, you are passing judgment. You might pass judgment about a behavior, an event, someone's intentions, or an outcome.
- Withholding.** With friends, coworkers, and strangers, we are often on our best behavior. You may err by saying too little when things go wrong. You may suffer silently before bringing issues up. Instead of saying things directly, you may drop hints and appear unaffected while frustration builds to anger.
- Sensitivity.** People differ in their sensitivity to comments or actions of others as well as their ability to deal with the stress created by conflict. Being easily offended is not helpful, but we should remember that carefully choosing the words we say can avoid offense.
- Self-Esteem.** Our self-esteem is more fragile than most people believe. Conflict often threatens self-esteem. By seeking out only people who agree with us (right or wrong), we avoid conflict and falsely elevate that self-esteem. By confronting and successfully negotiating with people who disagree with us, our self-esteem grows.

## Counterproductive conflict behaviors

Whether we recognize it or not, *everyone* has participated in one or more of these counterproductive behaviors when confronting conflict. Check out the Conflict Behaviors Chart at the end of the chapter for productive conflict resolution behaviors to try in place of counterproductive ones.

- Passing judgment
- Making assumptions
- Unwillingness to take responsibility for words or actions
- Unwillingness to compromise or change
- Needing to explain our side first
- Listening ineffectively
- Acting on fear of losing, of being rejected or dismissed
- Needing competition
- Assuming that one has to lose if the other is going to win
- Feeling that any criticism or disagreement is an attack on you
- Hitting “below the belt,” making intentionally hurtful statements or accusations
- Withdrawing and becoming silent
- Storing up complaints from the distant past

## Counterproductive conflict resolution (or how NOT to confront disagreement)

- Fighting it out.** The two involved argue, do not listen, get mad, bully, and become engaged in a power struggle often trading hurtful accusations that only escalate the conflict.
- Giving in.** Giving in may end the conflict, but can also be unproductive and harmful. Naturally, there are occasions when doing so is wise, to avoid escalation, for instance. However, if your needs are habitually unmet, you may stop caring and not only withdraw psychologically from the situation but also from the relationship.
- Avoidance.** When we practice avoidance, it weakens a relationship and resolves nothing. We can avoid addressing the conflict by refusing to talk about it, and by distracting ourselves with another activity meant to take our mind off it or to dull the pain. Some avoidance is caused by anxiety or fear of the conflict’s outcome.

## Healthy conflict resolution...

For many people, conflict creates significant discomfort. If handled appropriately, though, conflict can strengthen relationships and improve our understanding and acceptance of each other. Positive conflict resolution:

- Invites others to express their points of view.
- Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations.
- Expresses disagreements in a way that does not attack or disparage others.
- Helps uncover underlying and unstated issues causing the conflict.
- Brings disagreements into the open and addresses them.
- Expands areas of agreement and narrows areas of disagreement.
- Facilitates the development of creative solutions to conflict.
- Identifies the truth in criticisms.
- Knows when to compromise and when to stand firm.

## Negotiating and productive conflict resolution guidelines...

### Negotiation guidelines

We recommend reviewing the chapters Communication Skills and Assertive Communication in addition to practicing the following behaviors. The Steps to Negotiation worksheet at the end of the chapter provides a handy summary for you and your partner.

- Remember the relationship.** Remember—above all – your needs and the needs of others are equally important. Learn to play fairly. Separate the people from the problem.
- Remain calm.** Try not to overreact. Don't react to outbursts. By remaining calm, others will be more likely to consider your viewpoint. Recognize and understand emotions.

- Establish common ground rules.** You may want to ask your partner-in-conflict to read and discuss this information with you. When both people accept positive common ground rules for managing a conflict, resolution becomes much more likely.
- Set a time for a discussion.** It should be as soon as possible but agreeable to both persons. Springing a conversation on someone who is unprepared may feel like an attack and lead to defensiveness. Select a time when you can discuss the issue without distractions. Make sure neither of you is hungry, angry, or tired.
- Know what you want.** Vague complaints are difficult to address. Focus on your desired outcome, but know that it may be reached in a manner you haven't thought of yet. Focus on behaviors or actions you are seeking, not a change in the personality or perspective of the other person. What exactly is bothering you? What do you want the other person to do or not do? Try to be objective and fair or reasonable in your requests.
- State the issue clearly.** Ask for what you want; no one can read your mind. Stick to the facts; then, once you've stated the facts, you might state your feelings. Are your feelings in proportion to the issue? The Assertive Communication chapter has strategies to help you ask for what you want in a respectful manner.

*For example, Focus on how someone's actions impacted you practically ("Because of X-action, I have to Y-action") or emotionally ("I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when X-action occurs") or both.*

- Invite the other person to share his or her point of view.** Be careful not to interrupt, and genuinely try to hear the other person's concerns and feelings. Try to restate what you heard in a way that lets the other person know you fully understood, and ask him or her to do the same for you. If we encourage others to explain their side first, they will be more apt to listen to ours. Practice Active Listening, which is addressed in the chapter Communication Skills.
- Try to understand the other's perspective.** Try to see the problem through his or her eyes. The opposing viewpoint can make sense to you, even if you don't agree with it. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Propose specific solutions, and invite the other person to propose solutions, too.** Be creative if necessary. Listen openly. The idea is not to win, but to come to a mutually satisfying solution to the problem. Based on assertive behavior, learn to lay your needs on the table. Invent options for mutual gain. You can use the worksheet in the Problem Solving chapter to help you brainstorm and evaluate solutions.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.** Do this calmly and practically without criticizing the proposal itself.

- **Work for consensus, not compromise.** Consensus is a win-win proposition. Broaden your options. Identify shared interests. Ask for your partner's preferences. If you allow the other person only one option, it will make it difficult to resolve a conflict. People in disagreement should focus on needs rather than on positions. When we concentrate on needs, we find we have more in common than we had assumed. Try to get beyond your positions (who is "right") to the issues that lie behind them. We can often meet someone else's needs without abandoning our own. Above all, remember your needs and the needs of others are equally important.
- **Celebrate when you reach an agreement.** Thank each other. Conflict resolution is not always easy. Appreciate the effort and commitment it takes to move forward.

### More positive pointers

- **Express feelings in words, not actions.** If you start to feel increasingly angry or upset take a time out and do something to help yourself feel calm: take a walk, practice Deliberate Breathing, write in your journal – whatever works for you.
- **Deal with only one issue at a time.** Don't introduce other topics until one is fully discussed. This avoids the kitchen sink effect where people throw in all their complaints while not allowing anything to be resolved.
- **Don't use judgmental language.** Attacking areas of personal sensitivity creates an atmosphere of distrust, anger, and vulnerability. Instead of "*That doesn't make sense,*" try "*I don't understand.*"
- **Avoid accusations.** Accusations will lead others to focus on defending themselves rather than on understanding you.
- **Try not to generalize or exaggerate.** Avoid words like "never" or "always." Such generalizations are usually inaccurate and will heighten tensions. Review the Thought Record in the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter for more help with this issue.
- **Don't stockpile.** Storing up grievances over time is counterproductive. It's almost impossible to deal with numerous old problems for which memories may differ. Try to deal with problems as they arise.
- **Avoid withdrawing.** Positive results can only be attained with two-way communication. When one person becomes silent and stops responding to the other, frustration and anger can result. However, if you feel yourself getting overwhelmed or shutting down, take a break from the discussion. Let your partner know you will return to the conversation as soon as you are able and then follow-up.

- **Manage anger.** Disagreements can lead people to feel angry and hurt. Feeling angry isn't necessarily a problem if that anger is handled constructively. Anger can escalate one conflict and create additional conflicts. Review the Anger section of the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter and the Understanding and Dealing with Anger chapter in the Red Flags section if this is an issue you must confront in yourself or another.
- **When nothing seems to work.** Sometimes, despite our best conflict resolution efforts, a disagreement or problem seems insurmountable. When this occurs, talking with a professional can help. A trained mediator can help you communicate more effectively and eventually work your way through to a solution.

## Remember...

Conflict resolution is a skill that can be learned and improved upon. Conflict in relationships is normal and to be expected. How we handle the conflict is what counts and what can change the course of the relationship. Resolving issues fairly and respectfully builds trust and appreciation between people. Use the guidelines in this chapter and be responsible for your own behaviors, and you will find that conflicts become easier and easier to resolve.

## Put it into Practice

How effective are you and your significant other at resolving conflicts?

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Which ineffective conflict resolution behaviors do you struggle with?

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What are the strengths of your and your partner's resolution skills?

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What are the weaknesses?

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What might be an "easy" (not emotionally charged) conflict you and your partner could practice these skills on?

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## Conflict Behaviors Chart

COUNTERPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS	PRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS
Fighting it out (anger is released-no solution), giving in (needs go unmet), avoiding (no attempt to resolve conflict)	Expressing disagreement in a calm, respectful way that does not attack or disparage others
Passing judgment, making assumptions	Asking questions, listening actively, identifying underlying issues
Being unwilling to take responsibility for one's own words and actions; taking all criticism as an attack	Acknowledging one's own role in the conflict and apologizing when necessary
Being unwilling to compromise or change, being inflexible (stubborn)	Being open, flexible, and willing to try new solutions
Needing to explain our side first, listening ineffectively, needing competition	Inviting others' viewpoints, seeking to understand and validate their views and needs, expanding areas of agreement
Acting on fear of losing (competition), being rejected, or being dismissed	Acting in order to solve a problem and maintain the relationship
Hitting "below the belt," withdrawing, bringing up past complaints	Being supportive, direct, and focused on the current conflict
Seeking to meet one's own needs (win), disregarding the needs of others and the relationship itself	Seeking creative and mutually agreeable solutions that meet the needs of all involved, helping to prevent future conflict

## Steps to Negotiation

- **Remember the relationship**  
Both of your needs are important
- **Remain calm**  
Anger and emotion can cloud an issue
- **Establish common ground rules**  
No interrupting, listen attentively, be solution oriented
- **Set a time for a discussion**  
Minimal distractions
- **State the issue clearly**  
Address a behavior, action, or event – not a person's character
- **Know what you want**  
Is the conflict practical or emotional, or both?
- **Invite the other person to share his or her point of view**  
Sharing fosters cooperation
- **Try to understand the other person's perspective**  
Both parties need to feel understood and respected
- **Propose specific solutions, and invite the other person to propose solutions, too**  
Write them down if necessary
- **Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal**
- **Work for consensus, not compromise**  
Consensus is a win-win proposition which you both agree upon; compromise implies someone has given up or conceded a part of his own needs. Look for the needs behind the positions.
- **Celebrate when you reach an agreement**  
Negotiations can be difficult. When you succeed, appreciate and acknowledge one another!

## Conflict Resolution Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will practice inviting others to share their perspective *first* in disagreements while actively listening.
- I will actively avoid at least three counterproductive or ineffective conflict resolution techniques.

The outcome of my actions:

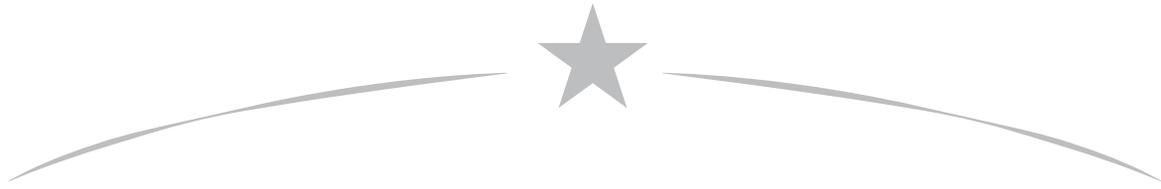
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## SOCIAL MEDIA

You understand that communication with your deployed Soldier may rely on social media and that is a positive thing during deployment. However, have you thought about how social media may impact your circle of support back home? Social media is used by 90% of young adults in the United States to communicate privately and publicly as well as to access news, education, and entertainment. This amazing technology allows us to instantly communicate with people far away and access endless information. It has, however, been infiltrated by people who use it irresponsibly and criminally. Understanding and watching out for these factors help the user to avoid problems.

Social media and texting can help build relationships, but it can also destroy them. It can spread important news or lies. It can be used to raise money for worthy causes or steal money from unsuspecting charitable people. By reading this chapter, you will educate yourself about this medium and the positive and negative impacts it can have on your life.

Dance like the photo won't be tagged.  
Love like you've never been unfriended.  
Sing like nobody's following.  
Share like you care.  
And do it all like it won't end up on YouTube. – Unknown

## Social media success...

### Positive communication

Use social media to be a positive force in the world. Let whatever you text, type, or post be truthful and kind. Some positive ways to communicate through social media include:

- Connecting with your loved one. Create a private Facebook® page or online account for you and your loved one that no one else has access to. Share important photos or news before the rest of the world. It helps your Soldier feel connected. Your comments and messages are private, creating a space just for the two of you.
- Animal videos, dancing babies, You Tube parodies: social media can be used to brighten anyone's day.
- Inspirational quotes and stories as well as words of encouragement brighten the realm of social media.
- Stay in touch with friends from afar and friends from the past. We can also meet new friends.
- Send a quick note or even an *"I love you"* to make someone's day.
- Provide social support. Help each other through difficult times and applaud successes.
- Publicly say *"Thank you,"* or privately say *"I'm thinking of you."*

### Information and opportunity

Whatever it is you want to know about, the information is accessible through social media. Get random questions answered, or learn substantial lessons.

- Educational websites, Facebook® pages, and more
- Visit universities online, take an online class.
- Learn about charitable organizations and volunteer opportunities.
- Job search and network with people in your current or desired field of work.
- Watch how-to videos online.

## Entertainment

Another great thing about social media is the access to free and inexpensive entertainment. Listening to relaxing or fun music is known to relieve stress. Watching a favorite TV show or comedic movie can also be mood lifting.

- You can watch movies, television programs, music concerts, and more for a fraction of the price it would have cost initially. You can download any of these things to watch at your convenience. Streaming media vendors compete for your attention, which brings costs down as well.
- Music access via social media is amazing. Subscriptions are available with unlimited access; there are apps to recognize and remember songs you hear on the radio. There are music services that have low monthly fees, and other internet companies have a music service or include music access with a membership. You may already have a favorite.
- Use your phone or tablet to read the latest best seller, download recipes, or even follow your favorite magazine. Most phones have reading apps and many books are free! Many colleges offer downloadable textbooks now to make studying easy when you are on the go.

## Social media pitfalls...

In addition to all the amazing things social media allows us to do, there are some issues that users need to be aware of.

### Addiction

Adults in the U.S. spend, on average, between one and three hours a day total using social media. In addition, they check a social media site 30 times a week or more on average. Numbers do vary by age, gender, and education, but experts agree that even one hour a day may not be healthy. Much depends on the extent to which it impacts your life negatively and whether being disconnected from social media makes you feel anxious. Because social media does affect the pleasure center of your brain, it is addictive. Despite the fact that social media is not a drug you ingest, it is physically addictive to your brain and can impact your mood and emotions negatively. Answer the following questions honestly to yourself:

1. Do you spend a lot of time thinking about what you just saw/read on social media or anticipating the next time you can check it?

2. Do you find yourself spending more time on social media than you intended to?
3. Do you find that the more time you spend on social media, the more relaxed or happy you feel?
4. Have you unsuccessfully tried to cut back or stop using social media?
5. Have you jeopardized or lost a relationship, job, or educational success because of use?
6. Have you lied about how much or often you use social media?
7. Have you used social media to relieve a bad mood?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to examine your use. The following are ideas on how to cut back and how therapists treat social media addiction.

### **Addiction treatment**

Some people are born with genetic tendencies to addictive behavior, and those suffering from depression or anxiety are more prone to addiction. Steps to decrease your use or recover from social media/internet addiction include:

- Be screened for depression and/or anxiety by a mental health professional.
- Strictly limit your social media and internet time each day.
- Use external stoppers. Choose events and times that you will have your phone off or on silent and out of sight.
- Set goals to steadily decrease your use time.
- Delete all addictive apps, games, and/or public sites you follow compulsively.
- Use reminder cards. These are small index cards with positive reasons for cutting back your use. This chapter will give you many good reasons.
- See a counselor for help if it's difficult to manage on your own. A therapist can help set goals, sort through your reasons for addiction, and encourage you in your effort.

### **Social media and depression**

Use of social media for more than one hour a day is correlated with a high risk for depression. In fact, the greater the amount of time spent, the greater the link. Why?

- Idealized presentations of self.** What people post is filtered and cropped and leveraged to make them and their lives look incredible. This distortion of reality can cause people to feel disappointed in their own seemingly boring lives.
- External validation.** Some people, unfortunately, seek the approval of others to create their own self-worth. If people leave compliments in the comment line of a post, or “like” a photo or post, it validates the person who posted it and makes them feel good about themselves. To the contrary, if someone criticizes a post, does not comment, or does not “like” the post, the user then becomes down and feels unaccepted or un-liked.
- Self-worth.** What you have and what other people think of you have nothing to do with the person you are. Your self-worth should come from inside yourself, not from others or materials things.

## Relationship impacts

Cell phone and social media use, without a doubt, can negatively impact your relationships with your friends, your family, and your loved one. One study found that 45% of couples reported having tension or even arguments in their relationship over social media and cell phone use. One reason for this is that 87% of young adults admit they check their phone or social media while having an in-person conversation. This is an unhealthy practice for many reasons.

## Lack of attention

When your phone is visible to you, whether it is face up or face down, you are not fully paying attention to the in-person conversation you are having. Whether or not you are listening to the speaker does not matter; the mere presence of the phone creates a distraction. Put it on silent and out of sight. Research indicates that with phone presence:

- You remember less of the conversation.
- You do not make eye contact with the person speaking to you.
- You do not observe the body language of the person speaking to you.
- You feel less empathy for the person speaking to you.
- You are less connected to the person speaking to you.
- Your behavior indicates a disinterest in the speaker or what the speaker is saying.

## Communication regrets

Many people admit to sending a text they later regret, or posting something online they later remove – after others have seen it. In fact, one study found that 71% of social media users had posted something they later regretted, and 58% had been upset by a photo that someone else posted of them. Things to remember when texting or posting include:

- Tone and intention can be lost in electronic communication.
- Misunderstanding can occur.
- The internet is forever; you create a digital footprint that cannot be deleted. Friends can screenshot, share, and forward before you remove it, and law enforcement can retrieve all deleted data.
- Don't post or text when you are upset. Cool off.
- Employers and universities may ask for access to your social media to evaluate you as a candidate. If you do not give consent, it creates suspicion. People have been fired from jobs and expelled from universities and other organizations for inappropriate social media use.
- Be aware of the persona you present online. It reflects on your family, the Army, and any other group you belong to.
- Approximately 8% of young married couples report jealousy over an online friendship a spouse is involved in. Be careful and guard your marriage.

## To post or not to post...

### Military considerations

As a military family member, there are things you know you should not post. Some things should not be posted for ethical reasons. Some should not be posted because they jeopardize the mission and safety of your Soldier. In addition, ask your friends not to post any of this information to your personal sites and ask them not to tag you in any such posting. Do NOT post:

- Any news of Soldiers injured or killed
- Any rumors of deployment extensions
- Any location dates of the deployment or redeployment

- Any piece of information that could be combined with other information to identify places or missions
- Any rumors or gossip in general
- Vague prayer requests that incite worry

## Personal considerations

Two other instances in which you should not be posting or texting are when you are under the influence of alcohol – or any other substance - and when you are driving.

- Alcohol and other substances impair your judgment and your ability to see the impact of your behaviors. There are even apps available to stop people who have a habit of “drunk-texting.”

You can text, post, or message things you regret or don’t mean when under the influence. Don’t do it.

- The CDC states that 9 people die each day in the U.S. because of distracted driving. If you are travelling 55 mph and take 5 seconds to read or respond to a message, you have taken your eyes off the road for 100 yards, the distance of a football field. Do not use social media while driving. Turn the phone off if the temptation is too great. Don’t become a statistic or cause one. In most states using your phone while driving is against the law for a reason.

## Fake news...

When you encounter rumors or gossip online, try to acknowledge them for what they are. When you read news, make sure and evaluate it for its credibility as well. According to research, 88% of young adults in the U.S. get *all* their news from social media. For this reason, it is vital that you learn to spot the real news from the fake news. Look for the following cues:

- Outrageous photo or headline.** This can indicate a fake or manipulated story.
- One quote wonder.** The writer may have one accurate quote to build a story on, but it is taken out of context, out of the correct time period, or misattributed entirely.
- Top of the feed.** Just because a story appears at the top of your search feed when you look for it does not make it credible. These spots are paid for by the publisher to increase exposure.

- **Suspicious URLs.** Known and usually credible URLs in the U.S. normally end in .com, .org, .gov, or .edu. A URL ending in .net needs to be vetted. A URL ending in .co or .su or any other irregular letters is highly suspicious and can be tagged onto what look to be very credible sources. For instance, the following are fake sites:
  - ABCNews.org.co
  - NationalReport.su
- **No mainstream coverage.** If a story is not being covered by mainstream cable or network news, this generally means that the story is flawed or false. The media in the U.S. can be sued for libel if they air untrue stories. In addition, these large corporations can lose millions of dollars in income if they lose their credibility. This does not mean the news they air is without opinion in addition to fact, but it does mean they are not allowed to lie. This government regulation does not exist in all countries, and our social media can be infiltrated by anyone, anywhere in the world. Be smart about what you read and what you believe.

## Other social media dwellers...

In addition to those circulating fake news, social media has become a venue for other dishonest or antisocial people.

- Trolls are people who post on social media specifically to make people angry. They instigate, they provoke, they insult. Trolls get pleasure in upsetting people and feel powerful doing it. Many use a false screen name to hide their identity.
- Catfish are those who assume a false persona online. They pretend to be someone or something they are not to benefit themselves. They may want to engage you in a relationship or they may want to scam you out of money. They may want your personal information to steal your credit identity. Be careful. Never give out personal information or money online to a person or group that initiated contact with you. Check out the credibility of other charitable organizations. Some are real; some are not.

## Choose how to use...

- Make responsible choices.** Use social media for all its positive capabilities. Do not let it control you. Do not let it harm your relationships.
- Live in the moment.** When you are on your phone, you are not fully in the moment you are experiencing. Are you busy videoing or taking selfies instead of enjoying the people, place, or event? Take a few pics to document the day, then put the phone away and enjoy the world around you. Don't distract yourself from life with your phone.

### Social media and your kids

Just as overuse and misuse of social media can impact your health and relationships, it does the same to children. The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a clinical report about the problem to increase parents' awareness about managing children's access and use.

- Know your devices' capabilities and enact all filtering and privacy settings. All computers and most televisions include parental control settings which prevent your child from visiting inappropriate sites or from downloading inappropriate content. All privacy settings should be at the highest/strongest possible. Consider purchasing software for parents which monitors online use, browsing, and cell phone activity. Some recommended software includes: Net Nanny, Pure Sight PC, and My Mobile Watchdog. In the age of cyber-bullying, sexting, solicitations, and harassment, it is important for you as the parent to take charge.
- Be a part of your child's online life. No child under the age of 13 should use social media. In fact, some sites including Facebook® forbid it. For teens, connect to your child's sites by creating your own account to monitor activity. Your child must also allow you to monitor the privacy settings they choose. They may insist you not post on their walls, and that's fine. Honor the request.
- Limit use and power down. Insist that family meals be device free and that phones and computers are turned off at bedtime. Create rules with consequences. Choose certain hours for social media use, and allow use only after homework is done. Remind older teens that phones are turned OFF in the car.
- Go public. Keep your household computer in a central, active location and do not allow laptop use in bedrooms. This helps you monitor activity and time spent.
- Talk to your kids about avoiding strangers online, not entering pop-up invitations, free-giveaways, or completing questionnaires. These are virus portals. Explain digital footprint and how what they post is forever and creates a reputation that is difficult

to change. Discuss your expectations for what is appropriate and inappropriate to post including photos. Direct them not to post photos or identifying information that could allow a viewer to know where you live or when you may or may not be home.

