

# U.S. Army Deployment Support Handbook: Children and Youth



GETTING PREPARED, STAYING PREPARED



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## ***Children And The Deployment Cycle Handbook – Edition 1, 2007***

*The U.S. Army Deployment Support Handbook: Children and Youth* is written for professionals working with military parents, guardians, and caregivers of children and youth during deployment. It provides guidance for parents in helping their children and youth cope with the challenges of deployment. The focus is on (1) identifying the challenges children and youth may experience during stages of the deployment cycle, (2) understanding developmental needs when deployment challenges occur, and (3) providing strategies parents can use with their children and youth throughout deployment to prevent undue stress, enhance their ability to cope, and foster resilience. To accompany this handbook are additional training materials for professionals as well as handouts and bookmarks for parents. This handbook is part of the Operation READY series, in which a variety of training materials have been developed for different audiences that include Soldiers and Families, leadership, Family Readiness Groups (FRGs), and Family program staff.

### ***Acknowledgements***

This handbook and synthesis of literature and resources was developed for the U.S. Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command by Bonnie Graham, Doctoral Candidate in Human Development – Family Studies at Virginia Tech; Associate Professor and Program Head of Human Services and Early Childhood Development at New River Community College; and consultant under Texas A & M's USDA Grant No. 2004-48211-03128. The Handbook was edited by FMWRC staff. It was written and compiled based on a review of select literature on deployment, child development, parenting, trauma, and the impact of war, and a diverse range of military, professional, and civilian organization materials and web sites. Mrs. Graham acknowledges Ms. Deborah Mancini, consultant and author of other documents in the Operation READY series, for her assistance in providing ideas on topics and resources, her significant contributions to the *Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death* part of this handbook, and her review and comments on a draft of this handbook. Assistance was provided by Cornell University, who conducted an earlier literature review on children's responses to deployment.

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IMWR-FP

22 FEB 2008

**MEMORANDUM FOR INSTALLATION FAMILY READINESS TEAM**

**SUBJECT: Welcome Letter**

1. Thank you for being a member of the Installation Family Readiness Team. Every member's role within this team is crucial to supporting Families.
2. Families have been and will continue to be a cornerstone of support to our Soldiers and civilians. Leaders, such as you, who assist military Families by providing the support and assistance they require, allow Soldiers to focus fully on their missions. Being a part of the Installation Family Readiness Team at times can be a daunting task, but also may have many rewards and you can be proud of the assistance you provide. Your service to the Army is invaluable.
3. The Operation READY (Resources for Educating About Deployment and You) series is written to assist you in performing the duties of your role. In addition to the Operation READY series, I encourage you to take advantage of the resources available on [www.myarmylifetoo.com](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com). The online resources serve as an excellent desktop reference to get you acquainted with the full scope of your responsibilities.
4. I offer you my grateful appreciation for your dedication and support to Soldiers and Families.

  
JOHN A. MACDONALD  
Major General, USA  
Commanding

# U.S. Army: Children and the Deployment Cycle Handbook

## **Part I. Introduction**

1.1 Purpose and Organization of This Handbook	5
1.2 Objectives of This Handbook	5

## **Part II. The Deployment Cycle**

2.1 Train-up/Preparation and Mobilization	7
2.2 Deployment	10
2.3 Employment	10
2.4 Redeployment	12
2.5 Post Deployment and Reconstitution	13

## **Part III. Development of Children and Youth Within the Context of Deployment**

3.1 Supportive Family Relationships	17
3.2 Effective Communication	21
3.3 Critical Thinking	24

## **Part IV. Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Deployment**

4.1 Stress of Deployment	29
4.2 Coping and Resilience	30
4.3 Parents – Care of Self	34
4.4 Infants and Toddlers	36
4.5 Preschoolers	40
4.6 School Age Children	44
4.7 Teenagers	49

## **Part V. Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death**

5.1 Children's Response to Combat Deployment	55
5.2 Children's Response to Trauma and Death	59
5.3 Coping and Resilience Related to Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death	63

## **Part VI. Partnering With Child Care Programs, Schools, and Child and Youth Services**

67

## **Part VII. Pregnancy During Deployment**

71

## **Appendix: Resources**

Web Sites for Children and Youth	77
Web Sites for Parents	79
Books for Children and Youth	84
Books for Parents	85

## **Appendix: Bibliography**

87

## **Appendix: References**

89

### 1.1 Purpose and Organization of This Handbook

THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK is to provide professionals working with military parents, guardians, and caregivers with parenting information and resources to minimize familial stress, enhance resiliency, and ensure the well-being of children and youth during the deployment cycle. In everyday life, parenting can be rewarding and pleasurable. Yet, parents sometimes feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and uncertain about how to raise their children. All children are vulnerable to risks in their environment and for military children deployment is an additional challenge.

The *Children, Youth, and the Deployment Cycle Handbook* was developed to help parents specifically address the increased challenges for children and youth associated with deployment. While deployment is a routine part of military life, deployment for Soldiers has increased in frequency, length, and complexity. Thereby, increasing the challenges those parents and their children face. Each stage of the deployment cycle along with the child's stage of development brings about diverse challenges that require personal and Family resources and coping strategies to ensure the needs of children and youth are met. Deployment can cause disruptions to Family routines, changes in Family roles and responsibilities, create uncertainty and anxiety, and even jeopardize the Family's sense of safety and stability. Furthermore, results of deployment can be positive, creating an increased sense of purpose and priority in life, improved relationships, individual growth and maturation, and enhanced resiliency.

This Handbook includes six sections that focus on helping professionals assist parents in nurturing and guiding their children throughout the deployment cycle (Part I) by fostering resilience through the development of supportive Family relationships, effective communication, and critical thinking skills (Part II). Specific attention is given to stress, coping, and resilience related to parents care of self and the different stages of development including infants and toddlers, preschoolers, school age children, and teenagers (Part III). In addition, this handbook addresses combat deployment, trauma, and death (Part IV); partnering with child care programs, schools, and Child and Youth Services (Part V); and coping with pregnancy (Part VI).

### 1.2 Objectives of This Handbook

The *Children, Youth, and the Deployment Cycle Handbook* describes parenting practices that have been recognized as important to the well-being of children in the context of deployment. Effective parenting practices include understanding children's development and implementing strategies that nurture and guide children's development at different ages.<sup>(1)</sup> This handbook is designed to help military parents:

- Increase their understanding of children's development and the challenges within the context of deployment through parts of the handbook titled:
  - The Deployment Cycle.
  - Development of Children and Youth within the Context of Deployment.

- Provide strategies for parents to implement that nurture and guide children's development at different ages during deployment through parts of the handbook titled:
  - Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Deployment.
  - Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death.
  - Partnering with Childcare Programs, Schools, and Child and Youth Services.
  - Pregnancy During Deployment.

*The Children, Youth, and the Deployment Cycle Handbook:*

- Identifies children's developmental needs related to deployment and their age.
- Describes the impact of deployment on children.
- Explains parenting strategies that foster supportive Family relationships, effective communication, critical thinking, coping, and resilience in children and youth during deployment.
- Identifies resources and where to get help related to deployment.

### Footnotes

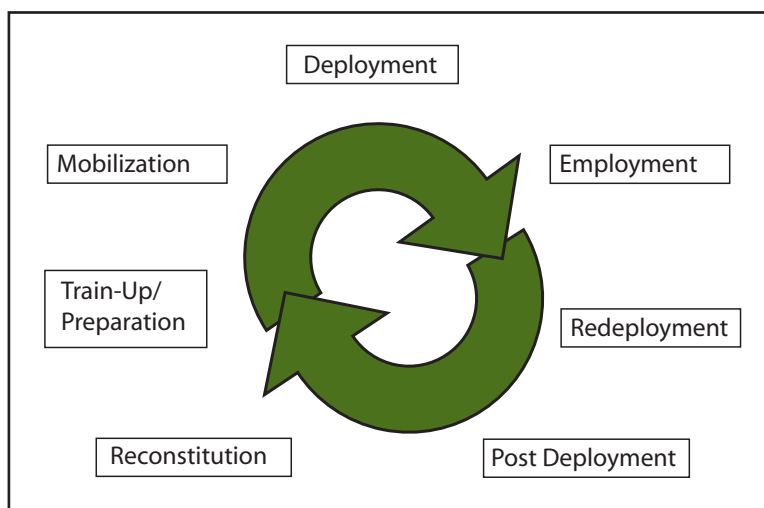
- (1) Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994, developed the National Extension Parent Education Model which compiles parenting practices recognized by parenting educators from across the United States as priority, or important, parenting practices.

## PART II: The Deployment Cycle

THE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE is divided into distinct stages associated with Soldier's deployment experiences. (2) The stages are train-up/preparation, mobilization, deployment, employment, redeployment, post deployment, and reconstitution. Each stage is described by an approximate time or duration, stressors Families face, and the emotional reactions likely to be experienced by the Soldier and Family.

The stress of deployment can be exacerbated when military personnel have extended deployments, have to be deployed multiple times, or when the deployment is especially dangerous. Conversely, deployments can have positive consequences for Soldiers and their Families. Growth, maturation, self-improvement, enhanced relationships, and resiliency can be some of the positive outcomes from deployment.(3) Being knowledgeable about the emotional cycles of deployment and basic human development, discussed later in the handbook, can help Families be pro-active in addressing emotional needs of children and ensure successful adjustment to deployment for the parent-Soldier, non-deployed parent, children, and youth.

Conversely, deployments can have positive consequences for Soldiers and their Families. It can be a time of individual and Family growth. Growth, maturation, self-improvement, enhanced relationships, and resiliency can be some of the positive outcomes from deployment. Being knowledgeable about the emotional cycles of deployment and basic human development, which is discussed later in the handbook, can help Soldiers and Families be pro-active in addressing emotional needs of children and can ensure successfully adjustment to deployment for the parent-Soldier, non-deployed parent, and children.



### 2.1 Train-Up/Preparation and Mobilization

The focus of the train-up/preparation and mobilization stages is on readiness activities to ensure the Soldier and Family is prepared for extended deployments. The mobilization stage begins when the Soldier is alerted for possible deployment. This preparation and mobilization time may last for a few weeks, months, or even a year, depending on the circumstances of the deployment. Family members may become anxious and preoccupied with anticipation as they prepare to face the loss of security and separation from their deploying Soldier.

During this stage the Soldier's duty to the military intensifies while the emotional distancing from Family begins. Soldiers are busy becoming energized by the upcoming mission and spending long hours in training, all of which are a necessary part of a safe and successful deployment. While the focus on Family may seem to decrease, it is during this period that the remaining parent and parent-Soldier need to reserve time to prepare each of the children for the departure and emotional distancing.

In reality, the high expectation of making this "the best of Family times" by resolving all emotional and business issues often creates more stress. Anxiety about Family relationships, dealing with disagreements, and helping children cope can be overwhelming. It is often easier to be angry than to be hurt by the upcoming loss. Results of unresolved emotional concerns can distract the Soldier from his mission and interfere with the non-deployed parent's ability to care for the children's needs. In spite of the tumultuous times, being alert to emotional needs and knowledgeable about children's development can help Families be pro-active in adjusting to deployment.

Understanding, critical thinking, relationships, resilience, and Family unity are fostered when both parents discuss deployment with their children. Open and honest communication enhances children's understanding and thinking, builds trust and strong relationships, and helps children and youth know it is safe to talk to their parents. However, information should be appropriate for children's age and level of understanding. Due to the uncertainty of deployment it is helpful to focus on what you do know and all the plans that have taken place to safely prepare the parent-Soldier and the Family for the unknown aspects of the Soldier's work.

Parents gain insight into what children and youth understand by listening to what they have to say. Ask them about their thoughts and feelings related to deployment. To help children and youth understand, explain in words they can understand that you are leaving for a while and their other parent (guardian or caregiver) will be there to care for them. It is also reassuring when parents let children know they are well prepared for their job. In addition, it is ok for parents and children to be sad about the separation, but will be happy to be together again when the parent-Soldier returns home.

To build trust with children and youth, try to say goodbye, even if you have to leave in the middle of the night. If possible, let them attend the deployment ceremony and the send off. Avoid "sneaking or slipping out" on children whether it is leaving them for the day in child care or the longer more difficult separation of deployment. Children quickly learn whether they can trust what parents tell them and honest communication appropriate for children's ability to understand fosters trust and thinking.



**KEY POINTS: Train-up/Preparation and Mobilization**

- Train-up and mobilization is a time of preparation for Soldiers and their Family.
- The Soldier's duty to the military intensifies while the emotional distancing from Family begins.
- Together, both parents need to prepare their children and youth for the parent-Soldier's departure.
- The expectation of making this "the best of Family times" by resolving all issues often creates more stress.
- Parents must take care of themselves to be able to care for their children.
- Being knowledgeable and pro-active in addressing the needs of children and youth can ensure successful adjustment to deployment .
- Secure relationships, effective communication, critical thinking, and thorough preparation are key to successful Family functioning during deployment.
- Open and honest communication appropriate for children's age and level of understanding, forms the foundation for trust, secure relationships, understanding, and critical thinking.
- Parents gain insight into what children and youth understand by listening to what they have to say and asking them about their thoughts and feelings related to deployment.
- Focus on what you do know and the plans taken place to safely prepare the parent-Soldier and Family for the unknown aspects of the Soldier's work.
- Parents that model effective communication, critical thinking, and coping skills help to build resilience in their children.

## 2.2 Deployment

THE DEPLOYMENT STAGE BEGINS when the Soldier deploys from the installation and extends until arrival into the designated theater. Soldiers can be distracted by the mission, and anxiety about the separation becomes real. Families are left to deal with the challenges of the parent-Soldier being gone and they experience a flood of emotions including sadness, fear, loss, and grief. Children and youth sometimes feel frustrated and even angry due to tasks left undone or the demand to perform for both parents in the absence of one.

The lack of control, array of feelings, and multiple stressors can cause a change in appetite and sleep, the inability to get along with others, and even the use of ineffective coping strategies such as the abuse of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. Yet, children, youth, and parents can grow strong as individuals and in their Family relationships when they practice effective coping skills and foster resilience. Strategies to foster resilience during deployment are included in Section IV of this Handbook and organized according to specific age groups.



### KEY POINTS: Deployment

- The deployment stage begins when the Soldier deploys from the installation and extends until arrival into the designated theater
- The anticipation and anxiety of the parent separation becomes real.
- Children, youth, and parents experience a flood of emotions including sadness, fear, frustration, anger, loss, and grief.
- Children, youth, and parents can grow strong as individuals and in their Family relationships when they practice effective coping skills and foster resilience.

## 2.3 Employment

During the employment stage, Soldiers perform their assigned mission in theater for a prescribed period of time. It extends until notification is received for redeployment. Children, youth, and parents adapt to the separation and adjust to their new routines, roles, and responsibilities over time. The Soldier and Family members gain increased understanding and feelings of confidence as they survive the challenges of deployment.

With increased means of communication today, staying in touch is an effective coping strategy for parents, children, and youth. Phone calls home, email, video connections, and any other form of communication with the Soldier can help regain stability and sustain relationships. While it is

important for Soldiers and Family members to keep informed, in the same manner, it is critical that rumors and unreasonably disturbing information be thoughtfully partitioned. The process of solving problems together takes special care and effective communication on the part of the Soldier and spouse to maintain trust; moreover, to foster a sense of security, stability, and resiliency in the Family.

Staying involved with supportive people and groups is also an effective means of coping. Support systems may include Family, friends, faith based and community groups, professionals, and the Family Readiness Group (FRG). The FRG, organized by the military Unit, serves as a support network for Families and it provides a channel for accurate military information.

The reaction of children and youth to the employment stage is unique to their age and the individual person. Changes in their behavior and moods are inevitable due to the stressors of deployment. If they experience serious difficulty adapting, parents should seek advice and help from professionals; such as, their Family doctor, school teachers, and counselors, and mental health counselors. Families are changed because of deployment, as well as with any challenge in life, but they do not have to be reduced by it; instead, they can grow stronger.



### KEY POINTS: Employment

- Soldiers perform their assigned mission in theater during the employment stage.
- Adjustment to new routines, roles, and responsibilities is unique to children, youth, and parents.
- Over time, Soldiers and Family members often have increased feelings of confidence.
- It is important for Soldiers and Family members to maintain strong relationships, communicate effectively, and solve problems together to maintain trust and foster a sense of security and stability, while unreasonably disturbing information should be thoughtfully set aside.
- Family, friends, faith based and community groups, professionals, and the Family Readiness Group (FRG) can be a source of support and means of coping.
- Children, teens, and parents that have difficulty adapting, should seek help from professionals; such as, their Family doctor, school teachers and counselors, and mental health counselors.

## 2.4 Redeployment

Redeployment includes reposture in-theatre, transfer of forces and material to support other operational requirements, or return of personnel, equipment, and material to the home station. Like other changes, this transition involves many emotions and requires careful communication, critical thinking, and preparation to be successful. The longer the previous deployment stages, usually the more extensive the changes that have taken place at home and with the Soldier.

New relationships, routines, and roles have been established and everyone has grown. For children and youth, development during the course of a year can change drastically, not only in their physical appearance but also socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Furthermore, changes in the Soldier may be extensive due to the impact of his or her deployment experiences. They are ready to complete the deployment mission, have fantasies about home, but at the same time wonder if they are still needed and how well the Family survived without them.

Along with excitement often comes anticipation as well as apprehension of the Soldier coming home, everyone is concerned about how the changes will be perceived. The conflicting and ambiguous feelings are coupled with feelings of having missed out. Similar to the mobilization stage, often expectations are high, the spouse tries to complete many tasks at home prior to the parent-Soldier returning and Family members try to prepare themselves for gaining back the parent that has been separated.



