



afterdeployment.org

Wellness resources for the military community.

**BRIEFING:
COPING WITH SEPARATION**

BRIEFING TOPICS

- COMMON FAMILY EXPERIENCES DURING DEPLOYMENT.
- SIGNS OF ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS.
 - ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS.
 - RECOMMENDATIONS.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Military Families Have to Cope with More High-Stress Events and Transitions than Most of their Civilian Counterparts. They Experience Deployments, Family Separations, Foreign Assignments, and Frequent Family Relocations.

STAGES OF SEPARATION

BEFORE THE DEPLOYMENT:

- PROTEST
 - Anger, Sadness, Guilt (not wanting the soldier to deploy) .
 - Frustration – SM’s preparation means less time with family.
 - Arguing as a means of ‘distancing.’
 - Pre-school children – clinging behavior, attention-seeking.
 - Elementary school children – behavior problems, more child-like behavior, outbursts.
 - Adolescents – aloofness, ‘don’t care’ attitude, arguing to camouflage feelings
- DENIAL / AVOIDANCE OF NECESSARY PREP TASKS
- DESPAIR
 - “How will I live through this?”

DURING THE DEPLOYMENT:

- DETACHMENT
 - Greater confidence in handling day-day tasks.

AFTER THE DEPLOYMENT:

- RETURN ADJUSTMENT
 - Period of awkwardness during the re-adjustment phase.

WHAT IS “NORMAL”? - SOLDIERS

SOLDIERS

IT IS ***COMMON*** AND ***NORMAL*** FOR SOLDIERS TO
EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL AFTERSHOCKS
WHEN
THEY HAVE WITNESSED OR BEEN INVOLVED IN
HIGHLY STRESSFUL AND LIFE THREATENING
SITUATIONS.

WHAT IS “NORMAL”? - FAMILIES

FAMILIES

IT IS **COMMON** AND **NORMAL** FOR FAMILIES TO EXPERIENCE STRESS REACTIONS DURING THE PREDEPLOYMENT, DEPLOYMENT, AND POST-DEPLOYMENT PHASES OF ADJUSTMENT.

FAMILY STRESS CAN OCCUR BEFORE A DEPLOYMENT, DURING A DEPLOYMENT, OR FOLLOWING REDEPLOYMENT.

FACTS & MYTHS

FACT:

MOST SOLDIERS ARE AFFECTED BY THEIR DEPLOYMENT.

MYTH:

EVERY SOLDIER EXPERIENCES CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS OR SYMPTOMS AFTER DEPLOYING.

FACT:

MOST FAMILIES ARE AFFECTED BY A DEPLOYMENT.

MYTH:

EVERY FAMILY REPORTS ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS REQUIRING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.

COMMON FAMILY THOUGHTS

- “AM I HANDLING THINGS THE RIGHT WAY?”
- “WILL HE/SHE APPRECIATE HOW WELL I’M MANAGING THE FAMILY?”
- “I’M GETTING GOOD AT SOME THINGS THAT I DON’T WANT TO GIVE UP.”
- “SHOULD I ASK HIM/HER ABOUT HIS/HER EXPERIENCES?”
- WHEN WILL HE/SHE DEPLOY AGAIN?”

Adjustment Problems

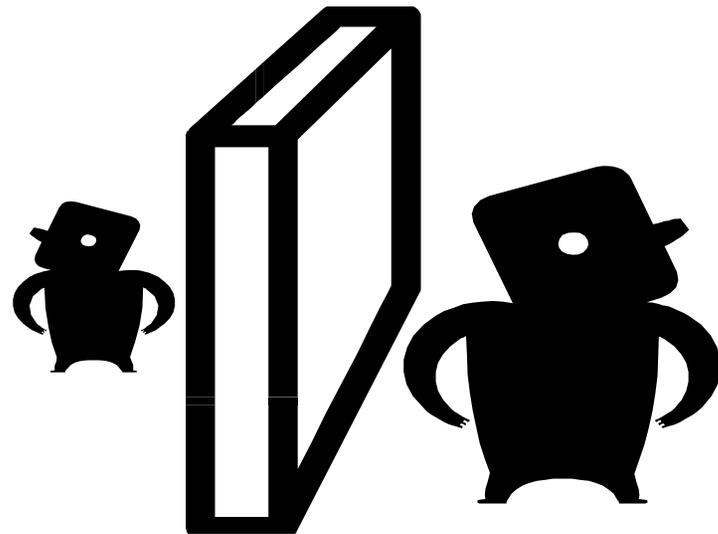
Feeling Depressed



Avoiding People / Interests Previously Enjoyed



SELF-ISOLATION



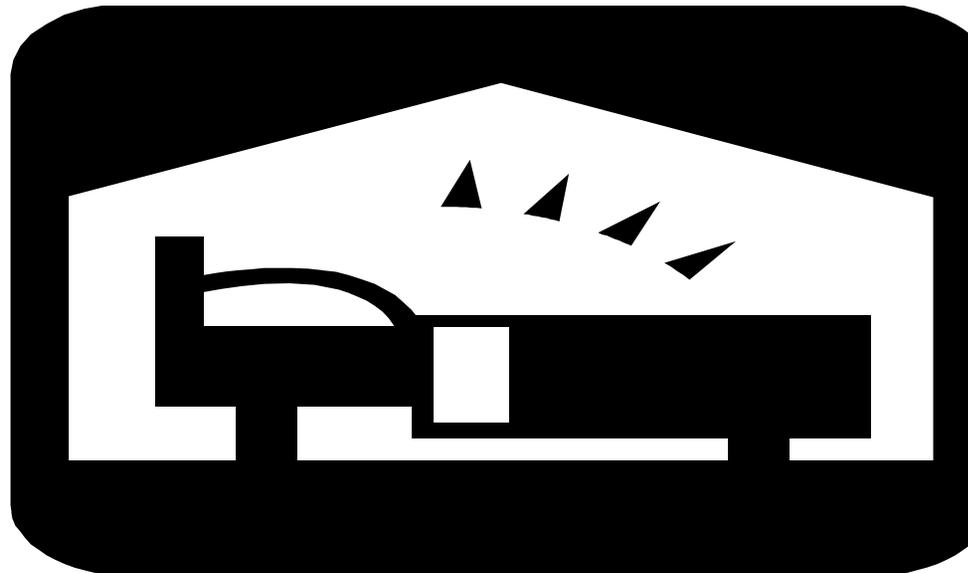
ANXIETY / PANIC ATTACKS.



Feeling Overcautious About Security or Safety.



Trouble Sleeping / Nightmares



QUICK TO ANGER





ROAD RAGE

EMOTIONS ARE NUMB



THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE



INCREASED ALCOHOL USE



Relationship Problems.



**SOLDIER: GUILTY for SURVIVING DEPLOYMENT;
GUILTY for NOT STILL BEING THERE**



LOUD NOISES



Feeling Uncomfortable In Crowds



NEGATIVE COPING

EXCESSIVE BEHAVIORS:

- ALCOHOL USE
- GAMBLING
- VIDEO GAMING
- FIXATION ON THE NEWS / WAR MOVIES
- OUT OF CONTROL SPENDING

CHANGE

Deployment Represents A Significant
CHANGE in Life Conditions.

ADAPTABILITY

"The Survivors in this Life seem to be those who are **ADAPTABLE to CHANGE.**"

- Cambridge International Dictionary of English

WHAT IS "ADAPTATION"?

"TO ADAPT" Means
"To Adjust to New Conditions."

ADAPTIVE DEPLOYMENT SOLDIER BEHAVIOR

- Being constantly on guard (hypervigilant).
- Getting little sleep.
- Recalling events repeatedly.
- Emotional numbing.
- Irritability.
- Heightened response to loud noises.

THESE BEHAVIORS MAXIMIZED SURVIVAL DURING
DEPLOYMENT, BUT ARE DISRUPTIVE IN GARRISON

ADAPTIVE DEPLOYMENT FAMILY BEHAVIOR

- Solving Problems Alone.
- Feeling Overcautious.
- Numbing of Emotions.
- Avoiding Social Outlets/Time for Self.
- Multi-tasking to Point of Exhaustion.

ADAPTIVE VS. MALADAPTIVE

WHAT'S ADAPTIVE IN ONE CONTEXT OR SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES MAY BE MALADAPTIVE IN ANOTHER CONTEXT OR SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHEN IS THE PROBLEM 'MALADAPTIVE'

- IF IRRITABILITY/ANGER PERSISTS.
- IF EXCESSIVE BEHAVIORS PERSIST.
 - THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE.
- IF NIGHTMARES/INSOMNIA PERSISTS.
- IF MOOD REMAINS FLAT OR DEPRESSED OR CONSTANTLY ANXIOUS.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- WHAT ARE YOU LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF DURING THE PERIOD OF DEPLOYMENT?
 - FOR EXAMPLE, CAN YOU NAME A NEW SKILL THAT YOU ARE DEVELOPING OR WILL NEED TO DEVELOP?
- DO YOU HAVE:
 - A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT?
 - GREATER SELF-CONFIDENCE?
 - MORE SELF-ESTEEM?
 - IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING ABILITY?
 - INCREASED APPRECIATION OF YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM?

IDENTIFIED NEEDS



Over 20% of returning Service Members experience:

- ⇒ Traumatic deployment memories
- ⇒ Sleep problems
- ⇒ Stress
- ⇒ Depression
- ⇒ Anger
- ⇒ Substance abuse
- ⇒ Relationship issues



BARRIERS TO CARE

While post-deployment adjustment problems are ***normal...***

Service members do not seek face-to-face care because of personal and/or situational ***barriers...***

...And the ***stigma*** associated with receiving care.

A photograph of a two-story house. The left side of the house is covered in green and brown camouflage paint. A person in an orange shirt is standing on a ladder, painting the white siding of the house. The right side of the house is white siding with a dark door and windows. The background is a solid yellow color.

**TROUBLE ADJUSTING TO
HOME LIFE?**

GET SOME HELP **afterdeployment.org**
A Wellness Resource for the Military Community

Adjusting to life after deployment can be difficult for service members, families and veterans.
afterdeployment.org provides self-care solutions for common post-deployment problems.

POST-DEPLOYMENT SURVEY

- POST DEPLOYMENT SURVEY ADMINISTERED TO ALL REDEPLOYING SOLDIERS.
- THE SURVEY TAPS A WIDE RANGE OF HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES.
- EVERY SOLDIER TAKES THE SURVEY.
- ON THE DAY OF THE SURVEY, EVERY SOLDIER HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK PRIVATELY WITH A CHAPLAIN, A SOCIAL WORKER, OR A PSYCHOLOGIST.

SUGGESTIONS: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATING

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:

- ***Focus on one issue at a time.**
- *Know what you want to say before saying it.
- Direct your message to the person who needs to hear it.
- ***Provide a ‘weather report.’**
- Avoid the ‘cold shoulder.’
- Avoid comparing your partner to someone else.
- Affirm your love.
- ***Don’t try to settle a big issue in one conversation.**
- Think about how you say what you say (tone of voice).
- ***Allow your partner equal time to speak.**
- ***Don’t bring up the past.**
- Use acknowledging statements (“That’s a good idea.”)
- Use clarifying statements (“Tell me more about ____.”)
- Eliminate verbal weapons such as:
 - “I told you so.” / “You don’t love me.”
- Think in terms of finding a solution rather than winning or losing:

SUGGESTIONS – 2

- It's O.K. to Ask About the Deployment – But You May Not Get a Response Right Away.
- Avoid Making Sudden Big Life Changes.
- Reassure Your Children – Change Often Frightens Them.
- Try to See Things From His/Her Point of View.
- Identify the Positive, Including Reaffirming Positive Traits.
- Voice Concerns In a Way that Doesn't Accuse or Threaten.
- Talk About Your Experiences – Talk is the Most Healing Medicine.

RESOURCES

- UNIT CHAIN OF COMMAND
- UNIT CHAPLAIN
- SOCIAL WORK SERVICES/CARE MANAGERS
- MEDICAL PROVIDERS
- MILITARYONESOURCE

FAMILY WEBSITE RESOURCES

- ***afterdeployment.org***: www.afterdeployment.org
- **Army Community Service, Fort Lewis**: <http://www.lewis.army.mil/dpca/acs/>
- **Courage to Care**: <http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/courage.html>
- **Deployment Health Clinical Center**: <http://www.pdhealth.mil/main.asp>
- **FRG Operations and Spouse Assistance**:
<http://www.armyfrg.org/skins/frg/home.aspx?AllowSSL=true>
- **Military Family Resources of Washington**:
<http://www.militaryfamilies.org/pages/5/index.htm>
- **My Army Life Too**:
<http://www.myarmylifetoo.com/skins/malt/home.aspx?mode=user&AllowSSL=true>
- **National Center for PTSD**: <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>