- Model responsible behavior. If you are addicted to your phone, or quickly check a text at a stoplight, you are giving your child permission to do the same through your actions. Limit your time, and teach your child to embrace the real world instead of focusing on the virtual one.

## Remember...

You are aware of the downfalls of social media as well as the benefits. Be aware that not all people on social media are who they say they are. Make sure you control the amount of time you spend on social media and post considerately. Use apps and sites for convenience, to enhance your life and your relationships, and to enjoy the entertainment they bring.

## Put it into Practice

It may be difficult, but try and track your Social Media use for one whole day. You might carry a small index card to note your activity, or open a “note” in your note app. Pick an average day, perhaps a weekday.

- How many times did you open or check a Social Media application? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, etc.)
- How much time, total, did you spend reading or viewing Social Media, approximately, in hours? \_\_\_\_\_

Gauge your Social Media moods:

- How often does something on Social Media lift your mood? (never/seldom/often/always)
- How often does something on Social Media annoy or aggravate you? (never/seldom/often/always)

Being honest with yourself, do you use Social Media when you should be: studying, working, sleeping, getting chores done? (yes/no)

Has anyone ever complained that you were paying attention to Social Media instead of them or a task you were working on? (yes/no)

Have you ever been caught up in a Social Media or online game and spent far more time playing it than intended? (yes/no)

How do you feel about your use of Social Media? Does it enhance your life, or does it keep you from fully participating with activities and people around you?

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What are ways you can improve the quantity or quality of your Social Media use?

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## Social Media Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- Commit to improving my social media use by:
- Identify something I want to learn using social media:

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

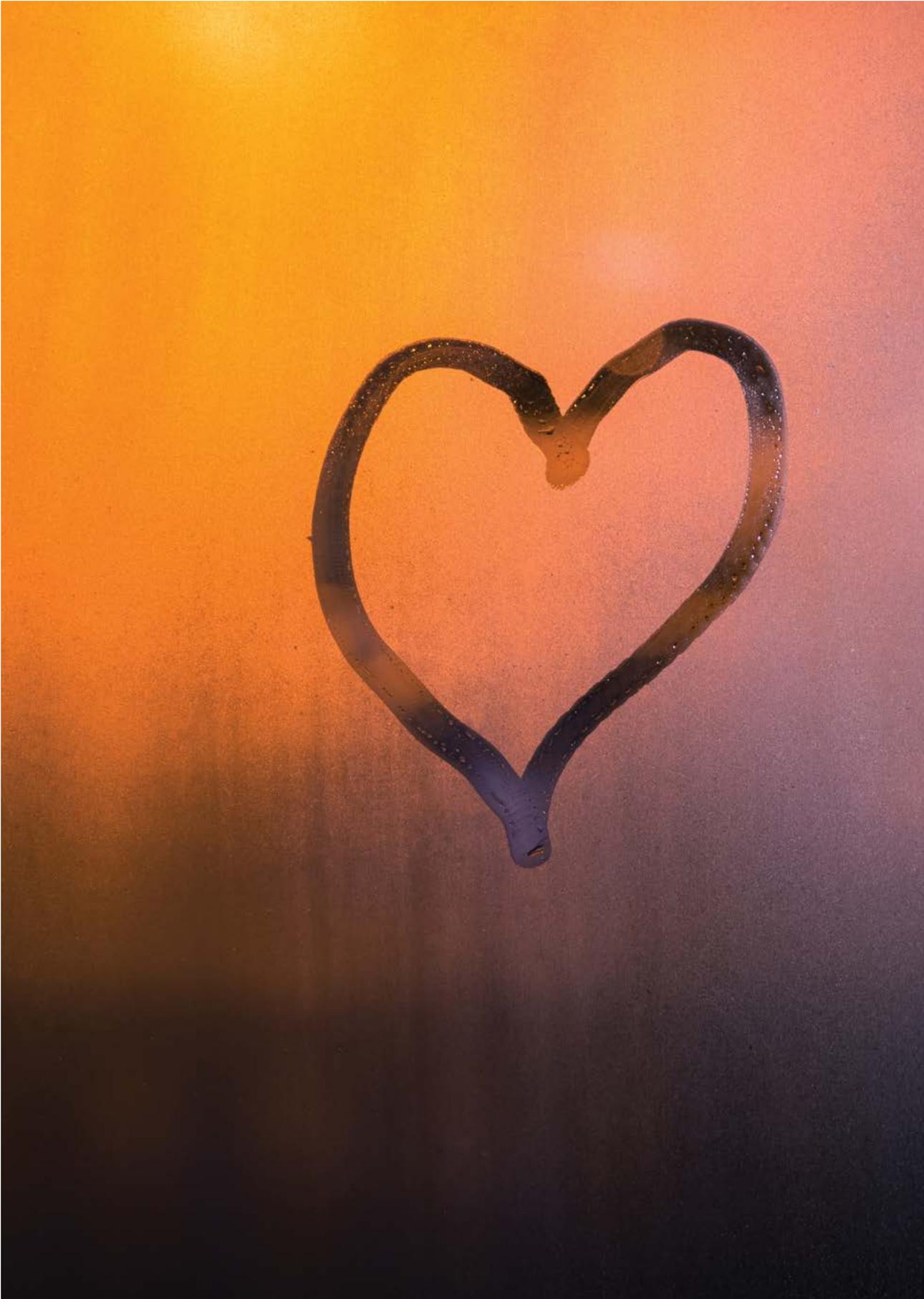
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







## EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT TO DEPLOYMENT

Deployment is a fact of military life. You have pride in knowing that your Soldier and your family are contributing to the safety of our nation. Yet, you will probably experience an intense range of emotions that typically occur throughout the cycle of deployment. Conflicting emotions are normal. At the same time, they are confusing and can be distressing. You may find yourself struggling with loneliness, depression, anxiety, trust, or anger.

One way to deal with stress is to have a positive outlook, to see the things that are stressful in a different way. Another way to deal with stress is to learn mood management techniques. The first step to improving your mood is to identify which factors of deployment are causing you stress. When you are in a stressful or emotional situation, it helps to think about the thoughts and feelings you are having. Learning to manage your thoughts and feelings can help you deal with the circumstances of deployment that cannot be changed. Learning about mood disorders can also help you know if you or others may need professional intervention.

Whatever your emotional state – which may change frequently during times of stress – you can manage. There are tools to help you adjust your feelings and enjoy life more fully.

It takes deep commitment to change  
and even deeper commitment to grow.  
– Ralph Ellison

## The emotional cycle of deployment...

For most military families, the cycle of deployment has been constant over many years as wars and conflicts continue. Just as there is a cycle for deployment, there is an emotional cycle that accompanies it that impacts the family members involved in different ways. You may be impacted the most. The range and cycle of emotions during deployment are not the same for everyone, but there are definable patterns.

1. **Deployment scheduled.** Short intense emotions occur when you learn deployment is scheduled. Emotions may include: anger, fear, bitterness, resignation, or acceptance.
2. **Deployment grows closer.** As the time of actual deployment approaches, the family members shift in their involvement with each other and may even begin to separate themselves emotionally. This often happens in the form of an argument over something petty. It is easier to walk out the door mad than with a tearful “*I love you.*” We call this “The Big Chill.” Emotions may include: guilt, anger, regret, physical withdrawal, and separation.
3. **Departure.** This period may last several days to weeks. Emotions may include: sadness, loneliness, and increased tension.
4. **Adjustment.** A few weeks after departure the family begins to find new routines and adjust to them. Emotions may include: less tension, a sense of teamwork and purpose, and increased acceptance.
5. **End of deployment.** As deployment ends, the family begins to plan for reintegration and anticipates the return of the Soldier. Emotions may include: increased tension, nervous excitement, and anxiety about how the deployment has changed everyone.

Think about your own current emotional cycle of deployment. Ask yourself these questions: What phase of the cycle are you in and what emotions are you experiencing? If you have experienced deployment before, what has helped you the most with different cycles of deployment?

## Emotional coping during deployment...

Deployment means adjustment. Being apart from your loved one can make you feel disconnected at times. It is not uncommon to feel lonely, depressed, uncertain of your trust in your partner, and angry. All these emotions can be stressful and can decrease your decision-making ability. Use the Managing New Emotions Worksheet to help you think about the emotions you and your family may be experiencing. Here are some strategies to help you guard against negative feelings.

## Loneliness

Being apart from others can make us feel isolated and alone in our challenges. Take steps to counter this:

- Seek out people.** Try not to isolate. Find ways to engage with other families who are currently experiencing deployment. If that is not possible, try finding a spiritual or community group to join.
- Find a support group.** Support groups exist for families experiencing deployment. Some groups will be peer-support and some exist through blogs on the internet. Some may be telephone support groups with topics presented for discussion.
- Journal.** Research indicates that journaling is good for not only your emotional well-being, but also for your physical well-being. It helps you clarify thoughts, know yourself better, reduce stress, solve problems, and resolve conflict with others. Write about thoughts, emotions, problems, disagreements, or anything you find difficult to navigate. Many famous people, and most of our Presidents, journaled! Make sure to keep your journal somewhere private so that you can be honest and write things you might not share with others.
- Good things journal.** Write down the good things that happen to you in a journal to help you to focus on those events rather than the fear and loneliness of being apart. List things you are grateful for. It can be something you share with your loved one that helps you both focus on the positive. Hunt the good stuff. If you took part in the pre-deployment module, this is a familiar concept to you. Take time each day to write down three truly good things that happened. Then take a moment and reflect on what those good things meant to you. How did you enable that good thing to happen? How can you create that good thing in the future? Hunting the good stuff helps to build optimism, which has been shown to have many emotional and physical benefits. It can become a way to share with your partner, and sharing makes a relationship stronger. You can use the Hunt the Good Stuff Worksheet at the end of this chapter to help you.
- Keep and make friends.** You and your loved one may have had friends in common and that does not have to end because of deployment. Explicitly let your friends know that you still want to be included in events.

## Depression

Depression can arise from feeling separated and lonely. It can build if you try to ignore it. Depression can cause physical symptoms such as sleep disturbance, fatigue, weight fluctuations, digestive disturbance, headaches, and muscle aches. It can make you feel chronically anxious, sad, hopeless, restless, or unmotivated. Depression prevents you from being your best.

- **Remember good times.** Talk with, or write to, your partner about happy memories the two of you share. Remembering details of great fun or emotionally special times will make them come alive again, and will help you maintain your connection.
- **Find the cause.** Depression has many triggers. Sometimes depression is a result of feeling angry or hopeless about a situation. Sometimes it comes from fear or grief that a situation cannot be changed. Sometimes it is the result of a neurochemical or hormonal imbalance that can be addressed by a doctor. Being sad during deployment is common. Whatever the cause, seek help.
- **Help is available.** If you continue to feel depressed over two weeks, it is important to have an evaluation to get the help you need. Talk to your primary care physician or see a mental health professional. Seek professional help immediately if you are using drugs or alcohol to make yourself feel better. Severe depression can lead to unhealthy thoughts and even those of ending one's life. If this has occurred, seek help immediately or call the joint DoD/VA Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 and press 1 if you are the family member of a Service member or Veteran. Suicidal ideation is a sign of clinical depression and should be taken very seriously. There is additional information in the Red Flags chapter of this book.

## Anxiety and fear

Everyone feels anxious at times and some anxiety is positive. Feeling anxious about a job interview leads you to rehearse and research. Experiencing mild anxiety may help a person become more alert and focused on facing a challenge. Some individuals, however, experience extreme fear and worry that does not subside.

Anxiety can interfere with sleep, focus, and daily activities. The frequency and intensity of anxiety can become overwhelming. Negative thoughts and concerns become intrusive. Like depression, anxiety can have a biological cause that requires medical intervention. Fortunately, most people who suffer from anxiety improve considerably by learning to manage their anxiety and by getting effective psychological treatment.

□ **Defining anxiety.** Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, extreme fear, and worried thoughts. It can also include the following physical changes:

- Increased blood pressure
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Dizziness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Insomnia
- Nausea

There is evidence that suffering from anxiety tends to run in families. Genes as well as early learning experiences within families seem to make some people more likely than others to develop the disorder. People who suffer from untreated anxiety often also suffer from other psychological problems, such as depression, and have a greater tendency to abuse alcohol and other drugs. Relationships with family members, friends, and coworkers may become strained, and job performance may decline.

□ **How to cope with anxiety.** There are many strategies you can use to manage anxiety.

- **Reduce your worries.** There are real issues to worry about, but in some instances, we worry about things we cannot control or that are very unlikely to occur. Make a list of everything you are worried about. On your list, separate out the real issues that a situation presents and those your imagination may be making worse. In addition, cross out the ones you have no control over. Try and practice the adage: Take control of the things you can, and accept the things you cannot change.
- **Problem solve.** Go back to the Problem Solving chapter and begin the process. Not confronting our problems, procrastinating, and allowing issues to fester will naturally increase anxiety. Solving even a few small problems can help reduce your anxiety, your feelings of being out of control, and the worries themselves.
- **Learn to relax.** Practice the stress reducing behaviors reviewed in this chapter. You may also consider practicing meditation and mindfulness to help calm your mind and help you live in the moment – not an unknown future. The Managing Excess Stress chapter includes several meditative strategies and general stress reduction strategies.

- **Exercise.** People who take care of their physical bodies are often better equipped to cope emotionally and are more resilient to life's changes. Research indicates that regular exercise:
  - Elevates mood
  - Improves sleep
  - Improves memory
  - Prevents and manages chronic disease
  - Reduces pain
  - Decreases anxiety and depression
- **Eat healthy.** Feed your body what it needs, not necessarily what will make you feel better in the moment. Anxiety often leads to over- or under-eating and increased use of alcohol.
- **Restrict chemical substances.** Restrict your intake of caffeine, alcohol, and drugs. Use the materials and the Substance Abuse Test from the Substance Abuse Red Flags chapter if necessary.
- **Take time out.** Do things that you enjoy. Relax or do something fun, even if it's just for 15 minutes.
- **Connect.** Talk to trusted friends or family members, and share your thoughts and feelings.
- **Seek help.** Just as psychologists and counselors can help treat depression, they can also help treat anxiety. In some cases, they may recommend medication and/or therapy. There are three common therapies that are proven to help significantly:
  - Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) helps you uncover and change negative thoughts or points of view that are causing and prolonging stress and anxiety. In some cases, your mental health professional may recommend medication and/or therapy. To practice these skills, you can use the Thought Record in this chapter.
  - Relaxation training may include progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, and education about tension and stress. See the Managing Excess Stress chapter.
  - Supportive therapy involves a mental health professional listening to and validating feelings.

## Commitment

Trust in another person involves a belief in their honesty, reliability, and strength. In marriage or a committed relationship, it also involves a belief in faithfulness and your commitment as a couple. Being apart from your loved one for an extended time may lead to feelings of insecurity and doubt, which can lead to questioning trust. To combat these feelings, take these steps. The Enhancing Your Commitment chapter offers additional strategies.

- Maintain emotional intimacy.** Keep each other on the same path of trust by sharing not only your love for one another, but also your goals, commitments, and accomplishments during deployment. Emotional intimacy keeps a marriage strong when you are physically separated.
- Communicate well.** Honor each other by listening and being supportive; this is vital in a committed relationship, especially when you are physically apart. Consistent positive communication and acts of thoughtfulness show commitment to keeping your relationship strong.
- Reach out to others.** Find friends who share your values and beliefs, and socialize with them. Dwell on the positives of your relationship and not on any doubts that may creep in. Choose friends and family who can help when you need to vent and bring positive balance when you are feeling unsure. Avoid those who increase your doubt.

## Anger

Anger can range from annoyance to hostility, depending on the situation. What is interesting is that the word anger derives from the Norse “*angr*” meaning grief. Anger usually evolves from a hurt, slight, or sadness. Remember this when facing someone else’s anger. The following steps can help you manage your own anger.

- Identify the cause.** Anger can result from feeling isolated, tired, or neglected. The whole experience of deployment may cause you to feel sad and, eventually, angry. Multiple frustrations may have built up over time and finally erupted in one angry outburst. Another source of disappointment can happen when you and your Soldier set aside certain pre-planned times to communicate. Perhaps not hearing from your loved one made you feel afraid. Try not to let frustrations or fears manifest themselves as anger toward your loved one who has very little control over communication patterns. Learning to recognize these feelings and analyze the thoughts behind them will help keep you from getting angry.

- Know the signs.** Recognize when you are getting angry; your body will signal it. Heart rate and blood pressure will increase; you will feel hotter; and breathing may become shallow or faster.
- Step back.** You may need to remove yourself from the situation until you feel you can respond without anger. Choose to be calm.
- Assess the situation.** Sometimes the emotion overwhelms our ability to see the root cause. You may be angry about something specific. You may be angry about the entire deployment experience. You may be frustrated or exasperated about all the unforeseeable things that have happened. Anger can mask sadness, fear, and helplessness. What experience or emotion has triggered the anger?
- Communicate calmly.** Talk to the person who upset you if possible. Calmly tell them how their words or actions make you feel. “*I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_.*” Review the Assertive Communication chapter to learn effective communication skills that convey your message without being passive or aggressive: It may take some practice.
- Find outlets.** Think of healthy ways to release anger. Being angry with your partner for something that cannot be changed is unproductive for both of you. Talking to a trusted friend, vigorous exercise, or meditative yoga can help release your anger.
- Forgive when necessary.** Learn to be forgiving of others, and start by forgiving yourself for whatever you are feeling.
- Choose your battles.** This is often described as “*Don’t sweat the small stuff.*” Is what you are upset about going to matter in a month? A year? If not, let it go. Choosing your battles in deployment may look like this: You finally get your loved one on the phone and want to vent about every frustrating thing that happened that week. The conversation becomes a gripe session and a “who has it worse” competition. Let the little things go. Focus on the positive. If you do have important issues, perhaps you could send an email addressing important things that frustrate you. If you face them early on and fix them, perhaps you will never get to the angry phase. Use your limited phone time for happy conversations. Use the Hunt the Good Stuff Worksheet to get started on recording positive things you can share; it may help you let the negative little things go and refocus you on all the good.

## Thinking positively...

Some external events cannot be changed. Your loved one is deployed, and you are responsible for the home and family during deployment. Learning to cope with a problem may be the only way to stop the stress.

### Unhealthy beliefs and thoughts

Our thoughts can either help decrease or increase stress. The following are types of thoughts that are both unhealthy and unproductive.

- All or nothing thinking.** These are thoughts and statements that include words such as **always**, **never**, or **every time**. You may think, *“I have to get the checkbook to balance every time.”* When we adopt **all or nothing thoughts**, we are usually unable to live up to them. This increases our stress.
- “Awfulizing” thinking.** These are thoughts and statements that include **awful**, **horrible**, or **terrible** evaluations. *“Why hasn’t my loved one contacted me for the past two days? Something terrible must have happened.”* Try not to jump to horrible conclusions. Assume the best, instead.
- Focusing on negatives.** Sometimes we focus on the bad or unfortunate things that happen to us. We may spend more time focusing on a single bad thing than on the many good things that happen. We may think that our lives are always unhappy. *“It is so unfair that I have to manage everything myself. Others aren’t having such a hard time. They have lots of people to help them, and I don’t have anyone.”* Everyone has a bad day, or deals with difficulties in daily life. Try to focus on the positives.

You may be engaging in one or more of these unhealthy ways of thinking. You *can* learn to change your thought patterns through mood management and self-talk.

## Five steps for managing your thoughts and feelings...

When you feel stressed, take a moment to think about the thoughts and feelings you are having. You can try to change your thoughts. Changing negative thoughts will improve your outlook. Learning to be more positive will help reduce stress.

1. **Identify the situation.** Describe to yourself the events that led to your unpleasant feelings.
2. **Identify your thoughts about the situation.** Recognize unhealthy thoughts. Are you caught up in all or nothing thinking or awfulizing conclusions? Are you focusing on negatives?

*For example,* You may leave a message for a friend asking her to call you. She does not call. You might find yourself thinking negative thoughts: “*She just doesn’t care about me!*”

3. **Recognize your emotions.** Recognize your emotions and feelings. Ask yourself: “*What am I feeling?*” Do you feel sad, mad, frustrated, overwhelmed...?
4. **Challenge your negative thoughts.** Replace them with more helpful or milder thoughts. Find a different way to think about or view the situation. Come up with positive explanations or focus on the good.

*For example,* Regarding your friend, you might try calling her back. You may discover she did not receive your message. Perhaps she was very busy with her family or she forgot. You may still be disappointed, but do not assume the strongly negative: She does not care about you.

This is the crucial step. It may be difficult to change your patterns of thinking, but you can change them. Be patient with yourself; it takes practice.

5. **Match milder emotion to your milder thoughts.** Ask yourself, “*How do I feel if I change my thoughts?*”

### Practicing the Thought Record

One way to easily work through the five steps is by using a Thought Record. The Thought Record is a simple way to record what you are thinking and feeling. There is a Thought Record for you to use at the end of the chapter. Let’s look at the following example.

Rodrigo and his partner, Terry, try to call or email on a regular schedule, even though Terry is deployed in a combat zone. They typically talk twice a week.

## Rodrigo's Thought Record

This is how Rodrigo completed the Thought Record about the stressful situation that he was experiencing.

STEP 1	
<p><b>Identify the situation.</b> Describe the events that led to your unpleasant feelings</p>	<p><b>Situation</b> What happened?</p> <p><i>I did not hear from Terry this week.</i></p>
STEP 2	
<p><b>Identify your thoughts in the situation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All or nothing (always, never, every time)</li> <li>• Awful</li> <li>• Focusing on negative</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Thoughts</b> What are you thinking?</p> <p><i>Something awful has happened to Terry.</i></p>
STEP 3	
<p><b>Recognize your emotions and feelings during the event.</b> (sad, angry, anxious, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Current Feelings</b> How do you feel in this moment?</p> <p><i>Panic-stricken. Afraid.</i></p>
STEP 4	
<p><b>Challenge and replace unhelpful or negative thoughts with more helpful or milder thoughts.</b></p>	<p><b>Substitute Thoughts</b> What is a different way of thinking about the situation?</p> <p><i>Terry is probably on a mission and cannot call me.</i></p>
STEP 5	
<p><b>Match milder emotions to your milder thoughts.</b></p>	<p><b>Substitute Feelings</b> How do you feel if you change your thoughts?</p> <p><i>Anxious but hopeful.</i></p>

## Remember...

Deployment can be an emotional time. Know that whatever you are feeling is normal. Take steps to support yourself emotionally by reaching out to others and by controlling any negative thought patterns you may become caught up in. Deal with your anger productively, and learn to communicate your emotions in a clear, supportive way. Try to stay positive and optimistic. In life, and in deployment, attitude can be everything.

