WORKING WITH MILITARY CHILDREN

A PRIMER FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

REVISED 2/2003

A PROJECT OF THE VIRGINIA JOINT MILITARY FAMILY SERVICES BOARD

Family Support Center
Langley Air Force Base, Virginia

Army Community Service
Fort Eustis, Virginia

Army Community Service
Fort Monroe, Virginia

Coast Guard Family Program
Portsmouth, Virginia

Fleet and Family Support Centers of Hampton Roads
Hampton Roads, Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In preparing this document, on-site interviews with 80 elementary schools in the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake, Virginia were conducted. Additionally, consultations with school personnel in Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton, Virginia aided us. These schools serve more than 30,000 children of military personnel living in the Hampton Roads area.

Many thanks to the numerous elementary school principals, guidance counselors, and administrative officials who so willingly gave of themselves in answering our questions and sharing their ideas on working with military children.

Finally, this project could not have been completed without the support and endorsement of the Virginia Joint Military Family Services Board. This board is comprised of representatives of Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard family support organizations in Virginia.

Introduction

This project was undertaken in an effort to recognize and record the extremely crucial role schools played in supporting the children of military service members during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Targeted to all school personnel and guidance counselors in particular, this primer is designed to educate, support, and affirm their future efforts.

Our format emphasizes strengths, stressors, and strategies as we look at four major aspects of the military lifestyle: separations or deployments, homecomings, relocation, and crises. An activities section is also included. It lists activities that teachers and counselors can use with individuals, or small or large groups of elementary school age children. These activities were designed to help children cope with the adjustments that a military lifestyle can demand. Their use will promote understanding and greater self-esteem for the military child.

Today, schools continue their crucial role in the lives of military families. It is hoped that this primer will support schools as they continue to support military children.

Table of Contents

The Deployment Cycle 15

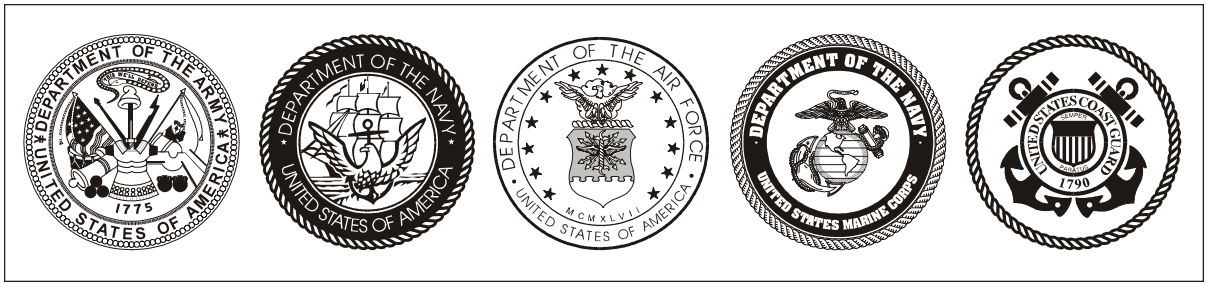
Homecoming: A Time of Celebration and Change 22

Relocation 28

Crisis 33

Children's Activities 37

General Information on the Military



Glossary of General Military Terms

Every occupation has its own language and customs. The military is no exception. To make communication easier, the military uses a lot of abbreviations and acronyms. For example, it is easier to say "PPSO" than say "Personal Property Shipping Office." Some of the most frequently used terms are included in this chapter. Each chapter also has a glossary of terms that relate specifically to the topic being discussed, i.e., deployment, homecoming, crisis, and relocation.

- **Airdale** – slang for naval aviator; "fly boy."
- **Allotment** – a portion of military pay specifically set aside to be sent automatically to another person or to an institution. The service members determine the actual amount of the allotment.
- **Air Wing** – a group of aircraft assigned together for a particular function.
- **Amphibious** – capable of operating on land and sea.
- **AWOL** - (Absent Without Leave) - to be away from the military without proper authorization.
- **BAQ** – (Basic Allowance for Quarters) - a supplementary allowance given to military personnel for certain housing expenses.
- **Billet** – a specific assignment in a ship or station organization.
- **Bravo Zulu** – a military term for a job well done.
- **Brief** – to instruct people for a specific mission or operation. Debriefing means a verbal report after the operation has been completed.
- **Chain of Command** – the organizational structure within the unit which indicates who works for whom.
- **CHAMPUS** – (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services) – healthcare service plan replaced by TRICARE in early 1998. Term is still informally used as synonymous with TRICARE.
- **Chit** – a voucher or request form.
- **CO** – (Commanding Officer) – senior person in charge of a command.
- **Commissary** – the grocery store usually on base or post where service members and families can purchase food, beverages, etc., at prices usually lower than in civilian stores.
- **CQ** – an Army duty lasting 24 hours.

