

A photograph of four military personnel in uniform saluting. From left to right: a man in a dark blue uniform with a sergeant's rank insignia, a man in a white uniform with a sailor's rank insignia, a man in a dark blue uniform with a lieutenant's rank insignia, and a man in a dark blue uniform with a captain's rank insignia. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

**Military Support Services
For Those Being Deployed**

Military Support Program For Personnel Being Deployed

Provided By:

The Counseling Team International (TCTI)

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So Where Do We Start?

Almost everyone has experienced, or will experience, a stressful situation either prior, during, or post deployment. During situations such as these, family, friends, and professionals are able to assist military personnel with coping. They are able to provide necessary support and understanding that aid in overcoming issues surrounding deployment. This program has been created for you to use as a reference when coping with personal issues regarding deployment as well as the issues your family and friends may face.

There are three primary objectives in this handbook:

1. To provide a general understanding of your own feelings across the different phases of deployment.
2. To provide a foundation of understanding as to your personal role in helping your family members and friends cope with your pending deployment.
3. To provide you with references and sources should you feel the need for further assistance.

This handbook will be divided into three primary sections.

- *Section One* will provide you with a better understanding of what feelings you may personally be experiencing during the entire deployment process. It will also show you how to deal with those feelings in an effective and productive manner.
- *Section Two* will outline the primary purpose for your involvement in helping your family members or friends deal with all three phases of deployment. This will be done by providing you with a better understanding of what feelings and emotions they may be experiencing and how to help them deal effectively with those feelings and emotions. You are a critical part in helping your family members and friends progress across the three phases of deployment – dealing with pre-deployment, deployment itself, and returning home after your deployment service.
- *Section Three* will provide you with a set of references and sources that can be used when you feel further assistance is needed. These resources will include counseling services, peer support services, and chaplain services.

Section One:

What Types of Things Will I Experience?

A look at what feelings and emotions you may have

Stage One: Pre-Deployment

Once you learn you are about to be deployed you may experience a variety of emotions surrounding your pending deployment. These emotions, and the ways in which you deal with them may greatly affect you during your deployment and how you will make the transition back once you return home from deployment. Moreover, understanding your experience of the deployment phases will help you help your family and friends in this process.

What kind of emotions and worries may I have before I am deployed?

Initial reactions and emotions regarding pre-deployment may include:

- Shock at the idea of being deployed
- Denial
- Excitement
- Anger or resentment that you are being deployed
- Anxiety about facing the unknown arena of military deployment
- Fear of separation from your family members and your current way of life
- Concern regarding the well-being of those who are being left behind
- Frustration over receiving an assignment and having to wait until your deployment date
- Concerns regarding your career once you return home from deployment
- A sense of loss and grief since you are leaving behind family members, friends, and peers
- Anxiety about the additional responsibilities loved ones will face
- Anxiety over a potential loss to income for your family
- Fear of missing important events and holidays
- Fear regarding the gruesome reality of combat

Most individuals will be able to adapt to the idea of deployment once they become more and more prepared for their deployment date. However, the level of adaptation does not take away the fact that you may experience shock, denial, anxiety, irritability, sadness, fear, excitement, or pride.

I understand now what I might feel, but what can I do about these feelings?

In order to effectively deal with issues related to these feelings, it is important you have family and friends to provide a good social support system. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Engage your family members and friends in conversation regarding your pending deployment

- Talk to your family members and friends about your fears and address those fears together
- Realize that having a mixed emotional reaction is normal at this stage in the deployment process
- Create a good unit of support from within your family and friends
- Discuss ways in which you can keep in touch once deployment has been reached
- Create a support network for those who are being left behind (who will help out if family needs become overwhelming, babysitting, etc.)
- Discuss how family routines, rules, and expectations will change during the period of deployment
- Spend time alone with each member of your family as well as your friends
- Reach out to other individuals who have gone through the same experience
- Attend counseling sessions to help address your emotions regarding deployment
- Be prepared for what lies ahead in the subsequent stages of deployment
- Journal your thoughts and emotions
- Get involved with an exercise program
- Enjoy recreational activities
- Reach out for spiritual support/peer support

Stage Two: During Deployment

Once you have been deployed, an entirely new set of stressors may present themselves. Being subjected to combat first-hand may provide you with new concerns in addition to the concerns you already have.