## Managing New Emotions

Are there emotions that you have noticed in yourself or your family members that have changed significantly since deployment?

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What have you done to manage these significant emotions?

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What else will you try?

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Who will you ask to help you?

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# Hunt the Good Stuff Worksheet

Some days we have a tendency to focus on the negative. By doing this, we diminish all the good and positive things in our lives. Looking for or hunting the good stuff can lift your mood and refocus your mind on the pleasant and enjoyable things in life. Sharing the good stuff with others can lift their mood, too!



## *What is good stuff?*

- A big or small event, accomplishment, or milestone
- Any area of your life you are content with or happy about
- Something positive about you or anyone else in your life
- Something about the natural world you enjoy
- Something you are grateful for or feel is a blessing in your life

In the space below, **record three good things and reflect on each:** Why did this good thing happen? What does the thing mean to you? What can you do to enable more of this good thing to happen? What ways did you or others contribute to the good thing?

**Good Thing #1** \_\_\_\_\_

*Reflection:*

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**Good Thing #2** \_\_\_\_\_

*Reflection:*

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**Good Thing #3** \_\_\_\_\_

*Reflection:*

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# Thought Record

In the space below, complete the Thought Record with a stressful situation that you experienced or are experiencing.

STEP 1	
<p><b>Identify the situation.</b> <i>Describe the events that led to your unpleasant feelings</i></p>	<p><b>Situation</b> <i>What happened?</i></p>
STEP 2	
<p><b>Identify your thoughts in the situation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All or nothing (always, never, every time)</i></li> <li>• <i>Awful</i></li> <li>• <i>Focusing on negative</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Thoughts</b> <i>What are you thinking?</i></p>
STEP 3	
<p><b>Recognize your emotions and feelings during the event.</b> <i>(sad, angry, anxious, etc.)</i></p>	<p><b>Current Feelings</b> <i>How do you feel in this moment?</i></p>
STEP 4	
<p><b>Challenge and replace unhelpful or negative thoughts with more helpful or milder thoughts.</b></p>	<p><b>Substitute Thoughts</b> <i>What is a different way of thinking about the situation?</i></p>
STEP 5	
<p><b>Match milder emotions to your milder thoughts.</b></p>	<p><b>Substitute Feelings</b> <i>How do you feel if you change your thoughts? (less sad, less angry, less anxious, etc.)</i></p>

## Emotional Adjustment to Deployment Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will create a Thought Record for a difficult situation I am coping with.
- I will begin a personal journal.

Record the outcome of my actions:

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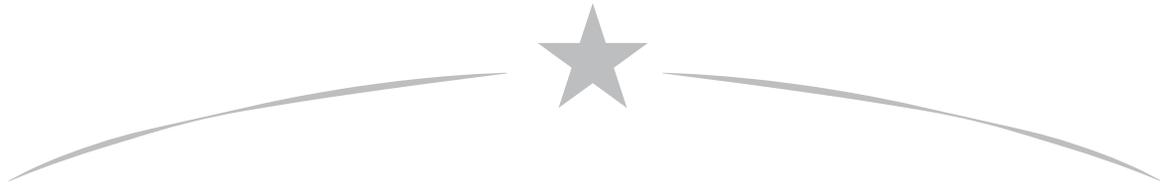
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







## RECOGNIZING RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability to persevere, adapt, and grow in dynamic or stressful environments. You may have witnessed people who have been challenged by serious accidents, circumstances, or events that are out of their control. Yet, these people remain strong and can quickly get back to a state of normal emotion.

Resilience does not necessarily involve a crisis or life-altering event. Resilience is also the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to resources that sustain their psychological, cultural, spiritual, social, and physical well-being. Finally, resilience is the ability to draw on one's strengths, coping skills, and supportive relationships to manage changes and face adversity effectively.

Why is it important to develop resilience? To face challenges and prevail, you must be resilient. How well can you bounce back from hardships and misfortunes? Happiness is easy in good times. However, in difficult times, remaining productive and positive can be challenging.

Resilient individuals remain strong and face unexpected changes with the confidence that they can overcome the situation. The cycle of deployment presents opportunities for increasing your resilience. You can be a model for your children and for other family and friends in their own life situations. You may not always feel strong and in control, but you can learn methods that help you keep moving forward.

Life doesn't get easier or more forgiving;  
we get stronger and more resilient. – Steve Maraboli

## Understanding how resilience works...

### Characteristics of resilient people

Resilience involves a set of attitudes that can be learned. Below are some characteristics that emotionally resilient people usually demonstrate.

- Problem solving skills and good judgment
- Optimistic, positive “can-do” feelings
- Curious
- Persistence, determination to keep working at a problem
- Flexible
- Sense of humor
- Social support, working to find a place in the community
- Reaching out to others instead of withdrawing
- Think before acting, not impulsive
- Work towards goal
- Realistic, time-driven expectations and goals
- Learn from past experiences and don't repeat mistakes
- Good communication skills that improve with practice

Resilience is not viewing events as positive when they are not, but rather a feeling of confidence that you can cope with whatever life brings you. Resilience is the ability to deal well with stress, adversity, and trauma.

### Your resilience characteristics

Resilience is a trait that helps you deal with the changes and challenges of deployment. Think of a time when you were challenged or faced adversity and were successful. What did you do that made you successful? These are the things that make your resilience personal. Your answer tells you something about your own resilience. If you are resilient, you may experience setbacks, but you will work through them and remain generally optimistic.

## Resilience Characteristics

Which of these characteristics do you already have?

Which would you like to work on developing?

CHARACTERISTICS	I ALREADY HAVE	I WANT TO WORK ON
Problem-solver		
Optimistic and self-confident		
Curious		
Persistent		
Flexible		
Sense of humor		
Good social support		
Reach out for help		
Think before acting		
Work toward my goals		
Set time driven goals		
Learn from the past		
Good communication skills		

## Using resilience...

### Increasing your resilience

Below are the traits of resilient people *and* what you can do to increase your own resilience. Test your resilience using the Brief Resilience Scale at the end of the chapter.

- Resilient people **problem-solve**. Seek solutions instead of wishing your problems away when things go wrong. Determine what needs to be done, make a plan, and follow through. Review the chapter Problem Solving for a step-by-step plan.
- Resilient people are **optimistic and self-confident**. Try to look on the bright side of any situation. Believe that you have the power to overcome obstacles. Be proud of how you have solved problems and made sound decisions.
- Resilient people are **curious**. Be interested in the world around you. Curiosity may lead to new ways to solve problems. Review how you have changed because of past experiences. Learn new things about yourself. Develop new interests for enjoyment. Ask others how they have dealt with similar problems.
- Resilient people are **persistent**. Continue your course of action despite difficulties you encounter. Do not give up too easily.
- Resilient people are **flexible**. Accept and anticipate change. If you expect changes to occur, you may be able to adapt to them more easily.
- Resilient people have a **sense of humor**. View adverse situations with the seriousness they deserve, but not so seriously that you cannot function. Use humor and laughter in stressful situations as coping skills.
- Resilient people realize the importance of **good social support**. Surround yourself with family, friends, and loved ones during times of hardship. Build and maintain strong relationships with people who are supportive of you. Make sure you offer support to others as well.
- Resilient people **reach out for help** when things get tough. Ask for help, support or just someone to be around while you are struggling. Call your FRG or ACS for assistance if needed. Think of three people right now that you are comfortable calling to ask for help. Build mutually **supportive relationships**.
- Resilient people **pick their battles**. Realize there are some situations you have no control over and no chance of influencing. Accept things you cannot change.

- Resilient people **think before acting**. Weigh your options and consequences of your actions. Remember the relationship before you act. Ask for advice and help when facing a difficult decision. Practice Deliberate Breathing.
- Resilient people **work toward their goals**. Do something each day that helps you see a sense of pride and purpose in your life.
- Resilient people **set time-driven goals**. Set time-defined short-term goals to reach long-term goals. You may set goals for each week, month, or year to give yourself a sense of accomplishment. Use the Goal Setting Worksheet and Template in the Taking Care of You Chapter.
- Resilient people **learn from the past**. Learn from your experiences of successfully coping with tough situations in the past. Learn from your mistakes, too. Build on what worked and discard things that didn't work. Negative events and even failure can provide lessons that help you to succeed.
- Resilient people are **future-oriented**. Don't dwell on the past. Invest your energy in possibilities rather than regrets. Each day, look for changes that signal improvement.
- Resilient people practice **good communication skills**. Practice active listening skills and assertive communication. Learn to make your point clearly, to listen to others respectfully, and to gain perspective on a situation. Check out the chapters on Communication Skills and Assertive Communication for practical strategies.
- Resilient people are **driven by their values**. Focus on what is most important to you when your life takes an unexpected turn. Don't compare your situation to that of others.
- Resilient people take care of their **physical well-being**. Eat healthy food, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly. When you are healthy, problem solving is easier. Review the chapter Taking Care of You First for more ideas.

## Appreciating sacrifice

During deployment, it may occur to you that maintaining resilience involves sacrifice. Sacrifice puts us to the test. It involves giving up something of value for the sake of others. Be *proud* of the sacrifices you, your Soldier, and your family are making. Managing deployment successfully builds resilience.

- Those in combat put their lives on the line, sacrificing time away from loved ones and their own safety.
- You may have sacrificed living near family, a job you enjoyed, or your idea of an ideal marriage.
- Your children are also sacrificing - their parent is absent to serve our nation.
- You appreciate and are proud of the sacrifices your loved one is making. You may feel frustrated and underappreciated at times, because many do not acknowledge the sacrifice made by those remaining at home. Most civilians do not understand this, nor should we expect them to. It is normal to want validation for your efforts and appreciation for your sacrifices. If you struggle with this, share your feelings with a friend who might help you feel better about the situation.
- Just as you need validation, acknowledge your children's sacrifice. Acknowledge their hard work and the additional support for the family they give. It is also important to let teachers and other leaders in their lives know that a parent is absent. This experience can cause children to behave differently and struggle with emotions and fears they did not have when their parent was home. Protect your child's privacy, but include others in your child's circle of support.

## Remember...

Resilience is a quality that can be built and improved upon. Recovering from setbacks and challenges is part of life. Being able to overcome the challenges more easily is a result of resilience. Focusing on problem solving and maintaining a good attitude are vital. Letting others help support you and taking good care of yourself are also factors. Are you goal-oriented and focused on the future? These help you persist through difficult times to reach the better ones ahead. Use your resilience skills to make deployment easier for you and for your family.

## Put it into Practice

Normal is what works for you and your family. There are no standard or normal stages for deployment and the following months. Use the following worksheets to take steps toward having greater resilience. These activities can help you build your resilient characteristics.

**Problem solving.** Break down larger problems into smaller, more manageable parts. Can you identify a problem that can be solved by breaking it down into smaller pieces? Can you think of a problem that needs your attention?

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Begin to work on problems immediately. Problems left alone will grow. Inaction can make you feel like a problem is out of control.

**Optimistic and self-confident.** Keep things in perspective and focus on the larger context. Name a problem that was not as bad as it seemed, as you look back on it.

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**Curious.** Continue to have interests outside your relationship. What things are you doing for yourself? What groups would you like to be a part of?

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**Flexible.** Recognize that family readjustment issues are normal. Are there any adjustment issues that your family has faced that you have heard other families talk about? How can their experience help you?

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**Social support.** Early in the deployment process, identify people who can help you. Can you identify some people you are willing to talk to or seek help from and what they can help with, if needed?

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**Work toward goals.** Be proactive in pursuing your goals. Do not wait for good things to happen to you. Identify a goal that you have been waiting to pursue. What can you do to start toward your goal?

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**Learn from the past.** Use past challenges to cope with new ones. Can you identify a current situation where a strategy you have used before might work?

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**Future-oriented.** Some setbacks are inevitable. What setbacks, if any, have you and your family experienced? What strategies did you use to get through them?

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**Pick your battles.** Realize that the stress of deployment can magnify common daily stressors. Are there things that didn't bother you before deployment but now do?

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# Brief Resilience Scale Worksheet

Take a moment to think about how each statement applies to you.

Please respond to each item by marking one per row.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. I tend to bounce back after hard times.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	5	4	3	2	1
3. It does not take me long to recover from a stressful event.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I usually come through difficult times with little trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I tend to take a long time to get over setbacks in my life.	5	4	3	2	1

My total \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ 6 =  (my score)

- 1-2    Need work
- 3      Room to improve
- 4-5    Great resilience

**Scoring:** Add your responses to all statements. Divide the total sum by the total number of questions answered.

Smith, B. W., Dalen, J., Wiggins, K., Tooley, E., Christopher, P., & Bernard, J. (2008). The Brief Resilience Scale: Assessing the Ability to Bounce Back. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 15*(3), 194-200.

## Recognizing Resilience Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will record steps I can take, as well as a *timeframe* for each step, to increase my resilience characteristics.
- I will set three goals to work on during deployment.
- I will cultivate my curiosity.

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

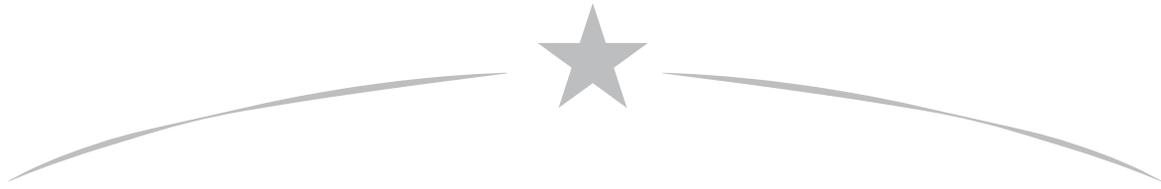
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## MANAGING EXCESS STRESS

Deployment can be a time of extra stress for you as you deal with change and more demanding circumstances. You now carry most of the burden of keeping things going and maintaining day-to-day tasks.

This stress may interfere with your ability to manage life at your best level. Understanding stress and our reactions to it is a good first step to finding effective ways to manage the challenges of deployment. Utilizing stress management strategies can help you feel both physically and emotionally stronger as you progress through deployment and as you face any of life's difficulties.

The only limit to your impact is your imagination  
and commitment. – Anthony Robbins

## What is stress and how does it work?

Stress is a normal part of life. Humans are designed to react with stress to things that threaten us. Our physical reaction to stress alerts our bodies to prepare for fight or flight. The fight or flight response is an evolutionary adaptation to a perceived threat. We will either stay to fight or leave a situation when something is threatening us. Rather than fight or flight, some people freeze and do absolutely nothing because they are overwhelmed. Stress is primarily a physical response, but as humans move away from many of the physical threats seen in the past, we see it being displayed in the emotional realm as well. If our demands keep increasing, we become overloaded. When we cannot cope with the excessive stress in our life, we tend to keep our body's alert system on.

### Stress and your health

When you are stressed, your adrenal glands release stress hormones, which include adrenaline and cortisol. Cortisol can alter your immune system, suppress your digestive system, and affect both reproductive and growth processes. The increased adrenaline can also affect our emotional state of being. Learning to respond to challenges in healthy ways helps keep these hormones in check.

- Normal stress.** When your body reacts to normal stress situations, your natural self-regulation decreases the adrenaline and cortisol after the threat is over. Your blood sugars and blood pressure also return to normal.
- Constant stress.** When you feel constantly stressed you are tense and nervous, and the fight or flight system stays on. Your body does not get a chance to recover because your body keeps producing the stress hormones.
- Disruptive stress.** Chronic stress can manifest itself by disrupting the normal functions of your autonomic nervous system. We can handle acute, intermittent stress, but overexposure to the stress hormone cortisol disrupts the physical and emotional processes of our bodies.

### Perceived Stress Scale

Are you stressed? Take the following quiz to see what the stressors are in your life and how you are managing them. The questions ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. A higher score indicates more stress. Use the strategies in this chapter to help you.

## Perceived Stress Scale

Take a moment to think about how each statement applies to you.  
Please respond to each item by marking one box per row.

IN THE LAST MONTH	NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	SOME-TIMES	FAIRLY OFTEN	OFTEN
1. How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. How often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	0	1	2	3	4
4. How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	4	3	2	1	0
5. How often have you felt things were going your way?	4	3	2	1	0
6. How often have you found that you could not cope with all of the things that you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7. How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	4	3	2	1	0
8. How often have you felt that you were on top of things?	4	3	2	1	0
9. How often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
10. How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

My total  0 - 15 Low Risk  
16 - 29 At Risk  
30 - 40 High Risk

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., and Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24:386-396.

## Stress and its effects...

### **Potential physical effects of stress**

When a stressor continues for a long time, it can take a toll on your health. You could be at risk for:

- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Sleep problems
- Obesity
- Increased susceptibility to colds and flu

### **Potential psychological effects of stress**

When left untreated, stress can affect your mood and decrease your quality of life. You may feel:

- Depressed, anxious, angry, irritable, and empty
- Exhausted with no energy to do routine tasks
- Hopeless, helpless, and find yourself crying often
- Low ability to experience pleasure and a sense of accomplishment

### **Potential social effects of stress**

Stress can also affect your social relationships and your social life. You can be at risk for:

- Decline in your friendships and relationships
- Feeling that no one understands what you are going through

## Anxiety

Struggling with excess stress can cause anxiety to build. Feeling anxious in certain situations is normal. Adrenaline from anxiety can help us study for a test or win a 5K race. In some cases, however, the adrenal system takes on a life of its own. You may become extremely anxious and not know why. Anxiety can go into overdrive and interfere with day-to-day living.

- **Symptoms.** Intrusive negative thoughts and feelings, disrupted sleep and focus, extensive worry, and fear can all indicate clinical anxiety. Clinical anxiety involves a prolonged period of any of these symptoms in addition to physical responses not connected to any present, immediate danger. These can include racing heart, fullness in the chest and throat, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, and shortness of breath.
- **Natural interventions.** Anxiety can be helped with proper nutrition, restricting caffeine and alcohol, taking time out to intentionally relax, and spending time with friends. Mental health providers can teach you behavior strategies to manage anxiety or panic attacks. Many people find meditation and yoga help.
- **Professional help.** Psychologists and mental health providers can successfully treat anxiety disorder and teach you management techniques. Anti-anxiety medications may be prescribed in addition to the counseling. If your anxiety is interfering with your sleep, your focus, or if it is intruding into your life randomly, let a health professional know.

## Discovering ways to manage stress...

### Give yourself a break

There are many ways you can step back from what is stressing you.

- **Make time for yourself each day.** Even ten minutes can make a difference wherever it fits in your schedule. During this time, distance yourself from distractions, family members, phone, and chores. Let family members know you are not to be disturbed. Choose a place you feel comfortable whether it is inside or outside. This is called the Make Time for Myself strategy.
- **Connect to a calm place.** Think about activities or places that help you feel calm. Recreate them in your mind. The Deliberate Breathing exercise in this chapter is a quick way to help you feel calm. You can practice it anywhere, and it only takes a few minutes.

**Tune into your senses.**

- **Smell.** Aromatherapy helps many people feel calm. Try scented candles, diffusers, or room sprays. Choose whatever scent pleases you and lifts your mood.
- **Sound.** Play music you like, stream spa music from the internet, or hang wind chimes outside your window.
- **Sight.** Going outside and getting even a few minutes of sunlight can help you reset. Warm light is calming. Blue, fluorescent, and LED lights can be stimulating, which you want to avoid.
- **Touch.** Rubbing your temples and forehead above your eyes can often relieve tension. Putting on soft comfortable clothing or holding a soft pet can help pull your mind toward calm.
- **Taste.** There are healthy foods that can help calm us. Try hot tea, a small piece of dark chocolate, or a piece of ripe fruit.

## Set boundaries

Feeling as though you have too much to do can be one of the greatest stressors. You probably have more than enough to do without adding another responsibility right now.

- Just say “no.”** One of the hardest things to do can be to tell people “no.” You are not a bad person if you cannot accommodate someone’s request.
- Discard burdens.** Examine the commitments you have made to your family or community. What is necessary? Try to cut out commitments you *should do*. Keep those you *must do*, and keep those that bring you pleasure.
- Do what matters.** Try to focus on the big picture perspective. Ask, “*Will this really be important in five years?*” “*In one year?*” “*In six months?*” If the answer is yes, it is probably important. If the answer is no, you may need to refocus your thoughts and energy elsewhere.

## Identify strategies to manage stress

- Journal.** Start a stress journal in which you record the events, situations, or thoughts that make you stressed. Record your level of stress and what was happening at the time along with the date. Do this for one month, and see what patterns emerge.
- Pay attention to your feelings.** Not expressing our feelings about a situation can become a source of internal stress when we keep them inside. Express your feelings in a respectful manner, and don't let resentment build.
- Keep a positive outlook.** There will always be things you cannot change. It is important to remember that you can always change your attitude. When you are feeling stressed it can be helpful to think of the many things you have to appreciate in your life. You can use the Hunt the Good Stuff Worksheet in the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter.
- Stay healthy.** Healthy eating enables your body to cope with stress. Avoid a diet filled with sugar and caffeine to stabilize your blood sugar and avoid those temporary effects of sugar highs and lows. Avoid escaping from your stress through alcohol or drugs.

## Stay social

- Try to arrange time to see family and friends.** Forming and maintaining social support can relieve stress by giving you a chance to discuss your thoughts and feelings.
- Stay connected** with friends or family at a distance through social media, but maintain standards of safety and etiquette while using the internet. Personal information shared should be monitored closely. Check the chapter Social Media for tips and strategies.

## Exercise

- If you shut down when stressed, try moving around instead.** You can do some simple stretches, squeeze a stress ball, or run in place to get yourself active. Look at the stretching sequence in the resources at the end of this chapter.
- Go for a walk or a bicycle ride.** Participate in group exercise in your community or find an exercise partner if you prefer.

## Meditation and mindfulness strategies

- ❑ **Mindfulness** is the practice of being attentively in a moment. When you are mindful, you focus on what you are doing and where you are - intently. If you are eating a piece of candy, do it slowly and notice the taste. If you are washing dishes, do it slowly and feel the soapy water on your hands. You can be calm and mindful of just about anything.
- ❑ **Meditation** is the practice of quietly trying to clear your mind of stressful thoughts. Usually, when meditating, you focus on one calm thought or idea. Practice makes meditation easier and helps you to relax regardless of your surroundings.
- ❑ **Mantram.** A mantram is a word, phrase, or brief prayer that can be repeated out loud, silently to ourselves, or written repetitively on a piece of paper - at any time or place. It helps to calm the body, quiet the mind, and improve concentration.

Pick a mantram that is meaningful to you or one that has stood the test of time. Repeat it as often as you can. Deliberately breathe as you repeat it. Relax your neck and shoulders. Focus on your immediate space. Your mantram should bring a positive feeling.

- ❑ **Practice.** The more you practice meditation and mindfulness, the greater their effect on your body and mind. You are creating a signal to your mind to calm the body and vice versa. We can learn to slow down, stop multi-tasking, and focus on the moment. Some people especially like to use it at bedtime.
- ❑ **Mandala.** The traditional Mandala is a complex visual design that is used for meditation. The word Mandala is Sanskrit for “whole world” or “healing circle.” Mandala originated in Tibet, but can be found in many ancient cultures. As you meditate, you focus on the mandala and its parts.

