



Chapter Five: The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

I. Lesson Plan

- A. Purpose: Understand the cycle of deployment and its effects
- B. Objectives:
 - 1. Understand the emotional cycle of deployment
 - 2. Understand the stages of the emotional cycle of deployment
 - 3. Understand separation anxiety and its symptoms
 - 4. Understand strengths, stressors, and appropriate responses to deployment
- C. Time: 45 minutes
- D. Preparation/Materials Needed:
 - ✦ Laptop computer, LCD, PowerPoint slides, flip chart, and markers
 - ✦ Blanket Activity supplies: tarp, beach balls, and nametags with roles

II. Training Session Content

- A. PowerPoint Slides
 - Slide 5-1: Chapter 5 The Emotional Cycle of Deployment
 - Slide 5-2: Blanket Activity
 - Slide 5-3: Myths and Facts About Deployment
 - Slide 5-4: Military Deployment Cycle Support
 - Slide 5-5: The "New" Emotional Cycle of Deployment
 - Slide 5-6: Stage One: Anticipation of Departure
 - Slide 5-7: Stage Two: Detachment & Withdrawal
 - Slide 5-8: Stage Three: Emotional Disorganization
 - Slide 5-9: Stage Four: Recovery & Stabilization
 - Slide 5-10: Stage Five: Anticipation of Return
 - Slide 5-11: Stage Six: Return Adjustment & Renegotiation
 - Slide 5-12: Stage Seven: Reintegration & Stabilization
 - Slide 5-13: Understanding Separation Anxiety: Infant through Preschool
 - Slide 5-14: Understanding Separation Anxiety: Preschool or Kindergarten Age Children
 - Slide 5-15: Understanding Separation Anxiety: Primary School Children
 - Slide 5-16: Understanding Separation Anxiety: Adolescents
 - Slide 5-17: Strengths for Children Resulting from Deployment

- Slide 5-18: Strengths for Youth Resulting from Deployment
- Slide 5-19: Symptoms of Deployment Stress in the School Setting
- Slide 5-20: Suggested Healthy Responses by Adults
- Slide 5-21: Other Deployment Stress-Related Issues
- Slide 5-22: True or False: The Myth of the “Perfect” Homecoming Reunion
- Slide 5-23: Homecoming and Reunion Activity
- Slide 5-24: The Homecoming: Challenges and Rewards
- Slide 5-25: Helping Infants Adjust to Reunion
- Slide 5-26: Helping Youth Ages 1–3 Adjust to Reunion
- Slide 5-27: Helping Youth Ages 3–5 Adjust to Reunion
- Slide 5-28: Helping Youth Ages 5–12 Adjust to Reunion
- Slide 5-29: Helping Youth Ages 13–18 Adjust to Reunion

B. Activities and Directions

1. “A Blanket Community” activity
2. Review slides on the stages of deployment. Brainstorm strengths (assets) built in children during deployment (write on flip chart).
3. In small groups, come up with three symptoms of stress in a classroom/program setting and the appropriate adult response.

III. Additional Resources on the Flash Drive

- A. National Military Family Association (NMFA) Report on the Cycles of Deployment: An Analysis of Survey Responses from April through September 2005, www.nmfa.org/site/DocServer/NMFACyclesofDeployment9.pdf?docID=5401
- B. The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective <http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle2.htm>
- C. XIII. The Impact of Deployment on the Military Family, by Col. Douglas A. Waldrep, MC, USA; Col. Stephen J. Cozza, MC, USA; and Col. Ryo Sook Chun, MC, USA. Department of Veteran Affairs, National Center for PTSD. http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/war/guide/chapter_xiii.pdf
- D. Uniformed Services Deployment: Helping Children and Adolescents Through the Difficulties of Deployment in the Family. American Academy of Pediatrics. <http://www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/index.html>
- E. Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “Helping Children Cope When a Loved One is on Military Deployment,” by Megan Allen and Lynn Staley, January 2007. <http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200701>
- F. Army Directive, Deployment Cycle of Support (DCS) Directive

V. Evaluation

A. Reflection Questions

1. I learned the following about military culture and the deployment cycle ...
2. Some of the ways I can use the RSG! Manual as I implement OMK in my state include ...
3. I am excited to be part of my state team because ...
4. Things I learned about OMK partners that will be beneficial to implementing OMK in my state are ...
5. My understanding or perception of OMK has changed from when I first arrived in Albuquerque in the following ways ...

