



FROM COUPLEHOOD TO PARENTHOOD

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

- How to handle the many changes that occur during the transition to parenthood
- How to make the transition when a spouse is deployed



AGENDA

- Introduction
- How your life will change
- Causes of possible conflict
- How to avoid conflict
- Tips for making a smooth transition
- When Dad is deployed
- Can parenthood make you a better partner
- Summary



INTRODUCTION

- Having a baby is exciting and beautiful but it can also put a strain on your marriage.
- About 4.2 million babies are born each year in the U.S.
- About two-thirds of couples report a decline in marital satisfaction during the first three years.
- However, roughly 30% of couples report an improvement in marital satisfaction



HOW YOUR LIFE WILL CHANGE

Your life will change in many areas:

- Social life
- Marital relationship
- Sleep patterns
- Energy level
- Priorities
- Relationships with friends and family
- Ability to be spontaneous



CAUSES OF POSSIBLE CONFLICT

- All the focus is now on the baby
- Moms and Dads respond differently to the new family member
- Both parents experience significant sleep deprivation
- Both have stress and anxiety about being the “perfect parent”
- There is a huge upheaval in daily routines
- The partners may have different priorities



HOW TO AVOID CONFLICT

Communication is key

- Choose an appropriate time to begin a discussion
- Listen without criticizing
- Remain calm and respectful
- Acknowledge the things that are positive
- Give yourself and your spouse credit and praise for the things you are doing well



TIPS FOR MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION

Before your baby arrives:

- Talk with couples who seem to have made a smooth transition to parenthood
- Spend quality time together before the baby comes
- Read parenting books – especially ones that focus on having a first child
- Find a couples' enrichment program
- Take a parenting class together
- Get baby sitters lined up



TIPS FOR MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION

CONTINUED

After your baby arrives:

- Spend some quality time away from the baby
- Accept the differences in how you respond to your newborn
- If your sex life has declined, accept this is normal and take it slowly
- Show affection for each other – holding hands, hugging, kissing



WHEN DAD IS DEPLOYED

- Send lots of pictures, emails, letters and cell phone pictures
- If possible, use a web-cam or video conference
- Check with the hospital regarding web-cams in the delivery room
- Communicate often how much you love and appreciate each other



What moms can do:

- Get your support system in place before the baby comes
- Keep your spouse informed of all the milestones reached



WHEN DAD IS DEPLOYED

CONTINUED

What Dads can do:

- Check in as often as possible with your spouse
- Send small gifts for your baby
- Send small gifts for your spouse, too
- Stay involved in all decision making



CAN PARENTHOOD MAKE YOU A BETTER PARTNER?

Absolutely!

What parenthood teaches us:

- Tolerance
- Playfulness
- Appreciation
- Flexibility



SUMMARY

- About two-thirds of all couples report a decline in marital satisfaction within the first three years of marriage.
- Many areas of life change when the first baby comes
- When conflicts occur, communication is key
- Work on enriching the marriage before the baby comes
- When Dad is deployed, send lots of pictures, emails, letters, and use a web-cam if possible
- If marital discord persists, contact a behavioral health professional





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

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



REFERENCES

- Susan K. Perry, *Loving in Flow: How the Happiest Couples Get and Stay that Way* (April 2003)
- John Gottman, *Seven Principles for Making a Marriage Work*
- John Gottman and Julie Schwartz Gottman, *Bringing Baby Home: A Program for New Parents Experiencing the Transition to Parenthood*” Instruction Manual
- Stacie Codkrell, Cathy O’Neill and Julia Stonr, co-authors of *Babyproofing Your Marriage*





THANK YOU