There are numerous free mandalas online and free mandala coloring pages. There is a mandala at the end of the chapter. Though seemingly childish, many adults find coloring to be calming. There are also inexpensive mandalas, usually on cloth, available online that you can hang in your room to focus on.



## Learning to relax...

### Learn to rate your level of tension or stress

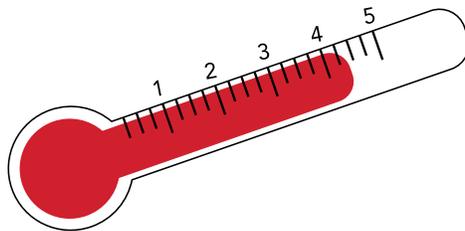
Before you begin a stress management exercise, rate your level of tension. Use the worksheet on the next page. Remember:

- It is helpful to learn to rate your level of tension both before and after a relaxation exercise.
- Doing these ratings helps you find out which strategies work best for you.
- Before the relaxation exercise, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (Rate from 1 to 5).
- Re-rate your level of tension after the exercise. After the relaxation exercise, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (Rate from 1 to 5).
- It typically takes time and practice to benefit from relaxation exercises.

### Use a Stress Diary

A stress diary can help you see patterns in the things that cause you stress. It can also show you the benefits of your relaxation practice. Use the worksheet at the end of the chapter.

#### Use this Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension



- 1 = Not at all tense
- 2 = Slightly tense
- 3 = Moderately tense
- 4 = Really tense
- 5 = Terribly tense

## Relaxation exercises...

Try to use a relaxation exercise daily. Practicing can help you gain more control over your tension allowing you to better manage stressful situations. There is a Stress Diary at the end of the chapter that will help you to monitor the events in your life that cause stress and to understand how a relaxation technique can help you. Relaxation techniques can be as simple as the Deliberate Breathing exercise you learned in pre-deployment. This simple exercise can provide you with a small window of calm amid chaos. There are additional relaxation techniques at the end of the chapter, including simple stretching, using music to relax, and guided imagery.

## Deliberate Breathing

1. **Rate your current level of tension.**
2. **Take a deep breath.** Don't breathe so deeply that it is uncomfortable.
3. **Breathe out slowly while saying a word or phrase to yourself.** You may want to use the word "Relax" or "Peace" or the phrase "Calm down." Any word or phrase will do as long as it is comforting to you.
4. **While exhaling, try to let your jaw, shoulders, and arms go loose and limp.**
5. **Repeat these steps 2 more times.**
6. **Afterwards, rate your current level of tension.**

## Pleasant events

Pleasant events don't have to be big activities that require a lot of planning. They can be small activities that you do on your own, with friends, or with your family. Check the resources at the end of the chapter for additional ideas and worksheets to help you schedule your events.

- Take the time.** Even though these activities may only last 15 minutes, taking this time out for yourself is important for your well-being.
- Do what you like to do.** A pleasant event can be anything you enjoy.
- Start small and keep it simple!** It doesn't have to be elaborate for you to benefit.
- Make it a habit.** Choose events that you can do every day or a few times a week.
- Get out of the house.** You may enjoy traveling, but realistically you cannot take a trip every day. Go on a day trip to the mall. Go biking or walking.
- Listen to music.** Burn or download your own mix of favorite music. Choose music you find calming and peaceful or music that puts you in a good mood.
- Pets.** Some people find spending time with a pet helps them to relax and feel peaceful. Pets will often provide unconditional love just being there. If you don't own a pet, area shelters are often looking for volunteer dog-walkers and cat-handlers. Social behavior makes the animals more adoptable.
- Read.** Reading and escaping into the world of stories can be a useful distraction and can be very enjoyable. Reading short stories or magazines can be helpful if you have limited time to read.

- **Watch.** TV programs and movies may provide a nice escape from reality. You might enjoy curling up on the sofa with a warm blanket and a bowl of popcorn while watching a favorite movie.
- **Have a hobby.** Spending time on a hobby can also be relaxing. You may enjoy reading, gardening, biking, knitting, scrapbooking, woodworking, or researching your ancestry.
- **Spiritual activity.** Find a religious or spiritual community where you feel supported. Research has found that three outlets military spouses often use to cope with stress are support from other military spouses, work, and religion.

## Remember...

Stress is inevitable. How we manage stress is what's important. Be aware of when your body is becoming stressed. Monitor yourself. Take time out to relax and enjoy yourself. Review the strategies in this chapter for ideas you can work into your daily schedule. Unchecked stress can have a negative impact on your physical and emotional health. Learning to manage it will improve your quality of life during deployment and after.

## Put it into Practice

Can you think of some situations that cause you stress?

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Can you use problem solving to help you make the situation better? See the Problem Solving chapter.

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Can you think about the situations that cause you stress in a different way? Use the Thought Record in the Mood Management chapter.

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What do you do to relieve stress now?

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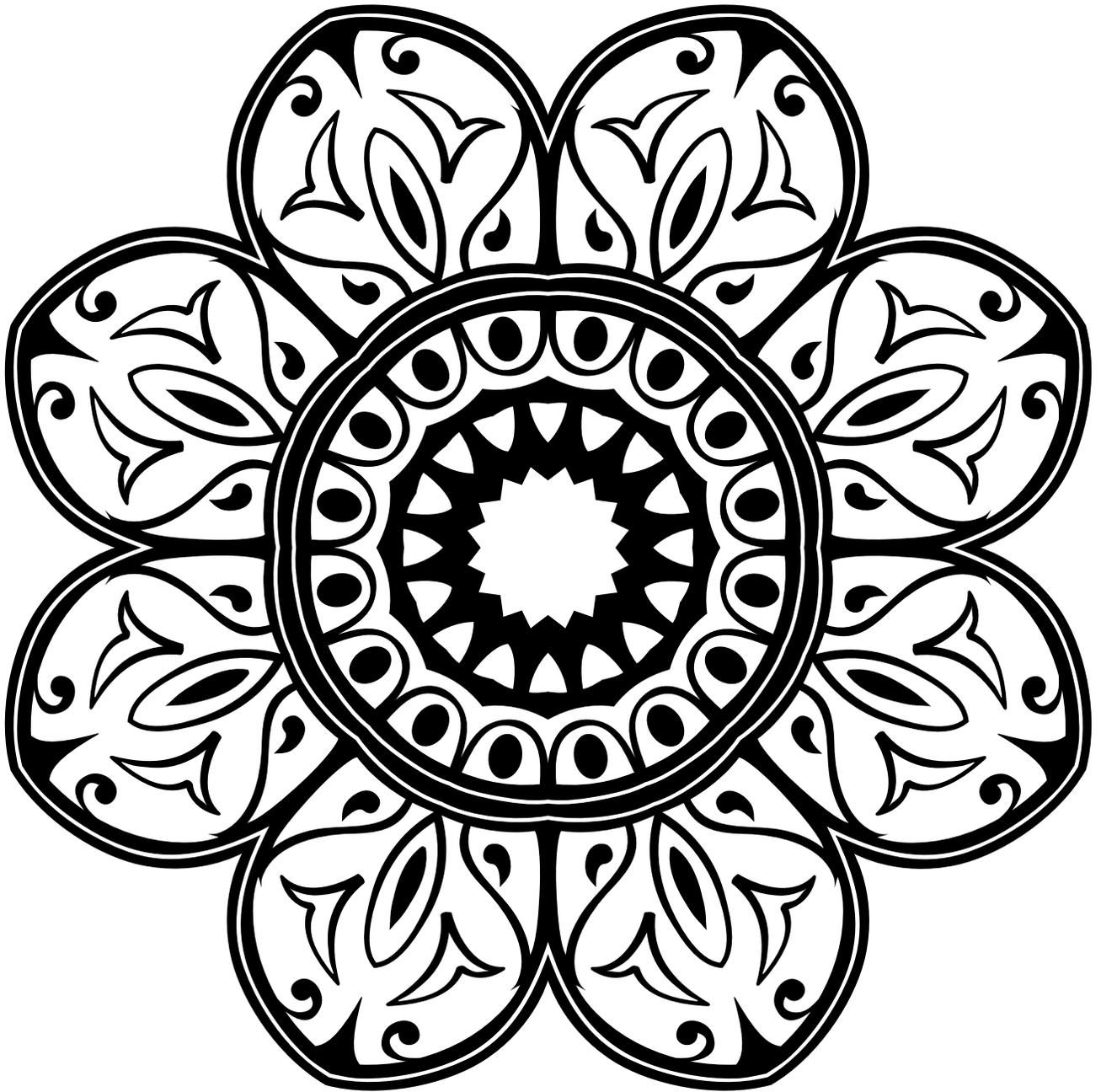
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What stress relieving activities would you like to try? Additional stress management techniques to consider are at the end of this chapter.

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Mandala



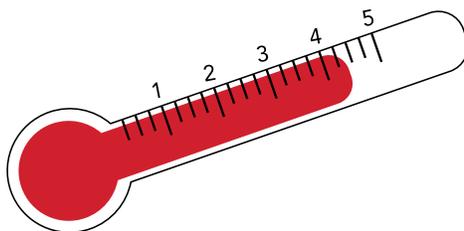
# Stress Diary Worksheet

For each day select one situation to record. Try to do a stress management exercise such as Deliberate Breathing while you are in a stressful situation. If you can't do that, record as much of this as you can (important details about the situation, why I felt this way, and what worked or did not work, etc.).

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
SITUATION		
COMMENTS		

DATE	STRESS BEFORE TECHNIQUE	STRESS AFTER TECHNIQUE
SITUATION		
COMMENTS		

Use this Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension



- 1 = Not at all tense
- 2 = Slightly tense
- 3 = Moderately tense
- 4 = Really tense
- 5 = Terribly tense

## Pleasant Event Ideas

- Listen to music
- Window shop
- Read
- Do crafts
- Rent a video
- Go for a car ride
- Enjoy flowers
- Take a nap
- Listen to the radio
- Have friends over
- Be with your family
- Take a walk
- Buy something for yourself
- Write letters, cards
- Exercise
- Go to the movies/a museum
- Have a picnic in the park
- Garden
- Look at the moon and stars
- Watch a favorite TV show
- Cook your favorite foods
- Go out to eat with a friend

## My List of Pleasant Events

Choose pleasant events that you can do on a regular basis.

Create a list of possible activities and write them down on the list below.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## Pleasant Event to Do This Week

Pleasant event for **me** this week is: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I need the following materials: \_\_\_\_\_  
(chosen pleasant event)

2. \_\_\_\_\_ will take place at the following location: \_\_\_\_\_  
(chosen pleasant event)

3. When and how often can \_\_\_\_\_ be done? \_\_\_\_\_  
(chosen pleasant event)

4. How much time will \_\_\_\_\_ take? \_\_\_\_\_  
(chosen pleasant event)

5. The steps I need to take in order to complete \_\_\_\_\_ are:  
(chosen pleasant event)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

*I will do my Pleasant Event on the following day(s) and time(s):*

<b>Day</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>(circle)</b>
Monday	_____	am pm
Tuesday	_____	am pm
Wednesday	_____	am pm
Thursday	_____	am pm
Friday	_____	am pm
Saturday	_____	am pm
Sunday	_____	am pm

## Relaxation Exercise – Stretching

Use a relaxation exercise daily. Practicing can help you gain more control over your tension, which allows you to better manage stressful situations.

### *Stretching to Relax*

1. Stand or sit, whichever is most comfortable for you.
2. Rate your current level of tension.
3. Take a deep breath, down to the bottom of your stomach.
4. Let it out slowly, feeling the tension drain away.
5. Take one more breath.
6. Let it out slowly.
7. Gently reach your arms out to the side.
8. Relax your shoulders down and stretch yourself a little.
9. Gently reach your arms out in front of you.
10. Feel the muscles in your back and shoulders loosen up.
11. Stretch out in front a little farther.
12. Now reach up as high as you can.
13. Push your arms up higher.
14. Bring them down to your sides.
15. Repeat (Steps 7-14).
16. Roll your shoulders back slowly three times.
17. Roll your shoulders forward slowly three times.
18. Shrug your shoulders, lifting them up and pressing them down slowly three times.
19. Take another breath.
20. Take a final breath.
21. After the stretching session, rate your current level of tension.

## Relaxation Exercise – Music

Use a relaxation exercise daily. Practicing can help you gain more control over your tension which allows you to better manage stressful situations.

### *Power of Music*

1. Find the type of music that you find relaxing.
2. Sit down in your favorite chair.
3. Rate your level of tension.
4. Find a comfortable position in your chair and close your eyes.
5. Listen to the music that you find relaxing.
6. Let your mind and body relax with the sound of the music.
7. After the music session, rate your current level of tension.

## Relaxation Exercise – Guided Imagery

### *Guided Imagery: Meadow and Stream*

You can have someone record this script for you or record it for yourself. Once you have used it several times, you may be able to call up the steps and feeling without listening to the actual recording.

First of all, get yourself into a comfortable position. Just settle back into your chair. Close your eyes and begin Deliberate Breathing, hold the breath for a few moments and then let it out slowly, feeling relaxation as you do so. And now take in another deep breath ... hold it until you feel a little tension in your chest and then ... let go ... relax ... allow all the muscles in your body to become loose, limp, soft like a rag doll, just allow pleasant waves of relaxation to flow through you, soothing and relaxing each and every part of your body ... including your arms and hands ... your neck and shoulders ... your scalp and all the muscles in your face ... and as you rest there quietly, breathing freely and evenly, allow the muscles of your chest to become loose and relaxed ... and then your stomach and your back ... both your upper back and lower back ... your hips and legs ... allow the relaxation to flow through your legs all the way down your feet and ankles ... and as I continue talking to you, these waves of relaxation can continue to spread throughout your body ... penetrating deeply to every cell of your body ... but no matter how relaxed you feel right now, it is possible to become even more deeply relaxed and yet awake and aware of my voice.

Now even though your attention may wander from time to time, simply bring it back to the images that I am going to describe. Imagine yourself about to open a very large door, and as the door opens you suddenly find yourself transported to another place, stepping out into a grassy meadow, a peaceful, quiet meadow. And flowing through the meadow is a small winding stream, and on each side of the stream are tall shady trees ... picture yourself right now sitting or lying down along the bank of this stream.

You may want to rest against the trunk of one of the trees ... notice the pale blue sky and the fluffy white clouds, feel the warmth of the sun with its pleasant rays shining down and sparkling as it reflects off the flowing water ... it is a beautiful, pleasant, peaceful day, not too warm or too cold ... the air is fresh and clean and you may even be aware of sounds of birds chirping or the sound of the water as it flows along the stream ... it is so peaceful here ... so calm and tranquil ... just look around you ... taking it all in ... enjoy the simple beauty of this place.

And now look more closely at the stream ... notice the clear, cool water as it flows by ... perhaps wondering where the water comes from and where it goes ... and as you look upstream you begin to notice what looks like a very large leaf floating on the water, and your eyes observe this leaf as it is getting closer and closer to the place where you are sitting ... and then, when the leaf is just in front of you ... you suddenly find yourself projecting and transferring to this leaf all of your concerns and discomfort. All of your cares and worries are transferred to the leaf, and so as the leaf continues to float down the stream it carries away all of your discomfort, all of your cares and worries ... just watch it float along getting farther and farther away from you ... until it finally disappears completely and you are left feeling even more relaxed, more comfortable, and more at ease than you have felt for a long time ...

For in this state of deep relaxation all parts of your body are working together harmoniously, smoothly, and healthily ... a deep sense of well-being fills your mind ... a feeling of healthy energy and vitality fills your body ... and as you prepare to eventually leave this special place of relaxation, you can carry back with you many of these pleasant feelings and sensations knowing that as you practice this exercise and similar exercises, it will become easier to use the powers of your mind to experience these positive effects ...

And now I will bring you back slowly from this relaxation by counting backwards from 3 to 1. When I get to 1, you'll be alert, refreshed, and comfortable. Okay, "3" much more alert; "2" feeling refreshed and comfortable, and "1" as you open your eyes and return your awareness to the room you are in.

## Managing Excess Stress Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will utilize the Make Time for Myself strategy each day for one week in hopes of prolonging the habit.
- I will choose three pleasant events and commit to incorporating at least one of them into each week.

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

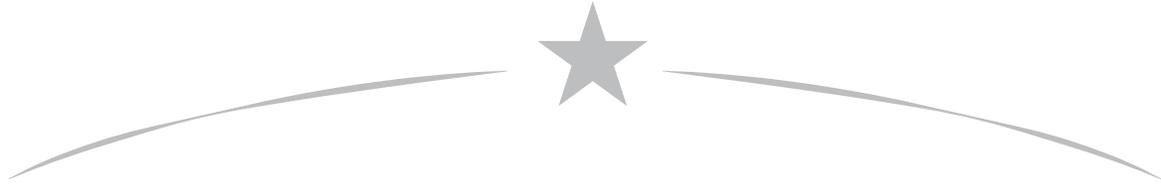
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## TAKING CARE OF YOU FIRST

Deployment can be a time of great change as you take on new roles and responsibilities. As you approach these changes, you may find that you put yourself last in order to manage. Family obligations, work or volunteer responsibilities, and household chores and repairs can make you feel as though you are pulled in many different directions.

To meet these challenges, it is important that you carve out time to manage your own health and happiness. Taking care of you comes in many forms: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It is appreciating yourself and living a healthy lifestyle. It is setting personal goals for yourself. It is allowing yourself the opportunity to experience a more rewarding life regardless of the challenges that occur.

Not knowing when the dawn will come, I open every door.  
– Emily Dickinson

## Appreciating yourself...

Most people have heard the directive on an airplane, “*Put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.*” This seems like common sense because if you pass out, you are unable to help others. However, if you look at your own life, you may be putting others before yourself too often.

Taking care of everyone else can become a habit. Sometimes it is easier to do things for others than to motivate them to do for themselves. It may have become a way of gaining positive regard from those around you. You may not feel you deserve to take time for yourself. Whatever the reason, breaking the habit of putting others’ needs before your own needs is not an easy thing to do.

When we help ourselves first we become more effective in taking care of others. When you take care of your needs, you and others around you will benefit.

### **Barriers to self-appreciation**

- Feeling selfish if you don’t help others first
- Takes too much time away from responsibilities
- Low self-esteem
- Hard to acknowledge your own needs
- Unable to express what you need

### **Benefits of self-appreciation**

- Better stress management and less anxiety
- Improved self-image and greater confidence
- Healthier lifestyle and increased good health
- More positive outlook to set and reach personal goals

## A closer look at self-esteem...

Self-esteem is the overall value we put on our own worth. It is the way we evaluate our own abilities and qualities. If we do not appreciate ourselves and our own worth, it is hard to appreciate others or to expect others to value us.

High (positive) self-esteem and low (negative) self-esteem are fueled by our daily experiences from childhood on. Children cannot appraise or filter out external evaluations of themselves by other people. As adults, we can choose not to accept others' critical assessments of us and, instead, listen to our own internal appraisals.

### **Low self-esteem**

- People with low self-esteem tend to be self-critical.
- They find it hard to think positive thoughts about themselves and, instead, focus on their flaws.
- They let outside opinions from others influence the way they feel about themselves. Often, they take criticism to heart.
- Those with low self-esteem tend to try to please others as a way of gaining approval.

### **High self-esteem**

- People with high self-esteem have a balanced view of themselves.
- They feel self-confident and can celebrate their successes while still incorporating feedback from others.
- They see the positive side of life and give the benefit of the doubt to others and themselves.
- They look at their mistakes as challenges or learning tools.
- Most importantly, they recognize their own value.

## Measuring self-esteem

Use the Self-Esteem Quiz below to understand your own level of self-esteem. If you need to improve your self-esteem, use some of the following strategies on the following page.

*Circle your answer for each question below.*

**1. When you look in the mirror, what do you see?**

- a) All your faults and flaws
- b) Someone who is fairly good looking
- c) One of the most beautiful people around

**2. Finish this sentence: I trust my ability to make decisions \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) Never
- b) Sometimes
- c) Always

**3. How do you react when you make mistakes?**

- a) You feel as if you are stupid/should have known better.
- b) A little embarrassed or upset, but you get over it after a while.
- c) You learn from the situation and move on.

**4. How often do you beat up on yourself and berate yourself for acting a certain way?**

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Never

**5. When it comes to relationships, do you feel as if you can add something positive?**

**How often do you feel as if you could do some good with your friendships and romantic relationships?**

- a) Never
- b) Sometimes
- c) Always

**6. I care what other people think \_\_\_\_\_.**

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Never

Scoring: If you circled more (a) answers, your self-esteem is low.  
If you circled more (b) answers, your self-esteem falls between low and high.  
If you circled more (c) answers, your self-esteem is high.

## Ways to increase self-esteem

- Leave your childhood evaluations behind.** As children, we may have received negative messages from parents or schoolmates that caused low self-esteem. Now is the time to change your opinion of yourself based on who you are today.
- Take responsibility for yourself.** Only you can take control and make changes in your life. You have the power to make it better.
- Work through your trouble areas.** Everyone has areas that need improvement. Identify one of yours, and make an effort to improve that area. You may see your self-esteem improved by the effort of trying.
- Learn from failure.** Learn from your failures, and move forward to your goals. When you fail, try to figure out why it happened, and grow from that knowledge.
- Finish what you start.** When you complete a task, you gain a feeling of being capable and accomplished. You learn to trust yourself in future endeavors.
- Surround yourself with positive people.** When you have low self-esteem, you are more likely to attract abusive and negative people. Positive and supportive people are attracted to like-minded people.

## Self-confidence and a healthy lifestyle...

Gaining self-confidence doesn't happen overnight. It is a process that builds upon itself. One way to increase self-confidence is by embracing a healthy lifestyle. A healthy lifestyle has the benefit of helping you manage stress. Certain activities encourage you to take time out from your demanding schedule. By taking time to care for yourself, you may find you are better able to relax and enjoy life.

Here are some things that you can do: exercise, eat balanced meals, get enough rest, ask for help, and take care of yourself. See the Healthy Lifestyle chapter for more strategies to take care of yourself.

### Exercise

- Exercise has many positive effects on the body. It reduces tension and improves overall physical health.
- You may find it difficult to exercise and/or difficult to find time. You may find it easier to break up your exercise time into manageable time slots. To exercise 30 minutes daily, you might try exercising in 10 minute increments rather than all at once. Be flexible.

- Exercise options are numerous: walking, jogging, Spin®, yoga, Pilates, Zumba®, and cycling. Try a new exercise program either in a class or via video, television or computer, or by using an app on your mobile phone. Some apps will track your effort and success for you.
- If possible, find a friend or neighbor to join you in your exercise program. There can be a built-in sense of motivation and encouragement when you exercise with others.

## **Nutrition**

- Eating balanced meals and maintaining proper nutrition are very important. Eat foods that are high in vitamins and nutrients. Avoid too many sugary snacks.
- Make sure you have plenty of fiber in your diet by eating fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Limit your salt intake as well as foods that are high in saturated fat and cholesterol. Make sure you get enough to eat.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Drinking 6 to 8 glasses of liquid daily is usually recommended. Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol; both can dehydrate you.
- Prepackage healthy foods. You can buy in bulk and prepackage 100 calorie amounts of healthy snacks. These can be taken with you, helping you avoid unhealthy options.