Chapter 5: The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Operation: Military Kids Ready, Set, Go! Training

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-1: Chapter 5 The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Content of this slide adapted from: N/A

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

- Do:**
- Review slide content with participants.
 - Share purpose and objectives of this chapter.

Say: *The purpose of this chapter is to understand the deployment cycle and its effects on families.*

The objectives include understanding the emotional cycle of deployment, the five stages of the emotional cycle of deployment, and separation anxiety and its symptoms. We will also discuss the strengths, stressors, and appropriate responses to deployment issues.

Deployment and the Community



Blanket Activity

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-2: Blanket Activity

Content of this slide adapted from: N/A

Materials Needed: Blanket Activity supplies: tarp, beach balls, nametags with roles

Trainer Tips: Make up nametags in advance, with roles that represent the community. Blow up the beach balls ahead of time, and make sure you have enough room to move with the tarp fully opened.

What to Do, What to Say:

Say: *This is an exercise in building teamwork, demonstrating how we need to recognize the strengths of all community members and understand the importance of communication. This exercise helps emphasize that we need to support the youth and families from our military units.*

- Do:**
- Place the blanket or tarp on the floor and have all participants align themselves on the edges. Each member picks up an edge of the cloth and holds the blanket tightly. Each participant holding the blanket will assume a community role: teacher, parent, business owner, law enforcement officer, doctor, county employee, school administrator, elected official.

- Do:**
- Start adding objects to the center of the blanket. As the objects are added, a group leader will describe a situation where several of your community members have been called up to serve in their National Guard or U.S. Army Reserve Unit. The remaining participants/community members will try to keep all the objects on the blanket.
 - Ask for volunteers to serve as community members of a fictitious town. Read each nametag as you give it to the volunteers.

Say: *Towns and cities form a support system or safety net for youth. The volunteers represent this safety net for our town.*

- Do:**
- Have volunteers pick up tarp.

Say: *Towns have many children to support and help develop into capable, caring, contributing citizens.*

- Do:**
- Add beach balls to tarp.

Say: *The adults in the town need to keep the tarp steady so that the youth don't roll off the side or "fall through the cracks" in the system. However, when members of the community are in the National Guard or Reserve, they can be deployed. Often this affects many members of the community at the same time.*

- Do:**
- At this point start "deploying" community members (by having them leave their spots along the sides of the tarp). Keep doing this until the balls fall off the tarp.
 - Debrief the activity by asking the following questions.

Say: *What happened as people started leaving their spots on the blanket?*

How did you feel when trying to keep all the objects on the tarp?

How did your role/responsibility change as others left the tarp?

What implications does this activity have for how we respond to the military youth and families in our community?

Deployment and the Community



Myths and Facts About Deployment

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-3: Myths and Facts About Deployment

Content of this slide adapted from: N/A

Materials Needed: 2 blank butcher block pages, tape, markers

Trainer Tips: The intent of this activity is twofold: (a) to give attendees an opportunity to share their knowledge of the deployment experience and (b) to clarify the facts for those unfamiliar with the deployment experience.

What to Do, What to Say:

Say: *The intent of this activity is twofold: (a) to give you an opportunity to share your knowledge of the deployment experience and (b) to clarify the facts for those unfamiliar with the deployment experience.*

- Do:**
- Tape the butcher block pages next to one another on the wall. Label one MYTHS and the other FACTS at the top.
 - Give instructions and ask the class to share their ideas about the deployment experience.

Say: *We'll limit our discussion to what can be listed on these two sheets of paper.*

Let's identify some ideas about deployment and what soldiers and families might experience.

