

Contents

- Tips for a Holiday Move
- Holidays and the Military Family
- How to Thrive During the Holiday Season
- Planning for Your Future
- Financial Counseling – a Benefit for All Military Families
- EFMP Provides Benefits to Navy Families
- The GI Bill – New Tools to Help You Transition
- Are You Ready for Flu Season? Fight the Flu with Prevention
- FFSC Offers Free Infant Massage Training
- Military Spouse Webinar: How to Start Your Own Business

Family Connection is a publication of the Fleet and Family Support Program.

The Navy's Fleet and Family Support Program promotes the self-reliance and resilience of Sailors and their families. We provide information that can help you meet the unique challenges of the military lifestyle.

The appearance of external links in this newsletter does not constitute official endorsement on behalf of the U.S. Navy or Department of Defense.

If you have questions or comments, contact the Fleet and Family Support Program, ffsp.fct@navy.mil.

Visit us online at:



Navigating Stress as a Family

By *Navy Suicide Prevention*

Military families, especially military children and spouses, experience many of the same transitions as their service member and must also navigate the associated stress. Separation during deployments, PCS moves and reintegration are some of the many transitions that can impact each member of a military family. With the “most wonderful time of year” upon us, family resilience is especially important to help reduce the negative effects of stress, promote psychological well-being and keep the “happy” in the holidays.

Remembering and applying the [5 Principles of Resilience](#) (Predictability, Controllability, Relationships, Trust and Meaning) can help families shore up their family resilience and thrive during periods of transition and stress. Use these quick tips to help your family stay mission-ready:

- **Connect with your community (Relationships, Meaning).** This time of year is a great time to get involved with your local community. Not only does volunteering at a local shelter, soup kitchen, food bank, toy drive or food drive speak to the meaning of the holidays, but lending a helping hand to the community also provides a way for families to get involved in an activity together.
- **Build new family traditions (Meaning).** In the spirit of the phrase “make new friends, but keep the old,” creating new or reshaping old family traditions brings families closer together. Whether miles apart or under the same roof, taking time to craft new family traditions that everyone can participate in is a great way for military families to stay connected any time of year.

- **Share your feelings (Predictability, Controllability, Trust).** Navigating the stress that comes with military transitions—including deployments, PCS moves and reintegration—can be difficult. Open communication is an essential component of the stress navigation process. Taking the time to sit down as a family to discuss changes and expectations can promote a sense of control and build trust within the family unit. December is the perfect time to sit down as a family to ask and explore what everyone is thankful for this year!

Now through January, the [Every Sailor, Every Day](#) campaign will promote small acts to proactively navigate holiday stress and build resilience for the New Year. Join us as we discuss ways to get ahead of the humbugs, leading into our “21 Days of Total Sailor Fitmas” this month! Subscribe to our [NavyNavStress blog](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and like us on [Facebook](#) to stay in the know!



Tips for a Holiday Move

The holiday season means a home filled with family, friends, food and presents to most people. It does not mean a home full of packing boxes and empty cupboards. However, sometimes you do not have a choice when to move when the military sends you to a new assignment in December.

There are several things you can do to make the holiday move less stressful and more festive for you and your family. Here are four tips to help with planning a holiday move:

1. **Put up decorations that can move with you.** You do not want to spend the holiday season without any decorations, but neither do you want your holiday move complicated by elaborate items that will need to be unpacked and repacked at the last minute. Instead, find a few favorite holiday decorations and put those out. A holiday wreath for the door or a small holiday items can also be moved easily from one home to the next and will help your new home feel special from that very first day.
2. **Share all of your contact information.** Holiday time is not a time you want to be out of reach of family and friends. Make sure that those people who are important to you know where you are going to be and how to contact you throughout the moving process.
3. **Take your holiday celebration with you.** If you will be spending the holiday on the road, find hotels that are planning holiday events and/or dinners. A warmly-decorated hotel may make it feel more festive.
4. **Explore your new community.** Take this time to explore your new hometown and to meet people you would not encounter other times of the year. Most cities host special events, concerts and light displays during the holiday season that make great family activities.



Holidays and the Military Family

The holiday season presents challenges for anyone. For military families, particularly during a deployment, trying to enjoy the season, establish new traditions, keep the old ones or simply balance a holiday budget can be especially challenging due to the military families' unique lifestyle. If you find yourself wondering where to start, or keep up the pace of the holiday hustle and bustle, here are some tips and resources for you.

1. **Starting new traditions:** Honoring traditions is important, but there is nothing wrong with [starting new ones](#). Mix things up a little bit. If you have kids, involve them in these decisions. Spending the holidays in a different location, having a potluck instead of a sit-down dinner, or even camping out on the living room floor one night may be enough of a change to refocus on the positive.