- **DEERS** – (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) – a database containing information on all active duty, retired, and deceased members of the uniformed services, and their family members or survivors. It's the military sponsor's responsibility to ensure family members are properly enrolled, that all information is accurate, and that any changes are promptly reported.
- **DoD** – (Department of Defense) Army, Navy, Air Force and the Marine Corps are administered by this department.
- **DOT** – (Department of Transportation) – Coast Guard falls under this department rather than DoD. In time of war, the USCG comes under USN and DoD.
- **Duty** – work period, commonly referred to in the Navy as a watch, which usually lasts 24-hours.
- **EFMP** – (Exceptional Family Member Program) – a mandatory enrollment program to identify sponsors with family members who have special medical, psychological, or educational needs. The program is designed to assure service members get assigned to areas where these needs will be met.
- **Exchange** – department store on base where service members and families can purchase household items. They are known as PX (Post Exchange), NEX (Navy Exchange), BX (Base Exchange), and MCX (Marine Corps Exchange). One can shop at any military installation. For example, a Navy family could shop at an Army Post Exchange or commissary.
- **Family member** – a term used for a person receiving all or a portion of necessary financial support from a service member. Authorized dependent family members include spouses, unremarried widows or widowers, unmarried children (including adopted children, stepchildren, and illegitimate children over the age of 18 if incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental incapacity), unmarried children between 18 and 23 who are attending school or college full-time, parents or parents-in-law who are dependent on the service member for more than one-half of their support, and unmarried illegitimate children (if actually dependent upon and acknowledged by the service member).
- **Family Service Center** – a support organization that provides programs and services to improve the quality of life of military personnel and their families. They are also known as Family Support Center, Community Service Center, or Work-Life Center.
- **FAP** – (Family Advocacy Program) – addresses the problems of family neglect, violence, and sexual assault. The program provides education on parenting, anger and stress management training, crisis intervention treatment, and follow-up when violence has occurred.
- **Field Day** – a day devoted to cleaning ship or station, usually Friday. The act of cleaning an office, compartment, or space.
- **FRO** – (Family Readiness Officer) – the designated Marine officer of a command who serves as a liaison between Key Wives and the command.
- **FTX** – (Field Training Exercise) – Army exercises conducted away from the unit.
- **Gator** – an amphibious ship or service member stationed on one.
- **Geedunk** – slang for snacks such as cookies, chips, candy, etc.
- **HBA** – (Health Benefits Advisor) – person attached to a military medical facility that helps answer questions families might have about CHAMPUS or Tricare.
- **ID Cards** – identification cards for active duty, family members, retirees, and reservists that are used to prove eligibility for services rendered by the military.
- **IG** – (Inspector General) – a person who may be able to assist service members and families confidentially resolve problems if the chain of command cannot resolve the problem. An IG also inspects and reports on the unit readiness.
- **JAG** – (Judge Advocate General) – a name given to lawyers in the military.
- **JF** – an Air Force term for security forces.

- **Key Wives** – a Marine term for wives of Marines of all grades who have volunteered to support families during times when a sponsor is absent or unavailable.
- **Leave** – authorized paid time off.
- **LES** – (Leave and Earnings Statement) – monthly statement to service member which shows monies earned, leave taken, accrued, and allotments authorized, etc.
- **Liberty** – short periods of authorized absence.
- **MP** – (Military Police) - an Army term for security forces.
- **MWR** – (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation) – a department which offers a variety of recreational programs, support services, and entertainment.
- **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society** – a private organization supported entirely by donations from the Naval/Marine community and friends. Its purpose is to assist members of the Navy and Marine Corps, their dependents, the retired community, and dependents of deceased members in times of urgent or emergency need. The Air Force equivalent is the Air Force Aid Society. The Army equivalent is the Army Emergency Relief Agency.
- **NCO** – (Noncommissioned Officer) – enlisted personnel between the ranks of E4 and E9.
- **Ombudsman** – Ombudsman - spouse of a member of the command who is appointed by the Commanding Officer to serve as official liaison between the command and family members.
- **OOD** – (Officer of the Day) – a duty lasting 24-hours.
- **PAO** – (Public Affairs Office) – staffed by persons who handle public inquiries and press relations for the military.
- **POC** – (Point of Contact) – the designated contact person for a particular project or event.
- **POD** – (Plan of the Day) – schedule of day's routine and need-to-know information published daily aboard ship or at shore commands.
- **PSD** – (Personnel Support Detachment) – Navy unit responsible for issuance of dependent I.D. cards, maintenance of personnel records, dependent status information, and pay records.
- **Rank** – grade or official standing of commissioned and warrant officers.
- **Rate** – grade or official standing of enlisted personnel; identifies pay grade or level of advancement; a rate reflects levels of aptitude, training, experience, knowledge, skill, and responsibility.
- **Rating** – job classification, such as Electronics Technician.
- **SP** – (Shore Patrol) - Navy term for security forces.
- **Sponsor** – the husband, wife, parent, or other guardian who is on active duty in the military.
- **Squadron** – Navy and Air Force term designating individual units within a Wing or Group, which has its own commander.
- **TRICARE** – medical insurance for families (and some former spouses) of active duty, retired, deceased members, and retirees of the uniformed services are covered. All eligible persons must be enrolled in DEERS. Most care from doctors, hospitals, and other providers is covered; however, some care must be pre-approved and there is a co-pay for services. TRICARE Standard option is the equivalent of CHAMPUS.
- **Wing** – Air Force flying units, as well as support squadrons.
- **XO** – (Executive Officer) – the second in command of a ship, aircraft squadron, shore station, unit, etc.

