YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM®

Experiencing Deployment

Facilitator Guide

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT

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Experiencing Deployment

Facilitator Note:

The following two symbols are used as indicators:
💻 (computer) indicates it is time to advance the slide on the associated PowerPoint;
✋ (hand) indicates there is an exercise associated with the content.

*Essential class content is noted in **bold**.*

All class handouts are available for download on the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.

Class Description:

This class examines common characteristics and feelings experienced by Service members and loved ones and considers strategies to help participants effectively navigate pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment transitions.

Stage:

Pre-deployment, During deployment, Post-deployment

DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this class has been developed for the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has reviewed the class and is responsible for content management.

Audience:

YRRP attendees

Time:

45 minutes

Equipment:

- Projector
- Laptop
- Pens

Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- PowerPoint Presentation
  1. Experiencing Deployment
  2. Objectives
  3. The Emotional Cycle of Deployment
  4. Pre-Deployment Experiences
  5. Children's Reactions: Pre-Deployment
  6. Coping Strategies: Pre-Deployment
  7. Identifying Sources of Support
  8. During Deployment Experiences
  9. Children's Reactions: During Deployment
  10. Coping Strategies: During Deployment
  11. Helping Children Cope During Deployment
  12. Preparing for the Reintegration
  13. Post-Deployment Experiences
  14. Children's Reactions: Post-Deployment
  15. Coping Strategies: Post-Deployment
  16. The Deployment Journey
  17. Review of Objectives
  18. Experiencing Deployment
- Handouts
  1. Experiencing Deployment Worksheet
  2. Pleasant Activities (online only)

Exercises:

1. Experiences of Deployment
2. Support Network

Objectives:

After completing this class, participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify common characteristics and feelings experienced by Service members and loved ones pre-, during, and post-deployment.
2. Identify coping strategies to address emotions, feelings, and communication and relationship challenges Service members and loved ones may experience pre-, during, and post-deployment.

Introduction

SHOW Slide 1: Experiencing Deployment

Facilitator Note:

Introduce yourself as the facilitator. State your name, military experience or affiliation, and perhaps one additional brief bit of relevant personal information that establishes your credibility (i.e., your professional training or experience).

Please limit your personal introduction to no more than 2 minutes to maximize the time attendees are able to engage with course content, practice skills, and participate in self-reflection activities.

We are going to discuss the emotions, feelings, and communication and relationship challenges that you may experience during the cycle of deployment. **Gaining a better understanding of the emotions associated with deployment may help you develop coping strategies**. Let me ask some questions so we can get to know each other. Raise your hand if the following questions apply to you.

PAUSE for a show of hands after each question.

ASK the following if this class is taught at a pre-deployment YRRP event:

How many of you are facing your first deployment?

Your second or more?

Who are the Service members deploying?

Who are the partners or significant others of the deploying Service members?

Who are the friends of the deploying Service members?

Who are the parents of the deploying Service members?

ASK the following if this class is taught at a during deployment YRRP event:

Who are the partners or significant others of the deployed Service members?

Who are the friends of the deployed Service members?

Who are the parents of the deployed Service members?

How many of you have children living at home?

Who has regular contact with your Service member?

Who has intermittent contact with your Service member?

ASK the following if this class is taught at a post-deployment YRRP event:

Who are the Service members who have returned?

Who are the partners or significant others of the Service members who have returned?

Who are the friends of the Service members who have returned?

Who are the parents of the Service members who have returned?

How many of you have children living at home?

Everyone experiences deployment in his or her own way. Being aware of some of the commonalities can help you prepare for what you might experience.

SHOW Slide 2: Objectives

At the end of this class, you will be able to do the following:

1. **Identify common characteristics and feelings experienced by Service members and loved ones pre-, during, and post-deployment.**
2. **Identify coping strategies to address emotions, feelings, and communication and relationship challenges Service members and loved ones may experience pre-, during, and post-deployment.**

Experiencing Deployment

SHOW Slide 3: The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

How many of you are familiar with a model called the Emotional Cycle of Deployment?

