



Make Prevention a CHOICE

Tips on Balancing Work and Family in the Military

Does your family complain that you don't spend enough time with them? Do you resent having to bring work home? Do you feel there is never enough time for yourself? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions you may be having difficulty managing the stress of having a family and a job. Take heart in the fact that this is normal. Military families experience stress over trying to balance their busy lives, but remember that stress can actually be a positive force in our lives. Stress motivates us to achieve our best, but moderate to high stress levels at work and at home can make us feel out of control. Here are some tips that may help alleviate the stress in your life.

AT WORK:

- ◆ **Discuss work problems with co-workers.** We all need to vent sometimes, so find a trusted co-worker you can talk to.
- ◆ **Analyze your situation and make appropriate changes to improve things.** This may involve analyzing your current job. Are you happy or would you be more satisfied elsewhere? If there are changes you could make, what is stopping you?
- ◆ **Switch to a different work task, if possible.** We all have a time of day when we are most productive at work. Complete your more difficult tasks during the time you are most productive.
- ◆ **Discuss work problems with your spouse or close friends.** Co-workers can offer support, but sometimes a spouse or friend outside of your work environment can offer another perspective. They are usually not directly involved in the situation at work and can provide another point of view.
- ◆ **Use assertiveness skills with co-workers and supervisors.** When you assert your own ideas without infringing on the rights of others, you are acting in an assertive manner. Assess the way you relate to your peers and supervisors so you can make changes when it is necessary.
- ◆ **Develop a hobby or leisure activity outside of the workplace.** Make sure your hobby is something you enjoy and find relaxing.

TRANSITIONING FROM WORK TO HOME:

- ◆ **Learn to manage your time.** Time management skills like setting priorities and having a "to-do" list can keep your business and home life organized. An organized person is likely to be a less stressed person.
- ◆ **Plan some catch up time into your day.** The unexpected happens when you least expect it, so block off part of your day for catching up on those unexpected tasks.
- ◆ **Change clothes immediately when you get home from work.** This helps in the unwinding process and encourages you to leave work behind. After you change clothes, you are able to face the demands at home.

- ◆ **Use your commuting time to your advantage.** Listen to some soothing music, take some deep breaths, or plan your agenda for the day. Using this commuting time helps you to relax and gives you a transition between work and home.
- ◆ **Involve your spouse and children.** Enlist your spouse's help with the household chores. Encourage your children to assist with dinner preparation, cleaning, or helping with younger children. Involving children in family chores assists them in learning responsibility and independence.

AT HOME:

- ◆ **Recognize the signs of stress in your home.** Be aware of what causes your stress level to increase and what makes you more relaxed.
- ◆ **Accept your limits as a parent.** You are not always going to be super mom or dad (and that's O.K.). It may be beneficial to take a "time-out" from your children so you don't overreact or say something you will regret later.
- ◆ **Think positively.** You are mentally and physically healthier when you have a positive attitude. The added energy and enthusiasm will help in balancing your life.
- ◆ **Exercise.** People who exercise have more energy, less stress, feel better, and are generally healthier. Find an exercise program that you enjoy. Make changes to the program if you get bored or frustrated.
- ◆ **Balance work and play.** Since we can't (and shouldn't) live on work alone, take some time to enjoy your spouse and your children. Plan a trip to the park, enjoy a quiet evening with your mate. Leisure time doesn't have to cost money to be beneficial for you and your family.
- ◆ **Use relaxation exercises.** Deep breathing, imagery, visualization, aromatherapy, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and meditation are all forms of relaxation for the mind and body. These techniques can help you feel relaxed, energized, and less stressed.

At times you may feel overwhelmed by the stress of working and taking care of your family. It is important to know that the military has several programs that can provide guidance. The following is a list of military agencies that provide assistance in the areas of stress management and mental health.

- ◆ Family Support Center
- ◆ Community Service Center
- ◆ Family Advocacy
- ◆ Chaplain/ Religious groups
- ◆ Base/Post support groups
- ◆ Mental Health Professionals
- ◆ Health Promotions
- ◆ HAWC/RAWC
- ◆ Semper Fit

How to Contact Us

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