### KEY POINTS: Redeployment

- Redeployment, a time of transition and preparation prior to the Soldier's return home, includes reposture in-theatre, transfer of forces and material, or return to the home station.
- Redeployment requires careful communication, critical thinking, and preparation to be successful.
- During the course of a year, children and teens grow up physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually.
- Changes in Soldiers may be extensive due to deployment experiences.
- Expectations are high. The parent at home tries to complete many tasks prior to the parent-Soldier returning. Children prepare themselves for gaining back the parent that has been separated.
- Feelings range from excitement and anticipation to apprehension and anxiousness. The conflicting and ambiguous feelings are coupled with feelings of having missed out and how changes will be perceived by everyone.

## 2.5 Post Deployment and Reconstitution

Post deployment stage begins when the Soldier arrives at home station. It includes administrative actions, briefings, training, counseling, and medical evaluations to facilitate the successful reintegration of Soldiers into their Family and community. Reconstitution begins after completing post deployment recovery and administrative requirements, when Soldiers are actually reintegrated into their Family, community, and civilian job. The focus of command efforts is to help Soldiers and their Family successfully reunite and reintegrate. The length of this time varies from Family to Family. It can range from a honeymoon like experience to the awkwardness of renegotiating Family responsibilities as well as dealing with job related issues. While Families may be resilient, change and uncertainty can be challenging.

The immediate homecoming can be an extremely happy occasion. Celebrations are sometimes formal with the senior commander present to praise the work of the Soldiers and Family members present to embrace their hero. However, it can be very different when Soldiers have to make their own way home with little “hero like” welcoming due to changes in arrival dates or when members of a unit arrive back at different times.

After the homecoming, Family members often experience feelings that need to be addressed. The returning parent may want to regain his/her position of authority in the home. The parent that has remained at home and maintained the Family during deployment may find it difficult to negotiate his/her new found sense of independence and autonomy.

Children’s feelings during post deployment will depend on their age and development. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers usually need time to re-know the parent-Soldier and may act as if the Soldier is a stranger. School age children may need lots of attention and look to the parent-Soldier as a hero, almost with infatuation. Teenagers can be resentful, irritable, and moody, appear to not care, or feel mature about the absent parent that may seem to not understand just how grown up they are.

Discipline from the parent-Soldier can be especially difficult for children, having adjusted to discipline from the parent that remained at home. The returning parent may not agree with all that has happened during his/her absence. To avoid disrespectful actions and hurt feelings, it is usually best for the parent-Soldier to not make quick changes. Allowing time to work through critical thinking strategies and determining together how the situations should be handled usually fosters a sense of respect and unity. Allowing children and youth to be a part of the process facilitates a more amiable relationship and models for children critical thinking steps in effective negotiation and decision making. It strengthens Family relationships and avoids the risk of pushing away the other parent and children during a time when coming together are critical.

Emotional adjustments require coping strategies and thoughtful actions to successfully transition the Family back to a sense of normalcy. Intimacy may require time. Everyone will need effective communication, critical thinking skills, and support to deal with changes and to emotionally reconnect. Furthermore, post deployment adjustments can be exacerbated by the aftermath of disasters and combat such as physical disabilities, death, and multiple emotional traumas. Children, spouse, and Soldier may need individual and Family professional help from counselors and community support groups.

**KEY POINTS: Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

- Post deployment begins when the Soldier arrives at home station and includes administrative actions, briefings, training, counseling, and medical evaluations.
- Reconstitution begins when Soldiers are reintegrated into their Family, community, and civilian job.
- Renegotiating roles and responsibilities, the awkwardness of reuniting with spouse and children, and job related issues can be stressful.
- While Families are resilient, change and uncertainty can be frightening.
- Young children usually need time to re-know the parent-Soldier and may act as if he/she is a stranger.
- School age children may need lots of attention and appear infatuated.
- Teenagers may feel mature, moody, or resentful towards the absent parent that appears to not understand just how grown up they are.
- Parents should foster a sense of respect and unity by allowing time to critically think together with each other and with children.
- Effective communication, critical thinking skills, and support helps everyone deal with the changes and emotionally reconnect.
- Post deployment adjustments can include struggles related to the aftermath of combat.
- Children, youth, and parents may need individual or Family professional help from counselors and community support groups.

**Footnotes**

- (2) Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Plan is available at [www.armyg1.army.mil/dcs/default.asp](http://www.armyg1.army.mil/dcs/default.asp)  
Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2007; Memorandum on the Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Directive dated 26 March 2007 from Acting Secretary of the Army.
- (3) Newby & Vineburgh, 2004.

## Notes



## PART III: Development of Children and Youth Within the Context of Deployment

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND MILITARY LEADERS place high priority on supporting Soldiers and their Families with accurate and timely information about what to expect during deployment and resources available to help reduce stress. Parents must prepare to care for their children and youth during deployment by anticipating the challenges associated with the different stages of deployment coupled with an understanding of children's development. Understanding how children develop and what their basic needs are provides insight into why children behave the way they do during deployment. When parents understand the underlying needs causing behavior, they can determine ways to help children cope with the demands of stress. Maintaining supportive relationships, communicating effectively, and thinking critically, are key parenting factors that minimize familial stress, enhance coping, foster resilience and ensure the well-being of parents, children, and youth during deployment.

### 3.1 Supportive Family Relationships

Supportive and securely attached parent-child relationships enhance children's social, emotional, and mental development. Likewise, insecure parent-child relationships can hinder healthy development. For example, children have problems managing their emotions and psychologically adjusting when parents are not supportive and seldom express positive emotions, dismiss children's feelings as unimportant, and have difficulty controlling their own anger.<sup>(4)</sup> Therefore, during deployment, supportive parental connections with the non-deployed and deployed parent enhance children's ability to cope.

Children's development is often described in stages and each stage is associated with a period of exploration, struggle, and sometimes distress. When children positively master each stage, it paves the way for future development, ensures sound personality development, and provides preparation for the psychological challenges throughout life. Deployment is one such psychological challenge for military children. The outcomes of each psychosocial stage of development are thought to be on a continuum ranging from positive to negative. The stages (5) along with the outcomes are described below:

- **Infants** – The positive outcome is to develop a **sense of trust** while the negative outcome is to develop a sense of mistrust. Trust is established when parents are consistently available to support and respond promptly to children's needs including food, warmth, and physical contact.
- **Toddlers** – The positive outcome is to develop **autonomy and independence** while the negative outcome is to develop shame and doubt. Children develop autonomy when parents encourage independence and allow them to make choices. Discipline strategies should focus on teaching rather than shaming children or causing them to doubt their ability.
- **Preschoolers** – The positive outcome is to develop **initiative** by exploring and trying new things while the negative outcome is to develop guilt when parents expect children to have more self control than they are capable.

- **School Age Children** –The positive outcome is to develop **competence** in mastering new skills while the negative outcome is to develop a sense of inferiority and inability to do anything well. Negative experiences lead to feelings of incompetence, while experiences that are positive yet challenging foster feelings of competence and success.
- **Teenagers** – The positive outcome is to develop a **positive identity** while the negative outcome is to develop identity confusion. A positive identity is constructed when teens are able to define who they are, what they value, what group and Family they belong to, and what their place is in society.

Forming positive psychological outcomes during childhood (a sense of trust, independence, initiative, competence, and a positive identity) is a crucial step in becoming a productive, contented adult that can cope with challenges in life.(6) Lessons from deployment indicate that while deployment increases stress and poses challenges, it rarely provokes pathological levels of symptoms in already healthy children. Stable Families that have healthy functioning parents, children, and youth prior to deployment usually adjust well. (7)

Securely attached relationships foster the healthy development of social and emotional skills, a sense of belonging, self-confidence, and positive self-esteem. They also foster intellectual development, critical thinking, and the ability to solve problems. Safety and a sense of belonging are basic human needs, similar to food and water. A child's Family is the first and most important group they belong to. Children develop secure attachments as well as a sense of trust and security in their parents when parents' responses to their needs are prompt, consistent, sensitive, and nurturing. (8) Supportive and secure relationships ultimately make a difference in how children cope during deployment and across different ages as described below.

- During the younger years children develop a sense of trust and autonomy through secure attachments with parents. This attachment is evident when children freely play and explore, express thoughts and feelings in conversations, seek their attached parent when distressed, and respond to attached parent's interactions. While military children sense the uncertainty and stress of deployment, in securely attached relationships with parents and other adults, they can feel safe and have empathy, learn to communicate, and learn to reason and think logically.
- Preschool and school age children also benefit from supportive Family relationships, especially during deployment. When children feel secure they are more comfortable taking initiative and developing competence. Preschoolers often use magical thinking to understand their world and are thus more likely than older children to misunderstand the realities of deployment. Due to their early cognitive abilities they may draw inappropriate or fantasy-based conclusions about their parent's separation. Similarly, school age children strive to develop mastery and competence in their lives. In this desire to assume responsibility, they may inadvertently assume they are the cause of and feel responsible for parental separations and Family problems. Both preschoolers and school age children benefit from parents provision of accurate, reality-based, developmentally appropriate information that relieves them of misperceptions or a sense of responsibility about the deployment or other Family changes.

- Teenagers benefit from supportive parental relationships too. Secure relationships formed in the early years and maintained throughout adolescence and life nurtures well-being in development. Change in roles and responsibilities during deployment can influence changes in teenagers' sense of self or identity. Their sense of identity is not yet stable. This is sometimes referred to as the struggle between identity and identity confusion.<sup>(9)</sup> When coupled with the changes (negotiations) in role expectations within the Family during deployment, identity confusion can be exacerbated at a time when identity development is often in a state of flux. Thus while teenagers may take on additional responsibilities, care should be exercised to minimize them prematurely taking on the role of an adult during parental deployment. Teenagers can feel or perceive they should take on adult like responsibilities even if not specifically told they should. Often they feel like, "he made me the man of the house" or "I'm not a child anymore."<sup>(10)</sup> Parents' strong and positive identification with the military can support adolescents' development of identity and can minimize the confusion of who their Family is and what is important to them.

Being able to successfully develop secure relationships with significant people forms the foundation for healthy development. Over time, while attachment begins in the early years with a special type of bond or relationship with parents, it should expand to form a hierarchy of attachments or relationships with significant people in the child's life such as other Family members, friends, and teachers. Healthy adjustment to the loss of an attachment is to gradually connect to an available person while having to disconnect with the missing attachment.<sup>(11)</sup> The ability to connect, disconnect, and reconnect with parents and others and continue to function is important during the deployment process. Children and teenagers are still in the process of developing effective communication and social skills; therefore, being able to connect with the remaining parent or other supportive adults or reconnect upon the parent-Soldier's return requires parents to provide intentional means of support.<sup>(12)</sup> Supportive relationships don't automatically happen. Specific strategies for developing and maintaining supportive Family relationships during deployment are described according to different ages in Part IV of this handbook.



### KEY POINTS: Supportive Family Relationships

- When parents anticipate the challenges of deployment and understand children's developmental needs and the cause of behavior, they can determine ways to help children cope with the demands of deployment.
- Children and teenagers are more likely to become caring, independent people and have supportive parent-child relationships when parents are understanding and nurturing.
- Maintaining supportive Family relationships, communicating effectively, and thinking critically, are key parental factors that help children and youth minimize stress, ensure well-being, and foster resiliency during deployment.
- Intentional support from parents is needed to help children and teens develop securely attached relationships (with non-deployed and deployed parent) and more easily connect and reconnect with parents and other significant adults during the deployment process.
- Forming positive psychological outcomes during childhood (a sense of trust, independence, initiative, competence, and positive identity) are crucial steps in becoming a productive, content adult that can cope with challenges in life, such as deployment.
- Children develop secure attachments and a sense of trust and security with their parents when parents' responses to their needs are prompt, consistent, sensitive, nurturing, and firm.
- While military children and teenagers sense the uncertainty and stress of deployment, in securely attached relationships with parents and other adults, they can feel safe and have empathy, take initiative, learn to communicate, and learn to reason and think logically.
- Providing accurate and developmentally appropriate information supports trusting relationships.
- Encourage independence, initiative, competence, self-confidence, and positive self esteem.
- Minimize the expectation that teenagers prematurely take on the role of an adult during parental deployment, yet some additional responsibilities nurture independence and competence.
- Nurture a sense of safety, belonging to a Family, and a positive identification with the military to support teenagers' development of identity and minimize the confusion of who their Family is and what is important to them.

### 3.2 Effective Communication

Effective communication aids in the development of healthy Family relationships and children's ability to understand and think critically. Parents can support children's development of effective communication skills in the following ways:

- Model active listening to create an open environment in which children and youth feel comfortable talking. Listening involves being available when children are ready to talk, allowing them to talk without interrupting, giving them your undivided attention, offering affirmations, and restating what they think they are saying. Truly listening to other's perspective increases understanding and often causes change in thinking, at least a little. Listening begins during infancy when adults and babies take turns listening and cooing/ babbling with each other. However, even at this early age when it appears that infants can't talk, it is this very time that the foundation for engaging in reciprocal, back and forth, conversations begins. Adults should be careful to allow wait or listening time for infants to respond to and initiate cooing and babbling remarks. This sets the standard for effective listening and a give and take in communication.
- Engage in conversations with children and youth that provide logic and reason as well as a moral compass to help children and youth navigate difficult issues such as deployment. Parent-child discussions that are "give-and-take" in nature and include a higher-level of moral reasoning lead to competent moral development. (13)
- Let children and youth know their feelings are normal reactions to deployment. A mistaken belief is that discussing sensitive topics with children will prompt unwanted behavior. More accurately, when we avoid difficult topics children are left alone and with little experience to make difficult decisions. Often they feel more comfortable talking to friends who too have limited experience and misinformation. Affirmations provide validation for children's thinking or may correct misperceptions. Asking children and youth what they think and feel fosters thinking skills and analysis of information.
- Communicate in ways appropriate for children's age and level of understanding, even during infancy, and especially about what concerns children such as deployment issues. Provide honest information in a supportive and nurturing environment. It prompts children and teenagers to feel comfortable seeking out accurate information from parents that they can trust. When parents avoid exaggerating the truth, but instead provide accurate information, children quickly learn they can trust what they say. Avoid graphic descriptions that may be too scary or cause too much stress.
- Ask children and youth questions to find out what they understand, to determine more clearly what they have questions about, and to decide what they are ready to understand. For example ask, "What do you think about...?" In deployment circumstances that are uncertain, acknowledge that you are just not sure. For example, "Mom is suppose to come home on (date), but we must be prepared if she has to stay longer to help where she is needed."
- Incorporate and explain non verbal means of communication to children and youth. Young children, before they are able to communicate clearly with words, must rely on behavior to communicate. Behaviors, gestures, facial expressions, body posture, and tone of voice

can all be effective means of communicating. Children need help in picking up non verbal messages; so, parents play an important role in explaining what gestures mean and how children can “read” another’s non verbal messages. Teenagers are usually more respectful with non verbal messages, like not rolling their eyes, when parents have been consistent in identifying and discussing the meaning of gestures and body language throughout childhood and the school age years. Perceptive parents look to children’s behaviors and gestures as well as their use of words to understand their children and to alert them to feelings and symptoms of stress during deployment.

- Be available when children and youth want to talk. Being able to discuss sensitive topics with teenagers doesn’t just happen when they become thirteen. Modeling sincere conversations begins during the early years when parents take young children’s ideas and concerns seriously. Riding in the car between events or during mealtimes together are convenient talking times with school-age children and youth. Teenagers like to stay up late and that is usually when they are ready to talk and parents need to be available.

Communication is crucial to making it through all stages of deployment smoothly. At each stage of deployment communication and maintaining connectedness is important. During train-up/ preparation and mobilization many decisions have to be made and plans implemented. During deployment and employment, effective communication is crucial to staying connected even at a distance. During redeployment, it is critical to discuss expectations that each Family member has for reintegration. During post deployment and reconstitution, once the Soldier is home, Families will need to renegotiate new routines, reconnect, and redefine Family roles. Since the deployed parent has been gone, everyone and everything may have changed. When Families get back together, everyone needs to adjust to these changes. This will take time, patience, effort, and a sense of humor. Understand that it is okay for children to have negative thoughts about the parent’s return and be frustrated with yet more changes. They are just as anxious as the parents are. Specific strategies for nurturing effective communication are described according to different ages in Part IV of this handbook.



### KEY POINTS: Effective Communication

- Effective communication nurtures healthy Family relationships and children's ability to understand and think critically.
- Active listening creates an open environment in which children and teenagers feel comfortable talking.
- Active listening involves being available when children and teenagers are ready to talk, allowing them to talk without interrupting, giving them undivided attention, offering affirmations, and restating what you think children are saying.
- The foundation for engaging in give-and-take (listening and talking) conversations begins during infancy with back and forth conversations of listening and cooing/babbling.
- Conversations that discuss facts, logic, and reason (avoid lecturing) provide a moral compass to help children and teenagers navigate difficult issues such as deployment.
- Parent-child discussions that have a give-and-take nature and moral reasoning lead to competent moral development and critical thinking.
- Let children and teenagers know their feelings related to deployment are normal.
- Regular, honest communication appropriate for children's age and level of understanding about what concerns them should begin during the very early years of life. When parents avoid sensitive or difficult topics, children and teens are left alone and with little experience to make difficult decisions.
- Ask children and teenagers what they think to foster critical thinking and analysis of information.
- Ask children and teenagers questions to find out what they understand, to determine more clearly what they have questions about and to decide what they are ready to understand.
- Non-verbal communication and behavior of children and teenagers alerts parents to feelings and symptoms of stress during deployment.
- Explain the meanings in non-verbal gestures. Help children and teenagers "read" another's non verbal messages and be cautious of the non-verbal messages they send. Ex.: "When you roll your eyes it tells me you are upset. Let's talk and work this out together."
- Be available when children and teenagers want to talk. Riding in the car or having mealtime together are convenient times. Be alert that teenagers are often ready to talk late at night.