PAUSE for show of hands.

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment is the name of a couple of stage models, and these models can guide our discussion about what you may be experiencing and how you are coping, pre-, during, and post-deployment (Knobloch et al., 2016; Logan, 1987; MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010; Pincus et al., 2001). For most stage theories, as with the models of the Emotional Cycle of Deployment, it is important to acknowledge that not

everyone goes through all stages, not everyone goes through the same stages in the same sequence or for the same duration, and many themes/issues may co-occur rather than follow an orderly sequence (MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010).

Pre-Deployment

SHOW Slide 4: Pre-Deployment Experiences

Pre-deployment begins with receipt of the deployment order and continues until the Service member leaves.

Turn to **Handout 1: Experiencing Deployment Worksheet**. As you can see on your handout, there are three columns that explain what you can expect, what you may be feeling, and possible coping strategies for pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. Notice the available space in column three. As we discuss the different emotions you may experience throughout a deployment, please use this handout to take notes, capture additional feelings that others express, and write down positive coping strategies you can use. At times, I will specifically direct you to note ideas in the columns.

We start with pre-deployment. Many of you may have already experienced the emotions associated with this phase or are experiencing them now. Can you put into words what you are going through or may have experienced when you went through this phase?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: anxiety; nervousness; excitement; dread; sadness)

Pre-deployment can be stressful because Service members and loved ones anticipate the impending change but cannot yet adapt. In addition, National Guard and Reserve families are often geographically dispersed and, therefore, may not have access to the same supports that on-base families have. Service members and loved ones may respond to the upcoming departure in a variety of ways. Anticipation of the deployment may lead everyone to grieve the absence of their loved ones before the deployment actually begins. Some may respond with detachment in an attempt to avoid the stressors of deployment or cope with the impending absence. Conflict and communication problems may also occur, and concerns may arise about how to adjust household routines and responsibilities. **Overall, family members and loved ones may experience a range of emotions with many feeling "a roller coaster of upturns and downturns" in relationship satisfaction prior to deployment** (Sahlstein Parcell & Maguire, 2014, p.142).

For those of you who have experienced a deployment before, what happens as the departure date approaches?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: we argue more; withdraw from each other; build walls)

Shortly before deployment, you may observe a change in emotions, feelings, and communication among family members and loved ones. You may have heard others referring to this period as the Detachment and Withdrawal Stage (Logan, 1987).

The Service member becomes more focused on work and the mission, and emotional distance starts to grow. Loved ones may begin to feel ambiguous presence - Service members may be physically present but psychologically absent (Maguire & Sahlstein Parcell, 2015; Yablonsky et al., 2016). **The stress of this change may increase conflict. This may be a very uncomfortable time.** Communication can help overcome the frustration.

Significant distress may interfere with everyday activities, such as completing household routines, being able to focus at work, and attending to the needs of children. If you feel like your stress is impacting your life in this way, consider speaking with a counselor about ways to manage your stress and learn how to cope more effectively. You might also consider the online YRRP class entitled Address Your Stress, which can be found by visiting the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/courses.

SHOW Slide 5: Children's Reactions: Pre-Deployment

As mentioned earlier, Service members may have to dedicate more time to the mission leading up to the deployment, which could cause distress for the Service member and their loved ones including children. **Avoiding goodbyes and minimizing the importance of the absence can lead to fears about the parent/adult disappearing when the Service member is not deployed** (DeVoe & Ross, 2012).

For those of you who have experienced deployment before and have a loved one who is a child, how did he or she react?

PAUSE for responses.

SHOW Slide 6: Coping Strategies: Pre-Deployment

EXERCISE 1: Experiences of Deployment

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is for participants to write down strategies that can help them cope with their deployment experiences. On this slide, participants will complete the Pre-deployment coping strategies section of the handout. This should take approximately 2 minutes.

Participants will have the opportunity to complete the During and Post-deployment sections later.