## **Sleep**

- Getting enough rest is important. Make sure you are getting enough sleep each night. Proper sleep helps you think more clearly, handle challenges better, and function better. If you are having problems sleeping, consult your physician.

## **Ask for help**

- Give yourself permission to ask for help before you burn out. Rely on family, friends, social services, and support groups.
- Arrange for 2 or 3 breaks during the week. Don't rule out help for short periods of time. Even short breaks are helpful.

## Medical care

- Set doctor appointments for your yearly check-up.
- Keep scheduled lab and doctor appointments.
- Take any medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Get your blood pressure checked.
- Get your vision and hearing checked.
- Perform self-exams (e.g., breast, testicle, skin) and report any suspicious findings.
- Schedule and keep your appointment with your dentist.
- Get a flu shot, a pneumonia shot, and any vaccinations recommended by your doctor.
- Report changes in your physical or mental health to your doctor promptly.

## Setting personal goals...

Setting personal goals is not only a way to achieve an objective, but also a way to increase self-esteem and self-confidence. You may discover skills and capabilities you never knew you had, which increases your sense of self-worth.

Goal setting can be done every day, once a week, or monthly. Some people like to have an annual review of their goals to see if they are meeting their own targets. Some goals may be lifelong. You can use the Goal Setting Worksheet and Template at the end of this chapter to help you determine those goals. Then use the strategies below to help you reach your goals.

### How to set personal goals

First make sure your goals are “smart.”

- S**      **Specific**
- M**      **Measurable**
- A**      **Achievable**
- R**      **Realistic**
- T**      **Time-sensitive**

- **Determine your specific goal and write it down.** You may have a broad goal, but you need to break it down to something that is specific and measurable. Be as specific as possible. Write your goal down and give yourself a timeline. Determine if the goal is reachable and achievable if you work at it.

*For example,* If your goal is to lose weight, the specific goal might be to lose 15 pounds.

- **Break down the steps to achieving your goal.** Once you have your specific goal written down, break it into smaller parts that represent steps toward achieving the final goal. Decide what actions you will take, along with your timeline for each action.

*For example,* To lose 15 pounds you might have a smaller goal of losing one to two pounds a week until you achieve your goal.

- **Determine any obstacles and plan to overcome them.** List potential barriers to meeting your goal so you will be prepared for them. Include your actions to overcome each of the barriers.

*For example,* On the goal of losing 15 pounds, an obstacle might be how to manage healthy eating at a birthday party next week.

- **Prepare a timeline for check-in intervals and achievements.** Write down your status each time you check-in to see if you are on track. Documentation can help reinforce your goals.

*For example,* Every week write down your current weight to track weight loss.

- **Revisit your goal, action steps, and obstacle plans.** If you are not achieving your goal, look carefully at your plan. What can you do to help yourself succeed?

*For example,* For your weight loss goal, are there new obstacles that you did not plan for? Do you need an exercise action step? Should you be more realistic in your goal and aim for ½ to one pound loss each week?

## Remember...

Taking care of yourself every day is as important as anything else on your to-do list. Your health and well-being contribute to your ability to manage your daily life and life's difficulties. Make yourself a priority, take care of your body and mind, and observe how other things improve as well.

## Put it into Practice

To begin to find out what personal goals you want to set, you could answer these questions first.

What will your life look like when you have what you want?

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What is your ideal career/job/business?

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What things do you want to experience?

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Where do you want to go?

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What does your ideal relationship look like?

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## Goal Setting Worksheet

What goal would you like to work on? Is it specific, measurable, and realistic?

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What is your time frame? \_\_\_\_\_

What steps will you take to reach your goal?

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What is your time frame? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there obstacles to reaching your goal? How will you overcome them?

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When will you measure your progress?

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# Goal Setting Template

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Taking Care of You First Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- Set a specific, realistic, achievable goal.
- List some places I'd like to visit or some things I'd like to experience.
- How can I make those things happen?

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







## FAMILY RELATIONSHIP & ROLE CHANGES

Most of the roles we have in our families are defined by time and experience. Deployment changes the family roles and responsibilities. You and your Soldier may have discussed these changes before deployment and how to manage them.

Research indicates four patterns that contribute to successful family role functioning – whether your loved one is away or not! Roles must be clearly established and explained, family members must be flexible and expect the unexpected, role distribution must be fair, and family members must behave responsibly and strive to do their best.

The bond that links your true family is not one of blood,  
but of respect and joy in each other's life.

– Richard Bach

## Deployment changes...

Deployment has likely brought about changes in your roles and responsibilities. You may find yourself overwhelmed with the responsibilities of maintaining a home, juggling finances, solving everyday problems, and meeting work or social obligations while your loved one is deployed. If you have children, you are now responsible for their welfare and activities. Do not hesitate to enlist the help of friends, extended family, or even members of organizations you belong to. Review the How to Find and Receive Help chapter for strategies on making this happen more easily. When asking, be direct, “*I may find it difficult to get everything done while my loved one is away. Is there anything you think you could help me with?*” If you have specific needs – lawn-mowing, child care or transportation, help with errands – let people know. You may find friends and family members are eager to help, but they may not know what your needs are.

### Discussing deployment with others

As your family roles change and you and any children take on different responsibilities, it can be helpful to have the support of others. Your community, schools, and employer may not be aware of the changes that deployment can bring. Knowing how to address this can help as you settle into your new responsibilities.

- Community.** If you live in a small or closely connected community be sure to tell others about the effects of deployment. Be careful to respect your family’s privacy.
- Teachers.** Talk with your children’s teachers and school personnel. It is important that they understand what is happening at home during deployment. Teachers can be additional support for your family in a way that can protect the privacy of the family. Visit [www2.ed.gov](http://www2.ed.gov) online, print out the brochure *Educator’s Guide to the Military Child during Deployment*, and offer it to your child’s teacher or principal.

### Helping children understand changes

Communicate with children in a way that is age appropriate. Plan to talk with children when they feel safe, and monitor their reactions for signs of confusion or information overload. Children need to process the experience and know what to expect. However, they often uphold the military ideal of personal courage and may not be forthcoming about their concerns. Reassure them that whatever they are feeling is normal and that everyone deals with deployment in his or her own way. Reassure them that you are there to support and guide them and that they will still be able to communicate with the absent parent. Do not hesitate to seek counseling for your children if necessary. They may not

want to burden you with fears and apprehensions but might be able to share with another trusted adult.

- Pre-school aged children.** Young children need simple explanations, not details. They may be aware of people crying but not necessarily the reasons why. They may not understand why the deployed parent has left.
- School-aged children.** Older school-aged children may want to ask more questions. They need direct and simple answers, especially about safety concerns.
- Teenagers.** Teenagers want more specific information and ask more difficult questions. Teenagers respond more positively to an open dialogue that includes give and take than to a one-sided lecture.

Research indicates that children of military parents face more psychological challenges than non-military children; the longer the deployment, the more significant the challenges. As the parent(s), you may be able to predict some of those challenges and prepare your child for them in advance. Your child's emotional well-being may largely depend on how well you manage deployment. Model positive coping methods while acknowledging that, at times, everyone will feel sad and miss the absent parent. Read the chapter Parenting for more guidelines.

## Understanding family roles...

Regardless of how many times deployment has been experienced, each time is different. It requires a renegotiation of your role and your spouse's role. There is also a negotiation of roles *after* each deployment. Understanding that there are changes in the family roles that are brought about because of deployment allows you to acknowledge those changes. It also allows you to discuss how you will work together to negotiate the way the roles and responsibilities of each family member will work in the present. It takes both time and effort to establish a new way of handling the roles and responsibilities in the family.

The Family Relationship and Role Changes Worksheet at the end of this chapter will help each member of the family think about the roles and responsibilities it takes for the family to function well. Remember, families with children do not function as a democracy. You are the leader. As you divide and reassign roles in the family, keep the following in mind:

- Be clear.** Establish clear roles for each family member. Clearly state what is expected with each responsibility.
- Be flexible.** Life will happen. Be willing to negotiate when unforeseen events happen.
- Be responsible.** You and your family members need to take family responsibilities seriously. All members should strive to do their best. Remind them of this.

## Assigning family roles

Every member of the family plays a part in helping with chores or upkeep of the family. Here are some simple strategies to help redefine roles in the family.

- Encourage.** Remember that family roles are not just physical like taking out the trash, but are emotional, too. Family members can all strive to keep a positive attitude, to cheer each other on, and to support one another emotionally during this time.
- Remember to Hunt the Good Stuff.** You may recall from Pre-Deployment training that this can be a family event. You can Hunt the Good Stuff at the dinner table or while doing chores together. Sharing the good things and reflecting on them with another person is good for both parties and helps to build and strengthen connections. Use the form in the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter,
- Communicate.** Set a time aside for the whole household to talk about what needs to be done now that your loved one is deployed. Clearly express what you need help with now. Allow others to share their needs as well. Listen openly to everyone's ideas.
- Appreciate.** Express appreciation for everyone stepping up during deployment. Express appreciation for the extra responsibility that each person will be performing to support the family unit. Schedule a fun activity to look forward to when responsibilities are finished.
- Assign.** Make decisions together as to how the roles and responsibilities will be divided. Even small children can help carry out the trash or set the table for meals.
- Choose.** Learning to work toward common family goals can be accomplished through negotiation of responsibilities. Helping each other with the yard or housework can bring a sense of purpose. Allowing everyone to have their say in what they want to contribute can go a long way in reestablishing roles and responsibilities.
- Align.** Align completion of chores or responsibilities to privileges or incentives. For older children, this might be allowance or free time. For younger children, this might mean extra video/TV time, staying up a little later on the weekend, or earning "points" toward a toy or game they would like.

You, as the parent, are responsible for providing physical, financial, and emotional support for your children. Having responsibility builds life skills and prosocial character. You may also work out of the home. Your older children may have paying jobs as well. Acknowledge this part of family support. Some tasks may take the cooperation of two or more people working together. Praise your children's ability to work together. Cooperation is a vital life skill.

## Chores to consider

Some parents take on too much, overburden themselves, and thereby deprive their children of learning experiences. Excessive burden can impact your health, mood, and ability to face life challenges. Responsibility is part of life, and sharing chores teaches this. It also endows your child with a sense of pride, accomplishment, and importance to the family. You should not do for your children that which they can do for themselves.

- Consider the following responsibilities which must usually occur for a family to function smoothly:

Pet care	Shopping for food
Yard care	Preparing meals
Cleaning kitchen	Cleaning bathrooms
School lunches	Child care/transportation
Car care	Vacuuming/sweeping
Laundry	Picking up toys/belongings

- Then ask yourself these questions:
  - Who in your household can do each of these things?
  - How often do they need to be done?
- Chores can be rotated between family members. Older children can be given more autonomy in the selection and completion methods than younger children. Chores such as raking leaves, can be assigned to the entire family as a project. Be creative. Check out the chore chart examples at the end of the chapter, or consider a technology intervention addressed below.

## Technology, family roles, and chores

Utilize your older children's smart phones or any tablet by using one of many new chore apps. These apps can randomly assign chores to your children or allow you to assign them. They can assign point values, create competition, and track completion. Some help your child stay organized with reminders and daily goals. Some allow you to incorporate good behavior goals and provide immediate feedback. The cost to download the apps is minimal. Many children are extremely tech savvy and enjoy the way the apps present the tasks in a game-like format. Check out the Parenting Resources Worksheet from the Parenting chapter for a list of specific apps to help get you started.

## Power struggles

Power struggles can occur with children whether they are toddlers or teens, especially when one parent is absent and change is creating some stress. It is natural to resist change. Here are tips from [positiveparenting.com](http://positiveparenting.com) to address the struggles.

- Side step.** Don't yell. Avoid emotion. Calmly and firmly remind the child of the agreement made beforehand. For example, he agreed to empty the dishwasher in order to watch TV on Friday. Then step away and remove the confrontation.
- Choice.** It is difficult to make a child do anything. Loss of privileges should be the consequence for not completing the responsibility. Your child can choose the chore OR the consequence. You might offer the option of a different chore in exchange for the chore being refused.
- Be creative.** Think of ways your child can feel in charge of a situation or something new. Do not micro-manage the process. Giving the child some perceived power can kindle the motivation to tackle the challenge.
- Respect the no.** Your child may not be intending to disrespect your authority, but only seeking to negotiate and make choices. This is a normal part of childhood as the child learns to make decisions. Teach your children to disagree respectfully and appropriately.

## Remember

Deployment brings many changes, especially to the roles and responsibilities of the household. When you sit down together, discuss the changes, and divide the responsibilities, the process will go more smoothly. Review the guidelines of this chapter with your older children. Ask for input. Look at deployment as an opportunity to take on new responsibilities, to try new things, and to grow as individuals.

## Family Relationship and Role Changes Worksheet

The worksheet below will help you identify how your roles have changed with deployment. You can use this worksheet for yourself and for other family members; just change the responsibilities in the first column for each particular person. After deployment, this worksheet will help you renegotiate family roles.

*In each column, write short answers for each category of roles.*

ROLES OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY FAMILY	MY ROLE BEFORE DEPLOYMENT IN THE FAMILY	MY ROLE DURING DEPLOYMENT IN THE FAMILY	WHO CAN HELP ME	WHAT RESOURCES I NEED
<b>Finances/ budget/purchases</b>				
<b>Home/auto repairs or purchases</b>				
<b>Medical or legal decisions</b>				
<b>Child care and transportation</b>				
<b>Family shopping, chores, meals</b>				
<b>Community roles</b>				

## Chore Chart Example

CHORES	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Pick up clutter							
Pick up toys							
Put things away							
Put dirty dishes in sink							
Put dirty clothes in hamper							
Hang up clothes							
Clear and wipe table							
Throw trash away							
Take out recyclables							
Dust (3x week)							
Sweep (Daily)							
Vacuum							
Do dishes (Daily)							
Wipe stove, fridge, counter							
Make beds							
Do some laundry							
Fold & put away laundry							
Wipe toilet, sink, tub							
Check homework							
Cook meals							
Change sheets							
Feed & water pet							

## Family Roles Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- I will complete the Family Relationship and Role Changes Worksheet and examine the necessary role changes deployment has brought to me.
- I will identify three roles I will be assuming during deployment.
- I will identify three people I can ask for help if I need assistance in carrying out these roles.

Record the outcomes or experience of my actions:

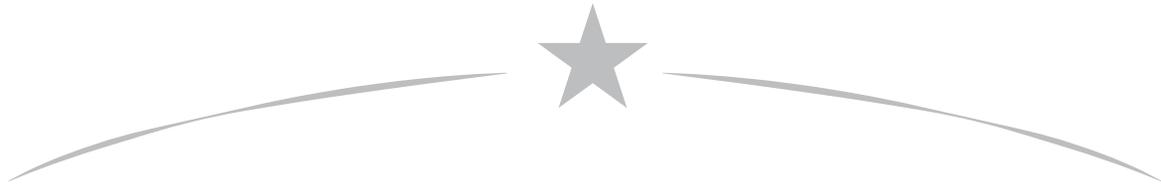
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## ENHANCING YOUR COMMITMENT

During deployment, relationships may become strained because of the emotional stress of physical separation. You and your loved one must purposefully strive to remain emotionally close. The steps you each take will help you both feel secure in your commitment.

Commitment often means doing the right thing rather than the easy thing. You and your partner need to express not only your love for one another, but also appreciation, acceptance, and support. Make an effort to communicate as frequently as possible, and keep that communication focused on strengthening your relationship.

In all relationships, there are disagreements, frustrations, and disappointments, but the two of you can manage these by keeping your expectations realistic and by managing your emotions. There are behaviors to avoid and behaviors to practice. This chapter will help you navigate the changes of deployment and keep the emotional bond you and your spouse share.

When you can't change the direction of the wind –  
change the direction of your sails.

– H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

## Understanding deployment commitment...

Most of the time we are secure in our relationship with our partner and do not question loyalty. However, relationships may become strained during deployment because of both physical distance and emotional stress on the relationship. During deployment, it is important to offer each other reassurances that the relationship is one of loyalty and commitment. Relationships require commitment on the part of both you and your partner. Strengthening commitment during deployment will help your commitment after deployment.

### Your spouse's experience

- Your spouse who is deployed needs to know you are committed to the relationship and are loyal.
- Your spouse may have doubts about the level of fidelity or trust during deployment.
- Your spouse may need reassurance that the loyalty in the relationship is mutual.

### Your experience

- During deployment, you need to know your spouse is still committed to your relationship and remains loyal.
- You may have doubts about the level of fidelity or trust during deployment.
- You may need reassurance that the loyalty in the relationship is mutual.

### Deployment as a couple

- When your spouse is deployed, it is important to renew your mutual commitment to your relationship.
- Open and honest communication will help as you discuss your feelings involving trust and loyalty.
- You and your spouse need to demonstrate appreciation for each other in multiple ways.
- Remember, marriage requires continuing commitment from each partner.

## Strengthening commitment to your relationship...

While deployment separates the two of you from your physical and sexual relationship, it does not have to impact your emotional relationship. Deployment is a temporary state, but you must commit to maintaining the relationship during this time or it will suffer. Use the worksheet at the end of the chapter to remind yourself of the strengths in your relationship and how you can foster them.

Deployment will bring about tensions that need to be resolved to remain emotionally close. In a healthy relationship, you are not only sexual partners but also friends. To get through deployment, you need to remain each other's friend. Working at keeping your relationship healthy will help you and your loved one be more resilient to the challenges of your relationship and the challenges of life.

Hopefully, before your loved one left, your relationship was strong. Your command recommended that you resolve any important disagreements before deployment. The closer and more committed your relationship was before deployment, the easier it will be on the two of you. To keep and build that closeness, focus on communication and maintaining intimacy.

### Communication with your loved one

Deployment is a barrier to communication, so it will take extra effort for both you and your spouse to keep it going. Calling and writing tell the other person that you are thinking of them; that they are a priority. Supportive emails and letters can go a long way in assuring your partner of your love. Communicate to your spouse the things that make you feel loved so that they can act on it. Don't expect mind-reading. Learn to listen actively and communicate effectively. Review the chapter Communication Skills for more assistance. Solid communication includes the following actions.

- Show respect.** You need to be able to speak or write to each other without fear of judgment or being ignored. This means honoring each other's point of view, whether you agree with it or not. If you seek to understand your partner instead of focusing on being right, your partner will feel respected and valued. Avoid accusing one another and making assumptions about things that were said or done. Remember that empathy and understanding will build and increase both trust and intimacy.
- Listen.** Listen to your spouse's fears and frustrations. When your spouse speaks, do not interrupt, even if you feel the urge to defend, deflect, or explain. Wait until he is finished and focus on what was said instead of what you want to say next. This is difficult and takes practice. Avoid shutting each other out by withdrawing or isolating. Ask questions.

- **Accept.** Accept each other as you are with all your human quirks, annoying habits, and weaknesses. Feeling accepted and loved just the way you are builds trust, security, and commitment in the relationship. You can't change other people. You can only change yourself and how you react to others.
- **Support.** Now, more than ever, is the time to support one another. Encourage one another. Be happy for each other's achievements. Be there for each other. Be unselfish. You can't be together, but you can still provide love and reassurance despite the distance.
- **Be clear.** When communicating about something important or difficult, you need to clearly tell your spouse what it is that you need. Do not be vague. Address actions that upset you and actions that make you happy. Make your needs clear to your spouse. Ask your spouse to do the same for you. Using the framework of "*When you do X, I feel Y*" helps to avoid blaming and subsequent defensiveness.

*For example,*

*"When you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel loved/important/wanted..."*

*"When you \_\_\_\_\_, I feel disrespected/hurt/ignored..."*

- **Express appreciation.** Humans need to feel appreciated. Express thanks and appreciation in your words and actions for the strength you both bring to the relationship. Communicate appreciation for the sacrifices you each have made. No one wants to feel taken for granted. Make your appreciation clear and make it often. Send a small gift for no reason, tell her how much you appreciate and admire her. Send an article of clothing you have slept in a few nights or a letter sprayed with cologne you often wear. Send anything you know makes your spouse feel loved and close to you.
- **Use time wisely.** Understand that timing is everything, and the Army has its own schedule. If you offend or disappoint one another, apologize and use the time you have for positive interchange. Realize that you are both under stress and have obligations. Try to be understanding of this. Use your time away from your spouse to try a new sport, craft, hobby or to do more of the things you love to do.
- **Commit.** Remind each other you are committed to making your relationship work, and then be proactive in making that happen. This helps maintain trust and helps you both feel valued. This also means being loyal physically and emotionally. Don't put your spouse down in public. You should both feel that you have each other's back. Guard your relationship from people who are negative or who are unsupportive of your relationship.

- **Be positive.** Have a positive belief in your relationship's success and in your partner. Think of the deployment experience as an opportunity that can help your relationship grow. Discuss how each of you has changed for the better. Focus on a happy future and the things you will do and see when the other returns. Once home, don't take each other for granted. The strategies you use to keep your emotional commitment strong during deployment should continue after deployment.
- **Cherish the things you share.** One of the beautiful things about intimate relationships is the private moments that you share. Whether it's an inside joke, a poignant moment that you've witnessed, or something else, the thing that intensifies your connection to this moment is the fact that it's a beautifully guarded secret. A relationship keepsake. An invisible string that anchors both you and your loved one to a moment in time. Remind each other of those things that are sacred to your relationship.
- **Understand your expectations.** Unrealistic expectations cause stress and anxiety and put undue pressure on your relationship. In turn, stress and anxiety can cause you to have unrealistic expectations. Your interactions and your roles cannot be the same as they are pre- or post-deployment. Let your expectations go, and accept any communication you receive with gratitude.
- **Set goals.** Healthy couples talk together frequently about their common goals and desires, which creates a sense of shared purpose in the relationship. Plan a weekend getaway for your spouse's return. Imagine and set goals from now and five years from now. Working toward them and achieving them will strengthen your commitment. Use the Relationship Goal Setting Worksheet and the Relationship Goal Setting Template at the end of this chapter to get started.

## Communication with others

- **When to seek advice.** There may be times you need to seek out sincere advice from a trusted friend about a troublesome situation involving your partner, but do so mindfully. Your spouse may not be available to talk about relationship matters, due to a variety of communication challenges that come with deployment. You may choose to utilize what limited communication you have with your spouse to stay positive, in which case you may need to confide in a trusted friend. If you choose to go the route of confiding in your friend, you may benefit from processing your concerns with, and getting an outside opinion from, this trusted person.
- **Pitfalls of seeking advice.** One danger with talking to friends about your spouse is that your friend may reinforce and perpetuate any negative feelings about your partner, and regardless of the intentions, this is not helpful. How will you handle

it if your friend uses any negative information about your partner outside of the appropriate context? If you are hesitant about the repercussions of sharing the private details of your relationship with another individual, you may first need to ask yourself: *“Is this something I should discuss instead with my partner?”*

- **If you seek advice.** If you do decide to share with your friend, know your boundaries about discussing your relationship with friends ahead of time: what is acceptable to discuss and what is off limits. Another thing to keep in mind if you decide to confide in a friend is to use good judgement. If you are going to be out enjoying a few drinks with your friends, this is not the time to discuss problems in your partnership. If you are still conflicted about what to share with whom, consider talking to a professional counselor.