What new feeling, stressors, or reactions will I have or experience once I have been deployed?

Emotional reactions during deployment may include:

- A lack of stability through both complex and continually changing missions
- A sense of detachment associated with long deployments
- Anxiety over having to work in harsh climates and geographical areas
- Frustration over your living situations
- Exhaustion from long days and inadequate rest
- Interpersonal problems with your peers
- Fear of combat itself
- Anxiety from the exposure to a foreign culture
- Concern over having limited leisure time
- Worrying about how things are at home
- Fear of how your family is coping without your daily support

- Apprehension regarding the lack of time to assimilate into this new situation
- Frustration regarding the lack of attained information
- Overwhelmed by duties
- A sense of loneliness
- Feelings of guilt for family and friends that you had to leave behind

You may experience new, uncharted reactions to your emotions and also to your surroundings. As a consequence, you may experience a change in your demeanor and outlook on certain events. This is natural. Experiences change people both for the good and for the bad. However, in order to help you transition from life pre-deployment to life deployed, you will need a strong support system.

What do I do?

To ease your anxiety you can:

- Keep a strong line of communication while you are away
- Realize your fears and/or anxiety towards combat is normal and to be expected
- Evoke your friends and family members to inform you of important events that happen while you are away
- Talk to your peers about how you are feeling and what you are struggling with
- Express your concerns
- Find ways to occupy your down time, doing things that you enjoy (reading, playing games, etc)
- Talk to a chaplain about any regrets, fears, or anxiety you may have
- Continue looking forward to the future and don't dwell too much on the negatives of the here and now
- Reach out for spiritual support/peer support
- Connect to The Counseling Team International on-line
- Find/connect with a military support program

Stage Three: Post Deployment

Now that you are about to return home, you may experience stress and worry. There are certain stressors that are directly related with the return home, or return to "normal" life. These stressors, like the others, need to be dealt with and faced rather than pushed aside and overlooked.

What else can I expect?

Reuniting with friends, peers, and family members can bring its own level of uneasiness for yourself. Here are some changes to be watching out for:

- Anxiety or frustration about how things at home have changed since you have been away
- Irritability about the different types of responsibility
- Concern for your post-deployment health
- Feelings of depression due to your guilt about actions you engaged in while in combat
- Anger since you have missed out on family and friends while you were away
- Fear of re-integrating your new expectations with new expectations of your friends and family
- Pride
- A new sense of honor and purpose
- New confidence in abilities
- Apprehension surrounding your return to employment status
- Feelings of grief and loss for those who did not come home
- Changed views on life
- Nervousness regarding the restoration of family roles and relationships
- Trouble readjusting to the rules, regulations, and policies of everyday life
- Excitement about returning home

During this time of reunion and transition to home life, it is important you talk with your loved ones regarding the changes you have both experienced. It is important to keep in mind you have both changed over your time apart and patience will help ease the anxiety felt by both sides.

How can I complete the transition?

Once again, support is what is most important. Here are some ways to deal with the new challenges that you will face together.

- Be aware there will be change
- Maintain reasonable expectations of the new changes
- Prior to your reunion, discuss how you would like to spend the first days after the reunion
- Continue to express your appreciation for your family members and friends
- Spend quality alone time together
- Become acquainted with a peer support group
- Be attentive to your reactions to coming home and address those issues as they arise
- Understand your adaptation to coming home may take some time

- Be sure to give yourself space
- Be flexible and patient. Communicate your respect
- Talk about what you learned while away
- Talk with your family members and friends about your feelings of combat and your feelings about returning home
- Attend counseling sessions with your loved ones, as well as allow yourself to attend individually, to discuss the differences and changes you have all experienced
- Get connected with a military support program
- Re-connect with your social group
- Find or re-connect with hobbies and activities you previously found enjoyable
- Research other people's experiences regarding reuniting and reintegration
- Get involved with a military support group

Your reintegration into mainstream society may not be an easy task and may take both time and effort for both you and your family and friends. In order to ensure the transition will take place in an effective manner, all parties need to be aware that changes have been made as well as possess reasonable expectations for those changes. If at any time you feel as if the transitions are too stressful, be aware there is an abundance of resources available to both you and your family members and friends regarding military deployment. Never give up hope, help is out there!