2. **Mindfulness during the holidays:** Do not let holiday stress take the joy out of the season. Find your Zen through practicing mindfulness. Listen to the ["Mindfulness During the Holidays"](#) podcast for tips to help you create less stressful holiday experiences.
3. **Holiday savings tips:** The holiday budget can send us spiraling; practice these [holiday saving tips](#) to put your mind and wallet at ease.
4. **Stay healthy this holiday season:** Follow these [4 tips to stay healthy this holiday season](#) - be committed, choosy, flexible and creative. You do not have to do it alone. Contact your [local Fleet and Family Support Center](#) or [Military One Source](#).

Whether it is a traditional holiday with no added challenges or changes, or one big roller coaster filled with twists and turns, these tips above will help navigate you through the holiday season.

How to Thrive During the Holiday Season

Stress about money and finances continue to plague our country, despite some improvement in the economy. In fact, 72 percent of adults reported feeling stressed about money at least some of the time and 22 percent say they experience extreme stress about money all the time.

As you can imagine, the holiday season only adds to our existing stress with all the expectations regarding the types of gifts to purchase, for whom, what parties to host, what parties to attend and what to bring, what to wear ... and so on ... and so on. It seems like the list gets longer and longer each year.

However, you can relax a bit because the good news is that there are actual steps you can take to prevent stress and possibly have a worry-free holiday. Here are some things you can do:

1. **Take time for yourself.** Taking time to care for yourself will benefit others as well. Remember, you are only one person and despite all the expectations this time of year, you can only do so much to make others happy. So, take time out of your schedule to recharge your batteries by doing something you enjoy like going for a long walk or run, getting a massage, taking time to listen to your favorite music or reading a new book.
2. **Volunteer.** 'Putting things into perspective' is an excellent coping skill. Helping those who are living in true poverty may help you put your own economic struggles into perspective.
3. **Have realistic expectations.** No holiday celebration will be perfect. So when the dog knocks the tree over or you burn the apple pie, filling the house with smoke and setting off all the fire alarms, look at these events as epic family holiday memories that eventually you will laugh at, instead of events that just plain ruined the holiday.
4. **Remember what is important.** Is getting a really expensive gift for your kids (that they may not even want to play with after a few months) the most important? Or is it the time spent together with family and friends, talking, laughing and enjoying each other's company most important? Take a step back and remember that it is not the amount of money that you invest in a celebration that makes it great, it is the people.
5. **Seek support.** Simply talking to your friends and family about the various stressors of the holidays is often enough to help you navigate through. But, if you continue to feel overwhelmed, consider seeing a professional [FFSC Clinical Counselor](#) to help you cope with the season.



New Spouse Orientation

New Spouse Orientation is offered as an [on-demand course](#) designed to support new Navy spouses. It provides information on benefits, support services, military culture and resources to help spouses adapt to the military lifestyle.

Relocation Tip

Shhh. Here are some [secret tips](#) for enjoying holidays with your children without all the hoopla.



Ready and Resilient Videos

The ["Building Ready and Resilient Sailors and Families"](#) videos help Navy families adjust to the challenges of deployment. They encourage Sailors and family members to seek out services and resources to promote family resilience.



Planning for Your Future

Starting a new career can be very exciting! But before you retire or separate from active duty you should make sure that you have done your homework. The newly implemented Military Life Cycle Model can help you plan your military career, as well as plan a successful transition to civilian life.

The Military Life Cycle Model promotes the revised [Career Readiness Standards \(CRS\)](#). These are tangible measures of a service member's preparedness for a civilian career and will help service members remain engaged throughout their military career. Instead of focusing on transition at the end of your military career, this model allows service members the opportunity to map and refine their individual development to achieve their military and post-military goals.

Before you start your post-military career you are encouraged to:

1. **Identify your interests:** Take time to think about and list the things you like to do. Consider the different paths you could take based on those interests.
2. **Inventory your skills:** As you move throughout your military career, maintain a list of skills and education that you have gained. This will help you assess your skills prior to separating or retiring, as well as help determine whether those skills and education are sufficient to meet your career goals.
3. **Know your options:** If you are looking for a new career, assess your options

by taking different career interest tests. Many will evaluate aptitude, personality and interests. A number of tests will also provide information on the skills and/or education needed to pursue your interest.

4. **Review financial responsibilities and needs:** A new career can mean more or less money to support your lifestyle. Make sure to understand the potential impact that a new career can have on your desired lifestyle. Do not be caught off-guard! Complete a 12 month budget annually so that you have a clear picture of your finances, responsibilities and needs.
5. **Make a plan:** It is important to begin the transition planning process early to allow time for planning and accessing the support services needed in the future. A good plan should provide the framework for identifying, planning and carrying out activities that will help you make a successful transition to civilian life.

