

A REAL ESTATE AGENT'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING

DEPLOYMENT



INSIGHTS TO HELP
SUPPORT MILITARY CLIENT'S
AND THEIR FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

For many military families, an overseas deployment is one of the toughest challenges they'll ever endure.

American service members sacrifice a great deal to keep our nation safe. But those left behind can face myriad financial and emotional hurdles. Deployments can put some of the strongest bonds and family relationships to the test.

There's no standard or cookie-cutter approach to dealing with deployment. Each spouse and family comes to grips with their own anxieties, fears and needs.

But some recurring themes, questions and concerns tend to crop up, especially among military families facing their deployment. What do they do? How do they prepare themselves?

This is a guide intended to give you the information military spouses wish they would have known. It features advice, insight and comments from spouses and family members who have endured the process. The goal is to help you understand the sacrifice that await your military clients facing deployment.

"I thought I knew what I was getting into from the beginning. I knew he wanted to join the military, but he joined the Guard and plans on going active. He just got out of basic training at the end of May, and at the beginning of June we found out he deploys in January. Now I have no clue what to expect."

- Kayla Karlstrand-Mitchell

PRE-DEPLOYMENT

Many military families have said the pre-deployment stage entails the most difficulties. Emotions run high, fear sets in, and if they're not organized in regards to paperwork, finances and home preparation, they might be in trouble.

Knowing what to expect beyond the to-do list can help pre-deployment families attack the tasks at hand and reduce emotional stress. Here are some things to expect after a deployment is assigned.



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THE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE:

TENSION: When there are multiple obligations with deadlines to deal with on top of a spouse's constant absence for preparation and training sessions, tensions can run high and resentment may surface. Arguments between spouses and tantrums from children are common.

WITHDRAWAL: When fear, confusion and anger set in, spouses may find themselves pulling away from each other as a defense mechanism. Patience and open communication are the best tools to overcome these challenges.

JEALOUSY/RESENTMENT: While a spouse is away training, they form bonds with their unit. They may come home excited about those bonds and upcoming missions together. Feelings of jealousy may arise and a spouse may feel as though their service member wants to leave. On the flip side, strong bonds need to form between a deployed service member and his or her unit. A spouse's excitement will help with his or her own need to cope.

"Well ladies this is my tenth deployment, so please if you need anything send me a message! I will try and help if I can. We are all in this together. That's why we are called 'A MILITARY FAMILY'"

- Laura Baie

"I wish I knew how hard it would be for our little girl not see her daddy as much, but other than that I love it. It doesn't bother me what people say or that I'm not around my family 24/7. The life of being an Army spouse is what it is when he puts his name on the paper."

- Katelyn Putnam



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WHAT CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW

Children may not understand all of the details surrounding a war or a combat zone, but they may not need to. They need to know their needs are met and will stay met even with a parent's absence.

- The parent at home may be sad at times, but the child needs to know that it's normal and not their fault. Parents love their children in happy times and sad times.
- Children need to feel secure and supported. If mom is gone for a while, dad needs to be there. Children will develop independence and self-confidence knowing they have support if they stumble.
- Getting children involved in an organization such as a sport or club will help them feel a sense of camaraderie and belonging with others. They may get lonely with a parent gone, so any social reinforcement will be beneficial.
- Children can embrace deployment by having expectations to meet. When given some tasks to do while mom or dad is away children gain pride and a sense of achievement.
- Children have intuition as to what their parents are feeling, so parents who are honest about the situation will create a sense of trust. Obviously, some details may be beyond their understanding, but you can be open with basic information.

"It's hard to get used to but I'm almost two months in and I couldn't be more proud of my soldier. It's hard to be apart for long periods of time, but it makes our relationship stronger."

- Tiffany White

PREPARATION HELPS CHILDREN COPE

Studies show that children with deployed parents experience more stress, depression and behavioral problems than those with parents at home. Prior to deployment, parents who help their children understand what deployment entails and formulate ways to help them cope give them a better chance to succeed.



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THE PROCESS OF GRIEVING

A military spouse has to grieve a loss. Grieving is not as simple as accepting a spouse has left and moving on with one's life. It's a process with a few stages to work through.

THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF

DENIAL > ANGER > BARGAINING > DEPRESSION > ACCEPTANCE

THE DENIAL STAGE: THIS ISN'T HAPPENING...

Denying the circumstances surrounding a deployment won't make it go away. Sometimes the person experience grief needs someone or something to jolt him or her into reality.

ONCE A SPOUSE REALIZES WHAT HE OR SHE IS FACING, PROGRESSION TO THE OTHER STAGES OF GRIEF CAN THEN HAPPEN.

THE ANGER STAGE: WHY DOES THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN?

Anger arises from conflicting attitudes or expectations. The person moving through grief wants someone or something to blame. He or she wants to justify a position and the feelings surrounding the "wrong."

Unfortunately, it can go beyond a mental fixation and affect physical health. Anger can make a person tense, cause shallow breathing and a constant feeling of pressure. The only way to deal with its effects is to feel them out.



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THE BARGAINING STAGE: WANTING TO DO ANYTHING IF ONLY...

The spouse of a deployed service member can't perform enough good deeds to convince the military to keep his or her spouse home. Bargaining is a part of the grieving process. It's normal, but it's still a stage to get through.

THE DEPRESSION STAGE: DOWN AND DON'T FEEL LIKE DOING ANYTHING

The military is rooted in a sense of strength, meaning any perceived weakness can sometimes be stigmatized, including depression. Military spouses face the same stigmas, but battling depression alone is near impossible and it's a grief stage to address like the others.

When a service member is in the midst of a deployment, the loneliness a spouse feels can seem unbearable, making him or her question how to make it through the next month, week, day and even hour. The stress can make it a struggle to get out of bed some days.

"How to deal with post deployment problems: the sleepless nights, the night sweats and the anger at first. Being a military wife isn't easy and the things we're faced with back home can be hard, don't get me wrong I wouldn't change it for the world but knowing how to handle post deployment problems would have made things easier."

- Kary Whittington

"I wish I knew how hard the deployments are especially with only hearing from my husband maybe three or four times a month. When you try to talk to someone about it, all they say is 'You chose this life so you need to get over it and accept it because you knew what you were getting yourself into.' I hate when people say that to me because you know what? I can't help who I fell in love with, and because I love him, I'm going to stand by him and support him!"

- Natasha Anne Rathbun



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POST-DEPLOYMENT

When a deployed spouse returns, the military spouse can breathe a sigh of relief but challenges still may arise. Many military families have reintegration struggles that they didn't expect.

Spouses fall into the trap of envisioning an amazing reunion with their service member only to run into delayed flights, poor weather, overcooked chicken or whatever else can go wrong. Unrealistic expectations can cause stress and lead to tension and conflict between the couple—the last thing anyone wants for the return of a deployed service member.

"I was nervous, restless, had a hard time sleeping and could hardly eat... And then we had the dreaded delays. Lots of delays. Lots of questions. Some major heartbreak when we knew that he wouldn't come home on the scheduled day."

- Jill, from A Troop's Girl

"A few months ago I wasn't sure I was ready for him to come home. They'd just announced the extensions and I was in a pit of depression. We were both in our deployment "groove." Having your spouse come home in the middle of that groove can seriously throw things out of whack; it can take months to get the ship righted again. But the closer it got, the more excited I became."

- Tiffany White



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REINTEGRATION TO THE CIVILIAN LIFESTYLE

Some spouses may return and integrate themselves back into the home without much friction. But military spouses can be on the outlook for new or altered behaviors and other post-deployment symptoms, including:

- ★ *Easily agitated*
- ★ *Wanting to go back rather than deal with adjustment*
- ★ *Irritability and constant fighting*
- ★ *Trouble sleeping, night sweats and nightmares*
- ★ *Anxious in crowds*
- ★ *Claustrophobic in home*
- ★ *Speeding while driving*
- ★ *Driving anxiety, constantly looking at the side of the road and potholes for bombs*
- ★ *Easily startled by loud noises or other PTSD triggers*
- ★ *Always on guard, checking doors, etc.*
- ★ *Social isolation*

SOCIALLY, A MILITARY SPOUSE MAY EXPERIENCE MORE ALONG THE LINES OF:

- A veteran wanting a spending spree.
- After seeing how well a military spouse has coped with his or her spouse away, the veteran may be hurt or feel unwanted.
- Spouses may want to come off tough, but they may also feel the need for extra care and affection.
- In regards to sleeping, it may take a week for a spouse returned home to fully adjust to the time zone, the lifestyle and the comfort level. Even when they do adjust, they still may experience night sweats and nightmares.



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FINAL NOTE

This guide is by no means an exhaustive list regarding deployment. It is intended be a resource that both offers information and insight.



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