If I am overwhelmed how do I get help?

- Call a peer supporter
- Speak with a member of the clergy
- Contact family or friends
- Get in touch with The Counseling Team International

Section Two: What Are They Experiencing?

A guide to help you understand the feelings of those you are leaving behind

Stage One: Pre-Deployment

Friends and family members will venture through a wide array of emotions prior to your deployment. The emotions and reactions that your friends and family members experience during the post-deployment phase will shape how they feel towards, and transition through, the varying phases of deployment. Dealing effectively with these emotions will help your family members and friends become properly prepared and consequently make the transition much easier from one phase of deployment to the next.

What kind of emotions and worries do they have before I am deployed?

Initial reactions and emotions regarding pre-deployment may include:

- Shock at the idea of their family member or friend being deployed
- Difficulty believing you are being deployed
- Frustration and/or indignation
- Distress regarding the immediate future without the love and support of family and friends
- Distress pertaining to the impending separation and physical distance that will take place with regards to family and friends
- Uncertainty about life continuing on at home without your presence
- Feelings of loss and grief regarding the changes your deployment will bring
- Anxiety and fear about their new need to take on more family responsibilities and how they will adjust to these new responsibilities
- Stress over the potential loss of income for your family and support that you previously provided
- Children may feel loss over the separation from their parent and may worry about their safety
- Hope
- Excitement
- Pride

These emotions and reactions are to be expected and you should not feel bad if your family members or friends are experiencing negative reactions towards your deployment. As time progresses, they will begin to adapt to the idea of your deployment just as you will begin to adapt. This adaptation process will take some time and needs to be worked through rather than worked around.

I understand now what they're going through, but what can I do about it?

In order to effectively deal with issues related to these stressors, it is important that your family and friends provide a good social support system for one another while you are away. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Talk to your family member or friends about their fears and concerns
- Help them realize their feelings are normal and they are not alone with these feelings
- Encourage them to reach out to support groups and others who have gone through what they are now experiencing.
- Discuss how you will keep in contact with your family members or friends while you are away
- Enlist friends and family members to help one another with daily responsibilities once you have been deployed
- Spend quality time with your family members or friends
- Discuss how family roles will change with every member of your family
- Help them plan ahead financially
- Attend counseling sessions both individually and jointly with your loved ones
- Get connected with a military support program
- Help create a social support system for your family members and friends, comprised of people who love and care for them
- Research the types of experiences your family members and friends may have while they are away
- Be open minded about the feelings and emotions your family members and friends are experiencing
- Understand that they are just as concerned about your deployment as you are
- Help them get connected with a military support family group

It is important that your family members and friends deal with their fears and concerns rather than push them aside. Pushing them aside will only cause these issues to continue building up until they are finally unbearable. Dealing with them on a continuous basis will give their coping skills a chance to be effective.

Stage Two: During Deployment

After you have been deployed, your loved ones will experience a new set of feelings, reactions, and stressors. These stressors are also normal as they are learning to adjust to life without your daily support and presence.

What should I expect them to experience?

Some of their reactions may be:

- Loneliness
- Trouble sleeping

- Difficulty concentrating on daily activities
- Sadness
- Feelings of abandonment
- A sense of loss
- Emptiness
- Hope
- Apprehension about your well-being
- Worry about how the rest of the family is coping
- Stress regarding financial obligations
- Feeling over-whelmed by the increase in their responsibilities
- Anxiety about essentially being the sole decision maker
- Anger
- Change in eating habits
- Concern about the amount of accessible communication they have with you
- Anxiety over parenting issues
- Children may begin to act out and test the new boundaries
- Pride

Once you have been deployed, it is important for your family members and friends to be able to successfully adapt to the changes in their life. In order to do this they will need access to a variety of resources to help them through the transition.