These tips can be significant to a successful transition from the military to your civilian career, and the Navy is here to assist you. If you are proactive and apply these general tips throughout your military career, you will be well on your way to meeting your career readiness standards and having a smooth transition into your future. For more information or assistance, contact your [local Fleet and Family Support Center](#) or Command Career Counselor.

Financial Counseling – a Benefit for All Military Families

A recent study published by The Association of Military Banks of America (AMBA) found that 45 percent of Americans believe they are too poor for financial advisors and they need at least \$50,000 to receive professional advice. The study also found that people believe they do not have enough saved and they have not accumulated enough assets to meet with a financial advisor. Even though this is untrue and financial advisors can help with wealth accumulation and planning, the study left room to discuss the merits of financial counseling as a stepping-stone to working with a financial advisor.

Military families can access financial counselors at no-cost in multiple ways. A great place to start is at the [installation Fleet and Family Support Center \(FFSC\)](#). Most installations have very robust financial education programs with access to one-on-one counseling as well. One-on-one financial counseling services can also be found online at [Military OneSource](#).

In addition to one-on-one counseling, these financial education programs offer assistance with spending plans, debt management, information on the TSP, pay and benefits and much more. Family members are highly encouraged to attend financial education classes and counseling with their active-duty spouse. Additionally, families may also find that the installation military bank or credit union can be a great resource for financial education and counseling services.

Financial advisors, like financial counselors, can help you get on the right track. Financial advisors will be able to help you invest your money in the right funds and offer financial "advice," though there are usually fees associated with these services. A financial counselor will also be able to help you with a spending plan and debt management, as well as provide general information about investing; they cannot provide advice on a particular investment.

Both financial advisors and counselors are there to provide education and resources to assist clients in making sound financial decisions.



NAVY ia

**U.S. Navy
Individual
Augmentees**

IA Discussion Group Schedule

[View the Fleet-wide list of classes, support groups and events.](#)

Returning Warrior Workshops (RWW)

Returning Warrior Workshop Schedule and IA Family Events — www.ia.navy.mil. Click "Resources" then "IA Services."

CNIC

• FLEET • FIGHTER • FAMILY



EFMP Provides Benefits to Navy Families

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is a mandatory enrollment program that works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical, and personnel services to families with special needs.

“Sailors on active duty enroll in the program when they have a family member with a physical, emotional, developmental or intellectual disorder requiring specialized services, so their needs can be considered in the military personnel assignment process,” said Lt. Cmdr. Brent Dennis, EFMP program manager. “The overall goal of EFMP is to help families accompany the service member to the right duty locations; not to exclude them.”

EFMP offers many benefits to help address the challenges that can come with having a family member with special medical or educational needs. Families can receive assistance with managing appointments,

answering questions and navigating confusing medical and educational systems. The program provides access to respite care to provide families with an opportunity to rest and reenergize. Enrollment in EFMP also allows service members to focus on their military mission by assuring them that their families are getting the care they need.

“Once you enroll in the EFMP, trained personnel review the availability of resources in projected assignment locations to ensure that wherever you go, your family member’s needs are met,” Dennis said.

The exceptional family module is available online at the Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System website at <https://navyfamily.navy.mil>.

For more information, contact the Navy Personnel Command (NPC) Customer Service Center at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC, or visit the NPC website at <http://www.npc.navy.mil>.