- Do:**
- After each idea is identified, discuss as a group whether it is fact or myth and why. Use the resources listed at the back of this chapter to back up your decision.

Military Deployment Cycle Support

- Department of Army's (DA) seven stage process for supporting Soldiers and DA Civilians deployed for more than 90 days
 - **Train-up/Preparation** – training and readiness activities
 - **Mobilization** – Units/individuals alerted for possible deployment
 - **Deployment** – Units/individuals deploy to the designated theater of operation
 - **Employment** – Units/individuals perform their assigned mission in theater for a prescribed period of time
 - **Redeployment** – Units/individuals reposture in theater; equipment is returned to home station; individuals begin reintegrating into their predeployment environments and are reunited with families
 - **Post-Deployment** – Debriefings, administrative tasks and full reintegration of individuals into their families and communities
 - **Reconstitution** – Begins after post-deployment recovery and administrative requirements; individuals reintegrated into their families, communities and civilian jobs

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-4: Military Deployment Cycle Support

Content of this slide adapted from: Department of Army Directive, Deployment Cycle Support

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Become familiar with the DA Directive “Deployment Cycle Support.” Emphasize the fact that the audience may be exposed to several versions of the deployment cycle. Individuals may refer to a variety of stages comprising the deployment cycle. Service Members experience the deployment cycle somewhat differently than family members do. Consequently, the stages of deployment are labeled differently.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *This slide outlines the seven stages of deployment as defined by the Army. This is a very “military” and mission-oriented perspective of the deployment cycle.*

Operation: Military Kids focuses on the children and youth of deployed Service Members. Consequently, this training will focus on the personal experience these youth have as they navigate the stages of the emotional cycle of deployment.

The “New” Emotional Cycle of Deployment

- Each stage is characterized by time frame and specific emotional challenges
- Failure to negotiate successfully can lead to strife
- Seven distinct stages—
 - Stage One: Anticipation of Departure
 - Stage Two: Detachment & Withdrawal
 - Stage Three: Emotional Disorganization
 - Stage Four: Recovery & Stabilization
 - Stage Five: Anticipation of Return
 - Stage Six: Return Adjustment & Renegotiation
 - Stage Seven: Reintegration & Stabilization

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-5: The “New” Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage One: Anticipation of Departure

- Timeframe: When family members receive orders
- Increased feeling of stress in home
- Reality of change ahead is “sinking in”
- Denial and anticipation of loss
- Focus is on completing family pre-deployment activity checklist
- Members may feel more emotional
- In case of multiple deployments ... new cycle may begin before family has had time to renegotiate shared vision from last deployment

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-6: Stage One: Anticipation of Departure

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Two: Detachment & Withdrawal

- Timeframe: Last week before Service Member leaves
- Service Member is focused on preparing for mission and may distance self from family
- Anger, arguments may occur as family prepares to protect themselves from “hurt” of separation
- Communication may be difficult
- In preparation for loss, family may begin to act like Service Member is already gone
- Multiple deployments can result in need to repeatedly create distance; to feel “numb” and avoid emotional connection

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-7: Stage Two: Detachment & Withdrawal

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: None

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Three: Emotional Disorganization

- Timeframe: 1–6 weeks into deployment
- Life without Service Member may initially feel overwhelming
- Routines change, responsibilities added
- Kids may feel ...
 - Numb and not interested in doing much
 - More irritable than usual
 - Have difficulty concentrating—particularly at school
 - Wish things would go back to “normal”
 - Surprised because things seem to be moving smoothly now that Service Member is gone

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-8: Stage Three: Emotional Disorganization

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Four: Recovery & Stabilization

- Timeframe: Usually between weeks 3 and 5 after deployment
- Family finally starts to settle into routine of life without Service Member
- Coping with changes can be positive for kids
 - May enjoy new found responsibilities
 - Sense of independence
 - Relief that family is functioning well
- Coping with changes can be challenging for kids
 - Difficult time accepting changes
 - Stressed, depressed, and having difficulty getting things done
 - Feel unsupported and worried how will make it through
- Most of the time there is a mixture of both responses!