Resources

Military family support organizations provide programs and services to improve the quality of life of military families and single service members. They address practically every area of military family life, providing a comprehensive information and referral service on a wide range of family-related programs and services, including resources which are available in both the military and local civilian community. They are staffed by professionals and volunteers with a variety of backgrounds. Typically the services offered include crisis intervention, financial management, relocation assistance, spouse employment assistance, parenting education, and deployment support programs.

Each Branch of the service has an organization/ position that provides family support services:

- Army — Army Community Services Center (ACS)
- Navy — Family Services Center (FSC)
- Air Force — Family Support Center (FSC)
- Marine Corps — Family Services Center (FSC)
- Coast Guard — Work-Life Center — located in each district office.

School personnel should be familiar with the organization that supports military families at each local installation. They are first line resources in supporting military children and their families.

General Information on the Military

Introduction

The presence of military personnel and their families has a tremendous impact on communities across the nation and around the world. This is true whether it is a small, rural community with a single military command or a metropolitan area such as Hampton Roads, Virginia that includes United States Navy, Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps components. A military presence influences the social, cultural, educational, and economic profile of a community. This was clearly illustrated during *Operation Desert Storm* when thousands of military personnel were deployed, depleting many areas of some of their most dedicated community leaders and organizers and leaving others communities in economic despair.

During *Operation Desert Storm*, again with *Operation Desert Fox,* and most recently during *Operation Allied Force* (Kosovo Conflict*),* many Americans learned more about the different branches of the service and their missions, and they became more familiar with the challenges faced by military families – job danger, family separations, and the resultant uncertainty. During these operations, school personnel provided support for students and parents who had loved ones deployed. Their response has always been impressive, despite the fact that many have limited knowledge of the military and the unique dynamics of military families.

The military remains a mystery to many civilians, even in communities where it makes up a significant portion of the population. The special language, dress, titles, and traditions can be overwhelming for those with no previous exposure to the system. Military families do not want to be singled out for special attention. However, it is helpful for school personnel to have a basic understanding of issues impacting the lifestyle of military families.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide basic information about the armed forces. Schools can also contact their nearest military family support organization for more information on military commands in their area. Many schools have found the Adopt-A-School program valuable in establishing links to the military. When a military command "adopts" a local school, students and staff become more familiar with the military as they get acquainted with the service members involved in this local community service project. Activities can include serving as tutors, teachers' helpers, and big brothers/sisters. It's a fun and productive way for schools to learn more about the military.

RATE AND RANK

Rate and rank are the classification systems, which identify the official standing and level of advancement of a service member

ARMED FORCES COMPARABLE RANKS AND ABBREVIATIONS				
	ARMY	NAVY & COAST GUARD	AIR FORCE	MARINE CORPS
		COMMISSIONED OFFICERS		
O-10	General (GEN)	Admiral (ADM)	General (GEN)	General (GEN)
O-9	Lieutenant General (LTG)	Vice Admiral (VADM)	Lieutenant General (LtGen)	Lieutenant General (LtGen)
O-8	Major General (MG)	Rear Admiral (RADM)	Major General (MajGen)	Major General (MajGen)
O-7	Brigadier General (BG)	Brigadier General (Bgen)	Brigadier General (BrigGen)	
O-6	Colonel (COL)	Captain (CAPT)	Colonel (COL)	Colonel (Col)
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel (LTC)	Commander (CDR)	Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol)	Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol)
O-4	Major (MAJ)	Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	Major (MAJ)	Major (MAJ)
O-3	Captain (CPT)	Lieutenant (LT)	Captain (Capt)	Captain (Capt)
O-2	First Lieutenant (1LT)	Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)	First Lieutenant (1stLt)	First Lieutenant (1stLt)
O-1	Second Lieutenant (2LT)	Ensign (ENS)	Second Lieutenant (2ndLt)	Second Lieutenant (2ndLt)
		WARRANT OFFICERS		
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer (CW4)	Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-4)		Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-4)
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer (CW3)	Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-3)		Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-3)
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer (CW2)	Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-2)		Chief Warrant Officer (CWO-2)
W-1	Warrant Officer (WO1)			Warrant Officer (WO)
		ENLISTED PERSONNEL		
E-9	Command Sergeant Major (CSM)	Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO)	Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt)	Sergeant Major (SgtMaj)
E-9	Sergeant Major (SGM)			Master Gunnery Sgt. (MgySgt)
E-8	First Sergeant (1SG)	Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt)	First Sergeant (1stSgt)
E-8	Master Sergeant (MSG)			Master Sergeant (MSgt)
E-7	Sergeant First Class (SFC)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	Master Sergeant (MSgt)	Gunner Sergeant (GySgt)
E-6	Staff Sergeant (SSG)	Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	Technical Sergeant (TSgt)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)
E-5	Sergeant (SGT)	Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Sergeant (Sgt)
E-4	Corporal (CPL)	Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	Sergeant (Sgt)	Corporal (Cpl)
E-4	Specialist 4 (SP4)		Senior Airman (SrA)	
E-3	Private First Class (PFC)	Seaman (Seaman)	Airman First Class (A1C)	Lance Corporal (LCpl)
E-2	Private (PV2)	Seaman Apprentice (SA)	Airman (Amn)	Private First Class (PFC)
E-1	Private (PV1)	Seaman Recruit (SR)	Airman Basic (AB)	Private (Pvt)

