



HOME POINT

MILITARY DEPLOYMENT



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Military Deployment

Deployment is tough on the entire family even in the best of circumstances. Hardship is part of what makes the sacrifice of armed services members and their families such an honorable calling. But a military family can stay connected to each other before, during, and after deployment.

PHASE 1: Pre-Deployment (Create)

From the moment those ominous orders are received, a flood of anxiety, grief and fear is likely to flow. Don't ignore these feelings. Acknowledge and talk about them openly with each other and with the children. Guide them through the process of writing down the biggest concerns and then commit to pray for one another throughout the deployment.

Before deployment create a "Deployment Book" to store any memories that happen throughout the separation. Come up with specific strategies for staying connected with your children (i.e. writing letters, Skype, and pre-recorded Bible readings). Come up with a mutually agreed upon plan for marital intimacy (i.e. Skype dates, read and discuss the same daily devotional, and plan creative alternatives to physical intimacy). Most importantly, resolve any tensions in your relationship. Prolonged separation can make marital problems worse and create greater vulnerability to temptation while apart.

PHASE 2: Deployment (Connect)

Deployment brings big changes for the family. Your spouse must carry the load at home in a "man down" situation. The burden of responsibility has just increased dramatically, and life doesn't slow down to let them catch up. Connection is key at this point. Follow through with any plans

you created during the pre-deployment phase or create a plan now. The spouse at home may feel less comfortable in the same church community settings now that the spouse is away. That's okay. At the same time, resist the urge to withdraw. Give fellow believers the blessing of serving you and your heroic spouse, something they can only do if they know specifics. Maintain a list of practical "helps" that you can share in response to the vague offer "If there is anything I can do, don't hesitate to ask."

PHASE 3: Returning Home (Communicate)

This phase usually starts off with a burst of excitement and energy, as the spouse returns from deployment. But when the dust settles, it becomes clear that things have changed. The hole left by the absent service member has been filled by necessity and survival for the remaining family members. This phenomenon can lead to marital tension as couples try to re-establish their "normal life" roles. Communication is the key during this phase. Share and listen. Be open with each other. Re-establish regular date nights and family nights. Pray with and for each other, often.

Deployments are difficult. But they do not have to permanently scar relationships or family life dynamics. In fact, in many cases it can strengthen them if the couple chooses to be intentional up front.