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-9: Stage Four: Recovery & Stabilization

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Five: Anticipation of Return

- Timeframe: About 6 weeks before the Service Member returns
- Homecoming is coming!
- Family is happy, excited, and feeling boost of energy
- Trying to make everything “perfect” for return
- Sense of relief that Service Member will be home combined with worries about whether or not they will be the same
- If Service Member came home on leave at some point during deployment, that experience may be what family members expect:
 - Positive Leave Experience = Positive Homecoming
 - Challenging Leave Experience = Challenging Homecoming

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-10: Stage Five: Anticipation of Return

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Six: Return Adjustment & Renegotiation

- Timeframe: About 6 weeks after the Service Member returns
- During time of separation Service Member and all family members have changed
- Changes may hold pleasant surprises or may cause conflict
- Family members may feel overwhelmed by Service Member attempts to get to know everyone again
- Everyone needs space and time to readjust
- Entire family must begin to renegotiate how household will look now that everyone is together again

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-11: Stage Six: Return Adjustment & Renegotiation

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Stage Seven: Reintegration & Stabilization

- Timeframe: Up to 6 months (and beyond) after the Service Member returns
- Family continues to adjust to having Service Member home
- A “new normal” is established regarding routines and expectations
- Members may begin to feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable with one another again
- If readjustment challenges resurface, support is important ... It’s okay to ask for help if you need it!

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-12: Stage Seven: Reintegration & Stabilization

Content of this slide adapted from:

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips:

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: •

Say:

Understanding Separation Anxiety

- Infant through Preschool children:
 - Neediness and clinging more than usual
 - Separation fears
 - Unable to understand events
 - Heightened arousal and confusion
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Regressive symptoms
 - Trouble identifying and verbalizing feelings
 - Anxieties about change/loss

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-13: Understanding Separation Anxiety—Infant through Preschool children

Content of this slide adapted from: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective* by LTC Simon H. Pincus, et al. and *New Emotional Cycles of Deployment for Service Members & Families*, Dept. of Defense Family Readiness Through Education & Deployments, <http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through the articles cited above.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants

Say: *There is a developmental difference between infant and preschooler responses to separation anxiety. However, above is a list of general coping strategies that are common for children this age.*

Can you identify/share any other specific examples of how children in this age range demonstrate separation anxiety?

Understanding Separation Anxiety

- **Preschool or Kindergarten children:**
 - Clinging to people or favorite toy, blanket, etc.
 - Unexplained crying or tearfulness
 - Change in relationships with same-age friends
 - Choosing adults over same-age friends
 - Increased acts of violence toward people or things
 - Shrinking away from people or things
 - Sleeping difficulties (nightmares, frequent waking)
 - Regressing, such as toileting accidents, thumbsucking, etc.
 - Eating difficulties
 - Fear of new people or situations



Ready, Set, Go!

Slide 5-14: Understanding Separation Anxiety—Preschool or Kindergarten children

Content of this slide adapted from: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective* by LTC Simon H. Pincus, et al.

<http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle.htm>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Preschoolers (3–6 years) may regress in their skills (difficulty with potty training, “baby talk,” thumb sucking, refusal to sleep alone) and seem more “clingy.” They may be irritable, depressed, aggressive, prone to somatic complaints, and have fears about parents or others leaving. Caregivers will need to reassure them with extra attention and physical closeness (hugs, holding hands). In addition, it is important to avoid changing family routines such as sleeping in their own bed, unless they are very scared. Answers to questions about the deployment should be brief, matter-of-fact, and to the point. This will help to contain the free-floating anxiety of an over active imagination.*

Understanding Separation Anxiety

- **Primary School children:**
 - Same as previous slide, plus...
 - Rise in physical complaints (stomachaches, headaches) when nothing seems wrong
 - More irritable or cranky
 - Increase in problems at school
 - Drop in grades
 - Unwillingness to go to school
 - Odd complaints about school or teachers

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-15: Understanding Separation Anxiety—Primary School Children

Content of this slide adapted from: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective* by LTC Simon H. Pincus, et al.