How can I help out?

There are several ways in which you can help your family members and friends handle the added stressors of your departure.

- Communicate with them. Encourage them to discuss how they are feeling while you are away and talk about the changes you have both been through
- Write or e-mail your family members or friends as often as you can in order to establish a routine for both of you
- Encourage them to use other family members and friends as their support unit
- Discuss the changes that they are going through with your family members. Help other family members understand the difficulty and importance of everyone's new roles
- Keep up to date on the home status of your family members and friends
- Provide your them with advice on daily family, financial, and legal issues that you would have otherwise been a part of
- Help them realize that their fears and anxiety over the new situation is normal

Transitioning to life after your deployment will be a struggle for your family at the beginning. However, as time begins to progress, their pain and fear will begin to subside. They will slowly adapt to new routines and will hopefully feel a heightened sense of independence.

Stage Three: Post Deployment

Now that you are returning home there are certain issues you will need to address collectively. During your time apart, both you and your family members and friends have gone through a variety of changes. Both of you have learned to adapt to your new circumstances and have consequently grown individually.

How will they be different?

The reunion between you and your family members and friends will be a greatly anticipated event. Here are some of the emotions and reactions they may have prior to your arrival and after you have been home for a few days.

- Anticipation for your arrival
- Anxiety about how you will assimilate to the changes that have occurred at home
- Nervousness concerning the restoration of your relationship with your family members and friends
- Eagerness to be reunited
- Concern about how children will react to your return
- Apprehension regarding their potential decreased independence
- Hope
- Anxiety over their expectations having changed since you have been abroad
- Concern about how you have potentially changed
- Fear of how the time spent apart has hurt your relationship together
- Relief you will be able to become an active member in your family again.
- Irritability concerning the different types of responsibilities.
- Concern about the ability to re-integrate your expectations with the expectations of your loved ones.

During the reunion and re-integration aspect of deployment, it is critical to remember both of you have gone through changes. Only patience, love, and effort from both sides will help in overcoming any obstacles.

How do I help deal with these feelings?

The anxiety and nervousness they feel is expected. Here are some things you can do to help deal with those feelings:

- Keep in mind change is inevitable
- Be patient with yourself and with your loved ones
- Express your appreciation and love for one another
- Spend time alone together
- Encourage them to continue the new activities that they engaged in while you were away, perhaps incorporating yourself in their new hobbies
- Allow them adequate time to get re-acquainted with you
- Be open about how they are feeling and dealing with the situation

- Encourage them to continue to use other family members and friends as a support system
- Dissect any major problems into smaller, manageable parts and deal with those smaller parts on a continual basis
- Discuss how the first days after your arrival will be planned
- Discuss both your expectations and the expectations of your loved ones so both parties are clear about the roles they will begin to fulfill
- Get connected with a military support program
- Attend counseling sessions both individually and together so both parties are able to adequately express their feelings

The process of re-integrating yourself into home life will be a process in which all sides need to be patient. It may take some time to get re-acquainted with one another, learn your new roles within the family, and understand each other's perspectives. While the reunion can be full of anxiety and fear, it is also one of the happiest times in the entire deployment process.

Section Three: What If I Need Help?

References and sources to be used as you see fit

Chaplains: A chaplain is a member of the clergy who serves a group of people, regardless of denomination. Chaplains are not organized as a mission or church. The role of a chaplain is to provide the individual with spiritual counseling and assistance during times of need. Military chaplains can be found both on local military bases as well as abroad. If your family member or friend is a member of law enforcement or fire service, you will have access to a chaplain through both military and law enforcement or fire service connections.

Peer Supporters: These are individuals who are peers of equal standing and are trained in basic crisis-intervention and counseling skills. The role of a peer supporter is to be readily accessible to personnel in times of crisis and assist an individual in procuring professional help or other resources as appropriate. If your family member or friend is a member of law enforcement or fire service, you will have access to peer supporters through their law enforcement or fire service department.