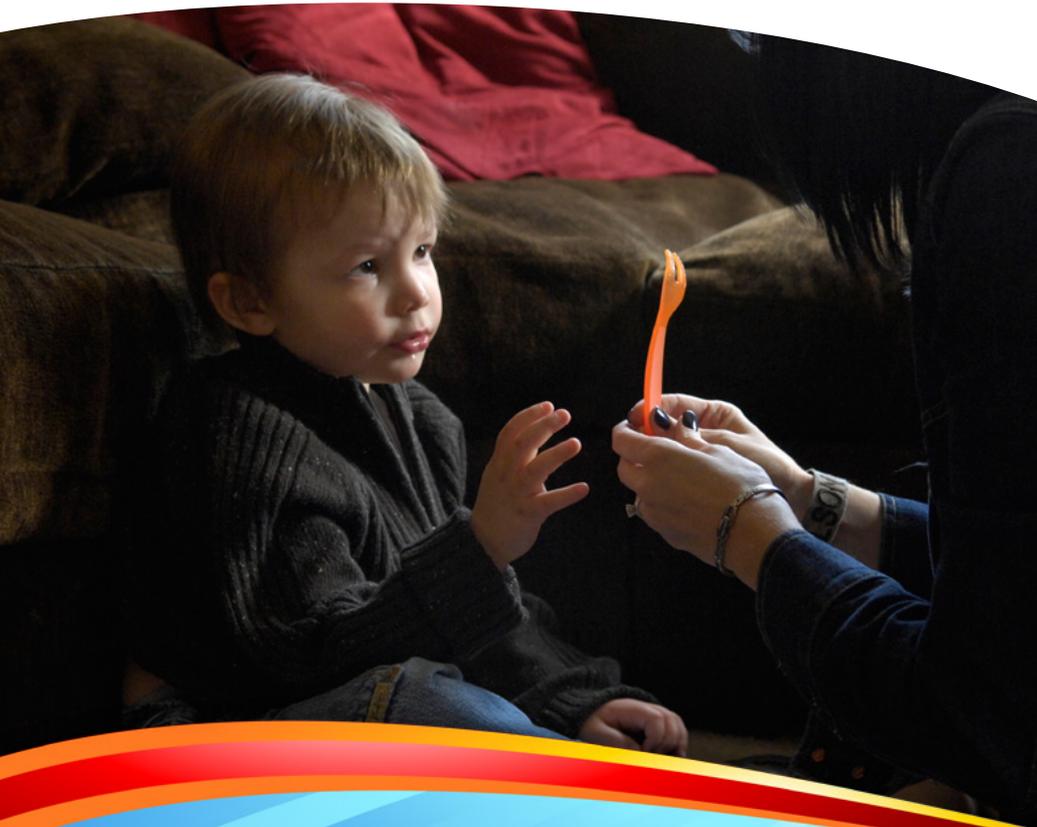
The GI Bill – New Tools to Help You Transition

Like any military mission, transitioning to civilian life takes preparation, research, planning and the right tools. One of the most powerful tools you have is the GI Bill, and it is important to know how to use it. Here are two new tools to help you in your decision process.

1. The recently updated [Choosing the Right School](#) guide (PDF): This new version includes information about the different types of degrees/programs that you can use with the GI Bill, the importance of school accreditation, and much more valuable information to help you make the right decisions on where to use your hard earned benefits!
2. The “[Know Before You Go](#)” video features veterans who have used their GI Bill benefits and offer great advice for how you can make the most of yours.

You can use your benefits to obtain an associate, bachelor’s, master’s degree, or even a Ph.D. Beneficiaries also have the option to participate in a certification program to gain the credentials required for the civilian job you want or learn a new trade through an apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

For some veterans, having so many options can feel overwhelming. “Make sure you have a plan,” says Kyle White, an Army Veteran and Medal of Honor Recipient who appears in the video. The [GI Bill Comparison Tool](#) is a great place to start, but perhaps the most powerful resource to help you make well-informed decisions about the future is your network of fellow veterans.



Are You Ready for Flu Season? Fight the Flu with Prevention

What is influenza (also called flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

How to stay healthy this winter

Maintaining a healthy immune system is a big key to your overall health this winter. Here are a few simple strategies you can follow to ensure your health doesn't suffer.

- **Drink water.** It is more important than ever to consume the right amount of water for your health.
- **Keep stress to a minimum.** Studies have associated high stress levels to making a person more vulnerable to catching colds and flu.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Maintaining a good healthy diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables is a great way to keep your body healthy.
- **Exercise regularly.** Get out and take a short walk and enjoy the cooler weather.



- **Get the right amount of sleep every night.** The average person needs 6-8 hours of sleep per night.
- **Wash your hands regularly.**

What should I do to protect myself from flu this season?

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others.

Know the signs and symptoms of flu

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

**It is important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

Be informed

Take the time to learn about influenza. For more information visit the follow:

- Flu.gov
- [Ready Navy](http://ReadyNavy)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](http://CenterforDiseaseControlandPrevention(CDC))



FFSC Offers Free Infant Massage Training

Attention all active-duty military families with young babies! Are you interested in learning how to better understand your babies' wants and needs, how to interact with them in a positive way, while learning new strategies to relieve their discomfort, especially when they are experiencing gas or colic? If yes, then infant massage training is what you need.

The New Parent Support Home Visitation Program is now offering free infant massage training. To schedule an appointment, contact the Home Visitor assigned to your [local Fleet and Family Support Center](#).

Military Spouse Webinar: How to Start Your Own Business

The Department of Defense Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program and the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Veterans Business Development invite you to learn more about military spouse business ownership. Join the upcoming 2016 webinar series: "How to Start Your Own Business as a Military Spouse and have it move with you."

Sessions will be held the first Wednesday of the month at 12 p.m. EST through October 2016.

[Register](#) for upcoming sessions.