<http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle.htm>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *School-age children (6–12 years) may whine, complain, become aggressive, or otherwise “act out” their feelings. They may focus on the service member-parent missing a key event, for example: “Will you (the service member) be here for my birthday?”*

Depressive symptoms may include: sleep disturbance, loss of interest in school, eating, or even playing with their friends. They will need to talk about their feelings and will need more physical attention than usual. Expectations regarding school performance may need to be a little lower, but keeping routines as close to normal is best for them.

Understanding Separation Anxiety

- Adolescents
 - Same as previous slide, plus...
 - Acting out behaviors (trouble in school, at home, or with the law)
 - Low self-esteem
 - Self-criticism—blaming themselves for situation
 - Misdirected anger (i.e., excess anger over small events)
 - Sudden or unusual school problems
 - Loss of interest in usual activities/hobbies

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-16: Understanding Separation Anxiety—Adolescents

Content of this slide adapted from: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective* by LTC Simon H. Pincus, et al.

<http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle.htm>

Materials Needed: None

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Teenagers (13–18 years) may be irritable, rebellious, fight, or participate in other attention-getting behavior. They may show a lack of interest in school, peers, and school activities. In addition, they are at greater risk for promiscuity, alcohol, and drug use. Although they may deny problems and worries, it is extremely important for caregivers to stay engaged and be available to talk out their concerns.*

At first, lowering academic expectations may be helpful; however, return to their usual school performance should be supported. Sports and social activities

should be encouraged to give normal structure to their life. Likewise, additional responsibility in the family, commensurate with their emotional maturity, will make them feel important and needed.

Unfortunately, some children may have great difficulty adapting to the stress of a deployed parent. If they are unable to return to at least some part of their normal routine or display serious problems over several weeks, a visit to the family doctor or mental health counselor is indicated. Children of deployed parents are also more vulnerable to psychiatric hospitalization—especially in single-parent and blended families.

Despite all these obstacles, the vast majority of spouses and family members successfully negotiate the sustainment stage and begin to look forward to their loved ones coming home.

Strengths for Children Resulting from Deployment

- Physical, mental, emotional, and social development is appropriate for age and stage of infant/child
- Responsive to nurturing
- Connects with parents/caring adults
- Able to identify and verbalize feelings

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-17: Strengths for Children Resulting from Deployment

Content of this slide adapted from: *The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective* by LTC Simon H. Pincus, et. al., and *New Emotional Cycles of Deployment for Service Members & Families*, Dept. of Defense Family Readiness Through Education & Deployments, <http://deploymentalhealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *The list above reflects common strengths for children (infants through 5 years) resulting from deployment.*

Can you identify/share any other specific examples of the strengths children in this age range demonstrate as a result of deployment?

Strengths for Youth Resulting from Deployment

- Fosters maturity
- Growth inducing
- Encourages independence
- Encourages flexibility, adaptability
- Builds skills for adjusting to separation and losses faced later in life
- Strengthens family bonds
- Civics—relationship with community
- What other strengths may result from deployment?

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-18: Strengths for Youth Resulting from Deployment

Content of this slide adapted from: *Working with Military Children: A Primer for School Personnel*, Military Child Education Coalition, <http://militarychild.org>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Much has been written about the negative impact family separations and relocations have on military children. Less attention has been focused on the positive impact of these realities of military family life. Several psychological studies show that despite the stress of separation, many children make significant developmental gains.*

Positive impacts include:

- 1) *Fostering maturity*
- 2) *Growth inducing*

Youth assume age-appropriate responsibilities in the service member's

absence. This provides a chance to develop new skills and develop hidden interests.