## Building intimacy...

*“How can you maintain intimacy when you are away from each other?”* This is one of the questions most commonly asked during a military separation. Intimacy includes physical and emotional expressions of love. Emotional intimacy happens when you feel safe sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires with your spouse. With emotional intimacy, you are able to more completely accept one another, to feel loved, and to fully love, no matter what. Your emotionally intimate relationship is one of trust where you each feel valued and cared for.

To create emotional intimacy in your relationship it is important that you are able to find ways of communicating with your partner on a regular basis and in a way that honors individual expression. When we feel we are truly heard, we feel connected, and connections are essential in intimacy.

Gary Chapman’s book *The 5 Love Languages* (2009) lays out five essential ways humans communicate and receive love. What makes one person feel loved may not be the same as what makes another feel loved. Chapman recently published a military edition of this book with accommodations for deployment (2017). Most people have one primary love language and one secondary love language. Learning about your own and your partner’s love languages can help you both do things that fulfill each other’s love needs, which can create a closer, more harmonious relationship.

- **Acts of service.** You feel loved when your partner does things to help you. It could be doing the dishes, folding the laundry, watching the kids for an hour or two, washing your car, or any other task that eases your responsibilities. The spouse at home is very likely doing many of these acts. The deployed spouse can serve the spouse by encouraging, supporting, and appreciating until the return home when practical deeds can be done.

- Gifts.** You enjoy receiving thoughtful gifts, both on special occasions and for no particular reason. The gift doesn't need to be extravagant or expensive. It is the thought and effort behind the gift that makes you feel loved. If this is what makes your spouse feel loved, send small gifts or meaningful objects as reminders of your love.
- Physical touch.** Affectionate pats, holding hands, kissing, and hugging are all gestures that make you feel loved. This may include sexual touch, but giving affectionate, nonsexual touches on a regular basis are an important way to show love and concern to the person whose love language is physical touch. Sharing clothing with one another can help you feel close. Perhaps sleep in one of your spouse's t-shirts, or spray it with your favorite cologne before sending it off.
- Quality time.** Spending time together and receiving your partner's full, undivided attention makes you feel loved. You feel cared about when your partner focuses only on you—no phone, computer, or TV. Taking a walk together, going out to dinner—just the two of you—or simply talking over a cup of tea or coffee are all activities that effectively communicate love to you. Do not multitask when you talk. Be completely focused on each other, your stories, and your feelings.
- Words of affirmation.** You feel valued and loved when your partner gives you unsolicited compliments, says, *"I love you,"* tells you special things she loves about you, or says other nice things, such as, *"Thank you for making such a great meal."* Words can encourage both of you to face challenges or even to take time off to relax. Use a kind, sincere tone. Make requests of one another, not demands. Send love notes, perhaps specialty notes: *"Open when you are lonely."* *"Open when you are overwhelmed."* Remind each other of why you love the other person and why you are attracted to them physically and emotionally.

Visit [www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com) to take a quiz which evaluates your love languages and ways you and your spouse can speak them. The site includes a link to purchase the military edition, as well as workbooks to improve your relationship skills.

## Barriers to emotional intimacy

Even when each person feels connected there may still be barriers to overcome to reach the level of intimacy that is vital in a healthy relationship. Here are some barriers that can occur, some general and some related to deployment.

- Unrealistic expectations or fantasies about the deployment
- Not optimizing communication during deployment to foster emotional intimacy
- Withholding your feelings, not stating your needs

- Focusing on stress and the negative aspects of deployment
- Worrying about faithfulness in your relationship
- Complaining about or disparaging your spouse in public
- Differences in the way men and women typically approach and experience intimacy
- Differences in the way men and women typically communicate

## **Managing anger**

One of the major barriers to intimacy in a relationship is poor management of anger. How we manage anger is important because some side effects of anger can damage or erode your relationship. Unmanaged anger can lead to depression and other problems. It can escalate, and a pattern of violence can emerge. Learning to fight fairly is a critical skill in a healthy relationship. There are cycles of anger and violence, some of which may apply to your relationships. Each phase leads to or causes the next phase. The cycle of anger includes:

1. Lack of communication
2. Unmet needs
3. Increasing tension
4. Explosion (can be violence towards self or others)
5. Relief or guilt

Understanding the cycle of anger helps you visualize where you are in the cycle or where your spouse may be. It also helps you prevent what began as a lack of communication or an unmet need from escalating into something far more negative. For strategies on negotiating your more difficult arguments or issues, review the chapter on Conflict Resolution. See the Understanding and Dealing with Anger section of Red Flags for more information on anger.

## Remember...

Spouses who have gone through more than one deployment have their own strategies for staying close during deployment. These include:

- Ignore other couples. Don't compare yourselves to them. Ever.
- Have a sense of humor. Laugh together. Laugh at yourself.
- Agree to disagree. Some things are not worth arguing about. Some things cannot be resolved until your loved one comes home.
- Be honest. Honestly share your worries, your fears, and your insecurities, but share your hopes and dreams as well. Encourage your spouse to share the same with you.
- Plan for the future. Focus on the end of deployment and the great things you can do when reunited.

When you and your partner committed to one another, you made a public choice. You declared your intent to spend your lives together. Learning to overcome challenges is part of growing as individuals and as a couple. Enduring difficulties together can draw you closer together and make you feel more secure in yourself and in your future. Being a military couple can create bigger obstacles than many couples face. Accept this. However, know that you have what it takes to prevail. Review the chapters of this book that help you manage your life and your emotions. Seek help when you need it. A good counselor or mental health professional can help you navigate the changes and stress of deployment and help you stay on track in your relationship commitment.

## Put it into Practice

What are some ways you would like to stay connected as a couple during deployment?

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What is the best way to communicate this to your spouse?

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What do you think would enhance your emotional intimacy as a couple during deployment?

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How will you discuss ideas for enhancing your relationship with your spouse?

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## Strengths in Your Relationships

List some of the strengths in your relationships with your spouse, your friends, and your family. What can you do to foster these strengths? Can you build these strengths into your other relationships?

### *My Relationships*

NAME	STRENGTHS

## Relationship Goal Setting Worksheet

Ask yourself these questions and then use the template below to record your goals and your plan to reach them. Although most of your relationship goals will be jointly set by you and your spouse, you each may also have some separate goals that impact your relationship. Repeat the process for each relationship goal. Realize that your goals and action plans during deployment may need to change after deployment.

*What goal do you want to set for your marriage or partnership?*

What is your goal?

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Why do you want this goal?

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What does success look like? Be specific. Can you make your goal measurable?

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How will you know you have reached your goal? For example, if you want a happy marriage, how would you know that you have it? What does happy look like for you?

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Is your goal broad and long-range? If so, you may need smaller objectives that are shorter term and more focused.

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*How will you get what you want?*

What will you do to reach your goal?

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What are the specific action steps needed to reach your goal? Be very concrete in your action steps – these are your blueprint for action.

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Who is responsible for accomplishing each action step?

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What is the timeframe for each action step, including the target date for accomplishment?

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# Relationship Goal Setting Template

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective to reach this goal:**

Action steps to reach this objective

Who will do this?

Time frame

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Enhancing Your Commitment Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- Verbally remind my partner of how committed I am to the relationship.
- Have a positive attitude: Believe in my spouse and myself.
- Let go of unrealistic expectations and go with the flow.
- Express appreciation to my spouse regularly.
- Listen more attentively and openly to my spouse, without judgment – only support.

Record the outcomes or experiences of my actions:

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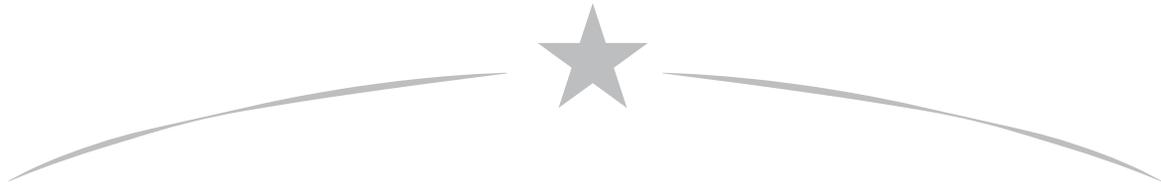
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## PARENTING

During deployment, children encounter the normal daily struggles of growing up but with the additional stress of an absent parent. Fortunately, research has been able to pinpoint the factors that help children thrive and grow during this challenging time. It helps your children if they understand and believe that their absent parent is away making a positive difference, not only for our nation but also for our world. Remind your child that the deployed parent is making a brave sacrifice we all can be proud of.

While your child's belief system is important, it is not as important as you are. You are the defining factor in how successfully your child navigates the challenges of deployment. Your child's resilience depends greatly on your own. By using the tools and strategies of this workbook, you become a greater model for your children.

This chapter outlines some strategies specifically for helping children navigate the changes of deployment. Research indicates that the children of deployed parents manage more easily when there is open and effective communication within the family. In addition, research finds that children who learn strategies to build resilience, manage stress, and manage emotions are far more likely to thrive.

If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money.

– Abigail Van Buren

## Communication...

### Share information with children

Specifically explain to your children or teens the general details of deployment they need to gain an understanding of the situation. Be mindful of your child's stage of emotional and cognitive development to choose information and gauge reactions. Children under the age of 3 are unable to reason and have no concept of time. In all cases, put yourself in your child's position. They do not have your life experience. Tend to any emotions first and behaviors second.

- Who?** Relate that the parent and combat support group are leaving. Your child may have relationships with the children of other Soldiers being deployed and feel less isolated to know others will be going through the same experience.
- Where?** Tell your children where the parent is being deployed. Find it on a map, and find your own town on the map if necessary. A teen may want to know more specifics, such as a base or installation, but will understand that sometimes we cannot know *exactly* where the parent is for the safety of the mission.
- Why?** Deployment is part of a job. The parent must leave because of work, not because of any problem with family. Very young children struggle with understanding that a parent cannot choose to stay home with them.
- How long?** Although deployments can be extended unexpectedly, share the *anticipated* (not promised) length of separation. Emphasize that no matter how long, it is temporary. Don't make false promises. Plans in the military change. Creating a count-down calendar or paper chain often helps young children conceptualize the time and watch the time shrink.
- What?** Some Soldiers have jobs that are easy and innocuous enough to explain to children. Some Soldiers have jobs that put them directly in harm's way. Your older children most likely fully understand your Soldier's duties, but younger children may only need to know that the parent is doing a job. Don't create anxiety that can be avoided. Don't lie to older children. Be optimistic and positive.

### Connect with your children

- Talk to your children and teens. Encourage them to share their feelings. Listen openly, and allow them to safely voice worries or fears without reprimand or judgment. Assure them that though things will be different with an absent parent, you will work together, make it through, and do most of the same things you do when the other

parent is home. Be honest and use black-and-white statements that leave no room for doubt, such as *“I will always take care of you.”*

- It helps to limit the amount of news your children watch or listen to, especially pertaining to military activities. You don't need to hide what's happening in the world from your children, but neither do they need to be exposed to stories that fuel their fears and which may be based on partial or inaccurate information. This is true for you, too!

### **Communicate with the deployed parent**

- Decide how and how often the deployed parent will attempt to communicate with the children. Email, phone, hand-written letters? Even a small child can draw a picture for a parent that can be mailed or scanned and emailed to the deployed parent. Be clear that they might not always hear from the parent when expected, and that's normal.
- Maintain a united front. Be consistent with discipline practices while the other parent is deployed. Consult with the deployed parent on more serious behavior issues. You and your loved one should share the same goals, values, and expectations for your children as well as similar discipline views. An imbalance between the two of you is extremely stressful for a child or teen. A united front helps them feel secure and stable.
- Realize that as the at-home parent, day-to-day decisions about the children will fall to you. The immediate nature of many decisions about the children will necessitate this.

### **Talk to your teens**

Many teens decrease communication with parents as they strive to become more and more independent. This is common. However, talk with your teens even if it seems they don't want you to.

- Teens are sometimes more receptive to one-on-one communication when there is a distractor: Try talking when you are in the car or doing a chore together. Allowing your teen to focus on something else while they talk removes some of the pressure for them.
- When your teen has questions, answer them honestly but with reassurance. Ask your teens and pre-teens for their opinion about what is happening, and listen to their answers. Treating their opinion with respect helps keep the communication going.

## Venting

- Let your children vent. Venting is verbal or written communication that releases strong emotions or energy. If your children vent or air their fears, frustrations, and sadness with you, listen with empathy, not judgment.
- Do not vent to your children or teens. Expressing that you feel the same way too, at times is fine. If you need to vent specifically about a problem, fear, or conflict with your Soldier, seek out an adult friend, family member, or counselor. Children have their own fears to burden them, but because they love us as we love them, they will carry the burden of our fears as well.
- Use discretion. Children and teens have excellent selective hearing. Be careful about what you say in front of them and when they are close enough to overhear.

## Resilience and children...

Building the skills of resilience helps all humans manage stress and adversity. This does not mean things won't be difficult. It means that we can recover and work through the challenges in a more healthy and positive way. Strategies to increase the resilience of your children include:

- Limit change.** Change and transition are stressful on adults and children. Do not add any additional change during deployment if possible. It is not a good time to change schools or daycare.
- Stay positive about the deployment.** Talk about the new and good things you and your children experience each day. The children may want to keep a list of pleasant, good, or great things they did or witnessed and then share from this list when they communicate with the absent parent. You can all Hunt the Good Stuff using the worksheet in the Emotional Adjustment to Deployment chapter. Focusing on the good goes a long way toward a bright outlook and positive experience in the face of adversity.
- Reach out to others.** Encourage your child or teen to spend time with friends they enjoy. Plan fun family activities with your nearby family and other friends. Build a strong network to support your child. Let the school know about the deployment. If you attend a place of worship, keep doing so. This provides another network for your child to lean on. At the end of the chapter there is a Parenting Resources List with links to materials for teachers, family, and you.
- Help your child by having them help others.** Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer

work. There are many organizations in need of help with tasks children can help do. Consider Meals on Wheels, walking dogs at a shelter, packing backpacks for needy students, or picking up trash in a park. Brainstorm, look online, ask at school, or consult your religious organization for volunteer activities you all might enjoy.

- Maintain the routine.** Sticking to a routine is comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your child to develop routines. You might declare one night a week pizza night (or some other food they enjoy). This creates a pattern and something to look forward to. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a nightly routine for children called *Brush, Book, Bed*. It can be found at <http://bit.ly/bedroutine>.
- Teach your child self-care.** Be a good example, and make sure your children eat properly, exercise, and rest. Allow children down time, as overscheduling causes physical and mental stress. Aim for balance.
- Set goals.** Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Praise your child for progress, not just achievement. Break down large homework assignments into small, achievable actions that add to completion. Together, choose family goals for the deployment, and work together to take the steps to achieving those goals. It will be exciting to tell the deployed parent about the progress.

## Stress management...

Deployment and its changes are stressful. Research indicates that during deployment military families and children experience significantly more anxiety in life than civilians. This anxiety is found to have cumulative effects after extended or repeated deployments. As mentioned in the Managing Excess Stress chapter, stress can take its toll on our physical health; this includes children. Learning to recognize symptoms of stress and to utilize stress management techniques with the entire family can have profound benefits for everyone. Stress is contagious and can impair your parenting, so make sure you are managing your own stress while helping your children to manage theirs.

### Symptoms in children and teens

Young children may find it difficult to verbalize when they are experiencing stress, and older children may avoid sharing feelings. The symptoms of stress in children can include:

- Irritability, moodiness, or even hostility
- Withdrawing from family or friends

- Repeatedly complaining or expressing worries
- Increase in complaints of headaches, backaches, or stomachaches
- Frequent crying or becoming more clingy
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Smoking, drinking alcohol, or using drugs
- Lack of energy or disinterest in previously enjoyed activities
- Falling or failing grades in school

Pay attention to these behaviors, and determine an appropriate response or intervention. Check in with teachers and coaches for updates on your child or teen's behavior in these settings.

## **Reduce stress**

Behaviors that can help your child or teen manage stress include:

- Getting plenty of sleep\*
- Quiet time alone
- Engaging in a pleasant activity
- Journaling, painting, or drawing
- Playing
- Exercising independently or playing a team sport
- Practicing good problem solving
- Learning and practicing mindfulness and meditation

*\*For pediatric sleep guidelines, see the resources at the end of the chapter.*

## Emotional adjustment and regulation...

### Utilize your time

Research indicates that merely spending time with your children helps them cope emotionally. Many working parents find this especially difficult. During the initial stages of deployment, carve out one-on-one time with your children and spend more time with them as a family. Taking a walk together, playing a game, and cuddling on the sofa with a movie are examples of positive family time. Children need to feel safe, secure, and loved. Spending time with each of your children indicates to them that they are a priority. Keeping daily routines also helps children and teens feel secure. This includes routine meal times, bed times, etc. Routine creates a stability your children can count on.

### Help your children regulate their emotions

Emotional regulation refers to a person's ability to effectively manage and respond to a given situation. This is a complex process that involves monitoring and evaluating one's thoughts and feelings about an emotionally arousing event while the event is occurring. You then regulate and respond in a way that is appropriate to the situation.

- Model it.** Model self-management by resisting your own tantrums and personal pity parties. Express your own emotions appropriately, and model mood management skills. Changing your thoughts about a situation to appropriate, calmer thoughts realigns the emotional impact the situation will have on you. These mood management steps are detailed in the chapter Emotional Adjustment to Deployment. The Thought Record can be used to help manage challenging emotions and feelings.
- Make amends.** Even in the fog of anger, attempt to speak respectfully to your children so that they learn to do the same. We all lose our temper from time to time, and apologizing to our children for our own inappropriate behavior models making amends. Note: If we keep repeating the inappropriate behavior, however, our apologies lose their authenticity.
- Nurture.** You probably know how to soothe your own child or teen. We often need to help a child or teen calm down BEFORE we address the cause of upset. Reassurance, hugs, and quiet time may help a child cope. If your child is angry and expressing it inappropriately, you might state, *"I need you to calm down so we can talk about this."* Remind your child or teen that you love them no matter what.
- Monitor sadness.** If the child is sad, allow crying. Sadness is normal, and crying is the normal response. It releases endorphins that calm the nervous system. If you feel your

child's crying is manipulative in nature or histrionic, try to catch your children NOT over-reacting and praise them for that behavior. If the breakdowns continue, let your pediatrician know.

- **Accept.** Accept your child's emotions and remember that a child's perspective of the world is very different from yours. Attempt to understand, not agree. Simply feeling heard may be all they need. Listen and allow silence to linger when a child stops crying or explaining. Your child may not need any intervention. A child who feels supported and understood is much more likely to listen to our suggestions or the choices we offer to move on. When the episode is over and the child has bounced back, praise the resilience.
- **Guide behavior.** When children are acting up we often feel the urge to immediately stop or punish the behavior. No one enjoys the supermarket melt-down or public back talk. However, research indicates that punishment usually leads to more misbehavior. You have stopped the behavior for the moment, but the child did not learn to control the behavior.
- **Consider your child's state of emotion.** Both good and bad behaviors are driven by emotions. Attempt to attend to the emotion, and then address the behavior. Is your child angry, frustrated, disappointed, or feeling left out? Find out the why of the behavior and focus on that first. The child will feel heard, but is not off the hook for misbehaving. Express clearly and specifically the behavior that is inappropriate in that situation and why. There are always options in how to deal with our emotions. Praise them when they choose to behave in a mature way.
- **Babies and toddlers are incapable of moderating their emotions.** Most misbehavior is driven by natural curiosity, frustration, and disappointment. Children this age become fussy and defiant when hungry or tired, as well. Be calm and prevent the misbehavior. Distraction is often useful. If need be, remove them from the situation.
- **Older children can learn to process emotions.** *"Why do I feel this way? Why did I do that? How can I problem solve or manage the emotion?"* Use encouragement, praise, incentives, and rewards for a positive environment. One study found that a 5:1 ratio is healthy. Five positive behavior reinforcements help counterbalance the negative impact of one consequence – however necessary.
- **Limit.** There are, of course, limits to allowing your child to display emotion, especially anger. In the heat of the moment, tell the child that *"It's okay to be mad, but it's not okay to hit/call names/destroy objects."* Your child should not be allowed to insult or hurt others, break things, or disturb people not involved in the conflict. You and your loved one may have established rules about the expression of anger: no shouting, no name calling, no profanity, no hitting, etc. Having clear household rules to refer

to establish expectations for everyone. Explicitly identify the misbehavior that needs to stop. *“You need to stop shouting at me, or you can sit in your room until you calm down.”* The child now has a choice, one of which includes controlling his own behavior. In addition to no statements, provide the positive expectation, *“In our family we: treat each other respectfully, disagree calmly, respect other people’s belongings, help one another...”*

In the Red Flags chapter at the back of the book are four sections related to emotional regulation: Child Abuse, Depression, Domestic Violence, and Understanding and Dealing with Anger. They are serious issues that need to be confronted immediately if they impact your household. Resources for help are available there.

## **The power and peril of praise**

The purpose of praising a child is to encourage positive behaviors that produce positive results. Many parents unwittingly praise the results instead of the behaviors that caused it. For instance, telling a child *“Good job on the math test!”* seems nice. However, current research shows that praising the result or an innate ability can backfire. Telling a child, *“Good effort!”* instead of *“Good job!”* is an improvement, however, take it a step further for the full impact.

- Praise the behavior, attitude, or character trait that got the result. *“You worked so hard on that project!” “You focused so well on the coach’s directions!” “You were so kind to your sister.”* Praise the things your child does have control over. He or she may not get a B+ the next time, or she may lose the softball game, or not get a part in the school play. The result cannot be the focus; encouraging the desirable behavior needs to be the focus of your words. Be as specific as possible. *“I like the way you take care of your things and put them away. It shows me how responsible you are.”*
- Avoid over-praising or praising innate ability. Pediatricians consider lavishing a child with praise to be emotionally unhealthy and research shows that this activity creates children who are overly-cautious, have less confidence, less persistence, and are less willing to share ideas in school. Praising a child for intelligence, physical attractiveness, or athletic or artistic gifts is to praise something the child has no control over. If they bomb the next test, does that mean they are not smart? No. More likely, the result is tied to something they did or did not do. Praise persistence and independence. If you are starting to wonder if you do over-praise, try asking questions instead.

- Ask your child what he enjoyed about the activity. Ask your child how she feels about her own performance. This helps children internalize the accomplishment and understand that outcome is controlled by behavior. Children who are praised for effort show more interest in learning at school, more persistence in learning new things, and more enjoyment in the process. These children also seek out new challenges when they master previous ones, turning them into self-motivated, self-directed learners. These are traits that will last your child a lifetime.

## Remember...

None of us are perfect parents, so don't compare yourself to others. You are the one to assess the needs of your family and your individual children. You are the one to decide how to parent them and help them grow into responsible, caring adults. Being an Army spouse is a tough job and being an Army parent is an additionally tough job. Reach out for assistance when you need it. Enlist family and friends when you need a breather or break to refresh your adult self. If a problem does not seem to be getting better, talk to your children's pediatrician or seek out a family counselor or psychologist. Not ironically, older children often open up to and accept the advice of an objective adult as opposed to their own parent. Your children may also not want to burden you with their own fears and can express things more openly with a trained professional. There are experts and resources eager to help, support, and guide you.

