

METHODS OF REDUCING FAMILY STRESS DURING SEPARATIONS

PRE-DEPLOYMENT

1. Spend time explaining why, where and how long the parent will be gone. Use maps, calendars or paper chains to help younger children visualize the location and length of the deployment.
2. Spend time individually with each child prior to deployment.
3. Take a picture of each child with the departing parent and give it to the child to keep.
4. Have the departing parent make tapes of bedtime stories to be played after his departure.
5. Allow children to talk about their feelings about the deployment.

DEPLOYMENT

1. Keep family routines basically the same.
2. Draw pictures and send letters to the deployed parent letting him/her know of the family activities.
3. The deployed parent should send postcards or individual letters to each child.
4. The remaining parent should spend individual time with each child.

POST-DEPLOYMENT

1. Make homecoming special. Make signs or bake cookies with the children.
2. Have a family reunion first, then plan a special time just for the couple.
3. Avoid "I had it worse" competitions.
4. Give each other a little extra space.
5. The deployed parent should ease back into the family system gradually. Initially, let the remaining parent continue to make decisions and do the majority of the disciplining. The deployed parent should not discipline too severely when she/he first returns.