- 3) *Encourages independence, flexibility
In an ever-changing world, youth learn to be resourceful and flexible.*
- 4) *Builds skills for adjusting to separations and losses faced later in life
In a lifestyle filled with good-byes and hellos, military children learn not only how to say good-bye, but how to begin new friendships.*
- 5) *Strengthens family bonds
Emotional adjustments during a separation often lead to the discovery of new sources of strength and support among themselves.*

Symptoms of Deployment Stress in School Settings

- Unable to resume normal class assignments/activities
- Continued high levels of emotional response (i.e., crying and intense sadness)
- Difficulty concentrating in school
- Express violent or depressed feelings verbally or through drawings/play
- Intentionally hurt self or others
- Gain or lose significant amount of weight in period of weeks
- Discontinue care of personal appearance
- Exhibit possible alcohol/drug abuse problem
- Frequent absences
- Experience decline in performance and grades that does not improve over time

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-19: Symptoms of Deployment Stress in School Settings

Content of this slide adapted from: *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment*, sponsored by Educational Opportunities Directorate of the Department of Defense

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

Say: Many factors influence a family's ability to adapt to deployment. Each individual in the family must adjust to new roles. Most children and youth will be able to adjust to a new normal after the departure of a parent. However, some children and youth who are fragile or who have had previous social or emotional problems may continue to have serious symptoms of stress and their ability to function may remain compromised.

Do:

- Review slide content with participants.

Say: The difference between a normal and a serious reaction to deployment is the degree and duration of the change rather than the kind of change. If a "normal" reaction persists for over six weeks, then the parent needs to be notified and a referral made to the appropriate health service.

Suggested Healthy Responses by Adults

- Educate self on the impact of deployment on children/youth and families
- Reflect what you see and hear in terms of their behavior to help them with understanding
- Be patient, understanding, caring, and firm with consequences for misbehavior
- Help children/youth identify, accept, and express what they are feeling
- Model constructive ways of dealing with strong or challenging emotions such as anger, grief, loss, sadness

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-20: Suggested Healthy Responses by Adults

Content of this slide adapted from: *Educator's Guide to the Military Child During Deployment*, sponsored by Educational Opportunities Directorate of the Department of Defense

Materials Needed: None

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

What to Do, What to Say:

- Do:**
- Review slide content with participants.
 - Brainstorm and share as a group additional responses not indicated on this slide that adults can offer to support children and youth.

Say: *Children and youth watch the way adults react to situations—deployment is no different. Adults can respond to the concerns of youth by educating themselves. Listen and reflect what you see and hear in terms of their behavior to help them with understanding. Be patient, caring, and consistent. Help youth understand their feelings in an age-appropriate manner. Be a positive role model in dealing with emotions like anger, grief, and sadness.*

Other Deployment Stress-Related Issues

- **Combat Stress**—Natural result of heavy mental and emotional work when facing danger in tough conditions; physical symptoms (i.e., headaches, racing heart, fatigue, anger) generally get better with rest and replenishment
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**—Possible response when deployment has occurred to war zone, natural disaster site, or urban riot location; physical, mental, and emotional symptoms that require professional assistance (clinically diagnosed)
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress**—Possibly experienced by family members upon return of Soldier; stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a suffering or traumatized person. (Figley, 1993)



Ready, Set, Go!

Slide 5-21: Other Deployment Stress-Related Issues

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders; *Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together*, Volume 5. No. 3

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: Be sure to read through Must-Read material at end of the chapter.

Caution to Trainer: *This information is meant to illustrate to participants that the severe stress resulting from extended deployment can result in these conditions. Do not engage in lengthy discussion on these topics. Refer participants interested in learning more to other qualified mental health and/or military professionals in community.*

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *When a Soldier returns home, they may be out of harm's way but the stress of being deployed may not go away. There are different types of stress that may appear during post-deployment.*

Combat Stress is a natural result of heavy mental and emotional work when facing danger in tough conditions; physical symptoms (i.e., headaches, racing heart, fatigue, anger) generally get better with rest and replenishment.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder—This is a possible response when deployment has occurred in a war zone, natural disaster site, or urban riot location; physical, mental, and emotional symptoms require professional assistance.