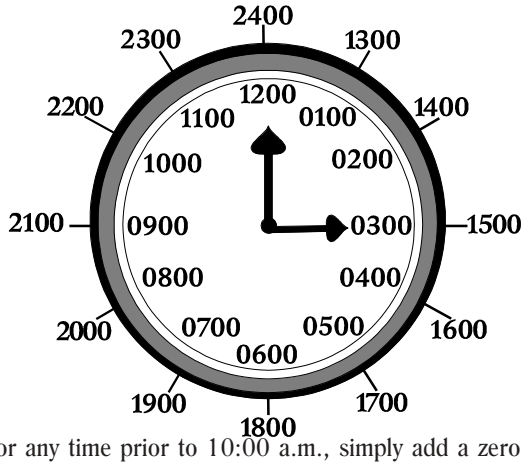
ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE	MARINE CORPS	COAST GUARD
As proscribed by the General of the Armies	None	None	None	None
General of the Army	Fleet Admiral	General of the Air Force	None	None
General	Admiral	General	General	Admiral
Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral
Major General	Rear Admiral (Upper)	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral
Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (Lower)	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Commodore
Colonel	Captain	Colonel	Colonel	Captain

ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE	MARINE CORPS	COAST GUARD
LT Colonel (Silver)	Commander	LT Colonel (Silver)	LT Colonel (Silver)	Commander
Major (Gold)	LT Commander	Major (Gold)	Major (Gold)	LT Commander
Captain (Silver)	Lieutenant	Captain (Silver)	Captain (Silver)	Lieutenant
1st Lieutenant (Silver)	Lieutenant Junior Grade	1st Lieutenant (Silver)	1st Lieutenant (Silver)	Lieutenant Junior Grade
2nd Lieutenant (Gold)	Ensign	2nd Lieutenant (Gold)	2nd Lieutenant (Gold)	Ensign
Silver Black: Chief Warrant Officer (CW-3); Silver Black: Chief Warrant Officer (CW-4)	Chief Warrant Officer (W-3); Chief Warrant Officer (W-4)	None	Silver Scarlet: Chief Warrant Officer (W-3); Silver Scarlet: Chief Warrant Officer (W-4)	Chief Warrant Officer (W-3); Chief Warrant Officer (W-4)
Silver Black: Warrant Officer (WO-1); Silver Black: Chief Warrant Officer (CW-2)	Chief Warrant Officer (W-2)	None	Gold Scarlet: Chief Warrant Officer (W-1); Gold Scarlet: Chief Warrant Officer (W-2)	Chief Warrant Officer (W-2)

ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE	MARINE CORPS	COAST GUARD
Staff SGT Major, Comm. SGT Major, Spec. 9	Master Chief PO	Command Chief Master SGT	SGT Major, Master Gunnery SGT	Master Chief PO
First SGT, Master SGT, Spec. 8	Senior Chief PO	Senior Master SGT	1st SGT, Master SGT	Senior Chief PO
SGT 1st Class, Spec. 7	Chief PO	Master SGT	Gunnery SGT	Chief PO
Staff SGT, Spec. 6	PO 1st Class	Technical SGT	Staff SGT	PO 1st Class
SGT, Spec. 5	PO 2nd Class	Staff SGT	SGT	PO 2nd Class
Corporal, Spec. 4	PO 3rd Class	Senior Airman	Corporal	PO 3rd Class
Private 1st Class	Seaman	Airman 1st Class	Lance Corporal	Seaman
Private	Seaman Apprentice	Airman	Private 1st Class	Seaman Apprentice
Private	Seaman Recruit	Airman Basic	Private	Seaman Recruit

Telling Military Time

Military time uses a 24-hour clock. The easiest way to remember military time is:



For any time prior to 10:00 a.m., simply add a zero before the hour, example: nine o'clock in the morning would be spoken as "zero nine hundred" and written as 0900. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 12:00 a.m. would be "ten hundred," "eleven hundred," and "twelve hundred."

For any time after 12:00 p.m., simply add twelve to the time, example: for 3:00 p.m., add twelve to 3:00 and get "fifteen hundred" or 1500. To convert from military time after twelve hundred, subtract twelve, example: for 1500, you subtract twelve from the military time and get 3:00 p.m.

In the day to day activities of the armed services, the importance of military children can be overlooked. Like their civilian counterparts, military children are the adults of the future. Many individuals currently serving in the armed forces were raised in military families and chose a military career because they had positive experiences as military children.

It is easy sometimes to slip into feeling sorry for military children – always moving to new places, leaving old friends, and trying to fit into new communities. But these hardships can actually provide exciting opportunities that challenge and strengthen children and families. One group of public school teachers commented that military students are culturally and politically aware, good "team players," independent, self-reliant, reach out to newcomers easily, and make good world citizens.

Branches of the armed services have different missions, and these differences often account for differences in family life. Separations and deployments are a fact of life for all military families. However, the mission of one branch of the service may require short, frequent separations while another branch might require longer, less frequent separations. These different patterns of separation can require different adjustments on the part of family members.

