



**GETTING PREPARED,
STAYING PREPARED**

**PARENT TIPS TO RESILIENCE
HELPING TEENAGERS WITH DEPLOYMENT**

Reactions To Deployment That Occur More Than Usual or Are Different Than Before:

Teens’ Reactions to Deployment (13-18 years old)

Act overly strong and mature | Act unconcerned, apathetic, and not interested | Feel anxious, irritable, impulsive, afraid, mad, sad, isolated, lonely, shocked, and depressed | Have mixed feelings—proud, angry, and tearful | Experience quick changes in emotion—happy one moment and sad the next | Increased discipline problems at home | Problems in school or unusual changes in academic performance | Change in eating, weight loss, or weight gain | Increased interest in friends, pointing out how their friends’ Families do things better | Try to isolate themselves or their social life and activities from their parent | Abuse of drugs or alcohol | Increased demands for attention | Lash out at others and self | Show resentment toward the returning parent for missing important events | Ignore the returning parent or try to make the parent feel guilty for leaving in the first place | Fear that they will be disciplined by the returning parent for things that happened during deployment

What Can Parents Of Teens Can Do To Foster Resilience

Take care of oneself— avoid being overly stressed—be patient and calm.

- Teens are protective and will try to shield additional worries from their parents.
- Maintain routines for stability.
- Ensure teens get rest, exercise, and eat properly.
- Help teens balance their need for more time with peers and time with Family.
- Say “I love you” and encourage teens to identify and be proud of their strengths.
- Ensure teens that feelings of loss and anger are common. “I am angry about this sometimes too.”
- Provide some space and privacy.
- Help teens get involved with other military Families, school teachers, Family Readiness Groups, local 4-H, and school related activities.
- Help teens recognize signs of depression or stress.

Create a sense of connectedness between the deployed parent and teenager.

- Engage in Family activities prior to deployment.
- Stay in touch through letters, cards, email, and phone calls.
- Send pictures, drawings, copies of school work, care packages, & videos.



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- Together research the location of the deployed parent.
- Keep a scrapbook, photo album or journal of missed events.

Model ways for teens to deal with complex and ambiguous feelings

- Help adolescents deal with anger and aggression productively. "I understand you are upset, so it is best if you take time to calm down and then we can talk." Set firm limits.
- Be available to talk with teens—they like to stay up late and talk.
- Discuss concerns parents have related to deployment according to the adolescents age and maturity.
- Ask questions to clarify what adolescents understand. "What do you think about _?" "How do you feel about _?" "Tell me what you think about _."
- Answer questions with confidence or say you will find the information.
- Have Family meetings throughout the deployment process.

Help teens understand the symptoms of stress. Include teens in decision making processes, especially when related to changes that affect them such as changes in roles and responsibilities.

- Share values and beliefs with teens relate to current issues.
- Model a positive identity with the military, discuss teen views, and help youth reframe negative situations.
- Actively listen to teen's ideas and concerns. Help them understand and accept ambiguous feelings as normal yet strive for meaning.
- Monitor overexposure and fascination with media and electronic games that focus on war and violence.
- Help teens discern what they have control over and what they do not have control over. For example, they can control how they respond to their parent's deployment by how they help at home.
- Alert teens to appropriate expectations and changes for the reunion

What Can Deployed Parents Do To Prepare Themselves?

Take it slow, do not force affection | Take care of oneself | Look for ways to interact that are pleasing | Plan quality time with each teenager | Model caring interactions between the parents | Work together with other caregivers on other suggested tips

Seek Support Of Friends, Relatives And The Community When Needed

It is important to discuss children's behaviors and feelings with caretakers, and ensure children receive support from health and other professionals at first signs of distress.

Key Contacts

Army Family Web Site

www.MyArmyLifeToo.com

Military OneSource 1-800-432-9647

www.militaryonesource.com

Operation Military Child Care

www.childcareaware.org

Military Child In Transition and Deployment

www.militarystudent.dod.mil

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