Secondary Traumatic Stress—Possibly experienced by family members upon return of Soldier; it refers to stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a suffering or traumatized person.

If you or one of your trainees is interested in learning more about these disorders, please talk with a qualified mental health and/or military professionals in your community.

True or False: The Myth of the “Perfect” Homecoming Reunion

- If you love one another, reunions are easy.
- Angry feelings should never accompany reunions.
- First few days following homecoming are often mix of relief, happiness, and anxiety.
- It’s perfectly natural for communication to be strained at first.
- Children may not feel automatically comfortable with the returning parent.
- It may take some time for the returning Service Member to adjust.
- If they really love each other, spouses/significant others will not change during absence.
- Re-established intimacy will flourish if given time to grow.
- Service Members never feel let down/lonely following deployment.
- There is no such thing as a perfect homecoming.

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-22: True or False: The Myth of the “Perfect” Homecoming Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: *Deployment and Reunion*, Military Family Forum Library, Bureau for At-Risk Youth, <http://www.Militaryfamily.com>

Materials Needed: Scratch paper for participants, answer key

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

- Do:**
- Activity Instruction: The Myth of the Perfect Reunion
 - Trainer option: Based on time available, you may do the activity with the large group or divide into small groups.
 - Ask participants to pull out a piece of scrap paper (or hand out paper).

Say: *There are many myths related to a deployed Service Member’s return home. This is a chance to test your knowledge of the truths and myths related to this event. Please take about five minutes to answer the questions on the screen, indicating true or false.*

- Do:**
- (After five minutes) Review the answers by having the participants share their answers. (Allow participants to share some of their stories if applicable.)
 - Address any additional questions from the group.



Homecoming and Reunion Activity

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-23: Homecoming and Reunion Activity

Content of this slide adapted from: N/A

Materials Needed: Marker or chalk, butcher block or blackboard

Trainer Tips: Note the resources listed at the end of Chapter 5 which support this activity. These articles describe the feelings that family members have reported during the Homecoming and Reunion stages. There may be individuals in the audience who have experienced these stages of deployment. Be sure to include their input, and have someone available to assist if individuals become emotional.

What to Do, What to Say:

- Do:**
- Ask for volunteers from the group to participate in this activity.
 - Divide them into three groups representing elementary age youth, middle school youth and teens.

Say: *Now that we have covered the emotional stages in the cycle of deployment and have a better understanding of what family members might be feeling, let's talk about what they might be feeling as they navigate the stages of Homecoming and Reunion with their Service Member.*

Do: • Ask each group to propose what they might be feeling about or doing in preparation for the Homecoming and Reunion with their Service Member. Write each group's response on a blackboard or butcher block.

Say: *What might elementary school children be feeling and doing?*

What might middle school youth be feeling and doing?

What might teens be feeling and doing?

The Homecoming: Challenges and Rewards

- Anticipated reunion is often as stressful as the anticipated deployment
- When date finally arrives, many family members are overwhelmed with rush of emotions—joy, as well as fear, anxiety, and anger
- Fears include permanent loss of a deep connection with loved one, or fear of change to a point that leaves nothing in common
- Families can reconnect on new, more exciting level if handled in a healthy way

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-24: The Homecoming: Challenges and Rewards

Content of this slide adapted from: *Deployment and Reunion*, Military Family Forum Library, the Bureau for At-Risk Youth, <http://www.Militaryfamily.com>

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Although homecoming and reunion is an exciting and joyful time for families, there are also many struggles in dealing with the stress of learning to live with one another again after an extended separation. Homecoming can be as stressful as deployment. A family goes through a whole range of emotions as the date approaches and arrives. Family members also fear that the deployed and themselves have both changed so much that there will be a loss of deep connection or they may have nothing in common anymore.*

If handled in a healthy manner it can be a time to reconnect on a new, more exciting level.