In familiarizing yourself with the military family and its lifestyle, remember that just as the branches of the service are different, so too are the individuals and families who serve. We respect these differences, but we have focused on their commonalties in providing information to aid your understanding of the military lifestyle. In the following chapters, four aspects of military life – deployment, reunion, crisis, and relocation – will be examined as they relate to military children.

References

Educational Publications, Inc., *What's Next? A Guide to Family Readiness*, 1990

"The Military Man," *The Virginian Pilot and The Ledger-Star*, Business Weekly: Almanac '91, 24 June 1991

Naval Military Personnel Command, *Sea Legs: A Handbook for the Navy Family*, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, 1989

Navy Wifeline Association, *Welcome Aboard*, Washington Navy Yard, Washington

Uniformed Services Almanac, 1991 Uniformed Services Almanac, Falls Church, 1991

Wedertz, Bill, *Dictionary of Naval Abbreviations*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1984

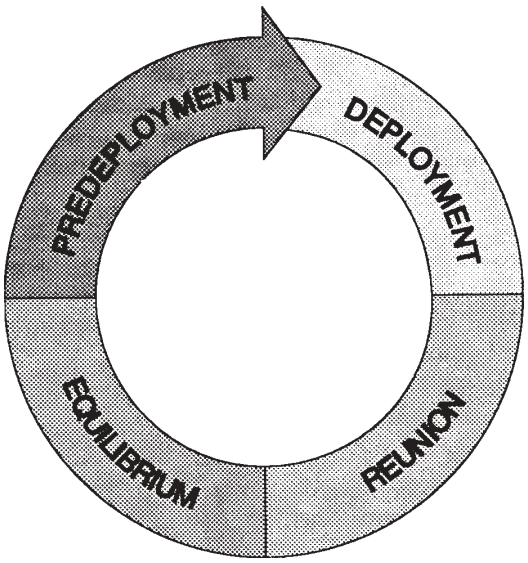
Suggested Reading—Adults

Channing L. Bete, Co., "What You Should Know About Military Family Life," Scriptographic Booklet, phone 800-628-7733 to order

"Handbook for Military Families, *Army/Navy/Air Force Times*, 1 April 1991

Werstch, Mary, *Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood Inside the Fortress*, Harmony Books, New York, 1991

THE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE



GLOSSARY OF DEPLOYMENT TERMS:

- **Chain of Concern** - an Army term for an informal self-help organization for spouses that is usually structured along the chain of command.
- **Deployment** - assignment of military personnel to temporary tours of duty. Can be weeks, months, or years of separation.
- **EDRIE** - when Army military companies are put of alert and are to remain in the company barracks until lifted. Can be from one hour to one week depending on the mission.
- **ETD** - a unit's estimated time of departure.
- **Cruise** - when a Navy ship deploys, the time spent away from homeport is often referred to as a "cruise" or a "deployment."
- **1st Sergeant** - also called "shirt" in the Air Force and "top" in the Army. A position in each squadron tasked with assisting active duty members and families and usually the Point of Contact (POC) for families during deployment.
- **MARS** - (Military Amateur Radio System) - a network of "ham" radio operators who provide phone patches to or from deployed units so that service members can speak to their family members at reduced rates or no cost.
- **Ombudsman** - spouse of a member of the command who is appointed by the Commanding Officer to serve as official liaison between the command and family members.
- **Patrol** - when a Coast Guard ship deploys, the time spent away from homeport is referred to as a "patrol."
- **Rapid deployment** - an Air Force term used when a unit may deploy within 12–18 hours after notification. Most of that time is spent on duty or in crew preparation, not with the member's family.
- **TAD** – (Temporary Additional Duty) - a Navy term for temporary duty.
- **TDY** – (Temporary Duty) – an Air Force and Army term for temporary duty that can last from a few days to a few months.
- **Unaccompanied/Remote tour** - permanent assignment of military personnel to a duty station without family members.

Resources

A variety of deployment support programs and services are available through Army Community Service Centers, Fleet and Family Support Centers, and Air Force Family Support Centers. Offerings vary from center to center, but typically they include:

Pre-deployment Preparation

Educational programs for single service members and couples that provide information on the financial, legal, practical, and emotional preparation for deployment.

- Financial - spending plan, payment of bills, financial goals.
- Legal - powers of attorney, wills, required paperwork.
- Practical – automobiles, leases, sources of support.
- Emotional - emotional cycle of deployment, ways to cope, maintaining communication.

Programs for children and parents are designed to reduce confusion and anxiety about deployment, discuss ways to stay connected during the deployment, and allow children to become more knowledgeable of their deploying parent's environment and duties.

Mid-deployment Support

These programs and services are designed for children and non-deployed parents. Educational programs explore feelings, offer innovative communication ideas, discuss coping strategies, and focus on Homecoming Day. Services include e-mail, phone, or videophone communication with deployed service member and information and referral to resources and activities in the military and civilian communities.

Reunion and Homecoming

These programs and services are designed for returning service members and their family members. Educational programs for service members explore the issues and concerns regarding reintegration into family life and the local community, as well as tips for a successful Homecoming Day. The Navy's Return and Reunion Homecoming Program provides these programs on board deployed commands during transit to homeport. Educational programs for family members typically cover parallel content from the perspective of family members.

http://www.lifelines2000.org

The Quality of Life (QOL) Mall is an on-line resource sponsored by the Department of Defense that offers information on a wide variety of services and topics of interest to military personnel and their family members.

