

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

What's Going On ...	Feelings	Coping Strategies
Anticipation of Departure		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denial and anticipation of loss Increased feeling of stress in home Frequency of arguments increase Reality of change ahead is “sinking in” Focus is on completing family pre-deployment activity checklist Members may feel more emotional In case of multiple deployments ... new cycle may begin before family has had time to renegotiate new normal from last deployment Children: decide when to tell them about the deployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anger Resentful Guilt Restlessness Depression Irritability Sadness Fear Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate (ask questions, listen to each other) Discuss deployment expectations Communicate “quality time” availability to family Discuss deployment with children Sharing feelings Planning and setting boundaries are the keys to managing the time leading up to the deployment
Detachment and Withdrawal		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Member is focused on preparing for mission and may distance self from family Anger, arguments may occur as family prepares to protect themselves from “hurt” of separation Communication may be difficult Experience lack of energy Increased difficulty making decisions In preparation for loss, family may begin to act like Service Member is already gone Multiple deployments can result in need to repeatedly create distance; to feel “numb” and avoid emotional connection Children: actual good-bye is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sadness Despair Hopelessness Anger Irritability Withdrawal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate time to spend with family members Be empathetic Include family, when possible, in pre-deployment activities Reassure each other you will be ok Develop and turn to support networks Be patient that Service Member may be spending more time at work Reassure children that the Service Member will return
Emotional Disorganization		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life without Service Member may initially feel overwhelming Routines change, responsibilities added May feel ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numb and not interested in doing much Have difficulty concentrating Wish things would go back to “normal” Surprised because things seem to be moving smoothly now that Service Member is gone Experience sleep difficulty Anxious about security issues Children: take cue from parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relief Sadness Lonely, frustrated Restless Confused Disorganized Indecisive Irritable Unmotivated Overwhelmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish your deployment routine Get involved Stay in contact with other family members Establish a connection with Service Member Stay in contact with support network Set Goals Start a hobby Get a job Volunteer
Recovery and Stabilization		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family finally starts to settle into routine of life without Service Member Coping with changes can be positive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May enjoy new found responsibilities Sense of independence, confidence Relief that family is functioning well Coping with changes can be challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult time accepting changes Stressed, depressed, and having difficulty getting things done Feel unsupported and worried how will make it through Most of the time there is a mixture of both responses. Children: clingy, sleep disturbances, eating difficulties; crankiness, drop in academics; acting out, self-criticism, loss of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mildly depressed Anxious Vulnerable Fear Emotional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a routine Work toward goals Keep communication going Use support network Take care of yourself Choose a positive attitude Keep things in perspective Be flexible Model positive coping skills for children

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What's Going On ...	Feelings	Coping Strategies
Anticipation of Return		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homecoming is coming! • Family is happy, excited, and feeling boost of energy • Trying to make everything "perfect" for return • Sense of relief that Service Member will be home combined with worries about whether or not they will be the same • Children: when to tell them of return? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement • Apprehension • Nervousness • Restlessness • Irritability • Anxiousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss plans for reunion • Set realistic expectations • Communicate expectations to family and friends • Remember Service Member must remain mission focused
Return Adjustment and Renegotiation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During time of separation Service Member and all family members have changed • Changes may hold pleasant surprises or may cause conflict • Family members may feel overwhelmed by Service Member attempts to get to know everyone again • Everyone needs space and time to readjust • Family member may feel loss of independence • Entire family must begin to renegotiate how household will look now that everyone is together again • Service Member may need time to assimilate back • Children: different reactions depending on ages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief • Happiness • Contentment • Irritability • Guarded • Resentment • Overwhelmed • Frustration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate • Be patient • Negotiate and compromise • Be willing to give up/take on different responsibilities • Keep emotions under control • Sit down and negotiate roles and responsibilities • Be aware of signs of combat stress
Reintegration and Stabilization		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family continues to adjust to having Service Member home • This could last for months! • A "new normal" is established regarding routines and expectations • Members may begin to feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable with one another again • If readjustment challenges resurface, support is important ... It's okay to ask for help if you need it! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation • Supportive • Comfortable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient • Communicate • Take it slow • Lower expectations • Taking time to get to know each other again • Re-negotiate if necessary

NOTES:

Deployment Resources

Topic	Website	Topic	Website
AAFES	www.aafes.com	Military Money	http://www.incharge.org/military-money
American Red Cross	www.redcross.org	Military One Source	www.militaryonesource.mil
Air Force Reserve	www.afrc.af.mil	Military Scholar	www.militaryscholar.org
Air Force Heart Link	https://www.usafservices.com/Home/SpouseSupport/HeartlinkTraining.aspx	Military Student	www.militarystudent.org
Air National Guard	www.ang.af.mil	Military Wives	http://spousebuzz.com/ http://www.veteransunited.com/spouse/
Army Emergency Relief	www.aerhq.org	Moms of Service Members	http://www.bluestarmothers.org/
Army Family Team Building	www.myarmyonesource.com	Military.com	www.military.com
Army Reserve	www.usar.army.mil	Moms over Miles	www.momsovermiles.com
Army Reserve Family Programs – Fort Family	www.arfp.org/index.php/programs/fort-family-outreach-and-support	National Guard	http://www.nationalguard.mil/
Dads at a Distance	www.daads.com	National Guard Family Programs	https://www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/Default.aspx
DECA Commissaries	www.commissaries.com	National Military Association	www.nmfa.org
Defense Finance and Accounting	www.dfas.mil	Navy Life Skills Program	http://www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program.html
Deployment Information	http://afterdeployment.t2.health.mil/	Navy Reserve	https://www.navyreserve.navy.mil/Pages/default.aspx
Defense Centers of Excellence	http://www.dcoe.health.mil	Operation Military Kids	http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/family/part/youthdev_part_military.html
DOD Mobilization Guide	http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Project%20Documents/MilitaryHOMEFRONT/Troops%20and%20Families/Deployment%20Connections/Pre-Deployment%20Guide.pdf	OSD Reserve Affairs	http://ra.defense.gov
Employment Support for Guard and Reserve	www.esgr.org	Parents of Service Members	http://www.operationwearehere.com/Parents.html http://www.survivingdeployment.com/parents.html
Financial Readiness	http://www.militaryonesource.mil/pfm	Spirit of America	www.spiritofamerica.net
Joint Service Support	https://www.jointservicessupport.org/	Surviving Deployment	http://www.survivingdeployment.com/index.html
Coast Guard Reserve	www.uscg.mil/reserve	Taxes (IRS)	www.irs.gov
Marines	www.marines.mil	Thrift Savings Plan	www.tsp.gov
Military Child Education Coalition	http://www.militarychild.org/	Tricare Reserve Information	www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve
Military Living	www.militaryliving.com	US Army	www.army.mil
Military Family Network	www.emilitary.org	Veterans Administration	www.va.gov
Marine Corps Family Team Building	http://www.mccsmcrd.com/MarineAndFamilyPrograms/MarineCorpsFamilyTeamBuilding/index.html	Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program	http://www.yellowribbon.mil/event_support.html