### 3.3 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze valid and reliable information, understand logic and reason, and synthesize and evaluate solutions to problems based on desired values and goals. Critical thinking involves interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2006). In general, critical thinking means reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do (Ennis, 2002). Nurturing relationships and appropriate stimulation of children and youth, from infancy throughout adolescence, enhances thinking and brain development by strengthening the synaptic connections in the brain which are crucial for social, emotional, and mental development. (14)

During deployment, children and youth often feel they have little control over the circumstances that are happening in their life. The uncertainty and stress can be overwhelming. Challenges and decisions that arise during deployment are often opportunities for parents to encourage their children and youth to think critically, make choices, and have appropriate and reasonable control over their own circumstances. When parents encourage children and youth to think critically and allow children reasonable control over choices in their life, children and youth develop a higher order of thinking, a sense of responsibility for behavior, and ownership for choices and consequences.

Children's capacity to handle stress is strengthened when parents are nurturing, use verbal guidance to help children understand and control their feelings, and provide suggestions and explanations for coping strategies. (15) These parenting traits support critical thinking and are characteristic of authoritative parenting. Parenting style impacts the development of critical thinking in children. The different parenting styles are described as authoritarian (strict), permissive (indulgent), and authoritative (democratic) parenting. (16) While most parents use a combination of the different behaviors depending on the situation, when authoritarian and permissive parenting strategies are used consistently it often results in less desirable outcomes for children. Yet, authoritative parenting strategies often result in more desirable outcomes such as critical thinking.

Authoritarian parents are very demanding and their word is not to be questioned. They use strict punishment and believe children should do as they are told with no discussion, often hindering critical thinking. Children raised by strict, authoritarian parents usually grow up to be obedient, shy, and feel guilty or depressed. They behave to avoid punishment and often are secretive or rebel as teenagers especially when authority figures are not present. The opposite extreme of a strict parenting style is permissive parenting. Permissive parents are lax in discipline and go along with whatever their children want. While they have low expectations, they are nurturing and accepting. Children that live in permissive environments often grow up to have little self-control and difficulty regulating their emotions and thinking critically. They tend to be unsatisfied and still dependent and irresponsible as adults.

The most effective parenting style includes authoritative behaviors. Authoritative parents set limits and enforce rules; however, they listen to requests and discuss feelings, choices, consequences, questions, and values. They explain facts and discuss logic and reason, without exaggerating the truth. Authoritative parenting is associated with children and youth that grow up to be critical thinkers, socially responsible, independent, articulate, and more content.



The benefits of an authoritative parenting style grow stronger as children get older. The children usually experience positive relationships, have high self-esteem, and are academically successful. Authoritative parents foster critical thinking through a democratic like style of parenting by:

- balancing parental warmth and acceptance with control and strictness;
- using parental power to enforce reasonable limits while allowing children freedom to be appropriately responsible for themselves;
- listening carefully to children's perspective;
- engaging in reciprocal discussions using logic and reasoning;
- teaching children to make decisions based on valid and reliable information and values; and
- allowing children to make choices and decisions when appropriate, yet setting firm limits when needed. (17)

Children and youth are more likely to understand experiences and live up to expectations if they understand the expectations and why. Consequently, they are internally driven by logic and reason, not reward and punishment. Children and youth that are motivated by external rewards and punishments usually do the right thing only to receive the reward or avoid the punishment, not because they know in their heart it is the right thing to do. Children also learn to be responsible for their behavior when they are allowed to make choices. When children make the decision, they own the decision and the consequence. Self discipline depends on children and youth thinking critically, making choices, and experiencing the consequences of their own decisions.

Parents are children's first and most important teacher. Children and youth need parents to help provide accurate information and a moral compass to navigate difficult issues such as deployment. It is important for parents to facilitate children's critical thinking, being careful to help children think through and analyze information, logic and reason, solutions, and the important values associated with the situation. Children and youth learn from their parents the values they hold mostly by the examples they model and not by words alone. Steps for parents to use to nurture critical thinking within the context of deployment include:

- Remain calm and nurturing. Focus on what is important for children and youth to learn from the deployment concern.
- Help children and youth identify the challenge, concern, or problem.
- Together, gather and analyze information to discern that it is reliable and valid.
- Ask children and youth what they think about the problem and use active listening throughout the discussion. Encourage the use of logic and reason.
- Discuss values, parent's and children's, related to the problem and the desired outcomes.
- Together, identify multiple choices or solutions and possible plans to address the deployment challenge. Ask questions like, "What is the right thing to do?" "What if everyone did this?" "What can we/you/I do to make this better?"
- With each solution, identify the consequences and likely results for everyone concerned if that solution is implemented.

- Decide what to do and believe. Help children and youth synthesize the information by using logic and reasoning to determine which solution best matches the most important values. Ask, "Which choice do you think is the best choice for everyone involved?"
- Implement the best solution.
- Help children and youth evaluate the results.
- Repeat the process if needed using the previous actions as helpful information learned.

Specific strategies for supporting critical thinking in children and youth during deployment are described according to different ages in Part IV of this handbook.



### KEY POINTS: Critical Thinking

- Critical thinking is the ability to analyze valid and reliable information, understand logic and reason, and synthesize solutions to problems based on desired values and goals.
- During deployment, children and teens often feel they have little control over what is happening in their life.
- Challenges during deployment are opportunities for parents to encourage children and teens to think critically.
- Children and teens understand limits and usually live up to expectations if they understand the logical reason for the limit and expectation.
- Nurturance and stimulation, from birth throughout the teen years, strengthens the synaptic connections in the brain which are crucial for social, emotional, and mental development.
- When parents facilitate children's critical thinking it provides an opportunity to identify important values associated with each decision.
- Encourage children and teens to think critically and allow freedom to make choices and decisions when appropriate, yet set firm limits when needed by modeling appropriate parental power. Over time they will develop a higher order of thinking, self-control, a healthy sense of power, and a sense of responsibility for behavior.
- Foster critical thinking through an authoritative or democratic like style of parenting by listening to children, engaging in discussions of logic and reason, setting firm limits, and helping children and teenagers make decisions based on facts and values.
- Balance parental warmth and acceptance with control and strictness.

**KEY POINTS: Critical Thinking, Cont.**

- Children and teens grow to be critical thinkers, self disciplined, independent, and confident when encouraged to think, make choices, and allowed to experience consequences of their decisions and behavior.
- Steps for parents to use with children and teenagers to nurture critical thinking:
  - Focus on learning, not punishing. Remain calm.
  - Help children identify the problem or concern.
  - Help collect, analyze, and determine reliable and valid information.
  - Use active listening, logic, and reason.
  - Discuss values.
  - Help children identify multiple choices/solutions and the consequences of each.
  - Help children decide what to do and believe - Select the solution that matches your values and goals using synthesis, logic, and reasoning.
  - Implement the solution or plan.
  - Evaluate results with children.
  - Repeat the process, when needed.

### Footnotes

- (4) Berk, 2006; Calkins & Johnson, 1998; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Gilliom et al., 2002; Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004
- (5) Adapted from Erikson, 1950, 1968
- (6) Erikson, 1950, 1968
- (7) Jensen et al., 1986; Watanabe & Jensen, 2000; Waldrep, Cozza, & Chun, 2004; Cozza, Chun, & Polo 2005
- (8) Bowlby, 1969
- (9) Erikson, 1968
- (10) Huebner et al., 2007
- (11) Boss, 2006
- (12) Huebner, et al., 2007
- (13) Walker et al., 1991
- (14) de Haan & Johnson, 2003; Huttenlocher, 1994; Stiles, 2001
- (15) Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997
- (16) Baumrind, 1991; Dekovic & Janssens, 1991; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn, et al., 1991; Steinberg, et al., 1989
- (17) Smith et al., 1994

## PART IV: Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Combat Deployment

### 4.1 Stress of Deployment

DEPLOYMENT IS CHALLENGING, yet it can provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships and foster resilience when military Families successfully respond to the stressors of deployment. (18) The stressors associated with deployment which children and youth appear to have the greatest difficulties with are:

- fears and worries about the parent-Soldier's safety, especially if exposed to combat;
- absence/separation from the parent-Soldier, especially during lengthy deployments;
- changes in Family routines, roles, and responsibilities;
- intense emotions in the Family, changes in relationships with the deployed and non-deployed parents;
- relocation, if the Family moves to a different geographical area or the child moves to live with a guardian/caregiver;
- media coverage of the mission, especially if a combat mission; and
- reintegration of the parent-Soldier into the Family.

Factors that can increase stress in military Families may include such risks as:

- being isolated and not having a close unit affiliation;
- having limited or no prior experience in the military;
- being pregnant or having young children;
- lower income; and
- experiencing additional stressors on top of deployment such as sick children, lack of sleep, or financial challenges. (19)

While there are many risk factors that impact the well-being of military children during deployment, some findings indicate that deployment rarely provokes pathological levels of symptoms in healthy children. (20) However, the longer problems go unaddressed the more complex they usually become, therefore, the need to address the challenges sooner rather than later. The increase in multiple, extended, and dangerous deployments can cause greater stress on parents and children. The effects can be more profound in deployment due to combat than non-combat deployment. Common feelings and behaviors of children and youth in reaction to deployment are specific to their age and level of development. A list of stress symptoms are included later in Part IV of the Handbook organized by specific age groups and information on combat deployment is included in Part V of the Handbook.

## 4.2 Coping and Resilience

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Coping strategies are learned skills that are deliberate and purposeful responses to help alleviate the negative impact of stressors. (21) Resilience is described as the ability to be flexible and thrive during times of undue stress or the ability to rebound from adversity healthy, strengthened, and more resourceful. (22) Children's reactions to the stress of deployment, their coping skills, and the level of their resilience are affected by such factors as their age, stage of development, temperament, life experiences, prior challenges, as well as support systems available to them.

Due to the uniqueness of each deployment, child, and Family, parental support to children dealing with the stress of deployment requires critical thinking and intentional coping strategies. Consequently, seldom is there one right answer or way to deal with and overcome challenges. The focus of how parents can help children and youth cope and develop resilience during deployment should be on thinking collaboratively and critically within the context of how children develop, what are the child's needs, and what strategies specifically address the need or cause.

Maintaining a state of preparedness is a proactive strategy and is crucial to managing the stress of deployment and ensuring resiliency. (23) Army Community Service (ACS) offers a comprehensive array of programs and services dedicated to maintaining the readiness of Soldiers, Families, and communities by fostering self-reliance, resiliency, and stability. ACS is the Commander's principal Family readiness agency, providing comprehensive, coordinated and responsive services that support readiness of Soldiers, civilian employees and their Families during war and peace. Mission areas of ACS programs include *Money Matters*, *Home and Family Life*, *Making a Move*, *Work and Careers*, *Learning for Life*, *Army Basics*, *Managing Deployment and Separations*, and *Getting Involved in Your Community*.

Army Child and Youth Services programs exist to support military readiness by reducing the conflict between A Soldier's mission requirements and his or her parental responsibilities. Ensuring quality child care programs that are both affordable and available to Army Families is a high priority. Indeed, it is the objective of Army Child and Youth Services to sustain its acclaim as a "model for the Nation" for America's child care and to extend this same noteworthiness to youth programs in accordance with statutory requirements, Department of Defense (DoD) policy, and Army baseline standards. Child and Youth programs include *Child Development*, *Family Child Care Homes*, *School-Age Services*, *Middle School/Teen Programs*, *Sports and Fitness Programs*, *Youth Education Support Services* and *Outreach Programs*. Additional program information can be seen at the official ACS website, [www.myarmylifetoo.com](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com).

The Department of Defense and military leaders provide guidance in helping Soldiers prepare an Emergency Care Plan and a Family Care Plan. An Emergency Care Plan is not required by regulations, but is highly encouraged. It outlines how the Family will be cared for if the parent or caregiver has an extended emergency such as being hospitalized or having an extended illness. It identifies who will be the caregiver during the emergency, information about the children that the caregiver will need to know, such as where the children go to school, doctor's information, and contact information for the Rear Detachment Commander and the Family Readiness Group (RDC/FRG). Schools must be aware of the assigned emergency caregiver to be allowed to pick up the children. The plan is also given to the RDC/FRG Leader.

A thoroughly prepared Family Care Plan is required for dual military and single Soldier Families. It helps prepare Soldiers and their Families for challenges and disasters that might occur during deployment. Completing the plan, described below, provides safety and a much needed means of coping for Families.

- Complete a Family Care Plan – Obtain the Family Care Plan and Checklist (DA Forms 5303-R, 5304-R and 5305-R). The Soldier and commanding officer (or designated representative) revise and initial every item of the Family Care Plan in accordance with AR 600-20( [www.army.mil/usapa/eforms](http://www.army.mil/usapa/eforms)). It is especially critical for single parents and dual military parents that a Family Care Plan (DA Form 5305-R) is in place prior to deployment. It is the parent-Soldier's responsibility to plan for the care of his/her children.
- Assign a guardian for the Family as Special Power of Attorney which is different from a General POA. The guardian, as special power of attorney, has the authority to assume the role of guardian of dependents in the parent-Soldier's absence. This person will act in the absence of the parent-Soldier, providing care, discipline, and education for the Soldier's minor children. The guardian, as Special POA, has the power to authorize medical care, including emergency surgery. The guardian must fully understand and agree in writing (DA Form 5840-R) to fulfill his or her responsibilities. The form must be notarized.
- Sign up for group life insurance and update all beneficiary information.
- Inform the spouse or caretaker about financial matters.
- Arrange for the guardian to have access to necessary funds.
- Arrange for housing, food, transportation, and emergency needs. The parent-Soldier is responsible to arrange for necessary travel and escort to transfer Family members and pets to their guardian.
- Talk with children's teachers and support staff at school about the children's living arrangements and how to be in contact with their caretaker/guardian.
- Enroll the parent-Soldier's Family in DEERS and check to make sure all ID cards are current. IDs can be obtained at the local National Guard Armory or Army Reserve Center, if the installation is too far away. To enroll in DEERS, Soldiers will need the following:
  - for your spouse – your marriage certificate,
  - for your natural child – the child's birth certificate,
  - for your adopted child – the child's birth certificate and adoption decree,
  - for your stepchild – the stepchild's birth certificate and your marriage certificate, and
  - for your parent – a dependency determination (DFASF Form 1868).
- Communicate your Family Care Plan to your Family and the guardian.

It is important for Soldiers to prepare a will in addition to the Family Care Plan and Emergency Care Plan. The original copy of a will needs to be signed and stored in a place safe from fire, flood, and other damage. Safety deposit boxes at a bank, lawyer's office, or a county probate court can store a will. It is important to tell the lawyer, spouse, caregiver, or power of attorney where the will is located.

To save money, it helps to organize the following information before going to see a lawyer:

- list of your assets
- list of beneficiaries (people that will receive which assets); be specific when listing items to give to certain people;
- name of the executor of the Will (the person or bank who will oversee the collecting, bill paying, and closing of the estate);
- name of a primary and alternate guardian for the children; and
- how to distribute personal money, using percentages instead of dollar amounts (50 percent to my wife, 10 percent to my brother, and 40 percent to be divided among my children).

The Exceptional Family Member Program Respite Care (EFMP) provides temporary rest periods for Family members for regular care of persons with disabilities. Care may be provided in the EFMP respite care user's home, EFMP respite care worker's home, or other settings such as special needs camps and enrichment programs. Eligibility for EFMP respite care is based on EFMP enrollment, exceptional Family member's medical or educational condition, and deployment needs. Qualifying Families are eligible to receive up to 40 hours of EFMP respite care monthly for each certified exceptional Family member. ACS Directors can determine if additional care is needed on a case-by-case basis.

The Department of Defense and military leaders place high priority on supporting Soldiers and their Families throughout deployment. They work to provide Families accurate and timely information about what to expect and resources available to help reduce the stress. Family Readiness Groups (FRG), numerous DOD affiliated web sites, and civilian resources are available to help Families during deployment. Prominent military resources consist of *Military One Source*, *Military Child in Transition and Deployment*, *MyArmyLifeToo*, *Army Community Service* and *Army Child & Youth Services*. Helpful government and civilian sources of support include *Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network*, *National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, *American Psychological Association*, *Military Child Education Coalition*, *National 4-H Council*, *National Military Family Association*, *NYU Child Study Center*, and *Zero to Three*. A more extensive list of military and civilian resources is included in the Resources section of this Handbook.

Challenging times, such as deployment, are opportunities to strengthen resiliency. Children and youth need parents to be proactive and reactive; proactive to prevent and minimize undue stress and reactive to respond to and help meet their needs when challenged. Supportive relationships, effective communication, and critical thinking provide the foundation that strengthens resilience in children and youth during challenging circumstances such as deployment. A list of strategies, specific to age, to help children cope with the stress of deployment and build resilience is included later in this section of the Handbook under each age group. More general parental strategies to help children and youth cope and ensure resilience during all stages of deployment and across all ages are included in the box below titled, *What Can Parents Do: Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Children and Teenagers Before, During, and After Deployment*.



### **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

#### **Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Children and Teenagers Before, During, and After Deployment**

- Maintain a state of preparedness, be proactive to minimize stress.
- Take care of yourself.
- Prepare an Emergency Care Plan, Family Care Plan, and will.
- Model effective coping strategies.
- Seek support from Family, friends, and the community.
- Maintain connections with other military Families and unit support groups (parent-Soldier's Unit, Family Readiness Group) to access accurate information about deployment and receive help.
- Foster securely attached relationships among children, teens, and both parents.
- Educate yourself on children's developmental needs and what is typical for each age.
- Avoid over scheduling, spend extra time with your children.
- Maintain regular routines.
- Model and encourage safe ways to express feelings.
- Encourage open, honest communication appropriate for child's level of understanding.
- Critically think and make decisions together, yet set firm limits.
- Listen to children's ideas and needs. Make decisions that support Family values.
- Monitor what children and teens see/hear (tv, newspapers) related to war/violence.
- Help children and teens feel connected with the deployed parent through cards, letters, email, photographs, videos, and care packages.
- Maintain memories of Family and friends. Create a photo album or scrapbook with your children and teens.
- Plan simple activities to nurture Family relationships – picnics, daily Family meals.
- Keep the parent-Soldier informed of Family and children needs and changes; yet, avoid controversial issues that will distract the Soldier.
- Keep in touch with child care providers and teachers. Initiate opportunities to share appropriate deployment experiences with children's classmates at school.
- Be an advocate for Soldiers and the military mission through activities to mobilize your neighborhood and community.
- Establish a clear identity as a supportive military Family.
- Seek support from professionals sooner rather than later – health and mental health professionals, teachers, faith groups, and community organizations and agencies.