THE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE

INTRODUCTION

Deployments or separations are faced by all military families at some time in their careers. The frequency and duration of these separations may vary depending on the branch of the service or the service member's job, but many of the emotional issues military families face are the same.

The deployment cycle is a construct that helps us understand the emotional stages that many military families go through in adjusting to family separations and reunions. The time it takes for individuals to move through the various stages of this cycle varies, and members of different military communities may experience stages of the cycle differently.

The stress of separation may be lessened if the service member on an unaccompanied tour is able to write, e-mail or phone home frequently. In contrast, a submariner's family may have little or no communication with their service member, and the challenge to "keep the connection" becomes even greater.

Dual active duty parents and active duty single parents may face even greater challenges during times of deployment. Finding reliable, long-term childcare can be difficult, and the cost of this kind of extended care during deployments can be very high. Current, complete Family Care Plans are also required of these military parents. Family Service Centers can assist these parents in managing the process of deploying.

Studies show that healthy families share many characteristics and that adaptability, flexibility, and clarity of family rules are some of the most important ones. All three characteristics are present in military families that successfully manage separations. These families are often referred to as "accordion families." They stretch out and expand to let the service member in after a deployment, and they compress and condense when the member deploys. During all this activity these remarkable accordion families, like the instrument, maintain harmony and make music, seldom dropping a note or missing a beat. But this astonishing feat might not be accomplished without help from outside the family. The military member's command, military and civilian service agencies, and other families all contribute to the harmony and smooth orchestration of family life and help children ease through the transitions.

STRENGTHS

Much has been written about the negative impact family separations and relocations have on military children. Less attention has been focused on the positive impact of these realities of military family life. Several psychological studies show that despite the stress of separation, many children make significant developmental gains. Positive impacts include:

a. **Fosters maturity** - Military children have broader and more varied experiences than non-military children.

b. **Growth inducing** - Military children learn more about the world and how to function within a community at an earlier age. Assuming age-appropriate responsibilities in the service member's absence provides a chance to develop new skills and develop hidden interests.

c. **Encourages independence** - Military children tend to be more resourceful and self-starters.

d. **Encourages flexibility** - In an ever-changing environment, military children often learn the importance of flexibility in dealing with day to day life.

e. **Builds skills for adjusting to separations and losses faced later in life** - In a lifestyle filled with good-byes and hellos, military children learn not only how to say good-bye, but how to begin new friendships.

f. **Strengthens family bonds** - Military families make emotional adjustments during a separations and relocations that often lead to the discovery of new sources of strength and support among themselves.

• STRESSORS

A deployment can range anywhere in length from two weeks to over a year. A company can be put on alert and required to remain in the barracks until the alert is lifted, from one hour to one week depending on the mission. With a rapid deployment, a squadron may receive only 12-18 hours notification before departure. A rescue unit makes short but frequent deployments, while a ship might make regularly scheduled six-month deployments. All of these situations can be stressful for military families, particularly for children.

Children's reactions to an impending separation will vary with their personalities and ages. Change is puzzling to children, and they may be worried, angry, or moody. Parents are concerned about how the separation will affect their children, as well as their role as parents. If you were to talk to a military family in the early stages of the deployment cycle, these are some of the issues you might hear.

DEPLOYING PARENTS

- Worried about losing touch with children.
- Concerned about whether they'll be remembered by children when they return (especially for infants and toddlers).
- Worried about changes that may occur in children during deployment.
- Concerned about their ability to be a good parent while deployed.

NON-DEPLOYING PARENTS

- Concerned about the heavier workload and increased responsibility.
- Worried about their ability to maintain consistent discipline practices.
- Concerned about their ability to fill the role of both parents.

CHILDREN

- **"Why must my parent go away?"**

Young children may not fully understand the reasons behind the service member's departure. In their minds, he/she may be choosing to go away. They may feel abandoned.

- **"My parent is going away because of something I did."**

Young children may feel the service member is going away because of something they did. They may feel guilty.

- **"If I was really good enough, my parent would stay."**

These feelings may be reflected in anger, hostility, a desire for revenge, or a desire to be punished for having such feelings. Children may feel unlovable or worthless.

- **"Go away – see if I care. We (the family) can get along just fine without you."**

Children may experience resentment toward the service member or a desire to take the parent's place, in addition to guilt for feeling that way.

- **"I don't have to listen if I don't want to!"**

Sensing a loss of continuity, children may continually "test" the non-deployed parent to find his/her limits; to see what's changed with the non-deployed parent at the helm. Now that the family structure has undergone some change, children may feel insecure.

Children from separated military families experience many of the same effects as children of divorce. They worry about what will happen to them. Will the non-deployed parent leave, too? Who will take care of them? This is especially so if the family has trouble with mail deliveries or pay allotments, which is frequently the case in the early days of separation. They may worry about whether they will have enough to eat, to wear, to play with, and a place to live. All these fears may consciously or subconsciously trouble the child.

However, one of the most influential factors affecting children's attitudes toward deployment is the non-deployed parent's attitude toward deployment. If the parent maintains a positive attitude and models effective coping skills, most likely the child will do the same.

