



COPING WITH CHALLENGES WHILE ON R & R

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

AGENDA

- Common Concerns
- Possible Roadblocks
- Communication Guidelines
- Communicating Long Distance
- Coping Skills



OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn to identify common concerns and possible roadblocks to having a positive R & R experience
- Gain knowledge of coping skills for achieving a positive R & R experience
- Learn effective communication skills



INTRODUCTION

- R & R can be both a joyful and a stressful time
- R & R impacts all family members
- R & R is different from the reunion and reintegration experience



COMMON CONCERNS

Common concerns for service members

- Will my family be happy to see me?
- Will my kids recognize me?
- Will I feel guilty for leaving my buddies behind?

Common concerns for spouse and family members

- Will my service member have flashbacks or be angry?
- Will our routine have to be disrupted?



COMMON CONCERNS

CONTINUED

Common concerns for both the service member and their spouse

- Will my spouse still want and need me?
- How much has my spouse changed?
- Will we still have things to talk about?
- Will my spouse still find me attractive?



POSSIBLE ROADBLOCKS

Family members may have taken on new roles and may have changed as a result:

- Spouse - may have learned to be more independent
- Children - may have matured and have taken on more responsibilities than before
- Service members - may still be in a warrior mentality with different priorities



POSSIBLE ROADBLOCKS

CONTINUED

- Problems before deployment
- Unrealistic expectations
- A tendency to focus on problems at home
- A resistance to reconnecting
- Poor communication skills
- Conflicting emotions



COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

- Discuss everything openly
- Avoid the “Who had it worse” discussions
- Approach each other as equals
- Don’t assume your spouse knows what you’re thinking



COMMUNICATING LONG DISTANCE

- Develop plans for staying in touch
- Be realistic about the communication
- Be honest about your feelings
- Don't read between the lines



COPING SKILLS

Remember, this is a time for rest and recuperation

- Focus on being together in the present moment
- Let your spouse and family know how much they are appreciated and loved
- Communicate your needs to your family prior to your return
- Remember the time together is short
- Stick with the routines established in the home – this is not a time for making changes



COPING SKILLS

CONTINUED

- Re-establish sexual intimacy slowly
- Don't use this as a time to unload on each other about what the separation has been like for you – don't play the “who has it worse game”
- Take it slowly and be patient with your family
- Give yourself permission to take this time for yourself
- Stay flexible



COPING SKILLS

CONTINUED

- If flashbacks and intrusive thoughts occur, remind yourself that this is a normal response
- Keep communication channels open
- Spend time together as a couple
- Spend time with children (together and individually)



COPING SKILLS

CONTINUED

- Don't be critical
- Limit alcohol use
- Don't make major life decisions
- Don't over-book yourself with too many activities
- Arrange quiet time



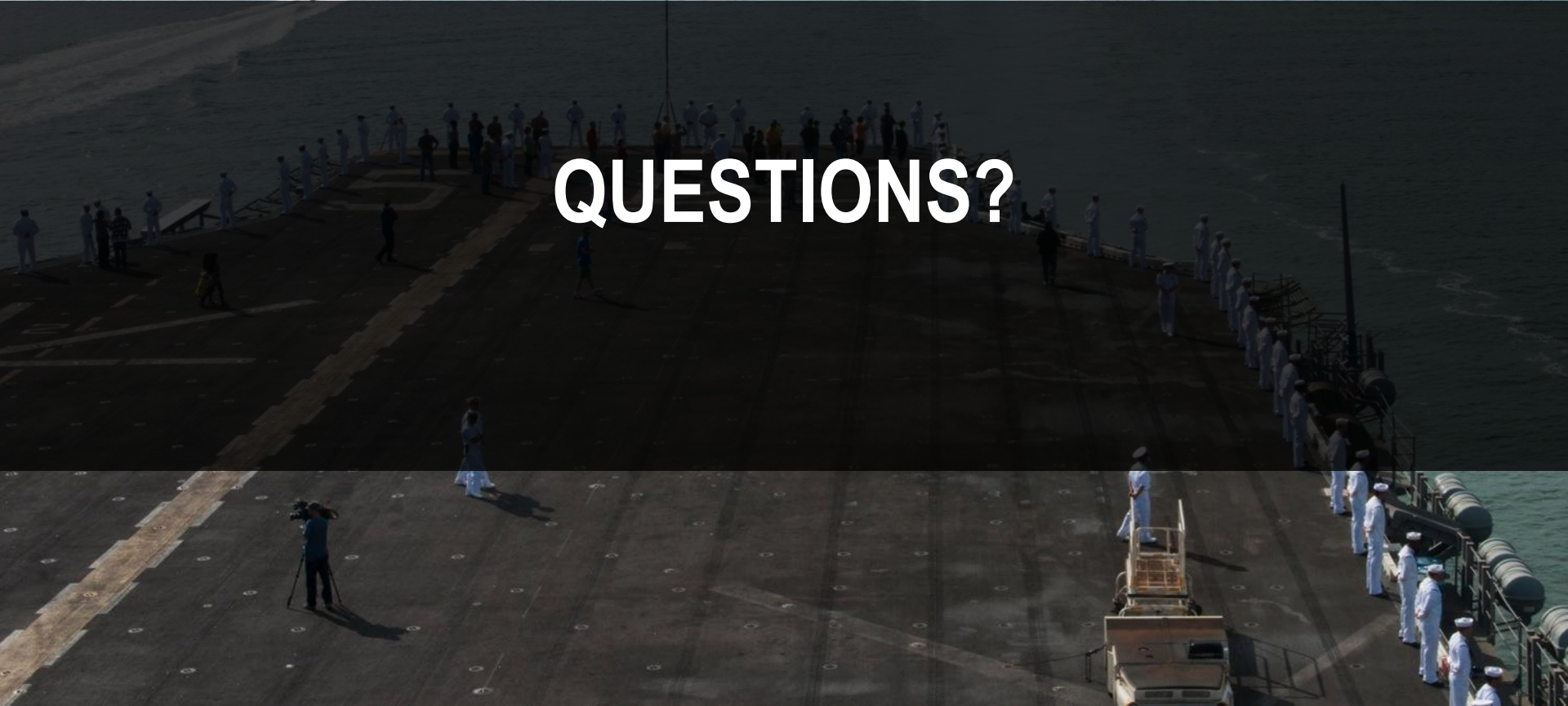
SUMMARY

- R & R can be both joyful and stressful
- The fact that R & R is short term presents challenges
- Keeping the marital and family relationships positive requires good communication skills
- It is best to stay focused in the present moment – Don't focus on the end of R & R
- R & R is a time to practice self-care and let others know what your needs are.





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services





THANK YOU