

Speaker Notes

Title of Presentation: Children and Separation Issues of Deployment

Page 1 – none.

Page 2 – none.

Page 3 – Intro –

- Difficult for parent & child - Parents have to cope with their own issues of separation while trying to assist their child at the same time.

- Resilience – children frequently bounce back to normal much sooner than adults.

Page 4 – Pre-Deployment:

- Anger – Why me? Why us? Why now?

- Denial – pretending it's not happening or avoiding the topic.

- Anxiousness – fear of unknown. What's going to happen? Who will take care of me? Will I still live in the same home & go to same school? Will my dad/mom come back?

Deployment: loss & sadness

- Resentment - that parent is gone & they're left behind.

- Guilt – child may feel they have done something wrong & that's why parent left.

Sustainment – Coping strategies have been employed. Child has adjusted to absence of parent and is able to feel connected to parent and safe and secure in home environment.

Page 5 – Abandonment - Because one parent has left, they expect something will happen to remaining parent

Need repetition – will need lots of reassurance. Will need to repeatedly explain what has happened.

Page 6 – Although many children make the adjustment with minimal reactions, these are some of the reactions that might occur.

- Fearfulness – fears of abandonment and fears for safety are common.
- Irritability and acting out – may engage in biting, kicking, hitting, throwing things.
- Changes in appetite – may not want to eat or may suddenly only eat certain foods.
- Change in sleep – may have more difficulty at bedtime or not want to take naps. Nightmares may be more frequent.

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Page 8 – • Regarding acting out behaviors, the child may pick fights with siblings, at school or with neighborhood children. Children may resist authority at home & school. Children may refuse to have contact with the absent parent.

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- Adolescents develop abstract/philosophical thinking. It is a time of questioning: questioning authority, traditions, values.
- Adolescents may want and enjoy taking on more responsibility, however they still need the limits and guidance of adults. The parent should be careful not to rely too much on the teen and place too much responsibility on them. Parents should be particularly careful not to place too much emotional responsibility on the teen – relying on them for emotional support and a sense of security.

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- Advance notice – helps child feel involved in the process and gives time to emotionally prepare.
- Talk to child together – this reinforces family unity and lets them know you are all in this together.

- Be honest – acknowledge you and they may feel sad, angry, afraid – it’s normal and it’s OK.

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- Anticipate questions- they will have lots of questions about their safety and security (will I live in the same house? Go to the same school?) Have a plan in place before talking to them.
- Let them know they’re not to blame – young children may feel the parent is leaving because they’ve done something wrong.
- Answer what is asked – don’t embellish or add too much info that may add to their anxiety.

Page 13 – It helps to provide an atmosphere of stability - being consistent and trying to keep daily routines as much as possible.

Develop plans for staying in touch – How often will you communicate? What methods will you use? - letters, email, tapes, videos, etc.

Page 14 – It’s not possible to love and comfort your child too much.

Encourage them to spend time with friends – they need peer support and outside activities.

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- Repetition – young children need lots and lots of repetition. They have no concept of time and have no abstract thinking. They cannot conceptualize the future. They will need repeated explanations of the deployment and reassurances several times a day for many days. It will take lots of patience.
- Exchange special comfort tokens – This helps give them a concrete way to stay connected. Exchanging comfort items with you child helps them believe you will return.
- Encourage them to draw and play – Children can’t cognitively understand and express feelings. They express themselves and work out their feelings through their imaginative play and art.
- They need lots of physical contact to feel secure and loved.

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- Mood swings are normal during adolescents – anticipate that some of the moodiness may be focused on the separation at times.
- The peer group is very important during adolescents. Encourage them to stay connected with friends. There are websites for adolescents of deployed parents which offer information and an opportunity to connect with other adolescents in similar situations.
- Let them know you hear them – this helps them feel validated. It also keeps the channels of communication open.

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- Individual letters – children love getting something in the mail that is just for them.
- Pictures from local papers – helps the child get an image of where you are and enhances the connection.
- Greeting cards – try to remember birthdays and holidays and special occasions.

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- Jokes – even young children enjoy knock knock jokes. Keeping a sense of humor is a stress reducer for both of you.
- Sometimes parents and children can actually get to know each other better through correspondence. Sometimes it feels safer to write about feelings than it does to talk about them.

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Page 20 – none.

Page 21 – none.

Page 22 – none.

Page 23 – none.

Page 24 – none.
Page 25 – none.

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