### 4.3 Parents – Care of Self

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Children, even very young infants, are perceptive to parent's feelings and behavior. (24) It is essential that parents maintain a healthy lifestyle and nurture their own body, mind, and spirit. Healthy living reduces stress and generates happiness for the entire Family, all the while providing a positive role model for children and youth. When teenagers see their parents not functioning well, it causes them to worry and often try to take on parenting roles. (25) Likewise, when they see parents successfully coping and functioning well, they function better. The effects of deployment on children and youth are determined in part by parent's reactions and ability to cope. (26)

Following are strategies that parents can use to take care of themselves.

- **Take care of physical needs.** Ensure proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise. These are natural coping strategies for combating the demands that stress places on the body. It improves the way parents' look and feel, and feeling good about self reduces stress and provides a model for Family fitness.
- **Communicate effectively and think critically** to minimize stress, enhance coping, foster resilience, and ensure personal well-being of self and the Family.
- **Maintain supportive relationships.** Get involved by extending a support network inside and outside of the military. Utilize Child and Youth Services programs to support parents and children during deployment. Staying connected with the unit and joining a Family Readiness Group (FRG) will put parents in contact with others who are in similar circumstances. The goal of the FRG is to help develop independent and resilient Family members with open communication and support. Families are better able to cope and function during times of separation when they are surrounded by others in similar circumstances. Parents may find comfort in sustaining or developing a spiritual connection or volunteering with a community or military organization. Channel energy into doing something that helps others and the Soldiers. Volunteer with such groups as schools, the Red Cross, VFW, or American Legion. Plan a night out without children. Maintaining relationships and social support systems strengthens resilience. Utilize Family support services that are available.
- **Practice healthy stress reducing methods.** Examine work habits and daily schedules. Balance demands and do things with children often. Laugh and have fun together as a Family. Go on inexpensive outings like picnics or hikes. Choose supportive friends. Avoid negativity and constant drama. Live within personal means and save money. Don't abuse drugs or alcohol. Coping with stress is sometimes equated with taking tranquilizers, drinking, smoking, or abusing other drugs. These are unhealthy methods of coping with stress and typically just cause more problems.
- **Search for ways to grow.** For the non-deployed parent, deployment is an opportunity for personal growth. Learn to deal with stressful situations and become more confident and independent during this time. Set personal goals and pursue a self-development plan. Whether it be a new health regimen, new hobby, or getting involved with activities such as volunteer work or going back to school, parents will feel better when taking these steps.

- **Engage in relaxation and stress-relieving activities.** Create an electronic Family album with captions that reflect memories. Keep a journal or diary, a simple way to ease worry and to identify hopes and fears. Log ideas as they arise that need to be discussed in letters or phone calls with the deployed Soldier. Draw pictures from images, or make a collage from photos and letters the parent-Soldier sends home. Note the date, time, place, and any details regarding personal moods and emotions. Keep writing; don't erase. If heading in a direction that is best to avoid, start a new paragraph. These accidental forays may be telltale signs for issues that need to be addressed. Parents should use techniques that best suit the way in which they express themselves.
- **Seek professional help when needed.** A list of resources, such as Military One Source, is provided at the end of this Handbook. In addition, local health and mental health professionals are helpful when needed.

### WHAT CAN PARENTS DO? Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Parents – Care of Self

- Take care of yourself.
- Model proper health and fitness for your Family.
- Ensure proper nutrition, sleep, and exercise.
- Communicate effectively and think through issues critically.
- Extend your support network inside the military. Maintain unit connections, utilize Child and Youth Services, and join a Family Readiness Group.
- Maintain supportive relationships – develop Family, friend, community, and spiritual connections.
- Balance work and Family.
- Schedule appointments and events to minimize being rushed.
- Have fun, play, and enjoy things with your children often – Family picnics or hikes.
- Choose quality friends, schedule occasional time with friends away from the children.
- Live within your means and save money.
- Don't abuse tobacco, drugs, or alcohol.
- Be your own person, pursue a new health regimen, get involved in volunteer work, go back to school, or take up a new hobby.
- Engage in relaxation activities. Create a Family photo album or keep a journal or diary.
- Seek professional help when needed.

#### 4.4 Infants and Toddlers (Birth to Three Years Old)

Infants are children from birth to one-year-old and toddlers are up to three-years-old. (27) In difficult times such as deployment, infants and toddlers may display the following feelings and behaviors in reaction to the stress of deployment.

- Cry or fuss more than usual.
- Display more frequent aggressive behavior, frustration, or temper.
- Revert to previous behaviors they had out grown; such as, thumb sucking, baby talk, and toileting accidents.
- Have changes in their sleeping and eating habits.
- Need to feel in control and be more difficult to comfort.
- Pretend play scary events they are trying to make sense out of.
- Be shy, withdrawn, and cling to the remaining parent or caregiver and fear separation from them.
- Not recognize or pull away from the parent-Soldier when they return.
- Be frightened by a new adult voice.
- Show signs of jealousy of their parents spending time together.

Parenting strategies that help children cope and foster resilience during deployment are based on supportive relationships, effective communication and critical thinking. Key developmental needs related to deployment during the infant and toddler years are explained below along with strategies to support children's development and foster resilience.

- Brain research indicates that nurturing and supportive relationships are crucial for emotional, social, and mental development. During the infant and toddler stages of emotional development, children either form **trusting or mistrusting relationships** with their parents and caretakers. Parents that are sensitive, loving, consistent, and responsive to children's discomforts help them feel secure and ensure the development of trusting rather than mistrusting relationships.
- Infants and toddlers **feel and sense more emotions** than they can explain and understand. They absorb the experiences around them and are impacted by events such as deployment and the way parents handle them. Their behaviors during difficult times, sometimes interpreted as misbehavior, are evidence of their frustration and feelings and thus should not be ignored. It is more helpful for children if adults identify and address the child's need that is causing the behavior rather than punishing the misbehavior. It is important for parents and caregivers to provide sensitive responses to help children cope during challenging times. It helps to have an approach of teaching and learning rather than punishing.

- Young children **learn from their experiences**, especially their Family. They are perceptive of moods and emotions. They take cues from their parent and caregiver. If the parent is coping well, then children will tend to do well. At the same time, if the parent is depressed, upset, or irritable then the young child senses this and will also have more difficulty being content. They may not be able to sleep or eat and even may lose weight at a time when steady weight gain is critical. Regular exams by pediatricians are important to ensure appropriate growth and development. It is paramount that parents take good care of themselves to be available to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. Often professional counseling and community services can provide resources and support related to parenting.
- The formation of **secure attachments** with significant adults is critical for sound development during the early years and forms a secure foundation that impacts future development across the life span. All areas of development are interrelated, thus when children thrive socially (securely attached relationships) and emotionally (feelings) they usually thrive physically (appropriate height and weight gain) and cognitively (brain development). Thus, it is helpful when both parents are a part of the early stages of development. This takes extra care when a parent is absent or deployed. Some ways to create and maintain needed connections from a distance include:
  - communicating through letters, email, care packages, and alternating journal entries;
  - listening and watching video and audio tapes of the deployed parent reading stories to the infant and toddler or playing together;
  - sending photos and ink prints of children's hands and feet to the deployed parent; and
  - making a child size photo album of the Family and deployed parent for the toddler to carry.

Becoming reunited as a Family during the post deployment and reconstitution stages can be just as challenging as deployment. The returning parent can help their infant or toddler ease into the relationship by watching for the child's cues of when they feel comfortable. For example, initially spend time hugging as a Family including the spouse and child. The "group hug" will help the child adjust with ease. Get down to the child's level, or stand as close as possible to the child, and let the child look at the returning parent, smell the parent-Soldier, or reach out to touch. The returning parent should become active in care giving duties. Learn to be comfortable changing diapers, bathing, playing, feeding, burping, and putting the baby or toddler to bed. He or she should take the baby/toddler for medical visits, take care of them when sick, and buy clothes, supplies and toys.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS DO?

### Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Infants and Toddlers

#### Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment

- Take care of yourself so you are able to care for your infant/toddler.
- Develop supportive relationships based on trust.
  - Be strong, patient, and calm.
  - Hold and cuddle with each other frequently. However, encourage children to sleep in their own bed and not with the non-deployed parent.
  - Provide increased attention and reassurance.
  - Do comforting activities that bring you closer together.
  - Delight in everyday activities like meals, story time, bath time, and uninterrupted conversations.
  - Let children know their feelings (sad, angry, frustrated, scared) are ok. Say, "It's ok to cry when you feel sad."
  - Acknowledge your feelings too, but help children feel safe. Say, "I don't know the answer to that, but I do know we are safe here at home and your Mom is well trained to do her job."
  - Assure children that they are not the cause of your feelings. Say, "I am frustrated today, but I'm tired, it's not because of you."
  - Maintain normal routines.
  - Be sensitive, consistent, and responsive.
  - Help children regain control when clingy or aggressive. Say, "I can tell you are upset, let's sit down and rock for a while to calm down."
- Create a sense of connectedness between the deployed parent and infant/toddler.
  - Involve children in corresponding frequently through letters, email, and care packages.
  - Send pictures and videos back and forth, use real time connections.
  - Listen and watch audio and video tapes of the deployed parent reading stories to their infant and toddler or playing together, prepared prior to deployment.
  - Send ink prints of baby's hand and feet, information from baby check ups, and milestone dates.
  - Make a photo t-shirt of the deployed parent for the child to wear – photo blankets.
  - Make a child size Family photo album for toddlers to carry, especially pictures of the deployed parent.
  - Keep the parent-Soldier informed of children's progress and needs.

### **Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment, cont.**

- Nurture effective communication and the early stages of thinking.
  - Delight in conversations that are interesting to children.
  - Model give and take conversations even with infants by taking turns listening and cooing/babbling with each other.
  - Model appropriate ways for expressing feelings. Say, “Daddy is gone for a while and I can tell you miss him a lot.”
  - Allow children to make choices when possible.
  - Be honest. Answer questions with simple, concrete, and confident replies, even when they ask numerous times.
  - Discuss similar topics frequently to support learning through repetition.
  - Help develop thinking skills and understanding by showing them pictures. “This is a picture of where Dad sleeps. Dad eats things like \_\_\_\_.”
  - Rely on personal values to answer tough questions.
  - Avoid graphic details that may cause fear.
  - Turn off the TV and radio so they can’t see and hear about war and violence.
  - Provide safe ways for children to express feelings through art, pretend play, story telling, and conversations.
  - Provide toddlers with a calendar or visual way to count down the days until their parent returns, allow flexibility in the return date for an extended deployment.
- Discuss deployment and children’s behavior and feelings with childcare providers and caretakers.
- Seek support from relatives, friends, and community (health and mental health professionals, childcare providers, and community organizations).

### **Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

Allow sufficient time for infants and toddlers to feel comfortable with and trust the returning parent.

- Parents should prepare themselves for this and avoid feeling rejected.
- Take it slow, don’t force affection.
- Model caring interactions between the parents.
- Have whole Family hugs at first.
- Get on the child’s eye level, wait for children to reach out to you when they are ready.
- Look for ways to interact that are pleasing, take clues from the child.
- Plan quality time with each child. Help in caregiving (bathing, feeding, playing, story time).

## 4.5 Preschoolers (Three to Six Years Old)

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Preschoolers range from approximately three-years-old to six-years-old. (28) They may exhibit similar behaviors during deployment that they display when experiencing everyday separation from a parent. Extensive separation in situations such as deployment can cause preschoolers to feel insecure and in need of additional positive, reassuring, and comforting attention. It is most helpful when provided prior to children acting out. During the deployment stages, preschoolers may experience the following feelings and behaviors.

- Sad or frustrated.
- Irritable, confused, and guilty – maybe thinking they caused the parent to leave.
- Become clingy to ensure that the parent doesn't leave again – separation anxiety.
- Display aggressive, demanding, and angry outbursts.
- Poke or hit the parent out of anger or to test the realness of their presence.
- Engage in pretend play trying to make sense out of the situation.
- Regress to behaviors they had out grown -toileting accidents, eating with fingers, baby talk, or sucking their thumb.
- Be afraid at night or have bad dreams.
- Ignore the returning parent or try to make him/her feel guilty for having left.
- Feel utterly content or elated, having the security of the Family unit being together again.
- Try to impress the returning parent with new skills and good behavior.

Parenting strategies that encourage supportive relationships, effective communication, and critical thinking help children cope and foster resiliency. Prominent developmental needs during the preschool years are explained below along with strategies to support children's development and foster resilience during deployment.

- Preschoolers understand **concrete ideas** that they can see and touch. They have difficulty understanding abstract ideas; yet, they feel and understand more emotions and concepts than they can verbally explain. They learn by exploring and actively doing; thus, to understand they need to see, touch, and do in addition to hearing.
- **To understand and make sense out of** the world around them, preschoolers often participate in imaginative or pretend play with other children and adults. While the effects of superheroes on children is controversial, viewing real scenes of violence and war, as well as, hearing graphic descriptions can be too dramatic for young children causing great fear and stress. Explanations of deployment should be simple, concrete, and void of graphic violence. Allowing children to pretend play provides opportunities for parents to hear what children think and feel through their play. When parents listen and participate in children's play they can explain and clarify misunderstandings. Parents gain insight into their own behaviors based on what they glean from children's play and even what children mimic from their parents.



- Children need help handling feelings; such as anger, sadness, and frustration. They need to **feel safe and secure** when struggling with loss and separation of a parent. Frequent hugs, holding hands, uninterrupted conversations, and quality time together provides significant reassurance. Security and comfort can be provided for preschool children by maintaining normal and routine experiences; such as sticking to their daily schedule including meal, bath, and bed times. Changes in where children sleep, how meals are provided, and nighttime routines should be avoided. Answer their questions with confidence, even if it is confidence in the uncertainty of deployment, but reassure them that their safety is certain and they are well taken care of. Remind them that the parent-Soldier is well trained and has lots of help to complete his job. Remember, misbehavior is often an indicator of a developmental need. It is best addressed by helping children learn appropriate ways to behave, rather than punishing misbehavior. Listen to children, yet set firm limits. Help children think critically through problems.
- Preschoolers **are eager to learn**. They learn through play and interacting with adults and other children. It helps to clarify what children think and are ready to understand by asking questions before explaining ideas or even answering their questions. Though they may ask the same questions repeatedly, answer them with honest, yet simple, concrete, and confident answers. Some examples of conversations that enhance thinking and reasoning in young children are:
  - “What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?”
  - “How do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?”
  - “Does that make sense to you? Tell me what you think.”
  - “What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean to you?”
  - “This is where Mommy used to sit at the dinner table; she is eating with other Soldiers and will be back to eat with us soon.”
  - Show the child the closet where Dad’s clothes hang and say, “Would you like to wash a few of Daddy’s favorite shirts so they will smell fresh and clean for him?”
  - Explain to children the new routines involving the returning parent. Say, “This is where Daddy will sleep now that he is home and he will go to work during the day.”
  - The returned parent-Soldier should reassure children when they leave for the day by saying, “I have to go to work now, but I will see you at dinner time.”

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS DO? Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Preschoolers

### Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment

- Take care of yourself so you have the energy to care for active preschoolers.
- Maintain a trusting, supportive relationship.
  - Remain calm, consistent, and reassuring.
  - Keep routine schedules that children can count on. Encourage child to sleep in their own bed and not with the non deployed parent.
  - Hug and hold hands with each other frequently.
  - Provide creative activities for children to express their feelings such as art, building toys, story telling, and puppets. Children transfer their feelings to the puppets or story characters.
  - Enjoy quality time together – reading books, drawing, going for a walk, completing chores, uninterrupted conversations, or preparing meals and eating together.
  - Establish new rituals together.
  - Create a memory book to share together and with the deployed parent.
  - Find ways to ensure preschoolers feel safe, secure, and in control – maintain routines – meals, bedtime, child care
  - Set firm, consistent limits that children can count on. Say, “You may hit the pillow, but you may not hit me. We do not hit people, it hurts.”
  - Promote independence and initiative – encourage children to explore and try new things.
  - Provide positive attention and reassurance – avoid children feeling guilt and shame when they make mistakes – teach new behavior.
- Involve preschoolers in activities to stay connected with the deployed parent.
  - Have frequent conversations and talk positively about the deployed parent.
  - Help preschoolers write letters and emails, draw pictures, use real time connections, send photos, videos, and care packages back and forth.
  - Frequently listen and watch video and audio tapes that were recorded by the parent-Soldier prior to deployment.
  - Help preschooler organize and share information about the deployed parent with child care providers and friends – child’s show and share or parent share with the class about the deployed parent’s service.
  - Allow children to hold onto a favorite item that reminds them of their parent – similar to a security blanket or stuffed animal.
  - Make a photo t-shirt of the deployed parent for the child to wear – photo blankets.
- Model effective communication.
  - Model appropriate ways of expressing feelings.
  - Communicate in simple and concrete terms. When preschoolers ask the same questions many times, answer calmly and with confidence.
  - Be honest, but ensure conversations are reality-based and appropriate for their age and level of understanding. Continue to avoid graphic details that may cause unnecessary fear and anxiety.

**Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment, Cont.**

- Discuss similar topics frequently to support learning through repetition and application to different contexts.
- Ask questions to clarify what children are ready to understand, before explaining ideas or even answering their questions. Say, “What do you think about \_\_\_\_? How do you feel about \_\_\_\_?”
- Answer their questions with simple, concrete, and confident answers, even when they ask numerous times. Follow up by asking questions to see if they are ready for more information. Say, “Does that make sense to you? What does \_\_\_\_ mean to you? What do you think about \_\_\_\_?”
- Support preschooler’s critical thinking skills.
  - Reassure preschoolers that their parent is well trained and has help in doing their job.
  - Help them find answers to their questions. Show them a picture and say “Dad is eating things like \_\_\_\_\_. This is a picture of where he sleeps.”
  - Ask what children think. “I can tell you are frustrated. What’s bothering you?”
  - Help children find appropriate ways to handle anger and frustration. Say, “What happened? Sometimes it helps to walk away or rest to calm down. Leave your toys there while you rest over here. When you are ready you can come back and play with them. What should you do nexttime?”
  - Talk with preschoolers about changes and decisions that involve them.
  - Rely on beliefs and personal values to explain reasons – keep them concrete.
  - Avoid abstract explanations; they will not understand the full extent of deployment.
  - Allow preschoolers to make choices when appropriate.
  - Encourage pretend play.
  - Monitor and limit exposure to the media. Turn the television off during graphic descriptions of violence and war.
  - Don’t be alarmed by imaginary friends – it provides comfort similar to a pet.
- Discuss deployment and children’s behavior and feelings with preschool teachers and caregivers.
- Seek support from Family, friends, and the community (health and mental health professionals, child care providers and teachers, and community organizations).

**Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

- Parent’s should prepare themselves for the preschooler’s adjustment – they are often content, elated and want to impress the returning parent.
- Let the child help prepare for their parent’s homecoming – make a banner or card, help clean up, buy/make a welcome home present, gather items saved for the parent’s return.
- Discuss possible changes in routines. Say, “This is where Mommy will sit for dinner when she gets home.”
- Look for ways to interact that are pleasing to the preschooler.
- Spend quality time and do activities together (hiking, picnics, talking, reading stories, sharing pictures and school work). If afraid at first include the non-deployed parent.
- Model caring interactions between the parents.

## 4.6 School Age Children (Six to Twelve Years Old)

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School age children range from six-years-old to twelve-years-old.(29) Often the older children in this age group, intermediate or middle school youth ranging from ten- to fifteen-years-old, are referred to as preadolescence or tweens because sometimes their behavior is similar to adolescents/teenagers and other times similar to younger children. This inconsistent behavior does not mean they are mature for their age nor does it mean they are immature. Instead it is a dynamic stage of change and transition. School age children may experience the following feelings and symptoms of stress to deployment.

- Feel guilty, confused, sad, depressed, irritable, angry, and worried.
- Complain, display anger or aggressive behavior.
- Experience rapid mood swings.
- Have changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- Demonstrate disinterest in school, recreational activities, and friends.
- Feel resentment toward the deployed parent for missing certain events (birthdays, etc.).
- Feel hurt by the parent's absence and try to say or do things that would return the hurt.
- Point out how other parents do things more efficiently or differently.
- Want to please the parent with new skills.
- Try to act "grown up" and impress the parent.
- Feel guilty for not doing enough or being good enough.
- Have fears that the returning parent will discipline them for things that happened during the deployment.
- Boast to friends about their parent's accomplishments or job.
- Talk endlessly to update the returning parent about things they missed out on.

During deployment, when school age children are angry, aggressive, and moody they may feel guilty, confused, sad, depressed, and worried. It is important for parents to identify children's needs related to their age and behavior to help determine how to best help them. With this age group having a supportive relationship with children and effectively communicating accurate information before deployment helps prepare children psychologically. Older school age children often have the most difficulty expressing their emotions and may be confused about their feelings, teeter tottering back and forth being a "tween." Key developmental needs are explained below along with strategies to support development and foster resilience in school age children during deployment.

- School age children are more and more concerned about being **competent and successful**. Self esteem is enhanced, when they participate in activities in which they are challenged yet successful. Parents need to help children identify their strengths and expose children to activities and opportunities that may interest them, being careful not to impose or force parents interests on the child. Help children find healthy places that they can be successful and challenged. When children are successful they feel competent and more confident in mastering new skills.

- As school age children grow older they are developmentally capable **of thinking more critically**. They are beginning to understand deployment and thus worries are more realistic and longer lasting. Over time they better understand values, beliefs, and faith. They rely on parents to provide honest, accurate, and reliable information. During especially challenging times of deployment, children and parents need to think through and carefully choose coping strategies that will work for each child; such as, how to temporarily lighten school expectations if needed, but soon return to normalcy. However, parents still need to carefully set aside unnecessarily scary information. Parents need to reassure older children too, that much training and many precautions have been implemented to ensure safety of the deployed parent and the Family at home. When parents are diligent in thinking together with children, making explicit all of the steps in the critical thinking process, children develop thinking and coping skills.
- School age children desire more **responsibility**. Being more aware of the realities of deployment, they may inadvertently feel they are capable of taking on responsibilities for deployment problems that they mistakenly perceive they are the cause of. Parents need to allow school-agers more opportunities to be responsible for some task on their own, with parental monitoring, such as Family chores or homework. It is important to provide time to talk and focus on their concerns with Family and friends, yet is also helpful to participate in activities that will distract and provide respite from the challenges during deployment.
- Children of school age are becoming more and more **independent**. They are developing new friends and they need more freedom. Parents need to encourage relationships with friends and other supportive adults such as school teachers and leaders of community activities like faith based or recreation groups. While parents need to provide school age children space and privacy, they need to monitor and supervise their children. It is important for parents to keep alert and “clued in” to how their child is growing and changing during deployment and how they might support their child’s development.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN DO?

### Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in School-Age Children

#### Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment

- Take care of yourself so you can be alert to children's needs.
- Nurture a trusting, supportive relationship.
  - Keep normal routines and schedules.
  - Spend quality time with school age children – hiking, bowling, movies, baking, crafts, projects.
  - Provide distractions from the stress of deployment – short trips, sports activities, playing with pets, drawing.
  - Help children identify their strengths. Encourage participation in activities they like, are challenging, and they are good at. Say, "I'm proud of you and I hope you are proud of \_\_\_\_ too."
  - Ensure school-age children get rest, exercise, and eat properly.
  - Be consistent. Help children feel safe and secure.
  - Be patient and calm, especially when school-age children are irritable and withdrawn. These are the very times they need you to help them regain control. Avoid responding back with anger or withdrawing. Instead model appropriate ways to handle irritability and anger.
  - Set firm, consistent limits. Say, "It's not ok to talk like that. When you calm down we can talk more. Later, after children have calmed down, say, "When you get irritable it makes me think you are not getting enough sleep or that something is bothering you. What do you think it is? What can I do to help? Next time what should you do?"
  - Recognize children's strengths and help them find ways to develop them.
  - Establish new rituals that bring the Family together.
- Help children stay connected with the deployed parent.
  - Do things together prior to deployment.
  - Encourage children to stay in touch through letters, cards, email, and phone calls. Use real time connections and instant messaging. Shop together for special paper or cards. Write letters together.
  - Send pictures, drawings, copies of school work, care packages, and videos.
  - Together research the location of the deployed parent.
  - Share what the deployed parent is doing.
  - Encourage children to keep a scrapbook or photo album of missed events to share after deployment. Say, "We all wish Dad could be here to see you in your recital. I am going to take a video and we can save one for when he comes home and send an extra copy to him tomorrow."
  - Help children initiate and participate in activities that support the cause of deployment (school activities that recognize Soldier's sacrifice).
- Implement effective communication skills
  - Discuss how to deal with anger and fear. Say, "Sometimes when you are angry it helps to write about your feelings... or go for a walk with a friend...or talk to me or your \_\_\_\_ leader."

**Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment, Cont.**

- Keep communication open. Actively listen to children's ideas and concerns. Don't interrupt. Maintain eye contact. Restate, don't correct what you think they said. Say, "So, you think \_\_\_\_"
- Initiate conversations, Demonstrate genuine concern and interest in children's ideas.
- Be honest, but ensure conversations are appropriate for their level of understanding. Avoid graphic details that may cause unnecessary fear and anxiety.
- Ask questions to clarify what children are ready to understand, before explaining ideas or even answering their questions. Ask, "What do you think about \_\_\_\_? How do you feel about \_\_\_\_?"
- Answer their questions with confidence, followed up by questions to see if they are ready for more information. Ask, "Does that make sense to you? What does that mean to you? What do you think about \_\_\_\_? Have you thought about \_\_\_\_?"
- Support the development of school age children's critical thinking skills.
  - Think together with children. Make explicit the steps in critical thinking.
  - Help school age children find accurate and reliable information about the deployment or the parent-Soldier.
  - Include school-age children in decision making processes related to changes in roles, responsibilities, and routines.
  - Help children identify accurate information when making decisions. "I don't think that is true, but let's research it to find out."
  - Share and discuss values, beliefs, logic, and reasoning related to current issues.
  - Help children think of multiple solutions to problems and then pick the solution that best matches their values and goals.
  - Discuss the results of the decisions with children and rethink.
  - Encourage children to keep a diary or journal.
  - Turn the television off during graphic descriptions of violence and war; encourage children to talk about their fears.
  - Discuss details of deployment appropriate with child's maturity and age, being careful to not cause unnecessary worry.
- Seek support from Family, friends, the community, and professionals.
  - Help children keep in contact with Family and friends.
  - Encourage friendships and get to know their friends – other military children, unit connections, friends in school, community groups – invite friends over or go on outings.
  - Ask about friends. Avoid snooping or eavesdropping on private conversations, but be alert to feelings and moods. Monitor and supervise activities.
  - Encourage children's relationships with other adults that support – coaches, teachers, activity leaders, friend's parents.
  - Connect with teachers and school counselors.
  - Provide a comfortable place to do homework. Talk about and monitor homework. Say, "I know it is hard to concentrate when you are thinking about your Mom. I will read my book with you while you do your homework. If you have any questions maybe I can help."
  - Encourage participation in Family Readiness Groups, 4-H, and other community groups.
  - Seek support for children from health and mental health professionals.

## **WHAT CAN PARENTS OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN DO?** **Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in School-Age Children**

### **Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

- Discuss with school-age children what to expect from the parent-Soldier and appropriate behaviors for the reunion.
- Involve school-age children in planning welcome home celebrations.
- Make it a priority for the parent-Soldier and the school-age child to spend quality time together.
- Do things together as a Family – meal time, watch a movie, go for a hike or picnic.
- Alert parent-Soldier to changes in school-age children and what to expect.



## 4.7 Teenagers (Thirteen to Eighteen Years Old)

The teenage years are referred to as adolescence, ranging from thirteen- to eighteen-years-old. (30) While teenagers may look like adults, their emotions during deployment and reintegration can sometimes be mature and sometimes similar to younger children. Some symptoms of their stress due to deployment and adolescence may include:

- acting overly strong and mature
- acting unconcerned, apathetic, and not interested
- feeling irritable, anxious, fear, mad, sad, isolated, lonely, shocked, and depressed
- act rebellious or disrespectful – fight, throw objects
- mixed feelings – proud and angry
- quick changes in emotion – happy one moment and sad the next
- problems in school or unusual changes
- a change in eating, weight loss, or weight gain
- increased interest in friends, pointing out how their friends' Families do things better
- isolating themselves or hiding their social life and activities from their parents
- possible promiscuity or abuse of drugs or alcohol
- lashing out at others and self or even inflicting intentional harm on themselves
- showing resentment toward the returning parent for missing important events
- ignoring the returning parent or try to make the parent feel guilty for leaving in the first place
- fear that they will be disciplined by the returning parent for things that happened during deployment.

Teenagers that are struggling prior to deployment will likely struggle with deployment challenges because even though the stressor (deployment) may be different, the developmental needs during the teen years are the same. Key developmental needs along with strategies to support development and foster resilience in teenagers during deployment are described below.

- Teenagers are developmentally capable of **thinking and reasoning at a higher level than younger children**. They are able to consider multiple possibilities and hypothetical circumstances. They are developing abstract thinking about things such as faith, trust, and beliefs. Teenagers can understand and articulate their thinking and feelings more clearly than before. It is important for parents to carefully listen to teenagers share their logic and reason as well and for parents to discuss what they believe and why. Parents need to be consistent in modeling and teaching effective communication and critical thinking skills. When teenagers question parents, it is a good opportunity to be explicit about how and why rather than being offended. The more accurate and reliable the information teenagers have the more insight they develop and the better able they are to think critically and make informed decisions. While it is important for teenagers to make and follow through with

some of their own decisions of what is right and wrong, it is also important for parents to continue to use a democratic style of discipline in which teens are carefully listened to, but parents ultimately set firm limits.

- A major need during the teen years is to develop **a sense of identity**. Psychologically, they spend a lot of time thinking about their identity, who they are, what they stand for, what they value and believe, what they are good at, and what they are willing to strive for. When parents have a strong, positive identification with the military, teenagers develop a more secure identity and are less confused about who their Family is and what is important to them. This is not only true for the parent's occupation and affiliation with the military, but also applies to strong Family culture, heritage, faith, patriotism, ethics, values, and morals. Parents need to help teenagers identify their strengths and what they are good at, then encourage them to participate in activities that develop their strengths.
- Teenagers desire to belong and develop close **friendships and intimacy**. They are becoming comfortable with their sexuality. They need relationships that are open, honest, and caring. Teens typically seek out friends and may try to pull away from parents. Contrary to some misconceptions, it is even more important for parents to stay engaged and in tune to adolescent needs, warning signs, and activities. While they may need some space, they do not need complete freedom. Their bodies may resemble that of an adult, but emotionally and mentally they are not. Therefore, they should not be provided extended unsupervised opportunities nor led to believe that participating in adult behaviors is healthy and acceptable. Avoid snooping or eaves dropping on private conversations, but investigate suspicions of inappropriate behaviors. During deployment teens often think they need to take on additional Family responsibilities which may help them feel important and helpful. At the same time, caution should be taken to ensure the tasks are commensurate with their maturity and that they are not expected to fill the role and responsibility of a parent.

These developmental needs, when coupled with deployment, can sometimes tax teenagers' ability to cope. Their responses to deployment may include irritability, rebellion, and anger. They may fight, throw objects, or be disrespectful. Teens are at great risk for substance abuse and promiscuity; and deployment may pose a greater risk to try these in an attempt to survive. Teenagers are more knowledgeable and aware of deployment issues and are at greater risks, but when they have support from parents and others they are more resilient. Family support is crucial for adolescent development during deployment.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF TEENAGERS DO? Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Teenagers

### Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment

- Take care of yourself. Teens are protective and will try to shield their parents.
- Maintain a trusting, supportive relationship.
  - Keep routines regular.
  - Ensure teens get rest, exercise, and eat properly.
  - Discuss deployment prior to parent leaving so they know what to expect.
  - Balance teens need for more time with peers and time with Family.
  - Spend quality time together – hiking, bowling, movies, baking, playing tennis, working on projects.
  - Provide distractions – short trips, sports activities, playing with pets, praying, listening to music, drawing.
  - Be patient and calm, especially when teens are irritable and withdrawn. Help them regain control. Avoid responding back with anger. Instead model appropriate ways to handle feelings.
  - Set firm, consistent limits.
  - Help teens deal with anger productively. Do not ignore angry and aggressive behavior. Say, “I understand you are upset, but it is best if you take time to calm down and then we can talk.”
  - Recognize strengths and help teens find ways to develop them.
  - Say, “I love you.” and “I’m proud of you.” often.
  - Reassure teens that feelings of loss and anger are common. “I am angry about this sometimes too.”
  - Establish new rituals that bring the Family together.
  - Encourage teens to share responsibilities at home, but not take on the role of a parent.
  - Help teens development of a strong sense of identity – culture, values, morals, faith, beliefs – Who they are? What they believe? What they are good at?
  - Support teen’s participation in activities they enjoy and are successful.
  - Stay alert, involved, and tuned in to activities, moods, friends, and warning signs.
  - Complement teens on their strengths and successes.
  - Allow teens some space but not total freedom. Supervise and monitor frequently. Don’t allow unsupervised activities for extended periods of time.
- Help teens stay connected with the deployed parent.
  - Do Family activities prior to deployment.
  - Encourage teens to stay in touch through letters, cards, email, and phone calls. Use real time connections and instant messaging. Shop together for special paper and cards.
  - Send pictures, drawings, copies of school work, care packages, and videos.
  - Together research the location of the deployed parent.
  - Share what the deployed parent is doing.
  - Help teens keep a scrapbook or photo album of missed events to share after deployment.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS OF TEENAGERS DO?

### Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience in Teenagers, Cont.

#### Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment, Cont.

- Help teens initiate and participate in activities that support the cause of deployment (school activities that recognize Soldier's sacrifice).
- Help teens develop effective communication skills.
  - Keep communication open and honest, teens can think and reason at a higher, more abstract level.
  - Actively listen. Don't interrupt. Restate what you think they said.
  - Be available when teens are ready to talk, often late at night.
  - Initiate conversations. Demonstrate genuine interest in teen's ideas.
  - Have Family meetings throughout the deployment process.
  - Ask questions to clarify what teens understand. Say, "What do you think about \_\_\_\_? How do you feel about \_\_\_\_?"
  - Answer their questions with confidence or find the information.
  - Ask questions to see if they are ready for more information. Say, "Does that make sense to you? What does that mean to you? What do you think about \_\_\_\_?"
- Support the development of critical thinking skills.
  - Include teens in thinking and decision making processes that relate to them. Continue to think together and make explicit the steps to thinking critically.
  - Help teens find valid and reliable information when making decisions. "Sometimes the information we hear from friends is not totally true. Let's research it to be sure."
  - Discuss values, beliefs, logic, and reasoning related to current issues.
  - Help teens think of multiple solutions to problems and then pick the solution that best matches their values and goals.
  - Discuss the results of decisions with teens and rethink.
  - When teens question parents, rather than being offended, take the opportunity to explain your reasoning.
  - Encourage teens to keep a diary or journal.
  - Monitor overexposure and fascination with media and electronic games that focus on war and violence.
  - Discuss details of deployment appropriate with teen's maturity, being careful to not cause unnecessary worry.
  - Help them understand that the deployed parent is well trained for their job and is doing all they can to return safely.
- Seek support from Family, friends, the community, and professionals.
  - Help teens keep in contact with Family and friends.
  - Encourage friendships. Get to know their friends. Don't embarrass teens in front of their peers – other military teens, friends in school, and community groups.
  - Have their friends come to your home so you can monitor and supervise more carefully.