So, what are some things you can do to manage the time leading up to the deployment? Write down some coping strategies in column three on your handout.

PAUSE for 2 minutes for participants to write.

Would anyone like to share a coping strategy?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: ***discuss in detail expectations for deployment, such as budgeting, child rearing, communication*** *[Drummet et al., 2003; Pincus et al., 2001; Saltzman et al., 2011; Troxel et al., 2016]; include loved ones and children when possible in pre-deployment activities and in discussions about what's going to take place [Givertz & Segrin, 2014; Jumper et al., 2005];* ***spend quality time with loved ones*** *[Andres, 2014]; plan ahead; set boundaries; be patient; listen to each other; share feelings; develop and turn to support networks; join organizations; seek out resources or classes for support or skill-building in managing stress or coping with strong emotions [Andres, 2014; Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015; Jumper et al., 2005; Troxel et al., 2016])*

During this stressful time and indeed at all times, it is important to remember that constructive communication can have a positive impact on relationship quality. **Constructive communication involves being able to soothe oneself during an argument, being empathic or understanding of the other person's feelings, and being able to clearly express yourself**. **You will want to avoid destructive communication, which includes criticism and contempt (which can mean constant complaining and showing little respect for the other person); stonewalling or ignoring the other person; defensiveness; and flooding, which is where you feel physically tense and anxious during a conflict with the other person** (Carroll et al., 2013; Gottman, 1994).

What about children? **If children are involved, it is important to communicate about the deployment in an age-appropriate way** (Louie & DeMarni Cromer, 2014). Young children may not fully understand what is going on, while older children and teens may have full awareness of the situation and the impending potential risks to the Service member. Having the deploying parent, or adult, around for support, and to answer questions, can be helpful as better and more frequent communication during pre-deployment is correlated with greater personal adjustment in children (Houston et al., 2013).

For those of you who have your own children or other important children in your life, the actual goodbye is very important. Why?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: children can equate slipping away as not coming back; children can feel cheated out of saying their goodbyes; reassure children that you love them even if you will be gone)

Avoid the temptation to take the easy way out and slip away while the children are asleep or at school. It is always better to say a face-to-face goodbye and reassure all involved that the deploying parent or adult will be missed and remembered (DeVoe & Ross, 2012).

SHOW Slide 7: Identifying Sources of Support

EXERCISE 2: Support Network

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. Participants will form groups and take turns sharing sources of support. The purpose of this exercise is for participants to have a ready-made list of potential supports to take home. This should take approximately 5 minutes.

Family members and loved ones, where will you turn for assistance during this deployment? Let's find out. I want you to form groups and take turns sharing one source of support you plan to use during this deployment. Someone start by naming a source of support, then the next person name one, and continue until everyone has shared. As people are naming individuals, groups, or types of support, write down any that are appropriate for you in the notes section on page 2 of **Handout 1**. This will help you create a ready-made list to take home. After everyone shares, each group will pick one support that was mentioned to share with the rest of the class.

PAUSE for 2 minutes for participants to share and write; then spend 3 minutes asking for answers from each group. (Possible answers: other loved ones in similar situations;

friends; family; religious organizations; unit readiness groups; and other support organizations)

Service members and loved ones, alike, may start thinking about many possibilities for the coming deployment: the *what ifs*, the worries, and the fears. It is important for everyone to cultivate coping skills to help manage their thoughts and emotions.

During Deployment

SHOW Slide 8: During Deployment Experiences

Finally, the Service member deploys. Some of you may have heard that emotional stages that correspond to this phase include Emotional Disorganization, Recovery and Stabilization, and Anticipation of Homecoming (Logan, 1987) **or Deployment, Sustainment, and Re-Deployment** (Pincus et al., 2001). For those of you who have been through a deployment, what feelings and emotions did you experience immediately after the Service member left?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: feelings of being overwhelmed; sadness; general lack of motivation; relief that the goodbye is over, often followed by a sense of guilt)

Initial feelings following deployment may include disorientation and mixed emotions, including a sense of relief now that the anticipation of the deployment has ended (Logan, 1987; Pincus et al., 2001). **This experience is sometimes called emotional disorganization and can manifest in loss of appetite, sleep problems, and general feelings of anxiety among partners and at-home loved ones**. Service members may find themselves preoccupied with the well-being of their loved ones.