## Put it into Practice

What is the information you will give your children about deployment? Are there things you will and will not tell them?

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Which strategies will be most useful for your children in building resilience? How can you help them practice these strategies? What will you do?

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Do you see any signs of stress in your children? How can you help them manage their stress?

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Think about your own emotional regulation. Are you setting a good example?

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Think about the times your children have need of emotional regulation. Do you have a strategy ready to practice?

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## Parenting Resources

### Bounce Back: How to Be a Resilient Kid

In this book by Wendy Moss, PhD, readers learn about the definition of resiliency and how to become a resilient individual. The book contains practical tools and strategies, including real-life stories of resilience and self-reflective quizzes. Recommended by the American Psychological Association.

### Army Family Readiness Group (FRG)

The FRG provides command information, community resources, a network of families, and announcements about activities and social gatherings related to your command. Check with your local FRG lead.

### Hug A Hero Dolls

This website offers numerous comfort items for your child during deployment. Send in a photo of the deploying parent, and they will create a soft doll in the likeness of the parent for the child to cuddle while mom or dad is away. Also available are pillows, blankets, photo-necklaces with dog tags, and 20-second voice recordings that can be inserted into any comfort item with a message from the absent parent. <https://www.hugahero.com/>

### FOCUS World

An interactive, online educational tool that helps military families become stronger in the face of challenges by providing both parents and children a fun place to learn and practice important skills, such as: understanding and managing feelings, goal setting, and communication during both deployment and reintegration. This webpage offers videos, downloadable worksheets, and a calendar of 28 days of family building activities.

[focusproject.org/focus-world](https://focusproject.org/focus-world)

### Military OneSource and Army OneSource

Crammed with resources on parenting children from infancy through teen years. Army OneSource is on the Army Family Web Portal.

[www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/parenting) and [www.armyfamilywebportal.com/](https://www.armyfamilywebportal.com/)

### Operation We Are Here

This website provides a comprehensive list of resources for military families and focuses on the families of the deployed and how to support them. There are also numerous links to educational materials for home-front loved ones. [www.operationwearehere.com](https://www.operationwearehere.com)

## Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers

A guide for helping adults understand the stresses of deployment for children and students that offers ways to help build their resilience during the experience.

[www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx)

## Sesame Street and Sesame Workshop

Military and Veteran family focused programs, such as Talk, Listen, Connect, Military Families Near and Far, and Transitions provide support and practical education to help children through deployments, combat-related injuries, and the death of a loved one.

[www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/veterans](http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/veterans) and [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

## American Academy of Pediatrics Sleep Guidelines

([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org))

<i>Age</i>	<i>Time Sleeping per 24 Hours</i>
Infant 4-12 months:	12-16 hours
Toddler 1-2 years:	11-14 hours (includes naps)
Child 3-5 years:	10-13 hours (includes naps)
Child 6-12 years:	9-12 hours
Teen 13-18 years	8-10 hours

## Parenting Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference:

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I commit to try the following strategy:

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Some other strategies I can try:

- Examine the following areas. Which are my strengths as a parent?  
Which would I like to improve?
  - Positive attitude
  - Staying social
  - Communication
  - Managing stress
  - Managing emotions
  - Guiding behavior

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_





## PREPARING FOR POST-DEPLOYMENT

Emotional and behavioral changes may be part of your life post-deployment, at least for the short term. You made adjustments while your Soldier was deployed. Decisions were made independently with the expectation that each person was helping to plan towards the future. There were adjustments with roles and responsibilities, and those may continue during reintegration.

Some of these changes may be changes that the family decides work best. Some of these changes may be related to your Soldier's combat experiences or injuries. Some behavioral changes will resolve over time, and some will require both you and your Soldier to make adjustments. Some may be longer-term changes that can be accommodated with the right resources to bring about a new future.

You can use the strategies you learn in this book, such as problem solving, assertive communication, active listening, role negotiation, and finding help, to help you successfully manage the changes brought on by post-deployment.

In order to carry a positive action,  
we must develop a positive vision.  
– Dalai Lama

## Preparing for change upon return...

When your Soldier returns from deployment, it is not unusual to see changes that have taken place as a part of the experience. Knowing about possible changes will give you some insight. Your Soldier is an individual, and the adjustment to returning home is different for everyone. You will both probably experience a range of emotions as you readjust to living with one another after the long separation. Change is difficult and stressful, but can be managed with patience and understanding on both your parts. Keep in mind:

- During deployment, you and your loved one had to develop strong strategies to make sure that you were communicating and nurturing your relationship. Continue these strategies. Don't take each other or your relationship for granted.
- Take inventory of the strengths you both developed while you were apart, and use them to talk about your roles and responsibilities as a couple and a family.
- Keep the lines of communication open with your loved one, but understand that there are some things about deployment that your Soldier may not want to talk about yet. Some families find that talking about the day-to-day small stuff is a helpful starting point.
- Be patient. Returning Soldiers may, at first, want to spend more time with their fellow Soldiers than with their families. If you've already been through Post-Deployment training, you may remember that this can be a result of the cohesion of the military unit. Let your loved one know that you understand the need to be with others who shared the deployment experience, but that you need to have time, too. Gradually, this issue should resolve.
- It is also important to know when you might need to seek assistance or treatment for any behavior that you feel is taking too long to resolve, or has become unsafe for your loved one, you, or the family.

## Possible changes...

### Combat stress reactions

Not all Soldiers will suffer from combat stress reactions. However, combat stress reactions are very common. Some of the common reactions that may be noticeable include personality, physical, and emotional changes. The way your Soldier needed to behave in a combat zone is very different from life at home. If combat stress reactions do occur, they will most likely be temporary. Some common reactions are:

- Excess drinking, smoking, drug use
- Work or school problems
- Edginess, easily upset or annoyed, irritable, angry
- Being on guard, or always alert, trouble concentrating, jumpy, easily startled
- Loss of intimacy, isolation, feeling withdrawn, emotional numbness
- Sadness, guilt, self-blame, feeling rejected or abandoned
- Feeling hopeless
- Not trusting others
- Being over-controlling or inciting more conflict than usual
- Trouble concentrating
- Physical ailments - stomach upset, headaches, sweating, rapid heartbeat or breathing, trouble sleeping or overly tired, neglecting health
- Erratic driving

Driving can trigger memories of deployment experiences where roads may have been very dangerous. Below are spouse reports about their Soldier's driving habits post-deployment.

*"We hadn't been prepared for hubby to feel uncomfortable if we weren't taking combat precautions in our minivan in the middle of the San Joaquin Valley. More than once he waited for a few seconds after everyone piled in before visibly shaking himself and starting out. For a few weeks, he wanted to put our third daughter in the rear of the van with a [Squad Automatic Weapon]."*

*"...after the first deployment, he would call out threats, but for him it was the overpasses and underpasses that would really bother him. He would be looking all around like we had missed an exit. Cars backfiring and the truckers' horn blasts also set him on edge."*

*After a month or so it calmed down, but every once in a while, we still get involuntary responses...*

*"I recall my husband doing a 180 in the street to check out a cardboard box. It was a little unnerving at first, but I did get used to it and of course it faded."*

- Emotional changes. Returning home can involve a readjustment of emotional reactions and emotional processing.

*"He spends all his time holed up in his room."*

*"He's been depressed since post-deployment, but he started going to support groups at the VA twice a week. He's showing improvement and looking forward to them."*

*"...I try to listen more, try to be supportive, and try not to let the little things get to me."*

*"We handled the big crowds and stress of the holidays, and he did really well. We have a code word for when he needs space. There were only a few times that he needed to use it."*

- Behavioral changes can also occur as the Soldier readjusts to home life.

*"We went for a long time after he got back, probably about 8 months that I slept on the couch because I got tired of being hit. [Nightmares would make him] come up out of the bed and rip the curtains down. He had us rolled up in the blankets and everything else one night."*

*"We talked about how we handled previous reintegration issues and we agreed, we can handle most anything."*

## **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder caused by exposure to a life-threatening event. PTSD can be very confusing to understand. Depression and substance abuse can add to problems for people with PTSD.

- Research indicates that in Veterans who have seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, approximately 20% develop PTSD. The majority of returning Soldiers do not develop it.
- Research also indicates that the sooner treatment begins, the quicker recovery occurs. Unfortunately, only 50% of those diagnosed seek treatment. PTSD can create stress in your relationship and in your household if left untreated. If your Soldier exhibits combat stress reactions for more than 3 months, seek help. Treatment works, and the sooner it begins, the sooner your Soldier will feel better and enjoy life more fully.

## **PTSD symptoms**

- Re-experiencing the traumatic event(s) of war, such as flashbacks or nightmares
- Avoidance and emotional numbing, such as not engaging in social activities, avoiding certain environments, not being able to feel emotions or connections with others
- Increased arousal, such as being always on guard, easily startled, difficulty falling or staying asleep

## **PTSD assistance**

PTSD programs are available through the VA and the military and can empower your loved one to deal with the effects of war and learn ways to cope with the changes to his/her life. See the PTSD Resource List at the end of the chapter.

- A thorough PTSD program should include anger management, stress reduction, education about PTSD, and evidence-based psychotherapy. Some skills that may be taught are: cognitive-behavioral therapy, managing of substance abuse, assertiveness, and relaxation strategies.
- It takes courage to keep trying. No one can make it better except the person who is experiencing the pain or difficulties.
- You can't control the problems and symptoms your loved one is experiencing by changing your behaviors or trying to change your loved one's behaviors. What you can do is take care of yourself by getting help for yourself.

## **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) happens when there is a blow or jolt to the head resulting in damage to the brain. TBI can range in severity and is the most common injury of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns.

- Research indicates that approximately 20% of the combat deployed are impacted by TBI. Blast injuries resulting from improvised explosive device (IED) explosions are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in combat zones. They are also often a result of a motor vehicle accident.
- TBI can occur without noticeable physical changes in appearance. The patient might physically look the same as before the head injury. Most forms of imaging don't show any differences after a blast injury.

## **Symptoms of TBI**

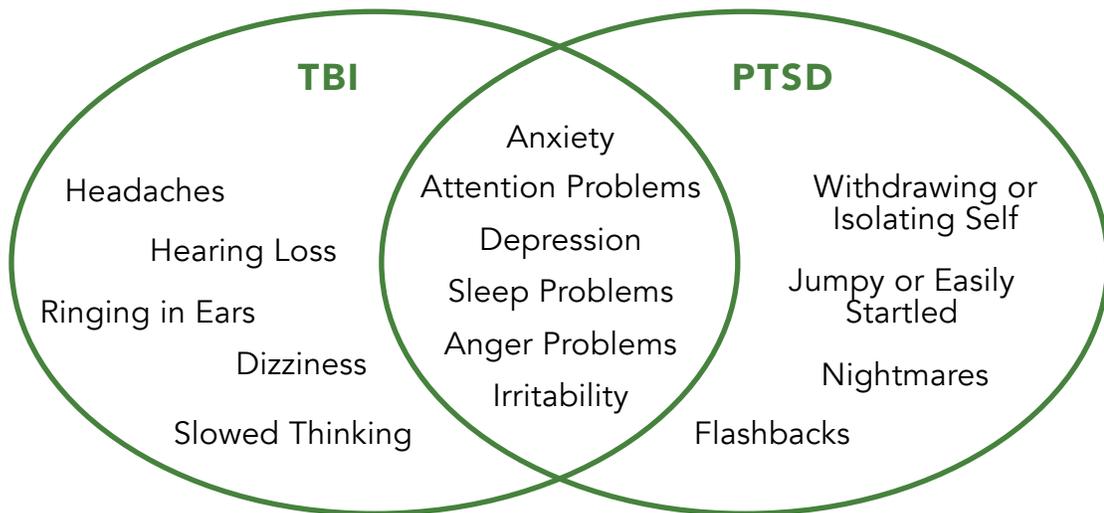
- Difficulty reading or seeing things
- Trouble concentrating, memory problems, or difficulty performing everyday activities
- Problems with coordination and balance
- Changes in senses
- Muscle spasms, pains, seizures, numbness in limbs
- Trouble speaking and communicating
- Unexplained mood changes or behaviors
- Ringing in ears
- Vomiting or nausea

## TBI assistance

- The brain, like other organs in the body, can heal and adapt. Medical professionals use this knowledge in treatment plans.
- There are teams of health professionals to help with recovery in the military, the VA system, and in the community.
- Rehabilitation goals may include ways to improve functioning at home and in the community.
- Severe head injury patients continue to recover and relearn skills. It may take time, but improvement usually occurs.

## PTSD and TBI

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Disorder (TBI) have some similar and some different symptoms as shown below. The disorders can co-exist, but they are not the same disorder.



## Domestic violence

Although domestic violence can occur in any relationship, it can also be one of the consequences of PTSD or TBI. Both conditions may be accompanied by decreased ability to manage anger, especially if substance abuse is involved, and this may lead to danger for you and your family. Decide on a safe place to go with your children if your loved one becomes volatile. By calling 911, the police will intervene and can help you find shelter if necessary. There is more information in the Domestic Violence chapter of the Red Flags section.

## Seek additional help...

### Behaviors you need to be aware of

It is important to seek assistance and/or treatment for any behavior that you feel is taking too long to resolve or has become unsafe for your loved one, you, or the family. At this point, an evaluation by a mental health professional for treatment can help. The following behaviors are ones you should not ignore. Seek help if your Soldier is:

- Becoming physically violent with the family, friends, or people in the community, threatening to kill others
- Showing signs of delusions or hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things that are not there
- Feeling paranoid, feeling like everyone is against him
- Not taking care of oneself, such as not bathing, exercising, or eating properly
- Using substances (alcohol, marijuana, drugs – even prescription drugs) to block out unwanted feelings or memories

### Depression

- Sadness that does not resolve
- Numbness or inability to enjoy activities
- Uncontrollable or more frequent than usual crying
- Loss of energy and/or sleep problems
- Feeling worthless

- Irritability that persists without reason
- Aches and pains, such as stomachaches and headaches that are unexplained

### **Signs of suicidal ideation**

- Talking about, threatening, or attempting to hurt oneself
- Appearing preoccupied by death or not planning for the future
- Withdrawing from friends, family, enjoyable activities, and the community
- Extreme mood changes, anxiety, rages, agitation
- Increased use of substances (drugs, alcohol, prescription pills)
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Engaging in risky activities
- Giving away possessions

### **Suicide assistance**

- For emergency response, call 911.
- Don't ignore it if your loved one says suicidal things. You might be tempted to think it is a way to get attention, but this may be WRONG.
- If your loved one talks of suicide, starts giving away belongings, or talks about not being around long, you should be worried and get help.
- If you are ready to leave the relationship and your spouse threatens suicide if you leave, use this as a bargaining chip for therapy.
- Give the attention asked for in a supportive way.

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**IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR LOVED ONE IS HAVING  
THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY.  
CALL 911  
IF THE THREAT IS IMMINENT  
OR CALL 800-273-8255 (TALK)  
AND PRESS "1" FOR MILITARY/VETERANS**

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## Don't let stigma prevent you from asking for help

It is important to understand how stigma prevents people from asking for help or assistance. A person may hesitate to seek mental health services to address a problem. We may not want society, the community, and especially those at work to think we are incapable of handling our problems. Understanding that treatment can help resolve many post-deployment issues and then seeking that treatment are signs of maturity and personal strength. You would go to the doctor if you had diabetes because your body no longer produces enough insulin. You have no control over this. In many mental health disorders, your body has stopped producing adequate amounts of various neurotransmitters; this, too, is beyond your control and needs professional intervention to restore health.

- You or your loved one may feel that seeking help will negatively impact the military career of the Soldier. This is usually untrue. The treatable disorder may be what impacts your Soldier's career if left untreated.
- As both military personnel and the public become more educated about mental health problems and the fact that they are biologically driven, there are fewer stigmas attached to receiving help with emotional or psychological problems.

## Remember...

Although there may be some changes that may take place following your partner's deployment experience, being prepared will help you. Think about how you can prepare for post-deployment, and how to use the power of information. Remind yourself that combat stress reactions are most likely temporary and should fade with time. If your Soldier does return to you with PTSD or TBI, remember that treatment is highly effective and that many people re-learn skills and gain more function.

To help you and your Soldier in the reintegration process, remember to:

- Focus on your strengths
- Keep the lines of communication open
- Be patient
- Get help if you need it

## Put it into Practice

It is important to understand how the changes can affect each of you. Have you seen changes already or from previous deployments?

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Which changes have been most challenging? How can you gain a more positive perspective on the changes and proactively manage any adjustments?

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What are some ways you and your loved one will prepare for any changes once deployment has ended?

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What are some ways you will prepare for changes once deployment has ended?

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## PTSD Resource List

### National Center for PTSD

This site has several links to self help, education, support, what to expect, managing tools, treatment, explaining it to friends and family, and more. [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

### Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury

As part of the Military Health System, the DCoE offers resources for health care providers, service members, Veterans, and military families. Email: [Resources@DCoEOutreach.org](mailto:Resources@DCoEOutreach.org). Telephone: 866-966-1020 (DCoE Outreach Center, available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week) [dcoe.mil](http://dcoe.mil)

### Real Warriors Campaign

The Real Warriors Campaign is a multimedia public-awareness initiative designed to encourage help-seeking behavior among service members, Veterans, and military families coping with invisible wounds. The campaign is part of the Defense Department's overall effort to encourage warriors and families to seek appropriate care and support for psychological health concerns. Telephone: 866-966-1020 (DCoE Outreach Center) [www.realwarriors.net](http://www.realwarriors.net)

### USACares Warrior Treatment Today

USACares Warrior Treatment Today pays essential household bills while a wounded service member or Veteran is attending residential treatment for TBI or PTSD. Telephone: 800-773-0387. [www.usacares.org](http://www.usacares.org)

### Primary Care Provider

Your loved one's primary care provider can provide care for PTSD or refer to additional resources and treatment. All care and referrals are confidential.

## Preparing for Post-Deployment Take Action

Something I learned today that made a difference: \_\_\_\_\_

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I commit to try the following strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

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Some other strategies I can try:

- Identify normal combat stress behaviors I might notice after my loved one returns:

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- Identify combat stress behaviors that need professional help:

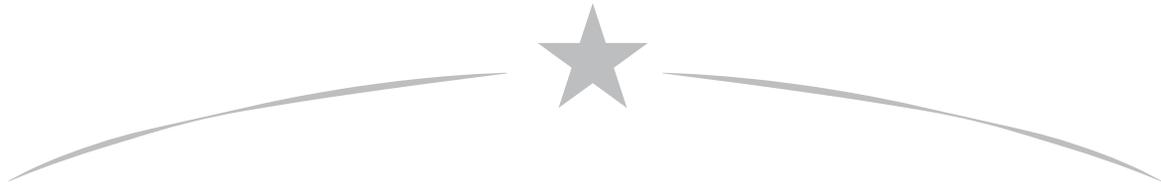
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





## RED FLAGS

It is important to recognize situations and behaviors that may be either unsafe or life-threatening. Throughout this workbook, you will find the phrase Red Flag to refer to these potentially dangerous situations.

The behaviors may be changes you notice in your loved one, yourself, or your children. Each Red Flag has information and contacts for additional support. Increased awareness is the first step to making a situation safer. Often the person who is demonstrating the most need for assistance is least aware of the problem.

Review the Red Flags whether you believe they apply to your current situation or not. You can gain a better understanding of the behaviors through the resources listed. By knowing the symptoms, you may be able to help your loved one or a friend in the future.

If a Red Flag behavior is unsafe, it is important to develop a Safety Plan. A Safety Plan allows you to prepare for these incidents. A template can be found at the end of this section. Utilize it to plan for your own protection, the protection of others, and as intervention for those you care about.

Most of us have far more courage  
than we ever thought possible.  
– Dale Carnegie

## Red Flags system of awareness...

- Red Flags are signs that behaviors should not be ignored.
- Red Flags allow you to stop potentially destructive behaviors.
- Red Flags encourage you to listen to “whispers” before they become “screams.”
- Red Flags encourage talking about potentially troubling behaviors rather than acting them out.
- Red Flags alert you to times when someone is most vulnerable.
- Some changes in behaviors are expected when your Soldier returns. Most of the time, these behaviors dissipate over a few weeks as your loved one adjusts to the return home and being away from combat. If any of the addressed behaviors last longer than 30 days, please seek professional help. Some issues take up to 3 months to resolve, but it is best to let a doctor or mental health professional decide which course to take.

### **Resources for information and help**

- There is help available in your local community. Search online for treatment programs and self-help groups in your area which often focus on specific addictions.
- Call your county health department and ask for licensed treatment programs in your community.
- Keep trying until you find the right help for your loved one, your family, and yourself.
- Ask a family therapist for a referral to a trained interventionist or call the Intervention Resource Center at 888-421-4321.
- For a pastoral counseling center in your community, go to [www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org).

# CHILD ABUSE

There are roughly 3 million reports of child abuse in the United States each year. It is estimated that three times as many go unreported. Child abuse and neglect can have lifelong consequences. Abused children are more likely to do poorly in school, abuse drugs and alcohol, and are more likely to attempt suicide.

Knowing the signs of child abuse can provide help and protection to these most vulnerable of victims. Not all abuse indicates physical battery as the term suggests. Following are the signs that a child might be the victim of abuse or neglect.

## Types and signs of child abuse...

### Physical abuse

- Physical abuse is defined as non-accidental infliction of physical injury to a child. The adult abuser is often, but not always, a male family member.
- Signs of physical abuse include:
  - Unexplained or recurrent bruises, burns, or fractures
  - Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
  - Bald patches on scalp
  - Chronic running away
  - Fear of medical examination
  - Aggression toward others
  - Fear of physical contact, flinching, or shrinking back when touched

## Sexual abuse

- Sexual abuse is defined as any activity, committed by an adult or older child, with a child before the age of legal consent that is intended for sexual gratification of the perpetrator. This includes touching, bodily penetration, and allowing a child to view pornography.
- Signs of sexual abuse in a child include:
  - Being overly knowledgeable about sex in a way that is not age-appropriate
  - Having medical problems such as itching or pain in the genital area or being diagnosed with a venereal disease
  - Depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempt, running away, overdosing, anorexia, isolating, being withdrawn, or overly anxious
  - Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well and do not want to be left alone with
  - Drawing sexually explicit pictures
  - Being unable to concentrate in school
  - Regressing to behavior of younger children such as thumb sucking, wetting the bed, or having nightmares

## Emotional abuse

- Emotional abuse is defined as rejecting, ignoring, criticizing, isolating, or terrorizing a child, which has the effect of eroding self-esteem in the child. Examples include mocking, belittling, or rejecting a child. It also includes blaming the child for things they are not responsible for. Emotional abuse often exists with other types of abuse, but by itself is difficult to prove.
- Signs of emotional abuse include:
  - Physical, mental, and emotional lags in development
  - Sudden onset of speech disorders
  - Self-deprecating and overreacting to mistakes
  - Extreme fear in a new situation
  - Neurotic behaviors such as rocking, hair-twisting, or self-mutilation
  - Extreme passivity or extreme aggression

## Neglect

- Neglect is defined as failure to satisfy a child's basic needs including food, water, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, or supervision.
- Signs of neglect include:
  - Constant hunger
  - Poor personal hygiene
  - No social relationships
  - Constant tiredness
  - Untreated medical problems
  - Destructive tendencies
  - Compulsive scavenging
  - Poor state of clothing
  - Inadequate seasonal clothing, such as no coat in winter

### **If you suspect abuse or neglect, seek out help**

- Around-the-clock counseling is available for children and adults by Childhelp USA/ IOF Foresters National Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453.
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP) provides services to troops and family members experiencing domestic abuse and child abuse through prevention efforts, early identification and intervention, support for victims, and treatment for abusers.  
[www.defenselink.mil/fapmip](http://www.defenselink.mil/fapmip)
- No matter where you live, the Memphis Child Advocacy Center website has excellent information and links to national support for parents, teachers, and children.  
[www.memphiscac.org](http://www.memphiscac.org)

# DEPRESSION

Research indicates that approximately 22% of Post 9/11 Veterans are returning from combat with depression and of those numbers, 14% are diagnosed with major depressive disorder. Depression is a treatable illness. Anyone can become depressed, but it is important for people with depression to seek treatment. Many types of treatment are available. Sometimes it is difficult to decide if you or someone else is depressed or just feeling down.

