



DEPLOYMENT AND REUNION

When military parents are deployed, and even after they return, their children's lives are turned upside down. Everything they know as "normal" changes, all while their teachers, friends and neighbors go about their everyday lives.

Spouses must also confront tremendous changes in their day-today routines. The stress of separation, the threat of loss, the change in caretaking roles, and the readjustment to life after deployment cause intense feelings for everyone in the family.

Understanding the stages of this emotional cycle prepares community members to offer sensitive, appropriate support.



Stage 1. Pre-Deployment

From deployment order until departure



- Denial
- Anticipation of loss
- Long hours away
- Getting affairs in order
- Mental/physical distance
- Arguments





Stage 2. Deployment First month

- Mixed emotions/relief
- Feeling disoriented
- Numbness, sadness, loneliness
- Sleep difficulty
- · Security issues





Stage 5. Post-Deployment

Three to six months after return

Loss of independence

• Need for "own" space

Renegotiating routines

Reintegrating into family

Honeymoon period

Stage 4. Re-Deployment Month before return

- Anticipation of homecoming
- Excitement
- Apprehension
- Burst of energy/"nesting"
- Difficulty making decisions



Stage 3. Sustainment Month two until month before return

- New routines established
- New sources of support
- Feeling more in control
- Independence
- Confidence ("I can do this")



Adapted from "The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective," by LTC Simon H. Pincus, USA, MC, COL Robert House, USAR, MC, LTC Joseph Christenson, USA, MC, and CAPT Lawrence E. Adler, MC, USNR-R. www.hooah4health. com/deployment/familymatters/emotionalcycle.htm





AWARENESS TO ACTION

What You Can Do

Community groups can compile and distribute a list of community resources (mechanics, babysitters, where to recycle, etc.), or connect military families with local organizations that offer support.

Families and individuals can educate others about how deployment affects military families, help a family with jobs around the house, or simply listen when a military family member needs to talk.



Once you've become active, take it one step further by spreading the word. Inspire teachers, businesspeople and other civic leaders to take action.

For example, a community group can collaborate with schools to educate staff about the emotional cycle of kids whose parents are deployed. Counselors and spiritual leaders, on the other hand, can become educated about local resources and refer military families who ask for help.





Partners

Operation: Military Kids — www.OperationMilitaryKids.org
Army Child & Youth Services — www.ArmyMWR.com
Army Reserve Family Programs — www.ARFP.org
National Guard Child and Youth Program — www.GuardFamily.org/Youth
Military OneSource — www.MilitaryOneSource.com
Military Child Education Coalition — www.MilitaryChild.org
National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies — www.NACCRRA.org
Zero to Three — www.ZEROTOTHREE.org



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