Organizations offering assistance:

Association	Website	Phone Number
The Counseling Team International	www.thecounselingteam.com	(800) 222-9691
The Military Family Network	www.emilitary.org	1-866-205-2850
Military HomeFront	www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil	1-800-342-9647
USDA Military Families	www.usdamilitaryfamilies.org	
Military Families United	www.militaryfamiliesunited.org	(202) 429-5600
Operation Military Family	www.operationmilitaryfamily.org	(425) 679-5671
Military Child	www.militarychild.org	(254) 953-1923
Fisher House	www.fisherhouse.org	(888) 294-8560
Military Families Voice of Victory	www.mfvov.com	(207) 299-4495
Military One Source	www.militaryonesource.com	1-800-342-9647
American Military Family	www.americanmilitaryfamily.org	(303) 746-8195
National Military Family Association	www.nmfa.org	(703) 931-6632
Military Support Groups and Centers	http://www.military.com/benefits/resources/family-support/military-support-groups-and-centers	

Books offering information:

Married to the Military: A Survival Guide for Military Wives, Girlfriends, and Women in Uniform by *Meredith Leyva*

Today's Military Wife: Meeting Challenges of Service Life by *Lydia Sloan Cline*

Chicken Soup for the Military Wife's Soul by *Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Charles Preston, and Cindy Pedersen*

Military Families: Adaptation to Change by *Edna Hunter*

A Tribute to Military Families: Letter of Thanks From Our Nation's Children by *National Military Family Association*

Surviving Deployment: A Guide for Military Families by *Karen Pavlicin*

Heroes At Home: Help and Hope for America's Military Families by *Ellie Kay*

Your Military Family Network: Your Connection to Military Family Resources by *Military Family Network*

A Family's Guide to the Military for Dummies by *Sheryl Garrett, Sue Hoppin, and Tanya Biank*

A Cup of Comfort for Military Families by *Collen Sell*

Home Fires Burning: Married to the Military, For Better or for Worse by *Karen Houppert*

The Military Support by *Amanda Springer*

Spirit of Freedom by *Lieutenant Colonel Dawn M. Smith*

Mom's Field Guide: What You Need to Know to Make It Through Your Loved Ones Military Deployment by *Sandy Doell*

Deployed, Not Disconnected: Hope and Help for Husbands and Wives Facing Separations Due to Military Assignments by *Don Martin and Karen Martin*

I Miss You!: A Military Kids Book About Deployment by *Beth Andrews*

What to Expect in the Military: A Practical Guide for Young People, Parents, and Counselors by *P.J. Budahn*

In Harm's Way: Help for the Wives of Military Men, Police, EMTs, and Firefighters by *Aphrodite Matsakis*

Faith Deployed: Daily Encouragement for Military Wives by *Jocelyn Green*

Changing Step: From Military to Civilian Life: People in Transition by Ruth A. Jolly

Life After Deployment: Military Families Share Reunion Stories and Advice by Karen Pavlicin

The Military Father: A Hands-On Guide for Deployed Dads by Armin A. Brott

When Johnny/Joanie Comes Marching Home: Reuniting Military Families Following Deployment by Lester Westling Jr.

Surviving Military Separation: 365 Days by Marc Maxwell

Encouragement for America's Hidden Heroes: Survival Tactics for the Families of Military Forces by Amy Stevens

Resources:

Curran, Stephen F. (2008). TBI or PTSD or Both? Practical Screening Tools for Physicians.

Dorian, Edrick H., Nagdimon, Jay M., & Jablonski Kevin J. Deployment Psychology Applications for Law Enforcement Agencies. *Behavioral Science Services: Los Angeles Police Department*

Hoffman, Kimberly. The Cycles of Deployment and Family Stress. *Connecticut National Guard*.

Litz, Brett T. (2007). Research on the Impact of Military Trauma: Current Status and Future Directions. *Military Psychology: Volume 19, Number 3*.

Martin, Dennis. Deployment Support Program. *Air Reserve Command. 4th Combat Camera Squadron: March AFB CA*.

Oimoen, Angela. (2007). Military Stress I: Deployment, Separation, and Reunion. *Online Encyclopedia of Family Stress and Coping*.

Tarpley, Alice. Deployment and the Military Family.

United States Navy. Leader's Guide for Managing Personnel in Distress