Stages of Deployment

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

Agenda

» Pre-Deployment
  – Stage 1: Anticipation of loss
  – Stage 2: Detachment and withdrawal
  – Tips for managing pre-deployment

» Deployment
  – Stage 3: Emotional disorganization
  – Stage 4: Recovery and stabilization
  – Tips for managing pre-deployment

» Reunion
  – Stage 5: Anticipation of homecoming
  – Stage 6: Renegotiation of marriage contract
  – Stage 7: Reintegration and stabilization
  – Tips for managing pre-deployment

Objectives

Participants will learn:
» The emotional phases of deployment
» Possible effects of the deployment phases
» Tips for managing the deployment phases

Three Phases of Deployment

» Pre-Deployment
» Deployment
» Reunion

Pre-Deployment Phase, Stage 1

Anticipation of Loss
» Occurs four to six weeks before deployment
» Possible reactions
  – Restlessness
  – Sadness
  – Irritability
  – Anger and resentment (spouse)
  – Guilt (military member)
Pre-Deployment Phase, Stage 2

Detachment and Withdrawal
» Occurs during final days before departure
» Possible reactions
  – Despair / hopelessness
  – Decision making may become increasingly difficult
  – Ambivalence about sexual relations
  – Emotional distancing

Tips for Managing Pre-Deployment

Pre-Deployment Considerations
» Prepare for deployment now
» Prepare family members
» Communicate with your family

Have a Plan in Place

Financial Matters
» Budget
» Allotments
» Bills
» Goals

Legal Matters
» ID Card
» Power of Attorney
» Wills
» Family Care Plan

Have a Plan in Place

Practical Matters
» Security
» Healthcare issues
» Household & vehicle
» Passport

Personal Matters
» Spouses
» Children
» Other relatives and friends
» Loved ones

Staying in Touch During Deployment
» “Snail” Mail
» Tape Recordings
» Telephone Calls
» E-Mail
» Video
Deployment

Deployment Phase, Stage 3

Emotional Disorganization
- Occurs during first 6 weeks of deployment
- Possible reactions
  - Initial relief followed by guilt
  - Feeling numb or without purpose
  - Sadness and withdrawal from friends
  - Overwhelmed with responsibility
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Restless, angry, confused, disorganized, indecisive, irritable

Deployment Phase, Stage 4

Recovery and Stabilization
- Variable duration between stages 3 and 5
- Possible reactions
  - Established new family patterns and settled into a routine
  - More comfortable with reorganization of roles and responsibilities
  - Cultivated new sources of support
  - Pride in ability to cope alone

Tips for Managing Deployment

- Develop a daily routine
- Send notes, emails, letters to your service member as often as possible
- Create care packages for your Service Member
- Volunteer
- Display your flag
- Seek support from family and friends
- Practice self-care

Tips for the Service Member

- Seek support from your battle buddies
- Avoid consuming too much alcohol
- Talk, send an email or write to your partner as often as possible
- Stay focused on the mission and reuniting with your partner and family after deployment
Safety Precautions for the Spouse

Use Good Judgment
» Other than family, friends and colleagues, don’t tell people your spouse is gone
» When someone calls asking for your spouse – never tell them your spouse isn’t home
» Don’t discuss their absence in public, even with friends
» Don’t give social security numbers to persons over the phone unless you are requesting a service or information that requires it

Practice Self-Care

» Get plenty of rest
» Maintain a healthy diet
» Exercise
» Practice relaxation
» Laugh
» Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine
» Minimize the amount of news you watch or read
» Listen to soothing music

Moving into Reunion Phase, Stage 5

Anticipation of Homecoming
» Occurs during the last six weeks of deployment
» Possible reactions
  – Feelings of joy, excitement, apprehension
  – Reevaluation of marriage and the effects on the family
  – Restlessness, frantic activity to finish projects

Reunion Phase, Stage 5 continued

Anticipation of Homecoming
» Possible reactions
  – Confusion
  – Changes in appetite
  – Decisions may become harder to make
  – Irritability

Reunion Phase, Stage 6

Renegotiation of the Marriage Contract
» Occurs during six weeks after the end of deployment
» Possible reactions
  – Physical togetherness, emotional distance
  – Loss of freedom and independence
  – Establish new routines
  – Renegotiation of assumptions and expectations of marriage
  – Adjustments in roles and responsibilities
Reunion Phase, Stage 7

Reintegration and Stabilization

- Occurs six to twelve weeks after the end of deployment
- Characteristics
  - New routines have been established
  - Relaxed, comfortable feelings
  - Sense of being a couple and a family again
  - Back on track emotionally and able to enjoy warmth and closeness of being married

Tips for Managing Reunion

- Communicate openly
- Go slow and be patient
- Make time for yourself and allow others free time as well
- Stay positive
- Reconnect with your social network
- Don’t expect old problems to have gone away

Managing Reunion

- Curb your desire to take control
- Accept that things may be different
- Take time to become reacquainted
- Remember that intimate relationships may be awkward at first

Communication is of utmost importance

- Be open to what the other person has to say
- Inform instead of order
- Don’t assume that people can read your mind or know how you feel
- Listen with your full attention or set up another time to talk
- Practice communication of your thoughts and feelings. It will become easier with practice

When to Seek Help

- If the stress of the deployment cycle is interfering with your ability to function in daily life, and coping methods are not working, don’t be afraid to seek help from a Chaplain, Military Community Services or Behavioral Health Service
### Summary

- Pre-deployment phase is characterized by anticipation of loss.
- Deployment phase: relief that the waiting is over. Emotions can become intensified.
- During reunion, after initial readjustments to roles are made, the couple can begin to feel a sense of closeness again.
- Communication during reunion is essential.

### Resources

- Military Community Services
  - i.e. Family Services, legal assistance (for power of attorney assistance) installation home web site, PFC/PFM for budgeting assistance, child/youth services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.tricare.osd.mil
- Behavioral Health Services

### Questions

- "?

### References

- *Coping with Deployment*,
  [http://marriage.about.com/cs/militarymarriages/a/deployment_2.htm](http://marriage.about.com/cs/militarymarriages/a/deployment_2.htm)
- *Guide to Coping with Deployment and Combat Stress*,
- *Preparing Your Marriage for a Military Deployment*,
  [www.TwoOfUs.org](http://www.TwoOfUs.org)