

Speaker Notes

Preparing for Your Parents' Deployment

Page 1 – Title Slide

- NOTE: This is designed to be an interactive presentation. Each slide contains talking points for discussion. Encourage participants to tell their stories and to come up with other ideas for coping, managing stress, etc. If you have access to a flip chart, white board or chalk board, you can write down the participants' responses for further discussion.

Page 2 – Objectives

None

Page 3 – Agenda

None

Page 4 – Introduction

- In this presentation today, we will take a look at the different challenges you may face when your parent deploys and learn how to cope with those challenges in a healthy way.

Page 5 – Discussion Question 1

- NOTE: If available, use a white board, chalk board or flip chart to write down the participants' responses.

Page 6 – Discussion Question 2

None

Page 7 – Discussion Question 3

None

Page 8 – Discussion Question 4

None

Page 9 – Discussion Question 5

None

Page 10 – Discussion Question 6

None

Page 11 – What to Expect

- NOTE: Ask participants what changes they anticipate and ask those who've had parents deployed before to share their experiences.
- NOTE: Ask what type of change the items on this list might cause and how it may affect them.
Examples:
 - "How do you think discipline methods at home might change?"
 - "If roles were to change at home, how do you think your role might change, and how do you think it would affect you?"

- Deployment causes a major change in our lives and change can sometimes cause stressful feelings. In the next slides, we will be looking at stress and the affects it has on us and what to do about it during deployment.

Page 12 – Stress and Deployment (Title Slide)

- NOTE: Let participants know that not everyone experiences extreme stress during a parent’s deployment. Some kids adjust very well to the change and are not as affected.

Page 13 – What is the Stress Response?

- An individual response: What is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. For example, some people enjoy riding roller coasters and others are afraid.
- A physical response: Many physiological changes in the body occur. For example:
 - Heart rate increases
 - Stress chemicals are released
 - Breath rate increases
 - Blood rushes away from your arms and legs to major organs (this is why we may experience cold hands and feet in a stressful situation)
- Necessary for survival: It was programmed into us thousands of years ago when many stressors where life threatening, such as a saber toothed tiger about to attack.
- It allows our bodies to gear up to fight or flee.
- In non-life threatening situations, it can give us the edge we need to perform well, such as in athletics, or performing on stage.
- Stress can become a problem if we are experiencing stressors repeatedly or if we are facing a constant stressor. In the next slides, we will take a look at how too much negative stress can affect us.

Page 14 – How Does Stress Affect You?

- NOTE: Ask participants what it is about deployment that might create stress for them.
- NOTE: On this and each of the following slides pertaining to affects of stress, ask participants if any of these items are occurring now and how are they coping. For participants who have gone through deployments before, ask how they handled them in the past.
- NOTE: Explain that learning the signs of stress is the first step in learning to manage it.

Page 15 – How Does Stress Affect You? (Continued)

None

Page 16 – How Does Stress Affect You? (Continued)

None

Page 17 – How Does Stress Affect You? (Continued)

None

Page 18 – Coping with the Stress of a Parent’s Deployment (Title Slide)

None

Page 19 – Coping with a Parent’s Deployment

- Write it down—keep a journal: Write about your experiences and feelings. Writing it down is better than holding it in.
- Figure out how you can help at home: It takes the whole family pulling together to make things work during deployment. Talk with your parents about different ways you could help; possibilities could be cooking, cleaning, baby-sitting, etc.
- Talk about it with supportive people: Talking about your worries is one of the best ways to cope. Find someone you can trust with your feelings—someone who will listen and be supportive. [NOTE: Ask if they have ideas about who they might talk with.]
- Socialize and participate in activities with friends: Connecting with friends and staying active helps to keep your mood positive. It also isn’t helpful to stay isolated when you are facing challenges in life—it’s best to get yourself out there and interact with your peers.
- Try to maintain routines: This helps to give you the sense that even though your parent is deployed, there is still stability at home.
- Realize that feelings of sadness, loss and anger are normal: You may have lots of feelings that occur all at the same time. If feelings become overwhelming, ask for help from parents, other relatives, teachers or school counselors.
- Be proud of your parent’s service and sacrifice: Realize the strength and courage your parent has and feel proud that they are making a contribution to their country by serving.
- Acknowledge your own service and sacrifice: You show strength and courage as well when your parent deploys, as you take on new responsibilities and duties at home.

Page 20 – Coping with a Parent’s Deployment (Continued)

- Stay positive: Negative thoughts such as “This is awful” and “I can’t stand it” only make things worse. Try replacing negative statements with positive ones such as, “I may not like it, but I can cope and get through it just fine.”
- Limit time watching news programs or reading the paper: Reports and images of war and other events can be disturbing and increase your stress level.
- Send care packages: Include things you’ve made, a paper you wrote at school, stuffed animals/toys—anything that will create a laugh or brighten their day.
- Express yourself creatively through art, music, creative writing or dance: Expressing yourself creatively can help you get feelings out and lift your spirits.

Page 21 – Coping with a Parent’s Deployment (Continued)

- Connect with other military kids: No one understands what your situation is more than another military kid. [NOTE: Ask the participants if they know of other ways to connect with military kids.]
- Seek help when needed: We all need help and support at times. Don’t be afraid to ask for it. It is a sign of strength and courage to know when you need help and to ask for it.
- NOTE: Before going to the next slide, ask the participants if they have had a parent deploy before and ask who they went to when they needed help coping. Write their responses on a white board or flip chart. The next slide will list possible resources.

Page 22 - Resources

- NOTE: Note any resources on this slide that participants may not have thought of. Ask if they can identify any other adults who they could go to for help.

Page 23 – Staying Connected

- Send emails, letters, etc.: It is not possible to overdo the communication with your parent. Communicating in a variety of ways can keep things fun and exciting.
- Invest in a WEBCAM: This allows you to have a virtual face-to-face conversation with your parent. You can also have other family members join you.
- Send care packages often: In addition to things you know they want or have asked for, send some fun things as well—a funny greeting card, a stuffed animal or gag gift, etc.—whatever makes them laugh or feel good. You can also send DVDs of some of their favorite TV shows or movies, music, games, comic books, magazines, newspapers—the possibilities are almost endless.
- NOTE: Ask participants if they can think of other ways to stay connected.

Page 24 – Practicing Self-Care

- Don't over-schedule yourself—take some down time: It's easy to become too busy with school, extracurricular activities, social events and family obligations. It can begin to feel overwhelming. Even though many of these activities may be enjoyable, when there are too many of them it can become stressful.
- Get plenty of rest: Your body and mind need time to refuel and rejuvenate.
- Exercise: This is a great way to get rid of tension in the body and stress chemicals that build up.
- Create a support network of friends, family, teachers, school counselors, etc.: It's important to surround yourself with supportive people. They will be there for you like a safety net if you start to have difficulty coping.
- Do something fun and enjoyable: Go to a movie, read a book, take a bubble bath, get together with a good friend.
- Laugh—share a joke with a friend: Laughter releases the body's endorphins (a brain chemical that is the body's natural opiate) which creates a sense of well-being.
- NOTE: Ask participants if they have other things they do to take care of themselves.

Page 25 - Stabilization

- As you are going through the changes and stressors of deployment, remember that it will get better and that both you and your deployed parent will adjust.

Page 26 – Positive Aspects of Deployment

- NOTE: Ask participants if they can think of any other positive aspects.

Page 27 – When to Seek Help

- As mentioned earlier—seeking help is a sign of strength and courage.

Page 28 – Summary

None

Page 29 – Questions

None

Page 30 – References

None

COUNSELOR USE ONLY