For family members and loved ones who remain when the Service member deploys, it is OK to give yourself time to adapt. Deployment is a big adjustment. Old routines have been disrupted, and new ones may not yet be established. Once routines are reestablished and social supports are utilized, feelings of confidence and mastery may follow as loved ones develop and expand skills to manage the increased stress (Jumper et al., 2005; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2012).

Look at **Handout 1**, and note if you are experiencing any of the feelings listed.

PAUSE.

Service members and loved ones do eventually settle into their deployment routines. During this time, the partner or at-home adult develops effective routines; uses social supports; and manages stress, parenting, and household responsibilities.

Additional responsibility can be stressful, and you may experience mixed feelings of success and failure. On one hand, you may be wondering how you are going to make it through the deployment, which can be worrisome. **Constant worry may lead to increased stress; reduced focus; and feelings of mild depression, anxiousness, and vulnerability** (Borkovec et al., 1983; Mahoney et al., 2016; Muris et al., 2005; Parmentier et al., 2019). On the other hand, **successfully handling all of these issues leads to significant resilience and potential for growth. Often you feel more in control, independent, and confident**. You can pat yourself on the back!

SHOW Slide 9: Children's Reactions: During Deployment

When deployments involve children, it is important to recognize how they are impacted. **How adults respond to their own distress, concerns, and queries often sets the tone for children as children take their cues from parents, caretakers, and other important adults in their life** (Flake et al., 2009; Lester et al., 2016; Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013). Young children may start to ask when the deployed Service member is coming home, and older children can better understand the potential threat to the deployed parent. Thus, finding ways to positively manage emotional reactions and added responsibilities is important as parents and other loved ones support children. Children will benefit from witnessing positive coping strategies (Belo-Utu & DeSocio, 2015; Kliewer et al., 1996).

Another common deployment stressor is long-distance parenting. Deployed Service members rely significantly on the partner or adult at home to help him or her parent and communicate with children. Because deployed parents can no longer be involved in day-to-day and face-to-face parenting interactions, they find new ways of maintaining a connection with their children and enacting their parental role. The strategies they adopt are also shaped by the technologies available to them and the frequency with which they can communicate with home. **Having to rely on one's partner or at-home caretaker to communicate with children, and the inconsistency in when and for how long communication can occur, can lead to stress for deployed parents and for their children** (Houston et al., 2013).

Importantly, **reactions to the deployment may vary depending on the child's age**. Infants can show more irritability, problems eating and sleeping, and increased crying as they respond to the at-home parent or caretaker's anxiety (Lincoln et al., 2008). Toddlers may experience increased anxiety including separation anxiety, and young children may become aggressive, tearful, or may experience an increase in bed-wetting (Mustillo et al., 2016; Pincus et al., 2001). School-age children, who are old enough to understand the gravity of deployment, may have difficulty sleeping, may be anxious, and may have difficulty in school (Lester et al., 2010; Mustillo et al., 2016). Adolescents may also experience socio-emotional adjustment difficulties, such as feeling sad, bottling up emotions, or having difficulty coping with daily stressors (Knobloch et al.,

2015; Marek & Moore, 2015; Wilson et al., 2014).

For children of all ages, deployment separation is almost always stressful and can affect them socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically (Cunitz et al., 2019; Lester et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2014)**. These reactions are generally time-limited and do not typically cause long-term adverse impacts. We also need to acknowledge that most families are resilient, and some of the changes we observe in children and adolescents may reflect maturation rather than changes related to deployment** (Marek & Moore, 2015; Meadows et al., 2016). Recognizing and responding to the symptoms of a child's increased stress can provide children with emotional support and security.

