

Childcare

Find reliable childcare before your spouse leaves. Talk to the CDC on your installation, or go to childcareaware.org, to find good childcare near you. Even if you stay at home, there will be times you'll need a break.

Preparing Children

Preparing for deployment is never easy, and this is especially true for children. Children have a unique relationship with each parent, and one parent's absence upsets this. Talk with your children about the deployment, what things will stay the same, and what things will change. Listen to their feelings and fears, and don't discount the ones you feel are irrational.

We don't have the ability to **change what our children feel**, but **our words and actions influence them**. Comfort and love your children through this hard transition. Each child is unique, and deployment will bring out different emotions in each of them.

Common struggles children will endure when a parent leaves are **clinginess or whining**, and **behavior regression** such as **tantrums, baby talk, or loss of bathroom skills**.

Teenagers

Being a teenager is tough without a deployed parent, so having a deployed parent **adds a lot of stress**. Teens and adolescents may experience increased anger, or moodiness. They may deal with deployment stress with appetite and sleep changes, detachment, anxiety, and loss of interest in some activities.

Talk to them about how deployment will affect the family, encourage them to share how they're feeling, and allow them a little space if they need it. Be ready for when your teen wants to talk, and keep communication open and easy. It is very helpful to build a team of counselors, teachers, or friends to help them adjust.

Planning Ahead

Being a parent takes time and commitment, and this doesn't change when a parent is deployed. Deploying parents, plan how you'll keep in touch with them while you are deployed, and how they can stay in touch with you. Alert them that sometimes they may not hear from you for a few days. Write birthday, anniversary, graduation cards ahead of time. Have them in envelopes ready to go in case you can't connect with home on the special day. Videotaping yourself reading a bedtime story is a great way to connect.

While the deploying parent is at home, make as many connections and memories as possible.

Family support centers are great resources. The book, **Over There**, helps younger children understand deployment. The deploying parent can also share a **special gift** with each of their children that will help them feel close to them when they are away.

When a Parent is Deployed

Allow children to take on age-appropriate tasks to help take some of the load off of you. If dad usually takes out the trash, let one of your children take it over while he's gone. **Make it clear that your child is not filling the place of a missing parent**. Let them know that strong families share the load, and they need to help the family be strong.

Sources:

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2. "Parenting Ideas for All Phases of Deployment." PA Families Inc., PA Families Inc., 2011, pafamiliesinc.org/military-families/deployment/parenting-ideas-for-all-phases-of-deployment. Accessed 10/15/2020
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4. "Preparing Your Children for Deployment." Military OneSource, U.S. Department of Defense, 4 Apr. 2020, www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/parenting-and-children/parenting-through-deployment/supporting-your-military-children-through-the-deployment-cycle. Accessed 10/15/2020
5. "Tips for Teens Dealing with a Family Member's Deployment." Military OneSource, U.S. Department of Defense, 11 Aug. 2020, www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/parenting-and-children/parenting-through-deployment/15-tips-for-helping-your-teenager-deal-with-deployment?inheritRedirect=true. Accessed 10/15/2020