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Managing Your Emotions When Your Spouse Is Deployed

Having your spouse deployed can bring up a wide range of emotions, starting when you first learn about the deployment and continuing until well after your spouse has returned home. You may experience fear, anger, loneliness, joy, relief and anticipation. Here are some tips to help you cope with the emotions related to your spouse's deployment.

Before the deployment

As departure day nears, some spouses begin to feel:

- Confused, stressed, resentful or depressed
- Detached or withdrawn as their service member invests more time and commitment in the mission
- Hopeless and impatient
- Emotionally and physically distant

To help keep things positive and loving with your spouse during the predeployment period, remember that it's important to:

- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Talk about your feelings and discuss what you expect from each other during the deployment, including how you'll communicate.
- **Create opportunities for lasting memories during the separation.** Spend time together in a relaxed atmosphere to create memories that will sustain you during the deployment.
- **Get to know other military spouses who are going through the same experience.** Get involved with family readiness activities and other unit or installation events.

During the deployment

During the first weeks after your service member leaves, you may feel sad, disoriented, anxious and angry. However, soon you will experience a growing sense of self-confidence and independence. Here are some suggestions for coping:

- **Find things to look forward to.** Take a class, volunteer or start a project you've always wanted to do.
- **Reach out to others who are in the same situation.** Plan an event with other families who are coping with a deployment or find a support group through your military community.
- **Don't try to hide your feelings.** It's normal to feel sad, lonely or angry when you've been separated from your spouse.
- **Concentrate on what you can control.** Try to focus on things you can control, like spending time with family and friends or signing up for a class or volunteer opportunity.
- **Learn some stress management techniques that work for you.** Try out some different ways to relieve stress, such as an exercise class, a journal of your thoughts and feelings, meditation or deep breathing.
- **Take care of yourself.** Get enough sleep, exercise, eat healthy meals and be sure to drink plenty of water.

Homecoming and the postdeployment period

The postdeployment period can last from a few weeks to several months. Along with your relief and joy, there may be an adjustment period for you and your spouse. This may be especially difficult if your service member is having difficulty disengaging from combat or is suffering from combat stress.

There are several things you can focus on to reduce stress for you and your family:

- **Maintain a positive, nonjudgmental attitude.** The right attitude will help lower stress and frustration when getting back together doesn't seem to be going the way you expected.
- **Talk openly and honestly about your experiences during the deployment and how you've changed.** It can help you re-establish a foundation of healthy communication and encourage your service member to trust you with his or her deployment experiences.
- **Try to be patient.** It may be some time before you and your spouse feel relaxed and comfortable together.
- **Make plans.** Making plans together, whether it's for a weekend outing or something more elaborate, can help you focus on your life together and help you feel closer.

Asking for help

Speaking with a counselor can help you manage emotions and challenges that come up throughout the deployment cycle. The following services offer free face-to-face [confidential non-medical counseling](#):

- **Military OneSource.** In addition to confidential [face-to-face counseling](#), you can meet with a counselor online, by phone or through secure video connection. And, if you would like to ensure your relationship is at its strongest before separation, consider taking advantage of the [Building Healthy Relationships free specialty consultation](#).
- **The Military and Family Life Counseling program.** This service is available through your [installation's Military and Family Support Center](#).
- **MilSpouse Toolkit.** From education on military culture to navigating resources, this track is beneficial for new spouses who may be experiencing a disconnect from their family and need to identify a support system in their new community. This track focuses resources to assist new and current military spouses with adjustment to the military lifestyle, developing coping skills and resources for resiliency.