SHOW Slide 10: Coping Strategies: During Deployment

EXERCISE 1: Experiences of Deployment (continued)

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. Participants will record coping strategies that can be used during deployment. This should take approximately 4 minutes.

For those who have already been through a deployment, would anyone like to share what you did to cope with the feelings you experienced right after the Service member deployed?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: establish your deployment routine; get involved; stay in contact with loved ones; establish a connection with the Service member; stay in contact with support networks)

It may be helpful to find something outside of your responsibilities to help you maintain positivity and motivation. What are some activities you can do outside of your usual responsibilities? Write down these ideas.

PAUSE for 2 minutes for participants to write. (Possible answers: volunteer; start a new hobby; set goals; have a quiet evening; listen to music; remember the words and deeds of loving people)

If you are interested in more ideas for how to maintain positivity and motivation, consider looking at Handout 2: Pleasant Activities on the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout.

What are some coping strategies beyond the initial phase of deployment that may help you handle issues throughout the deployment duration successfully?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: maintain a routine; work toward goals; keep communication going; use support networks; take care of yourself; choose a positive attitude; keep things in perspective; be flexible)

Knowing that loved ones left behind are adjusting well can help the Service member focus on his or her mission and settle into the deployment routine. One of the biggest challenges throughout the Service member's deployment is maintaining effective communication. Effective communication can be difficult during deployment since you often need to rely on other methods to communicate rather than face-to-face conversations. Use of these other communication methods can lead to miscommunication. We touched on the idea of constructive communication earlier when talking about the pre-deployment phase. The same principles remain important during deployment (and at all other times, in fact!).

Remember that generally, and specifically during deployment, destructive communication is associated with greater conflict and worse relationship satisfaction; whereas, constructive communication is associated with less conflict and better relationship satisfaction (Carroll et al., 2013; Gottman, 1994; Knobloch et al., 2018). Examples of constructive communication include having empathy for the other person (e.g., "I understand that you feel [emotion]"), stating needs and wants clearly (e.g., "When [situation] happens, I feel [emotion]. I would like [action to change the situation]"), and **finding ways to remain calm during disagreements (e.g., excuse yourself from the situation if you are becoming angry)** (Carroll et al., 2013). Putting it all together might be something like this: **"I understand that you feel [emotion]. When [situation] happens, I feel [emotion]. I would like [action to change the situation]. Let's discuss a solution."**

If you find yourself agreeing to the following, you may benefit from practicing constructive communication: "I don't censor my complaints at all. I really let [person] have it full force"; "I have no respect for [person] when discussing an issue"; "When in an argument I find I want to ignore [person]"; "I feel unfairly attacked when [person] is being negative"; "Whenever I have a conflict with [person], I feel physically tense and anxious, and I don't think clearly" (Carroll et al., 2013, p.537).

What can you do before the deployment to prepare for successful communication during deployment?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: a communication plan should be developed and agreed upon prior to deployment; remember to be flexible and understanding in times that communication cannot occur)

Remember to be flexible. During deployment, there are many disruptions to communication. It is typically not a good idea to have a set day and time for calls or

online communication. Circumstances happen that are not under the Service member's control, and missed calls can cause undue anxiety.

SHOW Slide 11: Helping Children Cope During Deployment

Parents, caretakers, and loved ones, what can you do to help children cope with their feelings during Deployment?

Would anyone like to share a coping strategy?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: help children by coaching them through difficult emotions and stressful situations - ***let them know you understand and accept their emotions; help them label and describe what they are feeling****;* ***work with them to problem-solve, if appropriate [this includes coming up with coping strategies, like deep breathing]*** *[Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, & Prior, 2009; Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010; Saltzman, Lester, Milburn, Woodward, & Stein, 2016];* ***remain calm and be patient; set firm limits within a context of love and care [Saltzman et al., 2011; Saltzman et al., 2016]; consistently enforce age-appropriate consequences for misbehavior; model constructive coping skills*** *[Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015; Kliewer et al., 1996])*

SHOW Slide 12: Preparing for the Reintegration

Once Service members receive notification of their return date, they relay this information to family members and loved ones. Some of you may have heard this phase being called the Anticipation of Homecoming (Logan, 1987).

