



Make Prevention a CHOICE

Deployment Tips For The Military Family

Deployments can be stressful times for military families. With careful planning, however, some of the stress associated with deployments can be reduced. There are specific time frames that mark deployments.

Before the actual deployment, it is important for every family member to be aware of the upcoming change.

During the deployment, it is helpful to stick to your regular routine whenever possible. **After** the deployment, allow for an adjustment period for all family members.

BEFORE:

The Deploying Parent. . .

- ◆ Tell children ahead of time that you are going away.
- ◆ Talk about your deployment frequently. It may take some time for each child to understand and accept your leaving.
- ◆ Encourage your children to ask questions and discuss how each of you feels.
- ◆ Show your children that the parent at home will be in charge and that you trust him/her. Emphasize this before leaving and while you are gone.

The Parent at Home. . .

- ◆ Take pictures of the deploying parent with the children and in other familiar settings.
- ◆ Be sure there are enough pictures for each child to have at least one.
- ◆ Tape record the deploying parent and the children doing routine things together such as bath time or reading a bedtime story.

All Family Members. . .

- ◆ Swap a small item such as a snapshot, ball, cap or toy. Give each person something to remember the other.
- ◆ Visit the ship, submarine, or squadron so your children can see how the deploying parent will eat, sleep, work, and stay safe. Show pride in the work the deploying parent does there.
- ◆ Discuss how children will help with the household chores.
- ◆ Plan the ways you will maintain communication: letters, pictures, tapes, postcards from a place of particular interest to your children, or newspaper clippings of the deployed parent's favorite team.
- ◆ Explore each other's interests and the kind of information each of you would like to receive.
- ◆ Plan fun activities for the family before and during the deployment.

DURING:

The Deployed Parent. . .

- ◆ Keep in mind the time of year it is back home and what children might be doing (starting school, vacation, holidays).
- ◆ Refer to these activities in your letters and tapes.

- ◆ Think of each child's age, interests, activities, and friends when writing.
- ◆ Remember birthdays and other special family occasions with letters, cards, or small gifts.
- ◆ Use postcards, stamps, and photographs of the places you visit to show where you are and what you have been doing.
- ◆ You may need to urge your children to write. Let them know how special their letters are to you.
- ◆ Send mail to your children individually. It will make each one feel special.

Parent At Home. . .

- ◆ Keep the household routine and discipline the same. Consistency and continuity of discipline are important for the entire family.
- ◆ Expect that children will test the rules in the beginning to find out how far they can go.
- ◆ Resist saying, "Wait till your father/mother hears about this!" Handle things when they happen.
- ◆ Help your children keep track of time and the parent's travel by using a map, diary, or a cruise calendar.
- ◆ Have a family information center where postcards, letters, and pictures from the deployed parent can be posted.
- ◆ Encourage children to send their own letters, tapes, and pictures to their deployed parent.
- ◆ Tape conversations when children are arriving home from school, having dinner, or playing, and send them to the deployed parent.
- ◆ Talk with children to help them express feelings of anger or sadness about Dad's or Mom's absence. Let them know that parents sometimes feel the same way.

AFTER THE DEPLOYMENT:

Deploying Parent. . .

- ◆ Nothing stays the same. Before making judgments about the changes, try to understand the reasons behind them.

Parent At Home. . .

- ◆ Make homecoming special but don't build up the children's expectations so much that neither their returning parent nor the homecoming can live up to it. Keep expectations realistic.

All Family Members. . .

- ◆ Remember, the returning parent is a real person with feelings and emotions. Be patient. Everyone needs time to readjust to being home together again.
- ◆ You can't "make up" time you've been separated, but you can make the best use of the time you have together.

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