Helping Infants Adjust to Reunion

- Reactions
 - Cries, fusses, pulls away
 - Clings to parent who stayed behind
 - Change in sleep and eating habits
 - Does not recognize returning parent
- Techniques
 - Hold, hug as much as allowed
 - Interact, bathe, change, feed, and play with baby
 - Relax and be patient—they will warm up

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-25: Helping Infants Adjust to Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders, *Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together*, Volume 5. No. 3.

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Infants react to reunion, too. They may cry, fuss, and pull away from the returning parent or cling to the parent or caregiver who stayed behind. They may change sleeping and eating habits. Try to hold infant as much as allowed, interact with them in their daily routines, and be patient—they'll warm up.*

Helping Youth Ages 1–3 Adjust to Reunion

- Reactions
 - Shyness
 - Clinging
 - Doesn't recognize returning parent
 - Cries, has temper tantrums
 - Behavior regression
- Techniques
 - Don't force holding, hugging, or kissing
 - Give them space and time to warm up
 - Be gentle and fun
 - Meet them/sit at their level

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-26: Helping Youth Ages 1–3 Adjust to Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders, *Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together*, Volume 5. No. 3.

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Toddlers are emotional and mobile! They can react in many ways. They may be shy or clinging, and you may see behavior regression. They may not remember a parent that has been deployed for a long period of time.*

Some techniques to deal with these behaviors include:

- giving the toddler space and time to warm up
- be gentle and fun
- don't force holding, hugging, or kissing
- meet them on their level

Helping Youth Ages 3–5 Adjust to Reunion

- Reactions
 - Demonstrates anger
 - Acts out to get attention
 - Demanding
 - Feels guilty for making parent go away
 - Talks a lot to bring parent up to date
- Techniques
 - Listen
 - Accept their feelings
 - Play with them
 - Reinforce your love
 - Ask about interests
 - Assure them absence was not about them

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-27: Helping Youth Ages 3–5 Adjust to Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders, *Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together*, Volume 5. No. 3.

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Preschoolers may react by being angry, demanding, or acting out. They may talk a lot to bring the parent up to date, or they may feel guilty for making the parent go away.*

Techniques to deal with this include listening, accepting their feelings, and asking them about their interests. Reinforce your love and assure them your absence wasn't about them.

Helping Youth Ages 5–12 Adjust to Reunion

- Reactions
 - Fears of inadequacy
 - Dreads parent's return because of discipline resulting from acting out
 - Boasts about the military and the parent's service
- Techniques
 - Review pictures, school work, activities, scrap books
 - Praise what they have done
 - Try not to criticize
 - Affirm positive behaviors while away

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-28: Helping Youth Ages 5–12 Adjust to Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders, *Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together*, Volume 5. No. 3.

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *School-age youth may dread their parent's return if they were threatened with "Wait until your father gets home" during deployment. They also worry that they are inadequate. They generally take great pride in their parent's participation in the military.*

Parents can reacquaint themselves with their child by going over scrapbooks, activities, and pictures from the time they were gone. It is important to praise what they have done and try not to criticize.

Helping Youth Ages 13–18 Adjust to Reunion

- Reactions
 - Is excited—if positive relationship prior to deployment
 - Feels guilty for not living up to standards
 - Concerned about rules and responsibilities changing
 - Challenging, rebellious
- Techniques
 - Share what has happened to you during deployment
 - Listen with undivided attention
 - Don't be judgmental
 - Respect privacy and friends
 - Don't tease about fashion, music, etc.
 - Get involved in education

Ready, Set, Go!



Slide 5-29: Helping Youth Ages 13–18 Adjust to Reunion

Content of this slide adapted from: Hot Topics: Current Issues for U.S. Army Leaders, Reunion: Putting the Pieces Back Together, Volume 5. No. 3.

Materials Needed: N/A

Trainer Tips: N/A

What to Do, What to Say:

Do: • Review slide content with participants.

Say: *Teens can be moody. Some are excited that a deployed parent is home while others are concerned with the rules and responsibilities changing. It is important for the deployed parent to be respectful of the teen's privacy, friends, choice of music, and fashion. They should get involved with the teen by sharing their experience when deployed and listening to the teen's interests and issues.*