



# WHEN A PARENT DEPLOYS (CHILDREN AGES 2 – 5)

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

# OBJECTIVES

- Understand the Relevant Developmental Issues
- Common Stress Reactions to Deployment
- Preparing Young Children for Deployment
- How to Talk to the Child About Deployment
- Preparing the Child for Separation
- Ways to Help Children Cope
- Coping Strategies for Caregivers



# DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

- No concept of time
- Abandonment issues are prevalent
- Need lots of repetition



# COMMON STRESS REACTIONS TO DEPLOYMENT

- Regressive behaviors such as bed-wetting, baby talk, asking for a bottle
- Fearfulness
- Clinging to caretakers
- Uncontrollable crying
- Irritability and acting out
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns



# PREPARING CHILDREN FOR DEPLOYMENT

- The pre-separation period is stressful for parents and children.
- Young children may not fully understand why a parent must leave.
- What can help?



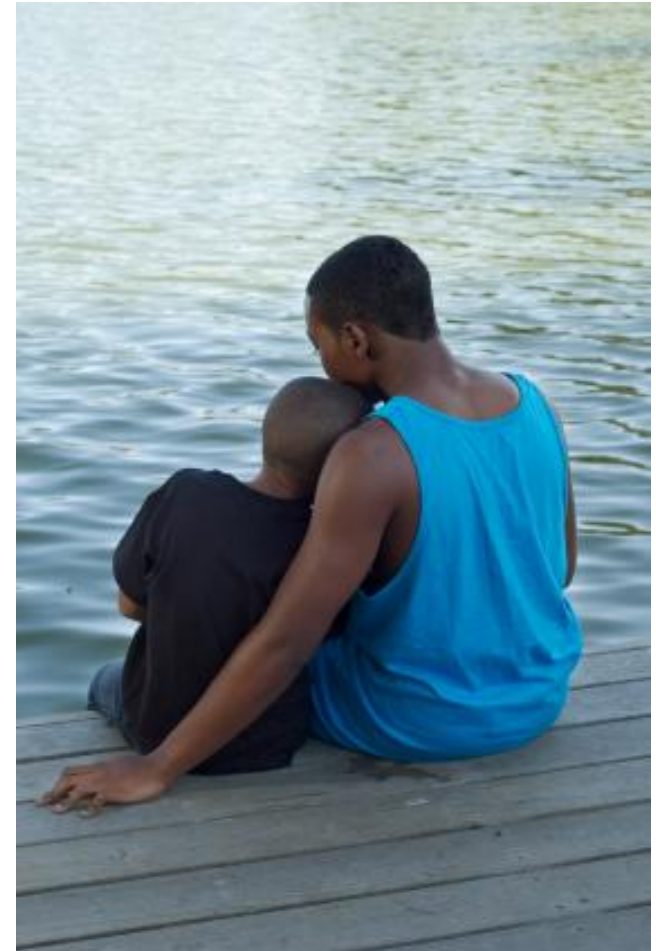
# TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE DEPLOYMENT

- Talk in a calm and reassuring manner
- Be open and honest
- Remember to talk on a level they will understand



# WHAT DO I SAY?

- Reassure them the deployed parent is not leaving due to their actions
- Let them know the parent is trained to do their job.
- Discuss changes in lifestyle that may occur



# PREPARE FOR SEPARATION

- Reinforce the emotional bond
- Plan for communicating
- Help the child plan for departure





# WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE

- Give them a method of measuring the passage of time
- Let them see the deployed parent's workplace through pictures and videos
- Letters and Cards are important
- Talk about the deployed parent frequently



# ADDITIONAL COPING STRATEGIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

- They will need lots of repetition
- Tape record your child's favorite books
- Encourage them to draw, paint and play
- Hug and cuddle them often



# COPING STRATEGIES FOR CAREGIVERS

- Maintain a regular routine with your child
- Turn on your “sensors”
- Limit television and other media news coverage
- Be consistent with discipline



# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Find time to rest, see a movie or do something just for yourself.
- Accept help from family and friends if feeling overwhelmed or in need of a time out.
- Seek help from your military or civilian community if needed.



# CONCLUSION

- Parents can help young children cope with the deployment of a loved one.
- Be aware of developmental issues/needs.
- Prepare for the deployment when possible.
- Utilizing coping strategies will help both the child and caregiver.
- Taking care of yourself is important.





**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

- [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)
- [www.usuhs.mil](http://www.usuhs.mil)
- USAREUR Deployment and Reunion Guide for Children







**THANK YOU**