ASK the following if this class is taught at a pre-deployment YRRP event:

How do you think you will feel once you get the notification of the return date?

PAUSE for responses.

ASK the following if this class is taught at a during (where participants have notification of a return date) or post-deployment YRRP event:

How did you feel when you got the notification of the return date?

PAUSE for responses.

For the waiting family members and loved ones, this time is often characterized by excitement, anticipation, and apprehension. Why is there both excitement and apprehension?

PAUSE for responses.

There may also be feelings of apprehension or nervousness related to concerns about how the Service member will view the decisions and changes that were made in his or her absence.

What is the challenge for the Service member at this time?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answer: to stay mission-focused)

Service members also experience excitement and apprehension during this phase. However, the Service member does not get to wind down yet; he or she has the challenge of remaining mission-focused, often until just a couple of days before the return. In addition, Service members may be anxious about reporting the return date as return dates can change (and often did during the early years of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom). If children are in the home, the Service member and his or her partner or at-home caretaker must discuss how to communicate with the children about the return of the Service member. As with deployment preparation, discussion of deployment return should be done in an age-appropriate way.

How would you tell children about the return?

PAUSE for responses.

Once a return date is announced, the countdown begins. Children also experience excitement and anticipation. Children may also feel anxiety about the deployed Service member's return especially if there was difficulty that will be addressed after the return. It is very important to discuss plans for the return with everyone involved in the Service member's life, so realistic expectations can be set for everyone. Make sure everyone understands how the reunion will take place. Service members can be transported from their deployment area to their home in less than 72 hours (DeVoe & Ross, 2012), so it is important that family, friends, and other loved ones understand that returning home may be stressful for the Service member.

Post-Deployment

SHOW Slide 13: Post-Deployment Experiences

The deployment is ending; it's all happy right?! Maybe but maybe not. Many changes have occurred during the deployment. **Immediately after the return of the Service member, families may experience a *honeymoon* period, and, while this time is filled with joy, it may also cause stress among loved ones and the returning Service member** (Louie & DeMarni Cromer, 2015; Pincus et al., 2001).

What do you think of when we talk about reintegration?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: reintegration: Service member fitting back into the family and family accepting the Service member into their routine; stabilization: establishing the new normal with family and loved ones)

How might loved ones change during the deployment?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: partners have become more independent, confident; children may have reached certain milestones, such as starting to talk or getting their license; parents may have moved or retired)

How might Service members change during the deployment?

PAUSE for responses. (*Possible answers: Service members have had life-changing experiences; duty had been first)*

ASK the following question if this class is being taught at a during deployment YRRP event:

What are some things you are doing now that the Service member did before the deployment?

PAUSE for responses.

Daily routines and household responsibilities must be reestablished. Families and loved ones need time together to share experiences and feelings in order to reconnect. Service members may require time alone to assimilate into life outside the deployment. The presence of operational stress may make Service members irritable and guarded. **As they try to fit back into daily life at home, the reassertion of their role may cause tension, and they may feel hurt if children, for example, are slow to warm up to their return** (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). Service members may also feel pressure to make up for lost time and missed milestones.

SHOW Slide 14: Children's Reactions: Post-Deployment

How do children change during the deployment?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: grow up; learn new skills; take on more responsibilities)

Children will also experience the return of the Service member differently based on their ages. Separation anxiety and strong negative reactions to deployment reminders (like a military uniform) may be present in younger children. Older children and adolescents may be fearful of the returning Service member or may resist changes to new routines established during deployment (Curry et al., 2018; Sayers et al., 2009). It is important for parents, caregivers, and other important adults to be sensitive to these reactions and to coordinate constructive responses.