## Potential signs of depression...

- Feeling sad, anxious, or empty for weeks on end
- Feeling hopeless or helpless
- Losing interest in ordinary activities
- Having a loss of interest in sex or affection
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Having appetite or weight changes
- Feeling chronically tired, restless, or irritable
- Having thoughts of death or suicide
- Having trouble remembering things or making decisions
- Having frequent aches and pains that do not respond to treatment

## Treating depression...

### Get professional help

Depression is a clinical disorder that takes place at a neurochemical level. The brain stops producing the correct levels of hormones which help the body stabilize our mood. There are many causes.

- See a doctor or mental health professional if you have felt the signs of depression for more than two weeks.
- Seek professional help immediately if you are using drugs or alcohol to make yourself feel better.
- Seek help immediately if you are suicidal. Seek help if you are afraid you may hurt yourself or someone else.

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**CALL 911 OR THE VA SUICIDE HOTLINE  
800-273-8255 (TALK)  
PRESS "1" AS A MILITARY FAMILY MEMBER**

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### Find the cause

A trained mental health professional, such as a physician, psychologist, or therapist, can help determine the source of the depression and recommend the best treatment.

- Certain medications may cause depression. Tell your doctor all the medicines you take including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbs.
- Depression is often caused by a biological reason. Depression is genetic and is known to run in families.
- Depression may be brought on by an emotional problem, a specific life situation, an illness, or an injury.
- Pregnancy and recovery from pregnancy can cause depression.
- Depression can be caused by chronic alcohol or substance abuse.
- Depression may be caused by a combination of these things.

## **Follow the recommended treatment**

- Treatment may include changing your habits and behaviors or changing the way you think about yourself.
- Treatment may include counseling with a mental health professional.
- Treatment may involve antidepressant medication and/or changing medications you currently take.

## **Take care of yourself**

- Ask for help when you need it. Even having assistance for a short time can help.
- Talking about your feelings with others can help. Talk to family, friends, your doctor, a clergy member, a mental health professional, or find a support group.
- Make sure you eat a balanced diet and at least three meals a day.
- Keep yourself looking nice and well-groomed even if you don't feel like it.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Do not drink alcohol to excess.
- Set reasonable expectations for yourself. No one is perfect.

## **Stay active**

- Keep busy. Participate in activities you enjoyed before you became depressed.
- Set a realistic routine for yourself and stick with it.
- Allow yourself to have fun. Laughing and playing are important parts of feeling good.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise increases endorphins, which elevate our mood.

## **Give it time**

- Depression does not go away overnight. It takes time to get better. Be patient with yourself or others who may be diagnosed with depression.
- It takes time for antidepressants to build in your system. If one medication does not work for you, another might. It often takes a couple of tries, guided by your doctor, to find the medication and dose that is perfect for you.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, is a widespread problem that is often unreported and overlooked. Conservative estimates suggest that 1 million women experience physical abuse each year in the United States. Other estimates suggest the number may be closer to 3 million.

It is important to understand the signs of an abusive relationship and understand that the victim is often the last to recognize, or accept, that a relationship is abusive, unhealthy, or even unsafe. The military community is acutely aware that domestic violence is a problem and wants to help. Your community also has resources in place. These resources will help victims relocate or can remove the abuser from the household. There are also counseling resources available for both the victim and the perpetrator, and reporting domestic violence does not mean an end to the military career.

Many victims are embarrassed by the situation or feel helpless to change it. Some victims blame themselves and feel they can endure it. Some feel trapped for financial reasons, such as needing support for children. All these concerns can be overcome. No one deserves to be abused for any reason.

## Domestic violence facts...

- Domestic violence is the threat or use of physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse with the intent of instilling fear, intimidating, or controlling behavior.
- Domestic violence may continue even after the relationship has ended. It most commonly happens in intimate relationships.
- Physical abuse can consist of pushing, hitting, slapping, biting, kicking, holding someone down, physically restraining someone, physically moving or pulling someone, choking, throwing objects at, using weapons, or even driving in a reckless manner intended to scare the passenger.
- Verbal or emotional abuse consists of name calling, threats, coercion, criticizing, yelling, humiliating, controlling finances to manipulate someone, threatening to harm a child or pet, or stalking someone.
- Sexual abuse consists of unwanted touching, forced sex, unwanted pregnancy, transmitting a sexual disease, false accusations of sexual infidelity, or sexual name calling.

- Most abusers have predictive behaviors and give warning signs. A history of past abuse and use of force during arguments are indicators of potential abuse. Other signs include unreasonable jealousy, controlling behavior, and blaming others for personal problems.
- The effects of domestic violence can be both physical and psychological and can impact the direct victim as well as any children who witness parental violence.

## Get help

- To find your installation's victim advocate visit [www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil) and select Victim Advocate under Services. A victim advocate can support victims of domestic abuse by providing:
  - Help with safety plans
  - Information on helping resources and referrals
  - Information about military and civilian protective orders
  - Accompaniment to meetings, medical, and court appointments
- The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is a command support program responsible for addressing family violence in military families in all branches. There are ways you can report and receive services without calling the police. They will help you and explain your options. [www.defenselink.mil/fapmip](http://www.defenselink.mil/fapmip)
- Deciding whether to report domestic abuse can be difficult. Victims of domestic abuse may feel confused, alone, or afraid to get help. If your partner is abusive, knowing your reporting options may help you decide what's best for you and your family.
- The Department of Defense is committed to addressing and ending domestic abuse. Except in select circumstances, **victims have the option of making either a restricted or an unrestricted report** of domestic abuse. Both options allow access to personal help and support, also known as victim advocacy services.
- **Victim safety is a priority.** If you are in immediate risk of serious harm, you cannot use the restricted reporting option and should call 911. The restricted reporting option does not apply to child abuse cases.

- Making a restricted report means:**
  - No law enforcement notification
  - No command involvement
  - Access to medical care, counseling, and support
  - Victim advocacy services
  - Time to evaluate your relationship choices
  - Control over what and how much information to share with others
  
- Unrestricted report to law enforcement.** Even if you call the police and make an unrestricted report, you may contact the Family Advocacy Program, military police, or chain of command. Making an unrestricted report provides you with:
  - Law enforcement investigation of an abuse incident
  - Command notification and potential administrative action against the offender
  - Support and protection from the command
  - Victim advocacy services
  - Information on legal rights
  - Assistance in applying for transitional compensation, if applicable
  
- In an abusive relationship, deciding what to do is rarely easy. But, knowing your options is the first step to ending abuse and creating a safer and happier life.

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**IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER  
CALL 911  
OR THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINE  
AT 800-799-SAFE (7233).**

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# GRIEF

It is not unusual for someone who has been in combat to have episodes of grief. Those who have been in combat may have experienced the loss of a friend or platoon member. You may notice changes in your spouse's personality, cognitive abilities, or even physical changes from injury. Loss of physical ability or the loss of a limb can cause grief. Loss of a future the two of you had envisioned can lead to grief. Many people grieve silently, and the signs are difficult to recognize.

You might grieve the time lost with your loved one. You may also grieve the loss of friends. You know there is no certainty in life. You might grieve the ways in which your loved one has changed. It is important to be aware of the signals of grief to help you and your family process the emotions and move toward acceptance.

## Understanding grief...

### **Grief is the natural response to loss**

- Most of us experience grief if there is a serious accident or illness. This is especially true if the accident or illness affects a family member.
- Grief is a response to losing something important. We can lose physical or cognitive abilities as the result of an accident or event. We may then grieve our loss of ability or independence.
- You may feel grief when your loved one is absent from family events like birthdays or holidays.
- You may grieve that the person you sent off to deployment came back changed.

### **Stages of grief can be different for each person**

- Denial.** You may say you are perfectly capable of managing everything, when every day you are falling behind.
- Anger.** Sometimes when we feel pain from loss, we blame others. You may be angry that you must manage without your loved one. You may be angry no one is helping. You may be angry with your loved one for being deployed.

- Guilt.** You may feel guilty for being angry. Your loved one may feel guilty about not being there for you. You may feel guilty for not wanting your situation. You may feel guilty for enjoying yourself while your Soldier is deployed.
- Depression.** You may become so overwhelmed with sadness you do not want to leave the house or have visitors. In your sadness, you do not want to do things you once enjoyed.
- Acceptance.** Given time and support you will eventually come to accept the changes deployment brings. You will begin to realize that it is okay to receive help from others and find a new way to be happy.

### Signs of grief

- Pacing or wandering.** A person who is grieving may wander, pace, or lose track of thought. The physical movement is a means of releasing anxiety and sadness.
- Angry outbursts.** A grieving person might lash out in anger at others for no apparent reason. This may be because the person is feeling grief but finds talking about it too painful. Try to avoid responding in anger as well, because doing so may only increase the problem.
- Not wanting to leave the house.** Another sign of grief is isolation. Staying home feels safe and secure. This is sadness, not laziness. However, if this behavior continues, talk to a doctor. This is also a symptom of clinical depression.
- Crying.** A grieving person may cry intermittently and be unable to say why. If this behavior increases, talk to a doctor.
- Loss of appetite or eating uncontrollably.** The grieving person may not have interest in food or may become dependent on food and eat too much.
- Sleeping too much or not enough.** A grieving person may want to stay in bed all day or may be unable to sleep or stay asleep.

### Talk to the doctor

- If you or a family member is tearful or sad most of the time
- If the sadness lasts longer than two weeks
- If you are afraid of your own outbursts or those of a family member
- If you think these behaviors are related to medications or substance abuse

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

If a person uses drugs or alcohol to feel good or to avoid feeling bad, this can become problematic. Abuse of substances can lead to medical problems, missed work, driving under the influence, and legal problems. It can negatively impact your marital relationship and relationships with others. Dependence (addiction) is defined by loss of control over the use of the substance. The user may want to quit but cannot. You may notice an increase in use or the person having a drink or other substance to begin a normal day.

- Many people underestimate the complex nature of substance abuse and dependence.
- The use of mood altering substances impacts the brain. The inability to stop substance abuse is more than a lack of willpower.
- Substance abuse and addiction are often connected with a mental health issue such as depression or anxiety.
- Research and clinical practice have shown that substance dependence can be successfully treated.

## Signs and symptoms...

- Here are some signs and symptoms related to substance abuse:
  - Anxiety
  - Memory loss
  - Depressed mood
  - Agitation and/or confusion
  - Falls and weakness
  - Changes in blood pressure
  - Pain in the upper abdomen
  - Fatigue
  - Sleep disturbance
  - Appetite disturbance and weight loss

## How do I know if someone might be addicted?

The CAGE is a quick set of questions that can help people understand whether they might be addicted to alcohol or other drugs. You can use these questions if you are concerned about your Soldier, another family member, a friend, or yourself.

### The CAGE Questions:

- C** Have you ever felt you ought to CUT down on your drinking or drug use?
- A** Have you ever been ANNOYED by others' comments about your drinking or drug use?
- G** Have you ever felt bad or GUILTY about something you said or did while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
- E** Have you ever had an EYE-OPENER (a drink or drugs) first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?

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**IF THE ANSWER IS YES TO ANY ONE OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS, THERE MAY BE A PROBLEM WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE OR DEPENDENCY. SEEK FURTHER EVALUATION AND HELP.**

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## Alcohol use...

### Problems associated with alcohol abuse

Heavy use of alcohol is defined as drinking 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on each of 5 or more days during the past 30 days. For men, the recommended limit for alcohol consumption is 14 drinks or fewer per week (i.e., 2 drinks per day) with a maximum of 4 drinks per occasion. For women, the recommended limits are 7 drinks or fewer per week (i.e., 1 drink per day) with a maximum of 3 drinks per occasion. A drink is defined as a 12oz. beer, a 4oz. glass of wine, or 1.5 oz. of liquor or spirits. Heavy use of alcohol is more common than illicit drug use for military personnel.

- The most common medical problems associated with long term alcohol abuse or dependence include:
  - Injuries sustained because of intoxication
  - Mental impairment
  - Chronic obstructive lung disease
  - Peptic ulcer
  - Psoriasis
  - Malnutrition

## Alcohol and medications...

Alcohol should not be consumed with many prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal medications. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist if you can safely drink alcohol with a medication. Read the labels on all medicines. Many of the drugs that should not be used with alcohol may be those that Soldiers are taking for issues such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, or sleep disturbance.

- Some common medications that should not be used with alcohol include:
  - Aspirin or acetaminophen
  - Cold or allergy medicines, including cough syrups
  - Sleeping pills
  - Pain pills
  - Anxiety or depression medicine

## Prescription medication...

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has labeled the abuse of prescription drugs an epidemic in our society. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 52 million people have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons at least once in their lifetimes. Among active duty service members, self-reported illicit drug use increased from 5% to 12% from 2005 to 2008, primarily due to non-medical use of prescription drugs.

- The following three drug classes are most commonly abused:
  - Opioids – usually prescribed to treat pain
  - Central nervous system (CNS) depressants – used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
  - Stimulants – most often prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Opiate overdoses, once almost always due to heroin use, are now increasingly due to abuse of prescription painkillers. Unintentional overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers have quadrupled since 1999. In 2016, the CDC reported that 91 people in the U.S. die every day from an overdose of prescription painkillers. Most of these overdoses are accidental. The user believes one more pill will not hurt; they take the medication with alcohol; or, they lose track of how many pills they have taken.
- Opiate drugs include morphine, codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone, fentanyl, meperidine, and Demerol.

## Prevention is the key...

- Drug and alcohol dependence is preventable, as are other dependencies.
- Prevention programs exist in all communities and are available to Soldiers, Veterans, and their families through military, VA, and community resources.
- Asking for help is the first and most important step. If you or your loved one has identified a problem with substance use or dependence, it is time to find an addiction professional for help.

## Resources for help

- Military OneSource and Army OneSource are confidential and can provide counseling and assistance.
- Ask your doctor for a referral to a mental health professional or call the Intervention Resource Center at 888-421-4321. A referral is generally needed for the treatment to be covered.
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) National Helpline – 800-662-HELP or go to [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence – [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)
- Call your county health department and ask for licensed treatment programs in your community.
- VA Medical Centers have inpatient and outpatient treatment facilities and support groups.

## Self-help groups

- Al-Anon Family Groups at 888-425-2666; [Al-anon.org](http://Al-anon.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) at: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org); phone number depends on location.
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA) at: [www.na.org](http://www.na.org); phone number depends on location.
- Families Anonymous at 800-736-9805; [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org)
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence at 800-622-2255; [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)
- For a pastoral counseling center in your community: [www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org); phone number depends on location.

# SUICIDE PREVENTION...

## **Know the warning signs**

- Threatening to hurt or kill oneself or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide when these actions are out of the ordinary for this person
- Feeling rage or uncontrolled anger, or seeking revenge
- Feeling trapped, as though there is no way out
- Feeling hopeless
- Behaving in a reckless manner or engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Looking for a way to kill oneself by seeking access to firearms or medications
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Feeling anxious, agitated
- Unable to sleep or excessive sleeping
- Experiencing dramatic mood changes
- Increasing drug or alcohol use

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**IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER ARE HAVING THOUGHTS  
OF SUICIDE, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY.**

**CALL 911**

**OR CALL 800-273-8255 (TALK)**

**AND PRESS "1" FOR MILITARY FAMILY MEMBER.**

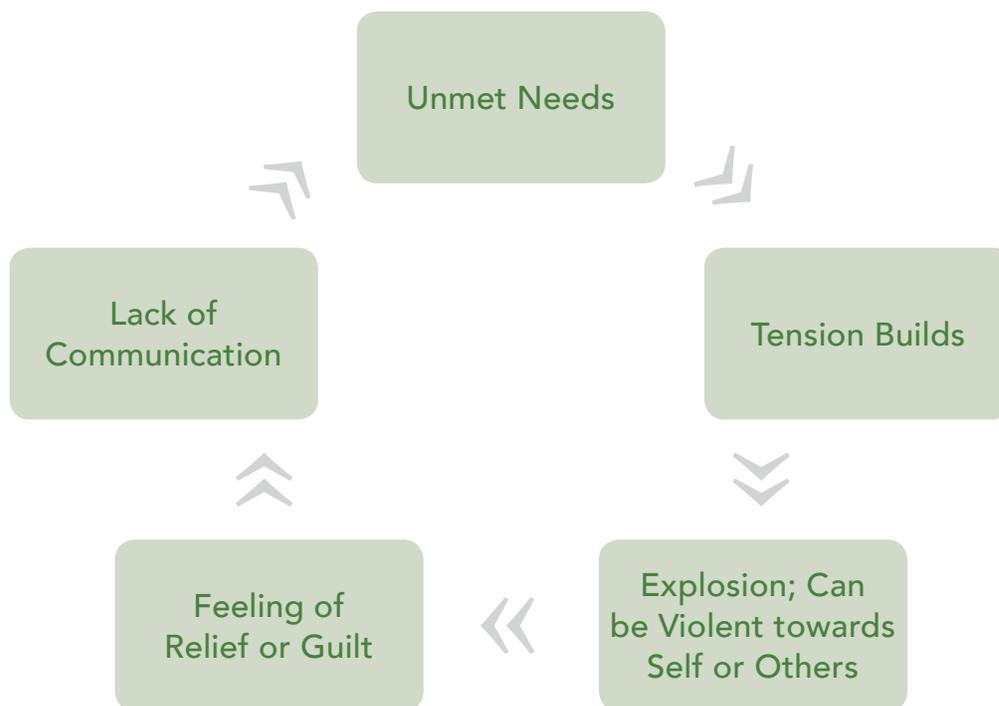
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# UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH ANGER

Anger is a normal emotion that everyone experiences at one time or another. When it is not properly managed, anger can be destructive to you and to everyone around you. Simple anger management techniques can help address the signals that anger is getting out of control. By understanding anger and its stages, you may be able to prevent what began as a frustration from building into anger.

When anger is managed, effective conflict resolution can occur. Soldiers who have been diagnosed with PTSD or a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) may unexpectedly be unable to manage their anger. If you feel your or your spouse's anger is impacting your relationship or your safety, get professional help.

## Cycle of anger...



## Signs of escalating anger...

The launching pad for anger is usually lack of communication or miscommunication. Learning healthy communication patterns with your loved one can help each of you prevent normal arguments and aggravations from going beyond that phase. Review the Communication section of this book and/or seek counseling to help communicate more effectively and respectfully.

- Physical symptoms
  - Feeling hot or sweating
  - Shaking or trembling
  - Headaches or stomachaches
  - Heart beating faster
  - Clenching or grinding teeth
  - Dizziness
  
- Emotional symptoms
  - Feeling misunderstood
  - Feeling mistreated
  - Feeling confused
  - Being restless
  - Feeling hurt
  - Feeling out of control
  - Feeling detached
  - Feeling insulted
  - Feeling rejected

- Behavioral symptoms
  - Yelling or cursing
  - Pacing
  - Clenching fists
  - Using alcohol or drugs to settle down
  - Crying
  - Rubbing head or arm
  - Sudden outbursts
  - Withdrawing
  - Changing tone or speed of talking
  - Becoming judgmental
  - Becoming sarcastic or losing a sense of humor

### **Things to know**

- Anger is often a cover-up for another emotion, such as hurt or fear. Anger may be a tool to communicate, to indicate something is wrong.
- Anger and aggression can be signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Anger can be a symptom of a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), especially if anger seems uncontrollable or unpredictable.
- Expectations may be unmet.
- Anger is often a response to a perceived threat, whether it is rational or not.

## Anger management strategies...

### Coping with an angry person

- Communicate.** Find out what is at the source of the anger. Practice active listening and try not to use insulting or accusatory language.
- Take responsibility** for your part of any disagreement.
- Validate** the emotions.
- Be honest and vulnerable**, and allow the angry person to do the same.
- Call a time out** or step back if the situation cannot be resolved right away.
- Practice** understanding, patience, and forgiveness. Don't hold grudges.
- Know when** to stand up for yourself, and know when to walk away. Always ensure the safety of yourself and your family.

### Coping with your own anger

- Listen to your body.** Know your body's signals of anger and listen to them. Your heart rate will increase, you may breathe faster, and your skin temperature and blood pressure may increase.
- Slow down.** Try not to move or act quickly. Allow the adrenaline rush of anger to subside. Take deep breaths and wait to feel calmer before you speak or act.
- Take a time out.** Step back or away from the situation. When you feel calmer and more in control, assess the situation with logic and reason instead of emotion. Emotion will cloud the issue.
- Review and redo.** Step back and think about what made you angry and why. You may have certain triggers or things that set you off. Once you have identified the triggers to your anger, you can choose how to react.
- Breathe deeply.** Shallow breaths make your body work harder. If you take deep breaths, you will send more oxygen to your body and lower your blood pressure. Use Deliberate Breathing. Breathe in and out slowly.
- Take a walk.** Sometimes taking a walk can help because it releases energy and relieves tension. Walk at a moderate pace, not a fast one. Walking fast may get you more worked up.

- Listen actively.** Before you get mad at someone, be sure you understand exactly what was intended and what they said, instead of making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.
- Practice problem solving.** When dealing with conflict, utilize the conflict resolution strategies provided in this book, as well as the problem-solving strategies. Both can help you avoid anger altogether.
- Be realistic.** You can only change yourself and your own behavior. If you behave in a calm, respectful manner, people around you are more likely to do the same.
- Smile.** It sounds ridiculous, but smile and hold it for five seconds. Your brain associates smiling with being happy, and this simple act can often trigger feel good emotions. Make the smile real, not fake or sarcastic. You may not be as angry as you thought.
- Seek help.** If you are unable to manage anger on your own, seek counseling for yourself or for you and your spouse as a couple.

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**ACT BEFORE THE BEHAVIOR PUTS YOU  
OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS AT RISK.**

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## Safety Plan

RED FLAG BEHAVIOR	MY PLAN OF ACTION
<b>Mild behavior, first symptoms are:</b>	<b>People I can call:</b>  <b>Places I can go:</b>  <b>Phone numbers to know:</b>  <b>What I need:</b>
<b>Moderate or escalating behavior, worsening symptoms/actions:</b>	<b>People I can call:</b>  <b>Places I can go:</b>  <b>Phone numbers to know:</b>  <b>What I need:</b>





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