



# **PARENTING SKILLS FOR THE SINGLE SERVICE MEMBER**

**Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors**

# AGENDA

- Introduction
- Letting Go of the Guilt
- Positive Aspects of Being a Single Parent in the Military
- Discipline
- Tips for Communicating During Conflict
- Single Parent Deployment Readiness
- Positive Aspects of Separation
- Building Support
- Taking Care of Yourself
- When to Seek Help for Your Child
- When to Seek Help for Yourself
- Summary



# INTRODUCTION

## **All single parents have added parenting difficulties**

- Absence of partner to share in the day-to-day responsibilities
- Increased financial concerns
- Lack of emotional support a partner provides

## **Single parents in the military have additional difficulties**

- Responsibilities of being in the military
- Dealing with unique separation issues
- Relocation issues



# LETTING GO OF THE GUILT

- Ask yourself whether your expectations are realistic or not
- Remember what is really important
- Remind yourself that single parents raise healthy, well-adjusted children
- Focus on what is positive in life
- Talk with other single parents in the military
- Try to remember that perfect parenting isn't possible
- Remember that children are resilient



# POSITIVE ASPECTS OF BEING SINGLE IN THE MILITARY

- Job stability
- Health benefits for self and children
- Opportunity for children to build confidence and independence
- Helps children understand the honor of serving their country



# DISCIPLINE

## Discipline is a concern for every parent

### Single parents in the military have added considerations:

- Deployments and other duties which require separation from their children
- Separations are more frequent and for longer time periods than in most civilian jobs
- Separation requires coordinating with other caregivers to maintain consistency



# DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

## Basic discipline guidelines:

- Children want discipline
- Discipline should be kind but firm
- Consistency is crucial
- Remain calm and avoid criticism
- Catch your child being good and give lots of praise
- Be a good role model



# ESTABLISHING RULES & LIMITS

## Rules and limits provide children with a sense of stability:

- Establish age appropriate rules and limits
- Have your child participate in setting rules and consequences
- Be consistent
- Set consequences that can be completed quickly, then give the child a chance to try again
- Use natural and logical consequences





# NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

- A natural result of the behavior
- Not imposed by the parent
- Allows the child to own the problem and face the consequences
- Teaches self-discipline



# LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

- Imposed on the teen by the parent as a result of the teen's behavior
- Should be logically related to the behavior
- Makes the teen accountable for their choices and behaviors
- Allows their problems to belong to them – not to you



# TIME-IN

## The positive interactions and feedback children receive when they are not misbehaving:

- Give physical attention
- Be specific
- Give immediate feedback
- Plan parent-child activities
- Catch children being good



# TIME-OUT

- Refers to time-out from attention
- Appropriate for children younger than 10
- Should be used to shape behavior, not as a punishment
- Must be used consistently



# MAKING TIME-OUT WORK

- Give lots of time-in
- Prepare the child
- Implement immediately after misbehavior
- Remain calm
- Choose a boring place
- Keep time-out brief



# TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING DURING CONFLICT

- Do not make threats or use degrading language
- If a matter is really closed to discussion, say so. “I’m not changing my mind about this.”
- Be consistent
- Use “When you...I feel...because...” statements



# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN A PARENT DEPLOYS

- Many changes occur in the child's world
- Moods may fluctuate more than usual
- Discipline problems may increase
- Preparing your child can help



# TALKING ABOUT DEPLOYMENT

- Anticipate your child's questions
- Give advance notice if possible
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Let them know you love them no matter what
- Talk with them about how you will communicate while you're away – email, letters, tapes, videos





# TALKING ABOUT DEPLOYMENT

CONTINUED

- Listen without being judgmental
- Let them know they are not to blame
- Help them recognize the importance of your job
- Use visuals when possible



# SINGLE PARENT DEPLOYMENT READINESS

- Make sure your will covers who will become your child/children/s guardians should something happen to you
- Obtain a medical power of attorney for your child care provider/s so they can access routine and emergency care
- Let your child/children's school know you are being deployed



# SINGLE PARENT READINESS

CONTINUED

- Discuss discipline methods, rules and consequences with your children and their caregivers
- Plan with your children how you will keep in touch with each other
- Make sure your child care provider/s know how to contact you with you social security number, command name and mailing address and email address



# PARENTING LONG DISTANCE

- Exchange jokes with your child
- Send a special gift for each child – something unique from where you are stationed
- Ask your child to send you something special
- Offer to correspond with your child's class



# POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SEPARATION

- Can increase independence and self-confidence
- Relationship with deployed parent might strengthen through exchange of letters, packages, emails, phone calls
- Develop closer ties with your children as you and your child work together for the common goal of staying connected



# BUILDING SUPPORT

- Try to connect with other single parents in the military
- Trade off child care with other parents
- Reach out to family members and friends who live near by
- Get to know neighbors who have children



# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- Be kind to yourself
- Pamper yourself whenever you can
- Give yourself credit for the good job you have done
- Seek support from other parents and peers



# WHEN TO SEEK HELP FOR YOUR CHILD

**Most children adjust to changes in their lives within a couple of months. Seek help if the following difficulties persist:**

- Decline in grades
- Withdrawing from friends and activities
- Increase in behavioral problems
- Frequent crying
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns





# WHEN TO SEEK HELP FOR YOURSELF

**Seek help if the following do not subside and are interfering with your ability to function:**

- Sadness
- Anger
- Withdrawal from family, friends and co-workers
- Always seek help if you have thoughts of hurting yourself or your child



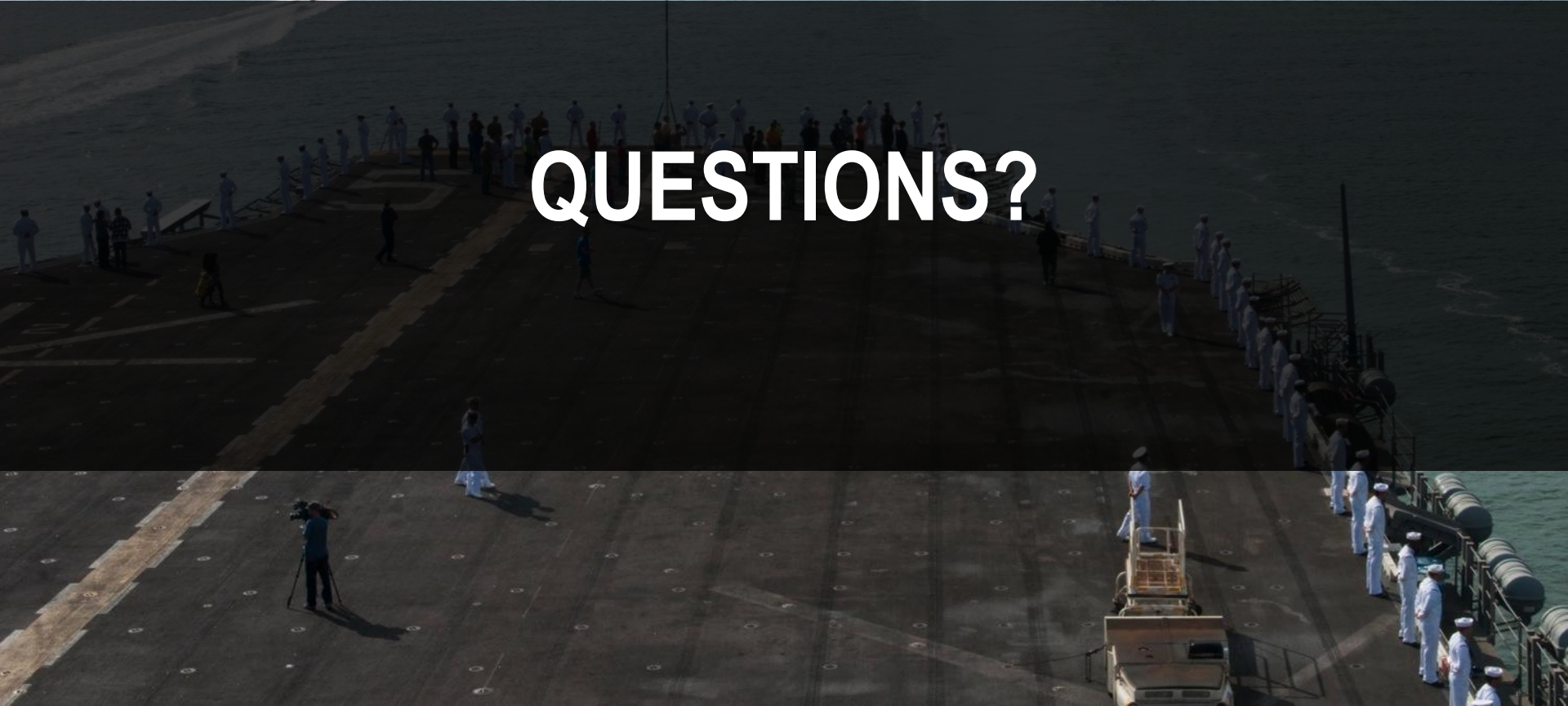
# SUMMARY

- Single parents raise healthy well-adjusted children
- There are many positive aspects of being a single parents in the military including job stability
- Discipline guidelines should include establishing rules and limits and determining consequences
- It's important to build a support network that includes family, friends and other single parents in the military
- Seek help for your child if behaviors such as frequent crying and withdrawal from friends continue
- Seek help if your feel you are a danger to yourself or your child





**QUESTIONS?**



# RESOURCES

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



# REFERENCES

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**THANK YOU**