



Informal Relationships with Coworkers and Peers

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Positive job relationships are helpful to job performance and successful reintegration following a deployment.

Asking for Help and Talking About Difficulties with Coworkers

Problems adjusting following a deployment *may have an impact* on workplace relationships. However, you may be unsure whether to talk about how your deployment experience has affected you. Many Service Members are not aware that combat stress reactions are common, so they try to hide those reactions from others.

When considering whether to discuss stress reactions with coworkers, it is best to look at the pros and cons. The chart that follows lists commonly raised issues.

Possible Pros of Discussing Deployment Stress with Colleagues	Possible Cons of Discussing Deployment Stress with Colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-workers may become more understanding. • They may become more supportive and helpful. • They may help with difficult tasks. • They might respect military service. • It might help with feelings of loneliness or feeling different. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-workers may act uncomfortable or withdraw • Some might judge or stereotype. • They might start to think that anytime there's a problem it's related to deployment stress. • Some might gossip to others.



SOME TIPS: DISCUSSING DEPLOYMENT AT WORK:

- Discussing deployment experiences with a co-worker is a personal decision. Those experiences do **not** have to be revealed.
- It is acceptable to say nothing, or a little, or a lot. It's possible to tell someone a **part** of the experience, but not all of the experience.
 - Strong anger or intimidation by either party in the conversation is not appropriate in the workplace. Even if there is a provocation, it is not necessary to behave in a way that will result in a reprimand or a dismissal from the workplace. It is best to take any concerns about provocation to superiors.
- Words should be chosen carefully—prepare ahead of time. Be aware of vulnerabilities. Know the things that are likely to be upsetting, and be ready to cope with those things.



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Tips for Approaching Co-workers for Support

- **Consider ahead of time** what to say and the possible emotions that may come up.
- **Choose carefully *who to talk to*** – approach people who are open, friendly and/or understanding.
- **Test the waters.** Say a little; check the person’s response and how that response feels.
- **Share with others** how problem situations are best managed. This helps others feel more comfortable by relieving them of the concerns that they may have to step in to manage problem situations.
- **Identify that the conversation is intended to:**
 - (a) explain the effects that the workplace problems are having; and
 - (b) request support in addressing those problems.
- **Remember people are interested in the experiences of those who served.** This may result in some uncomfortable questions, but it also may mean that people will be interested to hear about Service Members’ experiences.
- **Don’t assume that confidentiality is automatic** – people naturally gossip, and what gets said may get repeated. Active duty Service Members should consider the potential risks should something that they discuss privately be revealed to unintended parties.
- **Remember many people outside the military are not knowledgeable about war, trauma, depression, or deployment and the military.** Discussing these personal experiences will require patience.
- **Be prepared to handle questions and what to say:**
 - About being a Veteran or continuing Service Member.
 - About war experiences.
 - About deployment stress, depression, substance abuse, or other problems.



REMEMBER:

Maintaining positive relationship with co-workers and peers is essential to job success, satisfaction, and job retention.