

Speaker Notes

Title of Presentation: Coping with Challenges While on R & R

Page 1 – none.

Page 2 – none.

Page 3 – none.

Page 4 –

- **Both joyful and stressful:** Emotions can be intense. Expectations may be unrealistic which can lead to disappointment when the expectations aren't met.
- **Impacts all family members:** family members are also affected and can have concerns about the service member as well.
- **Different from reunion and reintegration:** R & R is for a very brief period. It is not a time to focus on fully reintegrating back into the family routine or try to make changes to that routine.

Page 5 – Remember, these concerns are completely normal. What types of concerns do you have or have you had in the past?

Page 6 – Again – these are normal concerns for both of you to have. Bringing these out in the open and talking about them can help alleviate the stress they may cause.

Page 7 – Be prepared that family members may have changed in their attitudes and sense of independence.

You may have changed as a result of being down range and may be focused on new duties and buddies left behind.

- State side spouse is now both Mom and Dad
- Older Children may go to work
- Older children may help out with child care
- Changing them was not easy. Spouses need to encourage in a nonthreatening way their service member to accept their roles during R&R.

Family members may have taken on new responsibilities: Home maintenance, managing finances, single parent. Things are being done differently now, but different does not mean bad, it just means different

- They may seem to have conflicting emotions
- Service Member may worry about not fitting back in
- The family may worry about Service Member resenting their accomplishments and try to take over again
- These are normal responses dealt with best after deployment.

Page 8 –

- **Problems before deployment** are probably still there. Try not to discuss them during R&R. Because of the growth of both the Service Member and family you may be better equipped to deal with problems after deployment.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** When our expectations don't meet our reality, our stress level increases. Expectations are sometimes demanding and unrealistic ideals can be set in stone. Don't expect that your R& R experience will be perfect and meet all of your ideals. Understand that there may be ups and downs as with any other area of your life. The key is to be **flexible**.
- **The tendency to focus on problems:** There may be a tendency for both the spouse, family and Service Member to focus on problems that either can't be resolved during R & R or don't need to be fixed during R & R
- Remember, this is your time to rest and recuperate. Focusing on problems at home such as home repairs, etc., will defeat this purpose.

- **Resistance to reconnecting:** There may be a resistance on the part of both the service member, spouse and children to connect with each other knowing that the service member will deploy soon

The Service Member and the spouse and family may be resistant to intimacy with each other. They both realize that this reunion is very short term and may be afraid of becoming too close – just to have to say goodbye again. Staying in the present moment can be a very helpful way to deal with this. If you still have difficulty connecting, just realize that this is normal and be willing to talk with your spouse and family about it.

Page 9 – Avoid the who had it worse game: RESPECT EACH OTHERS EXPERIENCES. Coping was not easy for anyone.

Page 10 –

- **Develop plans for staying in touch** – How often will you communicate? What methods will you use? - letters, email, tapes, videos, etc.
- **Be realistic about communication:** realize that sometime you may get voice mail or it may not be a time when your loved one can talk.
- **Be honest about your feelings:** Let your loved one know how much you miss and appreciate them.
- **Don't read between the lines-** try not to make assumptions based on a single line in a letter/email or the tone of the email. If you aren't sure about the meaning of something- don't be afraid to ask- it's better than coming to the wrong conclusion.

Page 11 –

- **Present moment:** Staying focused in the past and future instead of the present, can lead to stress and make reconnecting difficult. You have no control over the past and future, but you do have control over the here and now. Staying present focused may help alleviate some of your stress and anxious feelings and enhance your R & R experience.
- **Communicate:** Let your spouse and family know what you need and don't need prior to your R & R. If you don't want a lot of activities scheduled or you don't want a big party with family, friends and neighbors, then by all means let them know. They can't read your mind, and they may make plans that will not meet your needs and that could make your R & R experience more stressful.
- **The time is short:** Once again, be sure to stay in the moment and make the most of it.
- **Stick with routines in the home:** this is not a time to make major changes in the home routine. The routine has probably changed in your absence because it had to.
- Just let that go as much as possible. Trying to make big changes in the family's routine can cause upheaval for them and that can cause additional stress.

Page 12 –

- **Sexual intimacy:** take it slowly if you need to. You may both need time to reestablish the connection. Verbalize your caring and appreciation of your spouse & show affection.
 - Not just sex but celebrate sexuality
 - Time for just the two of you with no interruptions
 - Connecting physically may seem awkward, this is normal
 - Go with the flow, concentration may be difficult
 - Don't judge today's experience by the past
- **Don't unload on each other:** playing the “who had it worse game” can lead to anger and frustration on both your parts.
- **Be patient** with yourself and with your spouse and family: Understand that both you and your spouse and family have adjustments to make during this time.

- **Give yourself permission:** regardless of what was or is going on down range, you can give yourself permission to take advantage of this time. A brief R & R can help you recuperate and make you more alert and effective when you return down range.
- **Stay flexible:** make plans but be willing to adapt and understand that plans sometimes need to be changed.

Page 13 –

- Flashbacks and intrusive thoughts: – Although many Service Members do not experience this, if you do, remember that it is to be expected; it is the mind’s way of trying to understand the experience.
- Keep communication channels open: Use the communication skills mentioned earlier in the earlier slides.

Page 14 –

- **Don’t be critical:** Learn constructive criticism
- **Limit alcohol:** Light social drinking
- **Don’t make major life decisions:** Financial or personal
- **Spend time together as a couple:** Carve out some alone time for yourselves. If you have children, get a babysitter and plan a “date” night. It doesn’t have to be elaborate – go to a coffee shop or go for a walk in a park or hike & bike trail.
- **Time with children:** Some special time with your children can help you both feel connected. Play a game together, read to them, or go for a bike ride together.
- **Don’t over book yourself:** You may not be able to spend time with everyone you would like to see. Don’t forget that this is a time to take care of yourself – not others. You will also probably not have time to do everything you want and go everywhere you would like. Accept this as a reality and don’t pressure yourself.
- **Arrange quiet time:** Let others know if you need to have some time to yourself.
 - Take time to step out of the lime light and enjoy peace of life.
 - If it doesn’t have to be fixed now wait until after deployment.
 - The service member needs time to rest their mind and body.

Page 15 – none.

Page 16 – none.

Page 17 – none.

Page 18 – none.