### **Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment, Cont.**

- Ask about friends and be alert to feelings and moods.
- Avoid snooping or eavesdropping on private conversations, but investigate suspicions of inappropriate or unhealthy behaviors.
- Encourage teen relationships with other adults that support – coaches, teachers, activity leaders, friend's parents. Help teens find other adults to confide in.
- Connect with teachers and school counselors.
- Provide a comfortable place to do homework. Talk about and monitor homework.
- Encourage participation in Family Readiness Groups, 4-H, faith groups, and other community groups.
- Encourage teens to join support groups.
- Recognize signs of depression.
- Seek support for teens from health and mental health professionals.

### **Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

- Discuss with teens what to expect from the parent-Soldier and appropriate behaviors for the reunion.
- Involve teens in preparing welcome home celebrations.
- Make it a priority for the parent-Soldier and teen to spend quality time together.
- Do things together as a Family – meal time, watch a movie, go for a hike or picnic.
- Alert parent-Soldier to changes in teens and what to expect.

**Footnotes**

- (18) Jensen & Shaw, 1996
- (19) Wiens & Boss, 2006
- (20) Watanabe & Jensen, 2000
- (21) Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984
- (22) Boss, 2006; Walsh, 1998
- (23) Wiens & Boss, 2006
- (24) Levine, 2003
- (25) Huebner & Mancini, 2005
- (26) Figley, 1993; Jensen & Shaw, 1996; Watanabe & Jensen, 2000
- (27) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health, and Zero to Three.
- (28) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; and U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health.
- (29) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; Huebner & Mancini, 2005; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; and U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health.
- (30) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; Huebner & Mancini, 2005; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health.

### 5.1 Children's Responses to Combat Deployment

THE EFFECTS OF DEPLOYMENT ON CHILDREN are inconclusive.(31) While many military children are quite adaptive and resilient, the effects due to war can be more profound than non-combat deployment. Military children are sensitive to the information about war that surrounds them. Research suggest that massive exposure to war overwhelms children, while moderate exposure may lead to adaptive strategies, yet minimal exposure may not evoke even self-protective mechanisms. (32) Common feelings and behaviors displayed by children in reaction to deployment are specific to their age and level of development. A list of stress symptoms are included earlier in Part IV of the Handbook organized by specific age groups.

Military children do think about war and often have misconceptions that may be more dangerous to their psyche than a frank discussion about the facts of war. Thus, parents should have honest discussions about deployment and war with their children, military health care providers should encourage parents to discuss with their children their perceptions of war and the impact of war on their Family, and schools, clinics, and hospitals should develop and implement prevention and intervention programs for children at risk for problems upon parental deployment. (33)

Deployments to a war zone are stressful for children and Families. Although there are stressors common to every war, each war and deployment to a war zone has unique characteristics that create additional stressors. Soldiers conducting military operations in a twenty-first environment are facing the stressors created by terrorism and new enemy tactics. Although combat stressors are the most stressful experience, home front stressors can be a source of trauma as well. (34) Combat deployments have a great number of uncertainties that set them apart from traditional deployments. War creates ongoing stress and chronic anxiety about the future possibility of death and trauma. (35) The uncertainties and additional stressors of current military operations challenge the personal resources and military Families' ability to cope with these deployments, especially multiple deployments to a war zone. A listing of the stressors Soldiers, children, and Families face with combat deployments is presented in the table on page 56.

Research on the effects of war on U.S. military children is limited. Few studies have been conducted and the information on children is mainly based on parental reports. Further, the research data that is available describes the short-term effects on children and thus the long-term impact is not known. No research has examined the impact of military parent's injury and death on children.(36) The factors that appear to have the greatest influence on children's reactions to combat deployment are their perceptions, coping style, age, gender, and Family environment. Key research findings are presented on pages 56-58, with an emphasis on findings from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which is the most recent war military children have experienced.



### Combat Deployment Stressors

#### Soldiers' Stressors

- Anticipation of war (which includes unexpected separation, rapid training, rapid deployment, unknown future, boredom/waiting, exposure to new environments and environmental conditions)
- Anticipation of combat
- Participation in combat; combat exposure; threat of being killed or injured
- New environment; deployment environment conditions (severe weather, living conditions, sexual or physical abuse, interpersonal difficulties with supervisors or peers)
- New equipment
- Adjusting to high operation tempo (long hours, lack of sleep)
- Adjusting to loss of freedom and autonomy (for Guard and Reserve)
- Terror created by different warfare and terrorist tactics (missile attacks, chemical or biological agents, suicide bombers, IEDs)
- Uncertainty about exact length of deployment; End date
- Lengthy separation from Family
- "Home front issues"; Family problems or crises back home (dissolution of marriage, unexpected death in the Family)
- Communication from home (esp., "dear john letters" or no communication)
- Reunion and reintegration into Family
- Concern about being different after combat
- Disruption in occupational goals; loss or fear loss of job (especially for Guard and Reserve)

#### Children and Families' Stressors

- Anticipation of war (which includes unexpected separation, rapid deployment, Family disruption, loss of parent/spouse, unknown future)
- Uncertainty about date of deployment
- Uncertainty about exact length of deployment; Deployment extension
- Deployment length; lengthy separation from Soldier, who is spouse, parent and/or child (which results in "loss")
- Uncertainty about Soldier's location and activities
- Confusion on mission's purpose
- Potential for Soldier injury or death; increasing concern with each subsequent deployment to war zone about Soldier's safety
- Communicating with Soldier
- Concerns about children; Children's reactions
- Children's concern about non-deployed parent's reactions
- Media coverage (including negative press or false picture)
- Emotional toll; mental strain of multiple deployments
- Change in Family roles and responsibilities
- Relocation (if Family or children move during deployment)
- Worry over Family's financial situation
- Anticipation of reunion and Soldier's reintegration into Family
- Concern about what Soldier will be like when return
- Worries about the effect of lengthy absence or multiple deployments on Family dynamic; Concerns about how Family relationships will change
- Concern about Soldier redeploying
- Concerns about Soldier's well-being during and after deployment; Concern about the effects of maintaining high OPTEMPO on Soldier's well-being without breaks to replenish the spirit
- Uncertainty about the future



Factors that Influence Children's Reaction to Combat Deployment	Research Findings
<p><b>Perceptions</b> – Children's perceptions can cause anxiety for them.</p> <p><b>Coping strategies</b> – Different children use different coping strategies. Some strategies used by children are not effective for getting help.</p> <p><b>Age and gender</b> – Boys and younger children appear to have greater problems dealing with deployments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military children (active duty and reserve) 8 to 11 years of age voiced different perceptions about war and what it meant in general and to their Family than civilian children of the same age. Active duty and reserve children expressed fears their parent would go to war and their parent would die (Ryan-Wenger, 2002).</li> <li>• In interviews, children's fears of the risk of possible death to their parent was disproportionate to the percent killed in Iraq (Cozza et al., 2005). These fears may be exacerbated by the high media coverage of the war (Cozza et al., 2005).</li> <li>• Grade school children affected by Operations Desert Shield/Storm (ODS/S) had bizarre perceptions of deployed parent's activities. These children needed education about culture of area where deployed parent was (Hardaway, 2004).</li> <li>• Active duty children who were 8 to 11 years of age reported that they use fighting, biting nails, and daydreaming as general coping strategies (Ryan-Wenger, 2002).</li> <li>• While some adolescents with parents deployed to OIF and OEF reported they handled the stress by lashing out, most tend to withdraw and isolate themselves from others. Further, most adolescents did not reach out to others for support (Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005).</li> <li>• Acting out behavior has been commonly reported for children of all ages. Some researchers claim that this behavior is an ineffective way for children to get support from authority and peers (Hardaway, 2004; Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005).</li> <li>• A study of children with a parent deployed for ODS/S found boys and younger children were more likely to exhibit greater symptoms (Jensen et al., 1996).</li> </ul>

Factors that Influence Children's Reaction to Combat Deployment, Cont.	Research Findings, Cont.
<p><b>Parent's reaction and changes in Family relationships</b> – <i>Non-deployed parent's stress reactions can be a stressor for children and impact children's emotional state and behavior.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's concerns about the non-deployed parent's reactions are impacting their behavior.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Children affected by ODS/S were preoccupied with the remaining parent (Hardaway, 2004).</li> <li>– Adolescents of OIF and OEF reported concern about parent's being tense, worried, impatient and emotionally unavailable. Adolescents reported that their behavior was in response to how non-deployed parent coped which also influenced their relationship with their parent during the deployment (Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Family support and communication</b> – <i>Family support and communication are helpful to mediating the effects of combat deployment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children need to feel safe and to know what to expect (Ursano &amp; Norwood, 1996; Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005). Adolescents reported that having parents talk to them before the OIF/OEF deployment helped them cope with the deployment (Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005).</li> <li>• Adolescents mentioned that friends and Family were helpful by providing opportunity to talk and engage in activities that diverted attention. Listening and reassurance are helpful (Huebner &amp; Mancini, 2005).</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Children's Responses to Trauma and Death

How individuals (and Families) respond to trauma is determined by a number of factors including:

- **Temperament** – personality traits often determine how individuals respond to extreme stress.
- **Resources** – Individual and Family resources shape coping behavior. Individual resources are:
  - financial well-being
  - educational (problem-solving abilities, information)
  - health (physical and emotional well-being), and
  - psychological resources (self-esteem).

Family resources include Family cohesion and adaptability (ability to change). (37)

- **Culture** – An individual's cultural beliefs can impact how an individual perceives the event, expresses emotions and seeks help.
- **Coping style** – Individuals may use different coping strategies in different phases of a trauma situation. Two different coping styles are generally seen, either avoidance (withdrawal) or approach (take action).
  - **Family coping style.** Family coping style has been described as either a mastery (Family perceives they have resources or access to resources to exercise some control over the situation) or fatalistic orientation (Family believes they do not have resources to deal with the trauma). When Families take mastery orientation, they take a solution-oriented approach in contrast to fatalistic orientation which leads to passive behavior. (38)
  - **Effectiveness of coping strategies.** Coping strategies can be effective or ineffective. Ineffective coping strategies can add to stress. Research has shown that individuals who use withdrawal and avoidance responses are more likely to have greater posttraumatic distress, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and failure to recover than those who use problem-solving or adaptive coping skills. (It is important to note that avoidance and hypervigilance are ways individuals typically cope with repeated loss and death.) Other coping strategies considered ineffective are drinking, denial, avoiding talking about trauma, and regression (in children). (39) According to Peebles-Kleiger, Families may initiate controlling behaviors in response to the feelings of helplessness and these behaviors often do not "restore equilibrium and typically create additional harm". (40)
  - **Past history of trauma and loss** – Previous trauma can have a positive or negative effect. If an individual experienced mastery (or positive meaning) with previous trauma, then an individual may display increased strength in their ability to cope with subsequent trauma situation. However, individuals who have experienced prior traumas can be more vulnerable to development of PTSD.

- **Preexisting stressors** – Stressors (such as marriage, divorce, serious health problems, job loss and Family-related difficulties) preceding the trauma event can make an individual more vulnerable to traumatic stress reactions.
- **Spirituality and beliefs** – Traumatic events often cause people to question their beliefs about safety, trust, power/control, esteem, intimacy and faith. For example, war (or combat deployments) often raises questions about moral and ethical beliefs. Terrorist attacks cause people to question their beliefs that the world is safe, secure and predictable. This questioning reflects individuals' and Families' perceptions of their vulnerability, safety and control in the world which shapes how they respond. For example, Families often feel a need to focus on safety and thus can show hypervigilance and control behaviors. (41)
- **Perception about meaning of events** – How individuals and Families perceive events is a significant factor in the degree to which an event distresses individuals and Families. This interpretation affects the nature of individuals' coping and responses. For example, Soldiers may deal with war by finding meaning and gratification in their helper role. (42) A child who blames him/herself when a bad thing happens is likely to become distressed. (43)
- **Mental illness prior to event** – Individuals who had mental health problems or illness prior to an event are likely to have problems following a traumatic event.

These factors can serve as individuals' strengths which enable individuals/Families to show resilience or areas of vulnerability which lead to mental health problems/disorder. Individuals (and Families) vary greatly in their strengths and vulnerabilities. Children display a variety of reactions and feelings in response to the stress, fear, and loss experienced with a traumatic event (such as combat deployment or parent's death). Not all children exhibit all symptoms and their reactions will change over time. Some symptoms will be short-lived whereas others may persist. Some symptoms may not occur until years later. The interaction of these factors is complicated and thus it is difficult to predict how any given individual (or Family) will respond.

### Normal Children's Reactions To Trauma And Death

#### Young Children (0-5 years)

- Crying
- Fear of being separated from parent
- Clinging
- Whimpering
- Change in sleep and eating habits
- Regression in behavior (bedwetting, fear of darkness, baby talk, thumbsucking)
- Repetitive play or talk (especially children less than 3 years old)
- Screaming, tantrums, irritable outbursts (especially 3-5 year olds)
- Withdrawal (especially 3-5 year olds)

#### School-Age (6-12 years)

- Crying
- Withdrawal
- Unable to pay attention
- Anger/disruptive behaviors (fighting, bullying, aggression)
- Nightmares, sleep disturbances
- Irritability
- Fear
- Self blame or guilt
- Fluctuating moods
- Physical complaints (stomach aches, headaches)
- School problems (academic difficulty or decline, difficulty concentrating, school refusal)
- Clinging (especially 6-9 year olds)
- Regressive behaviors (especially 6-9 year olds)
- Resentment (especially 9-12 year olds)
- Suppressed emotions or denial (9-12 year olds)
- Sadness, depression (especially 9-12 year olds)
- Anxiety (9-12 year olds)
- Repetitive talk with peers or thoughts (9-12 year olds)

#### Adolescents (13-18 years)

- Suppressed emotions or denial; Emotional numbing
- Reexperiencing
- Avoidance of feelings
- Acting out (engaging in risky, antisocial or illegal behavior)
- Resentment
- Guilt
- Depression and/or suicidal thoughts
- Distancing, withdrawal
- Mood swings
- Anxiety, panic
- Anger
- Fear
- Appetite and sleep changes
- Nightmares
- Physical complaints (stomach aches, headaches)
- Difficulty with peers
- School problems (academic difficulty or decline, difficulty concentrating, school refusal)
- Increased dependence or independence

Subsequently, mental health problems can appear. The problems most likely to be seen are posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. The nature of children's reactions to a traumatic event and their risk of developing a mental health problem depend on circumstances of the trauma event, individual and Family characteristics, and Family and community support. Below are key factors as it relates to children's coping and resilience.

### Individual Characteristics

- **Age** – Children of different ages display emotions in different ways. For example, 3 to 5 year old children will display anger by fighting and throwing tantrums whereas 9 to 12 year old children will exhibit aggressive and bullying behavior.
- **Cognitive level** – Children's level of knowledge influences their understanding of an event or death, which in turn influences children's emotional and behavioral responses. Fear (e.g., about parent's death or safety) is normal at certain developmental stages. A traumatic event can heighten a child's normal fears.
- **Ability to cope** – Children, especially young children, have less well developed coping strategies than adults. Thus they may have difficulty knowing how to handle their own feelings or can become overwhelmed by their feelings.
- **Child's personality** – A child's personality and temperament influence how children respond, although these traits can become exaggerated. For example, an anxious child may become more fearful.
- **Child's relationship with deceased parent** – The nature of this relationship determines how children feel the loss and their emotional recovery.
- **Child's prior experiences with trauma** – Children are more likely to be severely impacted if they have already suffered from a trauma.
- **Child's preexisting mental health problems** – Children who have mental health problems or illness prior to an event are more likely to have difficulties following the event.

### Family Characteristics and Support

- **Parent's reactions** – This is one of the most significant factors that determine how children react. (43) Children's emotions can be in reaction to or mimic parent's reactions. Also children may be affected if parent is preoccupied with event and thus not available physically or emotionally.
- **Family's functioning style and relationships** – The nature of a Family's communication and ways Family members interact and support one another will determine the level of comfort and assurance children receive. A lack of Family support makes children more vulnerable to having difficulties.
- **Changes in Family life due to event** – These changes can create additional stresses that can have a negative effect or influence children's reactions.

### Community Support

Support services and networks available before, during and after trauma event – The availability of other individuals, who can provide comfort and reassurance, and support services is vital to reducing children's anxieties and facilitating children's abilities to cope.

### 5.3 Coping and Resilience Related to Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death

Lessons learned from previous wars to help Families and children develop resilience can be summarized into two areas: 1) helping Families maintain a sense of preparedness and 2) enhancing community support. These recommendations focus on ways to address the mental health issues of Families and children and to facilitate coping and resilience. (See pages 64-65.)

