## Experiencing Deployment (Slide 1)

- Gaining a better understanding of the emotions associated with deployment may help you develop coping strategies
- Everyone experiences deployment in his or her own way

## Objectives (Slide 2)

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

## Pre-Deployment Experiences (Slide 4)

- Pre-deployment begins with receipt of the deployment order and continues until the Service member leaves
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *pre-deployment section*
- You may experience a range of emotions and "a roller coaster of upturns and downturns" in relationship satisfaction
- Shortly before deployment, you may observe a change in emotions, feelings, and communication
  - May refer to this period as the Detachment and Withdrawal Stage
  - The Service member becomes more focused on work and the mission and he or she may be physically present but psychologically absent
  - Stress may
    - Increase conflict
    - Create feelings of being uncomfortable
    - Interfere with everyday activities
  - 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

## Children's Reactions: Pre-Deployment (Slide 5)

- 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

## Coping Strategies: Pre-Deployment (Slide 6)

- Coping strategies may include
  - Discuss in detail expectations for deployment
  - Spend quality time with loved ones
- 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

- Avoid destructive communication, which includes criticism and contempt; stonewalling or ignoring the other person; defensiveness; and flooding
- **Exercise 1:** Experiences of Deployment
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *pre-deployment section*
- Communicate with children about the deployment in an age-appropriate way

## Identifying Sources of Support (Slide 7)

- **Exercise 2:** Support Network
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *note section*

## During Deployment Experiences (Slide 8)

- 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; or Deployment, Sustainment, and Re-Deployment
- Initial feelings may include disorientation and mixed emotions, including a sense of relief now that the anticipation of the deployment has ended
    - Called emotional disorganization and can manifest in loss of appetite, sleep problems, and general feelings of anxiety among loved ones
- At-home loved ones give yourselves time to adapt
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *during deployment section*
- Constant worry may lead to increased stress; reduced focus; and feelings of mild depression, anxiousness, and vulnerability
- Successfully handling challenges can lead to resilience, potential for growth, and feelings of being more in control, independent, and confident

## Children's Reactions: During Deployment (Slide 9)

- Children take cues from parent/caretaker who remains with them
- Relying on one's partner 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
- Reactions may vary depending on the child's age
- For children of all ages, deployment separation is almost always stressful and can affect them socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically
- Reactions are generally time-limited and do not typically cause long-term adverse impacts
- Most families are resilient, and some of the observed changes may reflect maturation rather than changes related to deployment

## Coping Strategies: During Deployment (Slide 10)

- **Exercise 1:** Experiences of Deployment
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *during deployment section*
- Examples of constructive communication, which you can practice if you currently

find yourself using destructive communication patterns
    - Finding ways to remain calm during disagreements (e.g., excuse yourself from the situation if you are becoming angry)
    - "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."
- Examples of destructive 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"
- Remember to be flexible

## Helping Children Cope During Deployment (Slide 11)

- Potential coping strategies for children
    - Let them know you understand and accept their emotions
    - Help them label and describe feelings
    - Work with them to problem-solve, if appropriate (this includes coming up with coping strategies, like deep breathing)
    - Remain calm and be patient
    - Set firm limits within a context of love and care and consistently enforce age-appropriate consequences for misbehavior
    - Model constructive coping skills

## Preparing for the Reintegration (Slide 12)

- Service members receive notification of the return date and they relay information to family and loved ones
    - Phase may be referred to as the Anticipation of Homecoming
- At-home loved ones and Service members may feel excitement, anticipation, and apprehension
- At-home loved ones may experience 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
- Service member does not get to wind down yet as he or she has the challenge of remaining mission-focused, often until just a couple of days before the return

## Post-Deployment Experiences (Slide 13)

- A honeymoon period occurs immediately after return, and it brings feelings of joy but also stress
- Daily routines and household responsibilities must be reestablished
- For Services members reintegrating, reasserting their role may cause tension,

and they may feel hurt if children, for example, are slow to warm up to their return

## Children's Reactions: Post-Deployment (Slide 14)

- Children's reactions vary based on their age

## Coping Strategies: Post-Deployment (Slide 15)

- **Exercise 1:** Experiences of Deployment
- **Handout 1:** Experiencing Deployment Worksheet *post-deployment section*
- Potential coping strategies
  - Negotiate and compromise roles and responsibilities
  - Be willing to give up some responsibilities
- Key elements for a successful reintegration include patience and effective communication
- Patience is key to helping children adjust to reunion
- Other suggestions
  - Teaching through encouragement
  - Establishing family rules and strategies for consequences
  - Plan positive family activities

## Review of Objectives (Slide 17)

- What are some characteristics and coping strategies for
  - Pre-deployment?
  - During deployment?
  - Post-deployment?