SHOW Slide 15: Coping Strategies: Post-Deployment

EXERCISE 1: Experiences of Deployment (continued)

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. Participants will record coping strategies that can be used post-deployment. This should take approximately 4 minutes.

What can you do to help everyone adjust during post-deployment?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: communicate and have patience; ***negotiate and compromise roles and responsibilities; be willing to give up some responsibilities****; keep feelings under control; be aware of signs of operational stress)*

Now, write down some of the coping strategies that you can use for post-deployment on **Handout 1**.

PAUSE for 2 minutes for participants to write. (Possible answers: be patient; communicate; lower expectations; take time to get to know each other again; renegotiate if necessary)

Patience and effective communication are key elements during post-deployment (Knobloch et al., 2016). Why do you think *renegotiation* is important during such times?

PAUSE for responses.

Families and loved ones must negotiate roles and responsibilities now that the Service

member has returned. Co-parenting must be renegotiated, and caregivers must develop new routines and practices while incorporating the changes brought about during the deployment. There are several online YRRP classes that may be of interest, and these can be found by visiting the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/courses.

As we have mentioned before, patience, communication, and respect are important to a successful reunion. Family members, friends, and loved ones should openly and calmly express their feelings and provide support for the Service member as he or she adjusts to life at home.

Patience is also the key to helping children adjust to reunion. The following are suggestions for helping children adjust: **teaching through encouragement**; implementing systematic discipline, such as **establishing family rules and strategies for consequences**; using interpersonal problem-solving to anticipate and address stressors and problematic family situations and **plan positive family activities**; monitoring and supervising; fostering positive involvement with children at home and at school; and observing, recognizing, and responding to difficult emotions (Gewirtz et al., 2018; Gewirtz et al., 2014).

Co-parenting must be renegotiated, and caregivers must develop new routines and practices while incorporating the changes brought about during the deployment. There are several online YRRP classes that may be of interest, and these can be found by visiting the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/courses.

Summary

SHOW Slide 16: The Deployment Journey

There are many challenges for Service members and loved ones to overcome during deployment, so anticipating these challenges is important in order to minimize potential emotional trauma to all involved. During this class, we have discussed that it is important to understand the emotions and feelings that Service members and loved ones may experience. Why? Would knowing how you are going to feel during a specific time of the deployment help you cope better? What are some potential benefits to understanding emotions during the deployment cycle?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: a smoother overall deployment experience; recognize your emotions, strong or intense, are normal; plan ways to support the ones you care about; try new positive coping strategies; manage stress better; openly share your feelings; help children cope; handle multiple deployments; build resilience)

Deployment can present an opportunity for growth for everyone involved. It is important to embrace the growth and change that occur during the deployment cycle. Put time

and effort into reestablishing bonds when everyone is together again.

Is there anything you would add to our discussion or are there any questions?

PAUSE for responses.

SHOW Slide 17: Review of Objectives

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **What are some characteristics and coping strategies for:**
   - **Pre-deployment?** *PAUSE for responses.*
     (Possible answers for characteristics: denial and anticipation of loss; increased feeling of stress in home; reality of change ahead is sinking in, pride)
     (Possible answers for coping strategies: discuss expectations for the deployment of budgeting, child rearing, and communication; go out with friends and loved ones)

   - **During deployment?** *PAUSE for responses.*
     (Possible answers for characteristics: life without Service member may initially feel overwhelming; routines change; responsibilities are added; have difficulty concentrating; wish things would go back to normal)
     (Possible answers for coping strategies: establish deployment routine; do other things to get moving – volunteer, find a hobby, set goals)

   - **Post-deployment?** *PAUSE for responses.*
     (Possible answers for characteristics: family is happy, excited, and feeling boost of energy; sense of relief that Service member is home combined with worries about whether he or she has changed; stress of reestablishing routines and responsibilities)
     (Possible answers for coping strategies: be patient; use constructive communication; negotiate and compromise roles and responsibilities)

SHOW Slide 18: Experiencing Deployment

Thank you, and please complete your evaluation for this class.

References

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