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

### Strategies to Cope and Foster Resilience Related to Combat Deployment, Trauma, and Death

- **Maintain a sense of preparedness** to deal with uncertainty and trauma.
- **Seek military information early and often.** Attend briefings and trainings and explore web sites throughout deployment. It is a difficult time to absorb information, thus Families often forget information presented at pre-deployment.
- **Know your single point of contact for when problems arise.**
- **Seek increased unit and installation leader support.** Media can present false pictures and Soldiers may downplay events. Look to leadership for open, honest communication - when and where Soldier is deployed, Soldiers experiences, return date, normal reactions of children, location of resources, and when to seek help. Participate in return and reintegration programs to prepare children and parents for Soldier's return.
- **Connect with Family Readiness Group volunteers** – a main source of support to Families.
- **Connect with other military Families** and promote self-help groups to handle loneliness and to be with other children and Families who have the same experience.
- **Seek help from Army support agencies** – Army Community Service, Army Child and Youth Services, Army Chaplains, Social Work Services, Army Medical Clinics, Army Substance Abuse Program, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs. Contact Military One Source for information and referral to installation and community based programs.
- **Prepare children and teens for deployment through discussions and planning.** Develop a Family Care Plan and an Emergency Care Plan. Frequently discuss and revise plans. Discuss how the Family will continue during the most challenging deployment situations – effective ways to communicate and think through the toughest outcomes, how to support self and children, and where to find help.
- **Be knowledgeable about children's needs, symptoms of stress, and how to support children and teens.** Seek information on children's reactions to combat deployment, trauma, and death; communication in age appropriate ways; helping children think and cope; signs and symptoms of depression and other mental health problems; and sources of support.
- **Take care of self.** Parent's reactions affect children; even young children absorb parent's feelings.
- **Develop supportive relationships with children.** Increased nurturance and understanding are necessary during trauma, death, and combat deployment.
- **Help children stay connected with the deployed parent.**



- **Talk with children and teens about war in age appropriate ways.** Discuss what to expect and changes that may occur before deployment. Consider the child's age and level of understanding when communicating about traumatic issues like death. For young children explain trauma and death in simple, concrete terms. Ask children what they understand to reveal any misunderstandings. Helpful resources related to grief and death are available through The Dougy Center web site (<http://www.dougy.org>).
- **Model and teach effective communication skills.** Be available when children and youth are ready to talk. Remain calm. Before offering explanations, listen to what children say. Listening to their stories is part of a healing process. Ask questions to see what children think and are ready to understand. Express feelings, values, and beliefs clearly.
- **Help children and teens think critically.** Focus on analyzing reliable and valid information, developing skills in logic and reason, and making decisions based on beliefs and values. Clarify children's misconceptions and help children make sense of events. When children are having difficulty thinking clearly, seek help from professionals.
- **Encourage children and teens to be involved in supportive relationships** – Family, friends, teachers, and community leaders. Participate in activities that provide distraction.
- **Seek support from teachers and community leaders.** Keep them informed of children's concerns; they can provide better support to military children and teens if informed. Build relationships with community leaders of faith.
- **Build children's and Family's strengths.** Take classes to learn to handle new responsibilities. Participate in activities to enhance Family relationships – support groups, retreats, marriage and Family counseling, anger management classes, and parenting education.
- **Seek help from health and mental health professionals.** Intentional and regular support is necessary to cope in more traumatic circumstances. Families and children need to be knowledgeable about depression and PTSD and participate in joint treatment.

*Source: Boss, 2006; Ursano & Norwood, 1996; Jensen & Shaw, 1996; NMFA, 2004; NMFA, 2006; Orthner & Rose, 2006; Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Huebner et al., 2007; Galovski & Lyons, 2004; Dirkzwager et al., 2005; Fals-Stewart, 2005; Calhoun & Wampler, 2002; Hardaway, 2004; Ryan-Wenger, 2002; Figley, 1993; Dougy Center, 2004.*

**Footnotes**

- (31) Information provided on this topic is taken from the Trauma in the Unit Handbook, a part of the Operation READY series, authored by Deborah Mancini, 2007.
- (32) Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Jensen, 1992
- (33) Ryan-Wenger, 2002
- (34) Wolfe, 1996
- (35) Webb, 2004
- (36) NMFA, 2004; Cozza et al., 2005, Cozza & Chun, 2005; Jensen & Shaw, 1996; Hardaway, 2004
- (37) McKenry & Price, 2005
- (38) Figley & Barnes, 2005
- (39) Figley, 1993
- (40) Figley & Barnes, 2005
- (41) Figley & Barnes, 2005
- (42) Litz, 2005
- (43) Webb, 2004
- (44) Ursano & Norwood, 1996; Webb, 2004; Jensen & Shaw, 1996.

## PART VI: Partnering With Child Care Programs, Schools, and Child and Youth Services

MILITARY CHILDREN WITH DEPLOYED PARENTS face issues that affect them while attending child care, school, Child and Youth Services, and other programs. It is important that caregivers, youth leaders, teachers and school support staff be aware of the particular needs of children. To be responsive and supportive it is important for the Family to keep the leaders and teachers informed. It is unlikely that they will know the child's Family member has deployed and the related concerns, unless the child or parent tells them. Children's behavior and performance is often affected by the stresses they experience during a deployment. The child's school can provide an atmosphere of stability, while everything else in the child's life is changing. Educators and youth leaders sometimes are the first to notice changes in performance and behavior because of the amount of time students spend in school and other programs of care. The extra eyes and ears can be very beneficial to the non-deployed parent or caregiver, who has many things on his or her mind during this time.

Strong Family partnerships with schools and other programs of care are much needed by children of all ages. Too often parents avoid contact with the middle and high schools for fear of inappropriately interfering or simply because they do not know how to approach young adolescents. Nonetheless, when parents increase involvement in schools and children's programs at the middle level, students actually achieve more, like school more, and have better internal Family relationships. Below are strategies for parents to use to nurture Family partnerships with programs and schools before, during, and after deployment.

**WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?****Strategies to Foster Partnerships with Child Care Programs, Schools, and CYS**

- Keep caregivers, youth leaders, teachers and counselors informed of changes and needs of your child; they can be alert to behavior, performance and symptoms of stress.
- Discuss changes and give permission for the caretaker to act in the parenting role during the parent's absence.
- Inform children and teens of the resources available at school, CYS, and other programs of care so they can seek help when needed.
- Discuss with caregivers, youth leaders, and teachers ways they can help:
  - Anticipate child's inability to concentrate, be helpful when child is unable to focus, and validate feelings that may be due to the deployment - fear, anger, confusion, guilt, sadness, anxiety.
  - Allow time for child to share information they have received from their deployed parent.
  - Encourage child to express his or her feelings through writing or drawing.
  - Set up counseling and military children or teen support groups.
  - Record child reading or making a presentation at school and send tape to the deployed parent.
  - Incorporate military missions and countries in the curriculum - writing essays, reading stories.
  - Provide maps and globes to show where U.S. troops are located.
  - Write and illustrate a class book to send to the deployed parent.
  - Prepare a welcome home banner when the parent-Soldier returns.
- Access web sites for help:
  - Military One Source <http://www.militaryonesource.com>
  - Operation Military Kids <http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>
  - Military Child in Transition and Deployment <http://www.militarystudent.dod.mil>
  - Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet) <http://www.cyfernet.org>
  - Boys & Girls Clubs of America <http://www.bgca.org>
  - Military Child Education Coalition <http://www.militarychild.org>
  - National 4-H Council <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>
  - National Military Family Association <http://www.nmfa.org>
  - Zero to Three <http://www.zerotothree.org>

- Send audio and video tapes of deployed parent with child to share with class and friends.
- Record child reading and send an audio tape to the deployed parent.
- Send copies of newsletters, child's work, and progress reports to the deployed parent.
- Send the deployed parent pictures and videos of program and school related events and activities.
- Plan a school spirit day using red, white, and blue colors.
- Initiate a service project at school sending care packages to Soldiers.
- Upon return, spend time at school in child's classroom volunteering or sharing appropriate information with the class about the deployment.

**Notes**

## PART VII: Pregnancy During Deployment

PREGNANCY IS A WONDERFUL TIME in the life of a Family. In the event of a deployment during pregnancy, couples need to be thoughtful about ways to ensure the experience is rewarding for both the Family at home and the parent that is away. It is helpful to anticipate the needs of the child and both parents. If the baby is expected to be born during the separation, they must anticipate the demands of preparing for the baby's arrival and having support during labor and delivery, in addition to preparing for single parenting.

Pregnancy is a more relaxing and rewarding experience when parents are prepared. Likewise, pregnancy during deployment can be rewarding when prepared, even with the additional challenges of parenting at a distance. Lessons from research indicate that couples should have a Family Care Plan, required by the Army for dual military and single Soldier Families (See the *Coping and Resilience in Response to the Stress of Deployment* section of this Handbook for details). The plan emphasizes to Soldiers the significance of their responsibilities to their Family while performing military service. It ensures plans for legal, educational, financial, religious, and special arrangements during the Soldier's absence such as instructions for child care, food, housing, transportation and emergency needs for the Family. The Soldier's Commander provides counsel and certification that adequate Family care arrangements have been made.

It is recommended, but not required, that parents prepare an **Emergency Care Plan**. This plan outlines how children will be taken care if the non deployed parent or caregiver has an emergency such as a hospital stay or extended illness. The plan identifies who will be the assigned caregiver during the emergency. It includes information about the children such as doctor's information, child care or school information, and Rear Detachment Commander (RDC) and Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader contact information. The plan should be given to the RDC and FRG leader.

Being separated from a spouse due to deployment during pregnancy, labor and delivery, and the early weeks of caring for an infant increases the challenges associated with pregnancy. In addition to the Family Care Plan and the Emergency Care Plan, expecting parents can take additional steps to ensure the pregnancy is smooth and rewarding. Planning ahead is an effective coping strategy to minimize stress. Some suggestions include:

- **Discuss the many possibilities, plans, hopes, and dreams related to the expecting baby.** Discussions prior to deployment are beneficial if parents are aware of the pregnancy. If not, planning during deployment can provide reassurance and comfort too. Discuss plans for staying connected, Family and friends to help during the deployed parent's absence before, during, and after the baby is born, medical care, financial plans for immediate and long term goals, child care, parenting strategies, and values and faith beliefs .
- **Stay connected with the deployed parent.** Discuss the prenatal development of the baby through letters, email, pictures, instant messaging, and real time video connections. Make efforts for both parents to share in decision making. Keep a written baby book to share when the deployed parent returns. Keeping an electronic journal with video clips, photos, and written entries will ensure connections with the deployed parent and the baby. Mail the CD or send it through e-mail.

- **Have regular prenatal checkups during pregnancy and well baby checkups after the baby is born.**
- **Incorporate into the budget the financial demands a baby brings** – baby furniture, clothing, food, diapers, medical expenses. Take advantage of children's consignment stores and thrift shops. Other mothers may share or recycle their baby clothes and furniture. Using these resources will save on the budget, and eventually allow recycling of these things for other Families and friends.
- **Maintain supportive relationships with Family and friends.** Having a support person, usually a friend, throughout a pregnancy makes a big difference. Having a good friend to be a labor coach during the absence of a spouse provides a great comfort. Family and friends can help with tasks before, during, and after the baby's birth.
- **Seek support networks from the Family Readiness Group.** This is a great place to meet friends and receive help managing a pregnancy alone during deployment.
- **Check with Army Community Service (ACS) for information about the New Parent Support Program (NPSP).** The NPSP is targeted toward new or first time parents and services are available to all parents from pregnancy through the time a child is three years old. The program is designed to strengthen parent's knowledge and skills so they can then provide environments where children can thrive. The program also seeks to reduce stressors that can increase the risk of child abuse and neglect. The NPSP includes social workers and nurses who do home visits and provide various other services. Home visitors cover a wide range of topics with Families, from potty training and discipline to feeding schedules and time management.
- **Connect with a faith group and other community resources for support.** Community organizations sometimes offer educational classes on topics such as pregnancy, nutrition, time management, and child development. As a means of support a friend may attend these classes.
- **Seek mental health when needed.**

After deployment, when returning home to a new baby, it is important for the returning parent-Soldier to be alert to the child's and spouse's needs. Likewise, it is important for the non deployed parent to help the returning parent find ways to develop an attachment with the new baby. These concerns are of course coupled with the typical transitions back home after deployment. It will take a while for the returning parent to become part of a home where the baby is in charge of when to wake up, when to sleep, and when to eat. The successful transition to parenthood depends on wanting as a couple to make the child come first and enjoying together the experience it brings. A new baby is demanding and requires timely and responsive attention.

One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is to love each other and model a healthy adult relationship. However, adults no longer have the sole claim to each other once they have children. This requires parents to be patient, yet diligent in finding time for each other. It also depends on recognizing that a relationship with a spouse must expand to include a new person. Parenthood changes people. This can be a good change when parents are careful to find time for each other and maintain connections while enjoying the responsibilities of children. Open and honest communication along with thinking through concerns and making decisions together will nurture a strong and healthy spouse relationship. The infant will not be the only focus of the Family forever, but it is important during this stage of a Family's development.



A baby needs to develop a secure attachment with both parents. This happens when both parents develop a trusting relationship with the baby by being responsive and consistent in meeting the baby's needs. Sometimes, parents underestimate how much difference simple contributions make in creating a bond between a baby and parent, and in turn, between dad and mom. A baby needs his or her mother's and father's care giving. Both parents should learn to feel comfortable changing diapers, bathing the baby, playing, feeding, burping, holding, rocking, and putting the baby to bed. Parents should share in taking the baby for medical visits, taking care of the baby when sick, and buying clothes, supplies and toys for the baby. Babies develop secure attachments to both parents when they sense they can trust their needs will be met through responsive, consistent, and loving care.

It is important for parents to keep ongoing contact with their community and support systems once the baby is born. Don't become isolated or spend too much time alone. Community groups, parenting programs, the Family Readiness Group, and faith groups are a few places where parents can and should be involved. It is also important for the socialization of the baby once he or she is born.

## **WHAT CAN PARENTS THAT ARE EXPECTING A BABY DO?**

### **Coping Strategies that Foster Resilience During Pregnancy and Deployment**

#### **Train-Up/Preparation, Mobilization, and Deployment**

- Prepare and maintain a current Family Care Plan and Emergency Care Plan.
- Discuss plans, responsibilities, hopes, and dreams related to the expecting baby, prior to deployment if aware of the pregnancy.
- Stay connected with the deployed expectant parent. Discuss prenatal development through letters, email, pictures, instant messaging, and real time video connections. Send pictures of the pregnant parent and extra copies of ultrasounds. Tape the birth and baby and send/email the CD to the deployed parent. Send feet and hand prints. Share in decision making. Keep a written baby book to share.
- Have regular prenatal checkups and well baby checkups after the baby is born.
- Budget for the financial demands of a baby – equipment, clothes, food, medical expenses. Take advantage of gently used items from friends or thrift stores.
- Maintain supportive relationships with Family and friends. Have a friend be a labor coach during the absence of a spouse. Help is needed before, during, and after the baby is born.
- Seek support – Family Readiness Group, Army Community Service's New Parent Support Program, and websites such as MyArmyLifeToo.com and MilitaryOneSource.com.
- Connect with community resources and your faith group for support.
- Attend educational classes such as pregnancy, nutrition, or child development.
- Seek help from mental health professionals when needed.
- Develop a secure attachment with the baby. Trust develops by being responsive and consistent in meeting the infant's needs. You quickly learn the differences in your baby's cries (hungry, tired, bored, wet).
- Use your time to reflect on the new changes in your life.
- Learn about the stages of development – what to expect and how to begin communicating. Understand that every infant is unique and develops at his or her own rate.
- Talk with your pediatrician about your baby's development, especially if concerned.

### **Post Deployment and Reconstitution**

- Be alert to baby's needs. They require prompt, responsive attention. Non deployed parents can help returning parents understand new responsibilities. Understand the infant is in charge of when to wake up, sleep, and eat.
- Both parents need to develop a secure attachment with the baby. Attachments are formed when babies sense they can trust their needs will be met through responsive, consistent, and loving care. Share in caring for the baby - changing diapers, putting baby to bed, taking the baby for medical checkups, caring for the baby when sick .
- Maintain connections with spouse, while enjoying the responsibilities of children. One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is to love each other and model a healthy adult relationship. Parents need to be patient, yet diligent in finding time for each other. Understand parenthood changes parents. Open, honest communication and thinking through problems together nurtures a strong spouse relationship.
- Keep contact with support systems – community groups, parenting programs, Family Readiness Group, and faith groups.
- Seek help from mental health professionals when needed.

**Notes**

## RESOURCES

### Web Sites For Children And Youth

#### Military And Federal Government

##### DoD

**Military One Source** (<http://www.militaryonesource.com>) – has informational articles on a wide array of topics and can self-refer to counselor at any time

**Military Child in Transition and Deployment** (<http://www.militarystudent.dod.mil>) – this DoD Web site offers chat room, deployment tips, and resources for children and teens

**Military Teens on the Move (MTOM)** (<http://www.defenselink.mil/mtom>) – a DoD Web site to help kids and teens deal with relocations and moves; can be helpful in dealing with relocations related to deployment

**America Supports You** (<http://www.americasupportsyoud.mil/AmericaSupportsYou/index.html>) – a DoD Web site that military children can view to find out about the different ways citizens are supporting military Families and also ways kids can become involved

##### Army

**MyArmyLifeToo** (<http://www.myarmylifetoo.com>) – official Army Web site for active, guard and reserve Families that provides information on an array of Army programs and services (including managing deployment and children and youth services); with links to:

- **Army Community Service (ACS)** – ACS offers a variety of skill building programs and services to assist Soldiers and Families with military and Family life issues (that include deployment, relocation, financial, employment, and parenting)
- **Army Child & Youth Services (CYS)** (also accessible at (<http://www.armymwr.com>) – CYS provides youth programs on military installations; CYS works in partnership with Boys and Girls Club and 4-H to have programs for military youth in local communities
- **Army Reserve Family Programs** (also accessible at <http://www.arfp.org>) – see Army Reserve Child and Youth Services section which contains separate subsection for children
- **National Guard Family Program Online Community** (also accessible at <http://www.guardfamily.org>) – see separate section for youth, National Guard Youth Online Community (also accessible at <http://www.guardfamily.org/youth>)
- **Virtual FRG** – (<http://www.armyfrg.org>) Families are encouraged to register and use this secure access to communicate with and maintain connections with your deployed Soldier

**Operation Military Kids** (<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>) – Army CY5 has and is continuing to set up community support networks for youth of mobilized Guard and Reserve that gives youth access to recreational, social and educational activities in their local community; visit this Web site to find out about programs in different states.

