



MAKING MARRIAGE WORK AFTER DEPLOYMENT

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Pre-deployment marital issues
- Changes in each other as a result of deployment
- Challenges of reuniting and adjusting to life post-combat
- Solutions and skills for a stable, satisfying relationship



COMMON MARITAL ISSUES

Whether military or civilian, marriages commonly struggle around certain issues

- Money
- Sexual intimacy
- Children
- Roles in and outside the marriage
- Trust and fidelity



THE EXPERIENCE OF DEPLOYMENT

Spouse at home

- Expanded responsibilities
- Single parenting
- Handling finances
- Anxiety, anger, stress
- Loneliness
- Growth, change, self confidence

Service Member at war

- Separated from family and friends
- Disrupted career
- Stress of combat
- Lonely, scared, angry, sad
- Expanded world experience and possible changes in worldview



CHALLENGES OF REUNION

- Unrealistic expectations
- Role changes – again
- Financial changes, struggles, mismanagement
- Lack of intimacy
- Difficulty transitioning from demands of combat
- Potential for substance abuse or other compulsive behaviors
- Extended family, work obligations
- Changes and differences in values, each other



SOLUTIONS - INDIVIDUAL

- Adjust your expectations
- Give your partner time and space to ease back into a post-combat reality
- Solve your own issues that contribute to marital stress
- Expand your own personal skills and resources



SOLUTIONS - COUPLE

- Build and enrich the marital friendship
- Identify and honor values, ideals and goals of each other, the relationship, the family
- Take the time to increase intimacy – both emotional and sexual
- Address unresolved marital issues of the past
- Create rituals that celebrate the marriage, the family, and connect you to the community



SOLUTIONS – LIFE SKILLS

In making any marriage work, pre or post-combat, strong life skills in certain areas will ease the challenges of being a couple:

- Intimacy
- Communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Problem-Solving
- Negotiation



SOLUTIONS – INTIMACY/SEXUALITY

- Trust
- Feelings
- Fidelity
- Safety
- Forgiveness
- Appreciation, Gratitude, Respect



SOLUTIONS – LIFE SKILLS

Communication

- Be attentive to what is said
- Clarify understanding
- Listen for the feelings being communicated
- Notice body language
- Avoid mental rehearsal of your response while the other person is talking
- Use “I” messages when you do respond



SOLUTIONS – LIFE SKILLS

Conflict Resolution

- Accept that some conflict is normal
- Not all problems are solvable
- Agree to work with each other on what you can do
- Attack the problem not each other
- Roadblocks to success - Criticism, contempt, defensiveness, stubbornness, overwhelming emotions



SOLUTIONS – LIFE SKILLS

Problem Solving

- Identify the problem
- Brainstorm possible solutions
- Evaluate effectiveness of options
- Select a solution and implement
- Assess results and make adjustments as necessary



SOLUTIONS – LIFE SKILLS

Negotiation

- Figure out how to meet the needs of the other person without losing sight of your own goals or needs.
- Create win-win attitude and solutions
- Seek consensus, be willing to compromise
- Avoid power struggles



SUMMARY

- Deployment affects many aspects of the marital relationship
- It's important to keep communication channels open
- Be patient, and give each other time to readjust
- Be willing to compromise
- Seek help from professionals if readjustment issues persist and interfere with functioning





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

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



REFERENCES

- Gottman, John M and Silver, Nan. *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*. Three Rivers Press
- Hendrix, Harville. *Getting the Love You Want*. Owl Books.





THANK YOU