

# TIPS FOR PARENTS OF SERVICE MEMBERS

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As the parent of a deployed service member, you may be feeling conflicting emotions. Undoubtedly, you're proud of your son or daughter, but you may also be worried about his or her safety. Here are some ways to ease your concerns while supporting your service member.

## **Learn as much as you can**

The unknown can cause worry, so find ways to fill the gaps in your understanding of your service member's life.

- Learn about the military and your loved one's service branch. Become familiar with the history, customs, and language.
- Educate yourself about the part of the world where he is deployed.
- Ask her about her assignment. She may not be able to disclose much, but being able to picture her daily routines may ease your worry.
- Keep up with the news, but know to step away when it makes you anxious or upset.

## **Connect with others**

It's important to be around others during this time.

- **Talk with other parents of service members.** Find out how they manage. You will pick up tips and gain comfort from knowing that you're not alone.

- **Spend time with friends, family, and people you care about.**
- **Connect with your service member's family readiness group.** Ask your loved one how to get in touch with this support network for his service branch.
- **Get involved with efforts to support deployed service members.** Even if your own son or daughter doesn't directly benefit, helping others can lift your spirits and give you a sense of purpose.

### **Stay in touch with your service member**

There are many ways to stay connected during deployment.

- Talk with your loved one about the best way to stay in touch during the deployment and whether there may be times when you don't hear from her.
- Ask him whether there is a command or unit website where you can look for pictures or videos.
- Use the mail to send physical reminders of home, such as your local newspaper and programs from a sibling's recitals or performances.
- Keep a list of things you want to talk about with your service member during your next phone chat or when she gets home.

### **Take care of yourself**

As much as your thoughts are with your service member, remember to focus on your own well-being.

- **Take time to relax and unwind every day.** Find a few minutes each day to practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or gentle stretching.
- **Fit exercise into your life.** If you can't hit the gym or join an exercise class, take a 20-minute brisk walk or do yard work. Find ways to sneak physical activity into your day by taking the stairs, parking at the far end of the lot, and choosing to walk rather than drive to nearby places.
- **Practice a hobby.** Becoming engrossed in an activity you enjoy can go a long way in easing stress. Join group activities that offer a chance to

socialize, such as a sports team, a painting class, or a book club.

- **Eat right and get enough sleep.** Being well rested and nourished will keep you healthy and better able to cope with anxiety and stress.

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