**Hooah4Health** (<http://www.hooah4health.com>) – this Army Web site identifies resources for helping children maintain their health and well-being; information and links are provided for dealing with deployment and various children and Family issues

**Army MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation)** (<http://www.armymwr.com>) – for information on recreation and leisure programs available

### Federal

**Government Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network** (CYFERnet) (<http://www.cyfernet.org>) – has online activities and information for kids (see just for kids) and teens (see teens R it)

### Civilian

**American Psychological Association** (<http://www.apa.org>) – provides information on a variety of psychology topics; articles (such as road to resilience written to help teens deal with war) can also be found on [www.apahelpcenter.org](http://www.apahelpcenter.org)

**Boys & Girls Clubs of America** (<http://www.bgca.org>) – offers a variety of programs designed to promote skills and development of children and youth; go to Web site to identify a club near you; through partnership with Army Child and Youth Services, Boys and Girls Club also available on military installations, for more information contact Army Child and Youth Services

**Community Youth Mapping** (<http://www.communityyouthmapping.org>) – this Web site sponsored by Academy for Educational Development (AED) Center for Youth Development and Policy Research is a tool to help youth identify resources and programs available in your local community

**Dougy Center** (<http://www.dougy.org>) – This web site offers numerous resources on how to help a grieving child, teenager, or adult. It provides helpful information for children and teens on handling grief, death, and funerals

**Mental Health America (formerly National Mental Health Association)** (<http://www.nmha.org>) – provides special web section for teens and young adults called mpower (also accessible at <http://www.mpoweryouth.org/411.htm>) to help teens learn about mental health topics and substance abuse and where to go for help; also click on help section to find screening tools

**National 4-H Council** (<http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>) – 4-H clubs, camps and after school programs offered to children and youth that focus on leadership, citizenship and life skills; visit the Web site to find out what 4-H programs are offered in your state; military youth are encouraged to click on 4HUSA.org to connect to 4-H online community for youth

**National 4-H Headquarters (USDA)** (<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>) – 4-H, which is conducted by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES of USDA), offers youth development programs at the local, regional, state and national levels; click on 4-H community menu to learn about military 4-H programs

**National Military Family Association** (<http://www.nmfa.org>) – NMFA sponsors a week of free summer camp to children of deployed personnel (see details about Operation Purple Camps)

**Surviving Deployment.com** (<http://www.survivingdeployment.com>) – this Web site by Elva Resa Publishing offers link to Kids Zone (also accessible at <http://www.deploymentkids.com>) for ideas and tools on how to cope with deployment

## Web Sites For Parents

### Military And Federal Government

#### DoD

**Military One Source** (<http://www.militaryonesource.com>) – has informational articles on a wide array of topics and can self-refer to counselor at any time; see sections on children and youth, deployment, and trauma, crisis and violence for articles and booklets on helping children and on parenting

**Military Child in Transition and Deployment** (<http://www.militarystudent.dod.mil>) – DoD's official site for education information for military children; has information for kids, parents, educators and leadership to assist with school transitions and deployment; offers chat room, deployment tips, and resources for children and teens

**Operation Military Child Care** – a DoD program that assists active duty and mobilized Guard and Reserve in finding affordable child care in your local community; for information on child care options, call National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) at 1-800-424-2246 or on the internet at <http://www.childcareaware.org>

**Department of Defense Mental Health Self-Assessment (MHSA) program** (<http://www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org>) – a DoD sponsored Web site where Soldiers and Family members can screen anonymously to assess whether have mental problems; parents can also use this tool to determine whether an adolescent is showing signs of depression

**America Supports You** (<http://www.americasupportsyou.mil/AmericaSupportsYou/index.html>) – a DoD Web site that military Families can view to find out about the different ways citizens are supporting military Families and also ways kids and Families can become involved

### Army

**MyArmyLifeToo** (<http://www.myarmylifetoo.com>) – official Army Web site for active, guard and reserve Families that provides information on an array of Army programs and services (including managing deployment and child and youth services); with links to:

- **Army Community Service (ACS)** – ACS offers a variety of skill building programs and services to assist Soldiers and Families with military and Family life issues (that include deployment, relocation, financial, employment, and parenting)
- **Army Child & Youth Services (CYS) (also accessible at <http://www.armymwr.com>)** – CYS provides child care, before/after school care and youth programs on military installations as well as offers information on and arranges affordable quality child care in local communities; CYS works in partnership with Boys and Girls Club and 4-H to have programs for military youth in local communities; CYS (through School Liaison Officer or SLO position) also conducts outreach to schools to educate on military children's issues and reactions to deployment
- **Army Reserve Family Programs** (also accessible at <http://www.arfp.org>) – for information related to deployment of Reserves and assistance in locating services in your local community; see Army Reserve Child and Youth Services section which contains separate subsections for parents and children
- **National Guard Family Program Online Community** (also accessible at <http://www.guardfamily.org>) – designed as a one-stop shop for information, resources and programs for Guard Families and assistance in locating services in your local community; has separate sections for Family members and youth; see National Guard Youth Online Community (also accessible at <http://www.guardfamily.org/youth>)
- **Virtual FRG** – (<http://www.armymwr.com>) Families are encouraged to register and use this secure access to communicate with and maintain connections with your deployed Soldier

**Operation Military Kids** (<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>) – Army CYS has and is continuing to set up community support networks for youth of mobilized Guard and Reserve that gives youth access to recreational, social and educational activities in their local community; visit this Web site to find out about programs in your state

**Hooah4Health** (<http://www.hooah4health.com>) – this Army Web site identifies resources for helping military Family members (including children) maintain their health and well-being; information and links are provided for dealing with deployment and various children and Family issues



**Army MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation)** (<http://www.armymwr.com>) – for information on recreation and leisure programs available to Families

## Federal

### Government

**Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet)** (<http://www.cyfernet.org>) – provides parents, program professionals and educators with links to a variety of informational materials, programs and research focusing on child development, parenting, and child and Family issues; information posted on this Web site written either by universities or professional organizations; features monthly “hot topics” as well as separate sections with online activities and information for kids (see just for kids) and teens (see teens R it)

**National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** (<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/>) – this Federal government Web site of Department of Veterans Affairs has information for veterans and Families on PTSD, traumatic stress as well as handouts on dealing with warzone reactions and reintegration

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** (<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>) – this Federal government Web site provides informational materials and online publications for parents, educators and response workers on mental health issues, disasters, terrorism, and trauma; information for parents on helping children cope with fear and anxiety related to traumatic events can be found on the following web page [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/TraumaticEvents/tips.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/TraumaticEvents/tips.asp)

## Civilian

**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry** (<http://www.aacap.org>) – has Facts for Families, a series of fact sheets offering information on a range of issues affecting children, teenagers and Families (for example, Facts for Families #87 focuses on Talking to Children about Terrorism and War, #88 focuses on military children’s reactions to separation, #67 focuses on the effects of watching the news); typically sets up a special page for major incidents; also has a directory for finding a psychiatrist in your local area

**American Academy of Pediatrics** (<http://www.aap.org>) – has information for parents on a wide array of children’s health and parenting topics

**American Legion** (<http://www.legion.org>) – offers a variety of supports to military Families including child care and youth programs

**American Psychological Association** (<http://www.apa.org>) – provides information on a variety of psychology topics; typically sets up a special section when major incidents occur; articles (such as road to resilience written to help teens and Families deal with war) can also be found on [www.apahelpcenter.org](http://www.apahelpcenter.org); also has a directory for finding a psychologist in your local area

### Civilian

**Boys & Girls Clubs of America** (<http://www.bgca.org>) – offers a variety of programs designed to promote skills and development of children and youth; go to Web site to identify a club nearby; through partnership with Army Child and Youth Services, Boys and Girls Club also available on military installations, for more information contact Army Child and Youth Services

**Community Youth Mapping** (<http://www.communityyouthmapping.org>) – this Web site sponsored by Academy for Educational Development (AED) Center for Youth Development and Policy Research is a tool to help youth identify resources and programs available in your local community

**Dougy Center** (<http://www.dougy.org>) – This web site offers numerous resources on how to help a grieving child, teenager, or adult. It provides helpful information on handling grief, death, and funerals with children and youth

**Mental Health America (formerly National Mental Health Association)** (<http://www.nmha.org>) – provides information on mental health topics with:

- special section for troops and Families that addresses helping children cope with war and helping Families with reunion
- informational section for youth and Families to get information on children's mental health issues (such as anxiety, depression, etc.) and parenting topics
- special web section for teens and young adults called mpower (also accessible at <http://www.mpoweryouth.org/411.htm>) to help teens learn about mental health topics and substance abuse and where to go for help
- click on help section to find screening tools and links to find mental health therapists in your local area

**Military Child Education Coalition** (<http://www.militarychild.org>) – is an organization that works to make schools aware of the educational issues of military children; military parents can find important information and resources for working with schools during their child's school transitions and deployment

### **Military Impacted Schools Association**

(<http://www.militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org>) – is an organization that represents schools with high concentration of military children; the organization works on funding, legislation and programs to ensure quality education for military children; military parents can use this web site to enhance awareness of legislation and efforts being made to support military children

**National 4-H Council** (<http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>) – 4-H clubs, camps and after school programs offered to children and youth that focus on leadership, citizenship and life skills; visit the Web site to find out what 4-H programs are offered in your state; click on 4-H afterschool (also accessible at [www.4-hafterschool.org/](http://www.4-hafterschool.org/)) to find after school program in your area; military youth are encouraged to click on 4HUSA.org to connect to 4-H online community for youth

**Civilian**

**National 4-H Headquarters (USDA)** (<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>) – 4-H, which is conducted by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES of USDA), offers youth development programs at the local, regional, state and national levels; click on 4-H community menu to learn about military 4-H programs

**National Association for the Education of Young Children** (<http://www.naeyc.org>) – NAEYC offers information for parents on finding NAEYC accredited child care programs as well as educational materials on activities that promote development of children birth through age 8

**National Association of School Psychologists** (<http://www.nasponline.org>) – this Web site offers information for Families on an array of children's behavior, mental health and education issues

**National Association of Social Workers (NASW)** (<http://www.socialworkers.org>) – look under press room menu and click on HelpStartsHere.org to find information on early childhood and youth development along with parenting tips; also has a directory to locate social worker in your local area

**National Child Traumatic Stress Network** (<http://www.NCTSN.org>) – offers information and resources for Families, professionals, and educators to help children deal with trauma events; has special sections for natural disasters and terrorism and typically sets up special section when traumatic events occur

**National Military Family Association** (<http://www.nmfa.org>) – provides information on programs, benefits and topics of interest to military Families; see Deployment and You section for a list of deployment resources; NMFA also sponsors a week of free summer camp to children of deployed personnel (see details about Operation Purple Camps)

**NYU Child Study Center** (<http://www.aboutourkids.org>) – offers a variety of articles on parenting, mental health, growth and development, and special issues such as talking to children about war (<http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/war.html>) and images of war

**Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists (SOFAR)** (<http://www.sofarusa.org>) – provides education and free clinical services to Families of deployed Reservists (with primary emphasis on greater Boston area although expanding its efforts); their Web site offers publications such as SOFAR guide on Helping Children and Youth Cope with the Deployment of a Parent in the Military Reserves as well as links to important resources

## Civilian

**Surviving Deployment.com** (<http://www.survivingdeployment.com>) – this Web site by Elva Resa Publishing offers articles and links for military Families; see article on kids and journaling and link to Kids Zone (also accessible at <http://www.deploymentkids.com>) for ideas and tools on how to help children cope with deployment

**Zero to Three** (<http://www.zerotothree.org>) – offers science-based information and tools for parents, educators and policy makers on how to nurture young children's development; look under "key topic" menu and click on military Families to find information and tips on how to help young children cope with military stresses such as deployment; see Zero to Three publication Little Listeners in an Uncertain World: Coping strategies for you and your child during deployment or when a crisis occurs to learn about babies and toddlers' reactions to stress

A

## Books For Children And Youth

### Books about Deployment for Children and Youth

This is a sampling of books available that parents can use to talk about deployment with their children.

- Brunson, J. (2003). A year without dad. Authors & Artists Publishers of New York, Incorporated.  
A first hand account of dealing with the absence and military deployment of a dad in the National Guard.
- Ferguson-Cohen, M. (2005 board book and 2002 paperback). Mommy, you're my hero. Brooklyn, NY: Little Redhaired Girl Publishing, Inc. Written from child's perspective, this book helps military and reservists' parents talk to children about deployment and war. for 4-8 year olds
- Ferguson-Cohen, M. (2005 board book and 2003 other format). Daddy, you're my hero. Brooklyn, NY: Little Redhaired Girl Publishing, Inc. Written from child's perspective, this book helps military and reservists' parents talk to children about deployment and war. for 4-8 year olds
- Hilbrecht, K., & Hilbrecht, S. (2000). My daddy is a Soldier. New Canaan, CT: New Canaan Publishing Company, Inc. This book talks about various aspects of a Soldier's life and how Family supports the Soldier. for 4-8 year olds
- Hoyt, C. (2005). Daddy's in Iraq, but I want him back. Trafford Publishing.  
A story about a young boy and his Family's experiences when father deployed to Iraq. for preschoolers
- Mead, A. (2001 paperback). Soldier mom. New York, NY: Random House Children's Books. This book is written from the perspective of an 11 year old and tells the story of an adolescent's experiences and feelings when her single mother is called up from the Army Reserves to go to Persian Gulf war and her mother's boyfriend moves in to take care of her and her baby brother. for young adults
- Mersiowsky, A. (2005). A yellow ribbon for daddy. Phoenix, AZ: Veritas Media. This book answers young children's questions about deployment. for 3-8 year olds

## RESOURCES

- Pelton, M. (2004). *When dad's at sea*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman and Company. This book tells the story of a how a young girl and her Family deal with the separation of her dad on a lengthy deployment. for 6-9 year olds
- Sesame Street Talk, listen, and connect – Helping Families during deployment. A bilingual kit developed by Sesame Street, New York Office of Mental Health and Military Child Education Coalition to help Families and children cope with feelings, challenges and concerns in different phases of deployment cycle. Available for free at [www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc](http://www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc).
- Spinelli, E. (2004). *While you are away*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. A narrative by three children, each representing a different branch of military, of their feelings and experiences during deployment. for 4-8 year olds
- Sportelli-Rehak, A. (2003). *Uncle Sam's kids: When duty calls*. Abidenme Books. This book gives parents and caregivers techniques and ideas on how to address children's reactions and the psychological aspects of different stages of deployment cycle. for 5-11 year olds

### Books about Parent Absence/Separation for Children and Youth

- McCormick, W. (2002 paperback, 1999 hardcover). *Daddy, will you miss me? Aladdin*. This book talks about the different ways a boy and his daddy stay close while his daddy is in Africa for four weeks. for 5-6 year olds
- Sederman, M. & Epstein, S. (2002). *The magic box: When parents can't be there to tuck you in*. American Psychological Association.
- Casey and his father find a special way to share their love when his father has to go away on business. Includes a note to parents. for 5-8 year olds

### Books For Parents

This is a sampling of books available for additional parenting information.

- Brazelton, T. B., & Greenspan, S. I. (2000). *The irreducible needs of children: What every child must have to grow, learn, and flourish*. New York: Perseus.
- Elkind, D. (1994). *A sympathetic understanding of the child: Birth to sixteen*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Elkind, D. (1998). *All grown up and no place to go: Teenagers in crisis*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Elkind, D. (2001). *The hurried child: Growing up too fast too soon*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1980). *How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk*. New York: Avon Books.
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### Footnotes

- (1) Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994, developed the National Extension Parent Education Model which compiles parenting practices recognized by parenting educators from across the United States as priority, or important, parenting practices.
- (2) Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Plan is available at [www.armyg1.army.mil/dcs/default.asp](http://www.armyg1.army.mil/dcs/default.asp)  
Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2007; Memorandum on the Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Directive dated 26 March 2007 from Acting Secretary of the Army.
- (3) Newby & Vineburgh, 2004.
- (4) Berk, 2006; Calkins & Johnson, 1998; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Gilliom et al., 2002; Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004
- (5) Adapted from Erikson, 1950, 1968
- (6) Erikson, 1950, 1968
- (7) Jensen et al., 1986; Watanabe & Jensen, 2000; Waldrep, Cozza, & Chun, 2004; Cozza, Chun, & Polo 2005
- (8) Bowlby, 1969
- (9) Erikson, 1968
- (10) Huebner et al., 2007
- (11) Boss, 2006
- (12) Huebner, et al., 2007
- (13) Walker et al., 1991
- (14) de Haan & Johnson, 2003; Huttenlocher, 1994; Stiles, 2001
- (15) Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997
- (16) Baumrind, 1991; Dekovic & Janssens, 1991; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn, et al., 1991; Steinberg, et al., 1989
- (17) Smith et al., 1994
- (18) Jensen & Shaw, 1996
- (19) Wiens & Boss, 2006
- (20) Watanabe & Jensen, 2000
- (21) Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984
- (22) Boss, 2006; Walsh, 1998
- (23) Wiens & Boss, 2006
- (24) Levine, 2003
- (25) Huebner & Mancini, 2005
- (26) Figley, 1993; Jensen & Shaw, 1996; Watanabe & Jensen, 2000

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- (27) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health, and Zero to Three.
- (28) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; and U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health
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- (30) Information from the following was reviewed in creating this section: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychological Association, 2007; Army Reserve Family Programs; Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network; Department of the Army Operation READY; Huebner & Mancini, 2005; National Military Family Association; Military Child Education Coalition; Military One Source; Military Student.Org; Operation Military Kids; Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health
- (31) Information provided on this topic is taken from the Trauma in the Unit Handbook, a part of the Operation READY series, authored by Deborah Mancini, 2007.
- (32) Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Jensen, 1992
- (33) Ryan-Wenger, 2002
- (34) Wolfe, 1996
- (35) Webb, 2004
- (36) NMFA, 2004; Cozza et al., 2005, Cozza & Chun, 2005; Jensen & Shaw, 1996; Hardaway, 2004
- (37) McKenry & Price, 2005
- (38) Figley & Barnes, 2005
- (39) Figley, 1993
- (40) Figley & Barnes, 2005



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- (41) Figley & Barnes, 2005
- (42) Litz, 2005
- (43) Webb, 2004
- (44) Ursano & Norwood, 1996; Webb, 2004; Jensen & Shaw, 1996.



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