



Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

For Those Who Serve and Those Who SupportSM

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF DEPLOYMENT

This handout presents the seven stages in the emotional cycle of deployment. It identifies what’s going on in each stage, what you may be feeling, and how to cope with the situation.

| What’s Going On ... | Feelings | Coping Strategies |
|---|---|--|
| Anticipation of Departure | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial and anticipation of loss • Increased feeling of stress in home • Frequency of arguments increase • Reality of change ahead is “sinking in” • Focus is on completing the family pre-deployment activity checklist • Members may feel more emotional • In case of multiple deployments ... the new cycle may begin before family has had time to renegotiate new normal from the last deployment • Children: decide when to tell them about the deployment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Resentful • Guilt • Restlessness • Depression • Irritability • Sadness • Fear • Anxiety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate (ask questions, listen to each other) • Discuss deployment expectations • Communicate “quality time” availability to family • Discuss deployment with children • Share feelings • Plan and set boundaries are the keys to managing the time leading up to the deployment |
| Detachment and Withdrawal | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Member is focused on preparing for mission and may distance self from family • Anger, arguments may occur as family prepares to protect themselves from “hurt” of separation • Communication may be difficult • Experience lack of energy • Increased difficulty making decisions • In preparation for loss, family may begin to act like Service Member is already gone • Multiple deployments can result in need to repeatedly create distance; to feel “numb” and avoid emotional connection • Children: actual good-bye is important | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Despair • Hopelessness • Anger • Irritability • Withdrawal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicate time to spend with family members • Be empathetic • Include family, when possible, in pre-deployment activities • Reassure each other Service Member will be ok • Develop and turn to support networks • Be patient that Service Member may be spending more time at work • Reassure children that the Service Member will return |



| What's Going On ... | Feelings | Coping Strategies |
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| Emotional Disorganization | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life without the Service Member may initially feel overwhelming • Routines change, responsibilities added • May feel ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numb and not interested in doing much • Have difficulty concentrating • Wish things would go back to “normal” • Surprised because things seem to be moving smoothly now that Service Member is gone • Experience sleep difficulty • Anxious about security issues • Children: take cue from parent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief • Sadness • Lonely, frustrated • Restless • Confused • Disorganized • Indecisive • Irritable • Unmotivated • Overwhelmed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish your deployment routine • Get involved • Stay in contact with other family members • Establish a connection with Service Member • Stay in contact with support network • Set goals • Start a hobby • Get a job • Volunteer |
| Recovery and Stabilization | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family finally starts to settle into routine of life without Service Member • Coping with changes can be positive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May enjoy new found responsibilities • Sense of independence, confidence • Relief that family is functioning well • Coping with changes can be challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult time accepting changes • Stressed, depressed, and having difficulty getting things done • Feel unsupported and worried how will make it through • Most of the time there is a mixture of both responses. • Children: clingy, sleep disturbances, eating difficulties; crankiness, drop in academics; acting out, self-criticism, loss of interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mildly depressed • Anxious • Vulnerable • Fear • Emotional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a routine • Work toward goals • Keep communication going • Use support network • Take care of yourself • Choose a positive attitude • Keep things in perspective • Be flexible • Model positive coping skills for children |
| Anticipation of Return | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homecoming is coming! • Family is happy, excited, and feeling boost of energy • Trying to make everything “perfect” for return • Sense of relief that Service Member will be home combined with worries about whether or not they will be the same • Children: when to tell them of return? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement • Apprehension • Nervousness • Restlessness • Irritability • Anxiousness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss plans for reunion • Set realistic expectations • Communicate expectations to family and friends • Remember Service Member must remain mission focused |



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|--|---|---|
| Return Adjustment and Renegotiation | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During time of separation Service Member and all family members have changed • Changes may hold pleasant surprises or may cause conflict • Family members may feel overwhelmed by Service Member's attempts to get to know everyone again • Everyone needs space and time to readjust • Family member may feel loss of independence • Entire family must begin to renegotiate how the household will look now that everyone is together again • Service Member may need time to assimilate back • Children: different reactions depending on ages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relief • Happiness • Contentment • Irritability • Guarded • Resentment • Overwhelmed • Frustration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate • Be patient • Negotiate and compromise • Be willing to give up/take on different responsibilities • Keep emotions under control • Sit down and negotiate roles and responsibilities • Be aware of signs of combat stress |
| Reintegration and Stabilization | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family continues to adjust to having Service Member home • This could last for months! • A "new normal" is established regarding routines and expectations • Members may begin to feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable with one another again • If readjustment challenges resurface, support is important ... It's okay to ask for help if you need it! | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation • Supportive • Comfortable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient • Communicate • Take it slow • Lower expectations • Take time to get to know each other again • Re-negotiate if necessary |

NOTES: