Holidays Apart From Family: Coping with Increased Stress

DCoE Monthly Webinar, Nov. 17, 2011

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## Report Documentation Page

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**12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**
Supporting documentation attached as MP3, Timeframe 1.5 hours

**14. ABSTRACT**
Separation between family members during the holiday season often impact relationships. Military duty frequently requires prolonged absence of one or both parents. The timing of the separation can begin on special seasonal holidays, making the parting even more significant. Other aspects of separation can mean that traditional, memorable practices have to be adapted to meet special circumstances. Speakers will provide information about holiday stress for the family and the separated service member and share approaches to mitigate that stress.

**15. SUBJECT TERMS**

**16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:**

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**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**
Same as Report (SAR)

**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**
60

**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction
- Presentations
  - Dr. Vladimir Nacev
    - The Impact of Holidays on the Absent Parent
  - Mary “Tib” Campise
    - Supporting Military Children and Families
  - Maggie MacFarland Phillips
    - Military Families and Separation During the Holiday
- Resources
- Q&A / Discussion
The Impact of Holidays on the Absent Parent

Vladimir Nacev, Ph.D.
Resilience and Prevention, DCoE
Deployment, Stress in Military Families

- Holidays can be a wonderful time for families to gather, reconnect and celebrate.
- For families experiencing a military separation, the holidays can also be a reminder that the deployed spouse is not home to share in the festivities.
Deployment and Stress in Military Families

- Deployment and duty-related separations are challenging for families and stress is expected.
- More active-duty spouses reported experiencing higher levels of stress in 2008 (47 percent) than in 2006 (41 percent).

Social Support, Communications

- Sense of community consists of unit support and informal community support
- Supportive social relationships build resilience, which is critical to developing healthy family coping
- Consistent and regular communications between service members and their families, while on deployment, are also critical to developing a healthy sense of connection and family resiliency
Social Support, Communications

- Problems communicating with family while on deployment predicts greater stress for the service member and his/her family
- Make time to connect with family – be creative!
- Put pen to paper
- Connect via phone or Internet
Gift exchanges -- Important to continue the tradition, if practiced

Do not isolate yourself -- Being around others is important to your well-being and reintegration

Socialize with friends and family in comfortable places and try to stick with your plans
Common Emotional Responses

- Service members may experience a range of feelings while away during the holidays – loneliness, depression, homesickness, frustration, stress or guilt
- The deployed person may also feel a need to temporarily distance himself or herself from the family because hearing about holiday festivities may be too painful
Helpful Ideas for Deployed Parents

- Write your child a brief letter about all the different ways your child is loved and appreciated, which can be opened and read on each of the eight days of Chanukah or Kwanzaa or the 12 days of Christmas.
- Create a holiday ornament, with the child’s name on it, to hang on the Christmas tree.
Helpful Ideas for Deployed Parents

- Record a reading of a favorite holiday book or story and send it to your child (or upload it to a video-sharing site)
- The videotaped story can become a part of a holiday or year-round bedtime routine
Helpful Ideas

- **Take time for yourself** – Sometimes self-care is the best thing you can do – time to recharge your batteries – others will benefit when you’re stress-free

- **Volunteer** – Find a local charity, such as a soup kitchen or a shelter, give a tree or adopt-a-family program

- **Have realistic expectations** – No holiday celebration is perfect

- **Remember what’s important** – The barrage of holiday advertising can make you forget what the holiday season is really about
Helpful Ideas

- **Seek support** – Talk about your anxiety with your friends and family. Getting things out in the open can help you navigate your feelings and work toward a solution for your stress. If you continue to feel overwhelmed, consider seeing a professional.

- **Keep things in perspective** – Consider stressful situations in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing events out of proportion. Also, teach your kids how to keep things in perspective, including what type of and the number of gifts they receive.
Happy Holidays

- There’s no right way to feel
- Although the holidays might be easier for some, they can be very stressful for others
- Know that you are doing the best you can under challenging circumstances
Supporting Military Children and Families

Mary “Tib” Campise, LICSW
Military Community and Family Policy
Family Advocacy Program
Military Culture

- Young force, many with children
- May live on military installations, many in remote locations, separated from extended family
- Frequent absences because of training/deployment
- Multiple relocations, sometimes living separately from family members
- Spouse employment
- Exposure to many cultures
- Risk of injury/death for military members
- Command involvement in personal and family life
- Irregular hours and unpredictable schedules
Unique Demands of Military Lifestyle

Guard/Reserve Service Members and their Families:

- Unique stressors because of part-time status
  - Citizen soldiers
  - Mobilization and deployment
  - Separation from family, jobs, community
  - Demobilization
- Children from reserve component families reported
  - More trouble interacting with peers and teachers (who didn’t “get” their experience)
  - More difficulties with parent readjustment after deployment
- Are more likely not connected to a military community or military resources
Active-duty Military Demographics

- **Age:**
  - Half between 22-30
  - Mean age = 29
  - 33.4 percent of U.S. Marine Corps are 18-21

- **Gender (Female):**
  - Army: 14 percent; Navy: 16 percent; Air Force: 20 percent; Marines: 6 percent

- **Education:**
  - Enlisted: 94 percent have high school diploma or equivalent
  - Officers: 91 percent at least college degree

*Data Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, Active-duty Demographic Profile (Sept. 2010).*
Marital Status:
- 56 percent married (49 percent Marines to 59 percent Air Force)
- 54 percent enlisted and 70 percent officers
- 44 percent active-duty service members have children
- 711K civilian spouses and 1.2 M children (0-18)

Data Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, Active-duty Demographic Profile (Sept. 2010).
# Children of the Armed Forces*

## Active Component

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* September 2009
Internal Partners

- Other Military Community and Family Policy Offices
  - Counseling
  - Child and Youth Programs
  - Family Centers

- Military HOMEFRONT

- Military OneSource

- Health Affairs
  - Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE)
  - Real Warriors Campaign
  - Medical Treatment Facilities
  - TRICARE
Military Family Learning Network

- Department of Defense/U.S. Department of Agriculture Partnership Bringing Together
  - Research of Land Grant Universities
  - Experience of the Cooperative Extension Service
  - Military Family Support System

Available Resources for Active Component

- Clinical counseling
  - Installation behavioral medicine/health clinic clinical mental health services
- TRICARE referral
- Limited session non-clinical counseling
  - Installation Family Center
  - Referral from Military OneSource
  - Military Family Life Consultant (at Family Center, public schools)
- Installation Family Advocacy Program (for child abuse/neglect and domestic abuse)
Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC)

- An extension of existing installation services, MFLC services are designed to help service members and their families cope with stress associated with the military lifestyle, particularly deployment-related challenges.

- MFLCs are available worldwide:
  - In installation-based activities and programs, CDCs and Youth Centers
  - Through the Joint Family Support Assistance Program
  - At summer camps
  - In elementary, middle and high schools

- Allows for flexible and responsive service delivery when and where services are needed
www.MilitaryOneSource.com
**Military OneSource Program**
One-Stop Shopping for Service Members and Family Members
Information and Referral to Military and Civilian Resources and Counseling Services*

<table>
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<th>Multiple Access Points</th>
<th>Military OneSource Call Center Operations (24x7x365)</th>
<th>Military OneSource Counseling Services** (A Complement to DoD’s MFLC Services)</th>
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*Resources coordinated with DoD and Service Branches
**All counseling services IAW currently established with DoD and Service Branch protocols

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For Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury

Resilience ★ Recovery ★ Reintegration

26
Take advantage of commissary sales with the Guard/Reserve On-Site Sales Program. This program delivers the commissary benefit to deploying Guard and Reserve members and their families that live in areas that are not close to an existing commissary store. All authorized shoppers are eligible! Find out more.

Deployment and Return
Dealing with Deployment
Preparing for Deployment
Resident Issues
Returning from Deployment

Resources
Cold and Breach Resources
Yellow Ribbon Newsletter
Returning from the WarZone A Guide for Families
MilitaryOneSource
Featured Military OneSource Articles
When Your Son or Daughter Is Deployed
Helping Your Preschooler Deal with Your Deployment
Helping Your School-Age Child Deal with Your Deployment
Managing the Emotional Cycle of Deployment when Your Spouse Is Deployed
Stepping Involved in Your Child’s or Teenager’s Life When You’re Deployed
Dealing with Combat and Operational Stress

Contact Us
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Military INSTALLATIONS

Your official DoD source for installation and state resources available to active duty, guard and reserve service and family members.

Installations • View articles, photos, major unit listings and contacts for programs and services worldwide. If you can’t find an international location, try visiting the Department of State country information.

States • View articles and local, state and national resource directories.

Get started!

Looking for particular installation or state?

Enter an installation [View a directory of installations]

Or, enter a state

Looking for specific program or service?

Select a program or service

Then, enter an installation [View a directory of installations]

Or, enter your postal code

Within 10 miles

Moving to a new assignment?

Take control of your move. Use our customizable calendar tool to create a unique personal moving plan. The calendar contains to do lists, checklists, phone lists, and links to critical moving information from budget planners to choosing a school.

To begin, select your departure date, departure and destination locations and get moving now!

Plan My Move

Are you a sponsor?

Have you been assigned official sponsorship duties? Log on to the CAC enabled eSponsorship Application Training (eSAT) to get started.

Interested in learning about how to become a sponsor? Learn more about the process.

Are you a service provider looking for a program or service across all installations?

Simply select the program or service and then choose any installation or enter any zip code. A downloadable directory for all installations will be available on the results page.
www.MilitaryHomefront.dod.mil
Troops & Families: Children and Youth & Deployment Support

Welcome, Service Providers!

MilitaryHOMEFRONT is an important source of information for Service Providers. The topics on the left represent major program areas under the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy.

This is the place to come for policy letters, instructions, legislation and other references. DoD program staff provide the documents and information in this section, ensuring that the service branch and installation program managers have access to the most up-to-date resources.

Some of the topics include tools and information to help you do your job. Future plans include Desk Guides, online learning opportunities and forums for the sharing of ideas and lessons-learned. Bookmark MilitaryHOMEFRONT and return often for the latest MC&FP information.

Reports

The latest official Quality of Life reports can be found in the Reports section of MilitaryHOMEFRONT.

Highlights & Headlines

Suicide Prevention Week, 5-11 September 2010
By MilitaryHOMEFRONT Staff
(Posted on Wednesday, September 08, 2010)

Suicide Prevention Week reminds us to take a moment from our busy lives and reflect on how prepared we are to help someone we care about, especially if this person seems burdened or troubled.

Combat, Hardship Pay Remain for Troops Serving in Iraq
By American Forces Press Service
(Posted on Wednesday, September 01, 2010)
The Yellow Ribbon Program is a Department of Defense-wide effort to support NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE SERVICE MEMBERS and their FAMILIES with information on benefits and referrals before, during, and after deployments.
When deciding to enlist into the Louisiana National Guard in July 2001, Sgt. Daniel Butts didn't realize that he would be entering military service just 15 days prior to the worst acts of terrorism ever carried out in the United States.

About 2,700 Army National Guard members from Idaho, Montana, and Oregon assigned to the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team are preparing to deploy later this year in support of Operation New Dawn.

DoD joins in call for innovative solutions

The Defense Department is putting some of its most vexing challenges on the Internet for the public to help solve as part of a new initiative to invite creative solutions to government problems.

Illinois, North Dakota participate in MEDFLAG 10 in Congo

Participants arrived in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo last week and began to
Welcome to the NEW Psychological Health Program home page!

National Guard members and Families should never weather emotional and behavioral challenges alone. That is why the National Guard Psychological Health Program is here for you, with Directors of Psychological Health in every State, Territory, and the District of Columbia to ensure you receive the care you deserve. On our new site, you'll find information and contacts to help you and your Family build resiliency, including education to support overall wellness, support for Family members and Friends, and immediate access to help if you are experiencing troubling symptoms. Our Library is home to numerous online resources on topics ranging from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder to Traumatic Brain Injury and more.

Are you in crisis? Private help is available 24/7 through Military OneSource. Call and talk anytime at 1-800-342-9647
MilitaryOneSource.com

The National Guard Psychological Health Program is proud to partner with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association in its mission to improve behavioral health care for military Families.

www.samhsa.gov

Upcoming Events

Yellow Ribbon Events

Pre-Deployment: 94th CSH (Fri November 4 - Sun November 6)
Pre-Deployment: 88 RSC - Event 6 (60-Day) Soldiers Only (Fri November 4 - Sun November 6)
Pre-Deployment: 88 RSC - Event 5 (60-Day) (Fri November 4 - Sun November 6)

More Yellow Ribbon Events

More Events

General: VIT VOL - Everyone Ready (ER) November 2011 Session 2 @ 3 PM EST (Tue

JOIN JSS AND GET PLUGGED IN!
Psychological Health Program
Deployments, Homecomings, Changes, Grief

Preview - When Families Grieve
www.familiesnearandfar.org
www.focusproject.org
FOCUS World (www.focusworld.org) is an interactive, online educational tool that helps military families become stronger in the face of challenges by providing both parents and kids a fun place to learn and practice important skills, such as:

- **Emotional Regulation** - understanding and managing feelings
- **Goal Setting** - working together as a family to achieve something important to you
- **Communication** - listening and responding to each other's concerns, including those related to deployment

Suggested Resources

FOCUS provides online resiliency training to military families.

Register
Links to Community Resources

- **Zero to Three**
- **Chapin Hall at University of Chicago**
- **Strengthening Families**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network**
- **Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress**
Military Families and Separation During the Holidays

Maggie MacFarland Phillips
Research Assistant
III Corps
Fort Hood Health Promotion
Impact of Separation on Military Families

For families with children, impact will differ depending on child’s age

- Children more aware of a parent’s absence and the implications of deployment as they mature
- Mid-teen adolescents (14-16 years) tend to display lower stress levels during deployment

Parents where one spouse is home

- Non-deployed parents’ reaction to deployment affects children
- “The most significant predictor of child stress during a deployment was parental stress.”

Keep Holiday Traditions Alive

Strong non-deployed parent important, especially during the holidays when traditions are especially prevalent

- Decorate as usual
- Where possible, follow established holiday routines

Healthy Mind, Body

- Children’s participation in sports correlates with lower stress
- Strong families are better able to cope so don’t be afraid to talk to someone

Sports correlated with lower stress, but not higher coping abilities – those belonged to:

- Children with strong families
- Children involved in activities aimed at service-oriented concepts such as selflessness and sacrifice, often through religious or scouting activities

Get involved in your community

- 55 percent of all adults get local news and information via word of mouth at least once a week
- People 40 years of age or younger especially learn about community events through word of mouth

There are a lot of opportunities to volunteer during the holidays

- Meet other people
- Focus on something other than deployment-related stressors by helping others
- Many volunteer opportunities are holiday-specific, but could open the door to year-round opportunities for giving back and being a part of something bigger than yourself
Know Your Resources

Word-of-mouth is just one avenue, but there are a lot of ways to get informed about services available to military families both during the holidays and year-round.
Offset the cost of the holidays

- Create a budget with a command financial specialist
- Find out if your installation has a “Santa’s Castle” or “Santa’s Workshop” charity that provides free toys to eligible military families
Don’t let the difficulties of deployment, the stresses of the holidays and the day-to-day ups and downs tempt you to turn to substance abuse

- Food and alcohol are especially prevalent during this time of year
- If you find yourself struggling, contact your installation’s substance abuse or wellness resources
Take Time For Yourself

Whether you have a deployed spouse or not, the holidays are stressful enough

- Be proactive and find out what stress-relieving activities, services and classes are available on and near your installation. Some might even be holiday-specific
Recognize the Signs

Someone you know might be struggling with depression this holiday season, know what to look for

- **In Adults**
  - Feelings of sadness or unhappiness
  - Loss of interest or pleasure in normal activities
  - Insomnia or excessive sleeping
  - Changes in appetite
  - Agitation or restlessness
  - Indecisiveness, decreased concentration
  - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt

- **In Children/Teens**
  - Younger children: sadness, irritability, hopelessness, worry
  - Adolescents: anxiety, anger, avoidance of social interaction
  - Changes in thinking and sleep common in adolescents, but not younger children
Social Media: Not Just a Fun Time-Waster

Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.): A quick, easy way to know your resources

- Get frequent, real-time updates on Defense Department programs and initiatives benefitting military families
- Comment threads on social media posts can be a good way to share holiday “best practices” and “lessons learned” with other military families
- Command information at almost every level available through many social media outlets
Resources

Military OneSource
- www.militaryonesource.com
- 800-342-9647

Community Resource Guide – Find out if your installation has a Community Resource Guide or something similar available on their web page
- www.bliss.army.mil/communityresourceguide
- www.bragg.army.mil
- www.hood.army.mil
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Recommended Resources (con’t)

Title: National Guard website  
Link: www.NG.mil

Title: National Guard Bureau Joint Services Support website 
Link: http://www.jointservicessupport.org/

Title: Sesame Workshop website: Deployments, Homecomings, Changes, Grief  
Link: www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion/tlc

Title: Sesame Street Family Connection website: Military Families Near and Far homepage  
Link: www.familiesnearandfar.org

Title: FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress™) website 
Link: www.focusproject.org

Title: FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress™) website: Focus World homepage  
Link: www.focusproject.org/focus-world-intro
DCoE Call Center
866-966-1020 (toll free)

www.dcoe.health.mil

resources@dcoeoutreach.org
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Please take the time to send us your comments via e-mail at:

DCoE.MonthlyWebinar@tma.osd.mil