• STRATEGIES

Deployments cause a number of changes in children's lives. Change is puzzling to children, and as a result they may show *signs of separation anxiety*. Listed below are some of the reactions that parents and teachers might observe in children when a parent is deployed. It is very helpful when teachers and counselors contact parents of military students experiencing separation anxiety. These students may be showing similar signs at home.

In preschool or kindergarten children you may see:

- Clinging to people or favorite toy, blanket, etc.
- Unexplained crying or tearfulness.
- Change in relationship with same-age friends.
- Choosing adults over same-age friends.
- Increased acts of aggression toward people or things.
- Shrinking away from people or things.
- Sleep difficulties (nightmares, frequent waking).
- Regressing such as toileting accidents, thumb-sucking, etc.
- Eating difficulties.
- Fear of new people or situations.

In school-age children you may see:

- Any of the signs exhibited by younger children, PLUS
- A rise in complaints about stomach aches, headaches, or other illnesses when nothing seems to be wrong.
- More irritability or crabbiness.
- Increase in school problems such as a drop in grades, an unwillingness to attend school, or odd complaints about school and/or teachers.
- Behavior changes.

Guidance counselors, teachers, and school administrators can assist military children and their parents in the following ways:

- Refer to military family support organizations for information on deployment workshops, free educational materials, or counseling services. (See divider page.)
- Invite representatives from your local military family support organization to PTA meeting to talk about separations and children.
- Encourage military families to attend deployment-focused programs.
- At the start of each school year, encourage military parents to provide the school with the name of the unit they are assigned to and when the unit deploys. This would allow the school to keep a confidential master list of students who have/will have parents deployed. This information helps teachers and counselors to be attuned to any emotional, behavioral, or academic changes that may occur with a student as a result of a parent being deployed.
- Work on craft or science projects that illustrate the change in seasons - pumpkins, snowflakes, leaves, and planting seeds. This helps young children identify the passage of time and relate this to parent's return.
- Encourage younger children to bring in some of the deployed parent's worn clothing and uniform items to use for dress-up play.
- Encourage students to communicate regularly with their deployed parents. Letters and tapes are always appreciated, but some other ways children can keep in touch include sending the service member:

  1. A gift certificate to be cashed in when the deployed parent gets home.
  2. A book written/illustrated about the absent parent.
  3. A new recipe they tried and plan to make when the deployed parents returns.
  4. A drawing with a hidden picture for the deployed parent to find.
  5. A crossword puzzle or secret message with a code for the deployed parent to figure out.

Suggestions for parents include:

- Take time to visit their children's teachers. Parents may be reluctant to advise a teacher of an upcoming deployment, worrying that it may appear as if they're asking for special treatment for their child. However, a teacher who is aware of the student's family situation is in a better position to be sensitive and encouraging.

- Encourage a parent to leave three stamped, self-addressed envelopes with the teacher. The school or PTA newsletter can be sent to the deployed parent as well as samples of their child's work with a short comment regarding his/her progress.

- Become a pen pal to their child's class. Instead of feeling different for having a parent so far away, their child will be proud of the important work they do. Everyday items from other cultures can be very educational. A parent could send postcards, maps, stamps, coins, menus, or information and articles that describe the foreign duty station, port, etc. A picture, patch, bumper sticker, or button will enhance a child's sense of pride in the parent's job.

Exemplary Efforts

- One Norfolk, VA class sponsored a Deployed Dad program. One child's Deployed Dad was chosen as the class's link to deployment. By tracking the Deployed Dad's journey on a map, the class learned about the world, and his child brought in postcards, stamps, shells, and other items sent from different places. Each child wrote the Dad letters. This program provided students with a positive, educational experience during a difficult time, and made the child feel closer to the deployed parent with the entire class as a system of support.

- During *Operation Dessert Storm*, a Newport News, VA elementary school dedicated a PTA meeting with a patriotic theme to people serving in the Persian Gulf. Everyone wore red, white, and blue; the non-deployed military parents were asked to attend in uniform; and children sang patriotic songs. The event was taped and sent to the soldiers in the Gulf from Fort Eustis, an Army installation in Virginia, who in return sent a tape back to the students.

- Many elementary guidance counselors in the Hampton Roads, VA area public schools facilitated deployment support groups for students whose parents or relatives were involved in *Operation Desert Storm*. These counselors are to be congratulated on their quick response in meeting the needs of military students who were sometimes confused and frightened by the rapid deployment of their loved ones. Many military parents commented to Navy Family Service Center staff that these deployment support groups were the key ingredient in easing their children's anxieties. These groups proved to be so successful in assisting students to cope more effectively with their parent's absence that some guidance counselors continue to offer deployment support groups on a regular basis.

- Students can make a time capsule at the beginning of the deployment. A shoe box or plastic bag can be filled with items like a piece of string as long as the child's height, a tracing of the child's hand or foot, a list of the child's favorites (song, candy bar, television show, toy, etc.), and any other items as desired. Students choose a hiding place for their time capsules at the start of the deployment and open them when the deployed parent returns. It's an entertaining way to measure the changes that have occurred!

- Peer counseling proved to be an effective technique implemented during *Operation Desert Storm*. More experienced military students assisted those students who with little or no experience with deployments, particularly children of reservists who were not prepared for their parents' rapid deployment.

- Students enjoyed inviting a guest speaker to address their deployment support group. A service member in uniform, a military spouse, or staff member from a local family support organization were utilized during *Operations Desert Storm* and *Desert Shield*.

- A puppet show developed by a local Navy Family Service Center was offered to early elementary students to help them understand and cope with the stressors brought on by *Operations Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*. Many public and private schools offered this program.

References

Breger, Eli, "On Navy Family Separations, " *Wifeline*, Spring 1981: 12

"Effects Of Deployment On Growing Families," *Military Family*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Fall 1981

Embry, Dennis D., "Someone in My Family Went Off to the Middle East" Project Me, Inc., 1990

Hill, Gary F., "Father & Son Together Again," *Wifeline*, Winter 1983: 1

Kersey, Katherine & Schuenke, Janet, "Military Daddy: Now You See Him Now You Don't," *Ladycom*, June 1982

Lester, Marianne, "When Daddy Comes Home - How to Cope With Children Who Are Hurt and Angry Because Daddy's Been Away," *Air Force Times*, magazine supplement, 20 September 1976:8

Logan, Kathleen Vestal, "The Emotional Cycle of Deployment," Naval Institute Proceedings, February 1987

Newman, George, "101 Ways To Be A Long Distance Superdad"

Sitler, Filomena, " The Military Father - Good Servicemen Can Be Good Daddies Too," *Air Force Times*, magazine supplement, 1 February 1982

Suggested Reading

Channing L. Bete Co., Inc, "*About Deployment*," Scriptographic Booklet, 1995, phone 800-628-7733 to order and request item #16931

Channing L. Bete Co., Inc, "Mission Readiness: A Personal and Family Guide," Scriptographic Booklet, 1996, phone 800-628-7733 to order and request item #92296E-7-98

Suggested Reading-Children

Channing L. Bete Co., "Until Your Parent Comes Home Again," Scriptographic booklet, 1996, phone 800-628-7733 and request item #54411

Corey, Dorothy, "You Go Away," Whitman, 1975

Dupasquier, Phillipe, "Dear Daddy," Bradbury, New York, 1985

Hoffman and Sitler, "A Special Family" *Naval Institute Press*, Annapolis, Maryland, 1981

McClosky, Robert, "Make Way for Ducklings," Viking, 1941

Sendak, Maurice, "Chicken Soup With Rice," Harper and Row, New York, 1971

Zolotow, Charlotte, "A Father Like That," Harper and Row, New York, 1971

HOMECOMING: A TIME OF CELEBRATION AND CHANGE

Homecomings can be a time of celebration as well as change. Family members experience a variety of feelings before and after being reunited. These emotions are perfectly normal. In fact, there are three stages that most people experience during homecomings: anticipation, readjustment, and stabilization.

ANTICIPATION

The weeks and days before homecoming are filled with mounting excitement, tension, and nervousness. Days may be spent in busy preparation for a spouse's return. Fantasies of an even better relationship may surface and take the place of reality as the day of homecoming draws closer.

READJUSTMENT

As the experience of homecoming fades, it is often followed by a stage of renewal and the possible renegotiations of roles and responsibilities. Experts have identified two stages of readjustment:

Stage One – Honeymoon
(usually until the first serious disagreement)

- Feelings of euphoria, relief
- Blur of excitement
- Catching up and sharing experiences
- Beginning to reestablish intimacy

Stage Two – Readjustment
(approximately 6-8 weeks)

- Intensified pressures
- Sensitivity to spouse's presence
- Increased tension as the idealized relationship confronts reality

STABILIZATION

The amount of time it takes for families to stabilize varies. Many experience only minor difficulty in adjusting to new routines. However, readjustment may be a longer process for others.

GLOSSARY OF HOMECOMING TERMS

- **ETA**- Estimated Time of Arrival.
- **Channel Fever** – constant state of excitement and sometimes sleepless nights experienced by returning military personnel and their families during the last few days of the deployment.
- **Tiger Cruise** – immediate family members of the deployed service members (except spouses) are invited by the command to ride the ship during the last few days of the cruise.
- **R&R** – Return and Reunion Homecoming Program.
- **Stand Down Time** – returning crew members typically have time off before the regular work routine starts again, but they must report for duty section.

RESOURCES

Homecoming support services are available through Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC), Air Force Family Support Centers (FSC), and Army Community Service Centers (ACS). Helpful resources include:

- **Classes**
- **Counseling**

Professional counselors provide free, short-term counseling and crisis intervention for personal, marital, and family matters. Referrals for long-term counseling are made to community agencies as appropriate.

- **Homecoming Preparation**

These programs prepare family members for the service member's return by addressing the emotional aspects of reunion and changes that may occur upon return.

- **Family support groups**
- **Key Spouses**
- **Ombudsmen**
- **Printed Resources/Educational Materials**
- **Return and Reunion Homecoming Program**

This Navy program offers educational workshops and resource information on board ships during the transit home from an extended deployment. An FFSC team provides workshops on topics such as returning to family and children, financial issues, and more. It is an exciting, dynamic program designed to "Help Make a Good Thing Better."

INTRODUCTION

Several days before homecoming from a major deployment, crews aboard Navy ships become afflicted with the mysterious ailment known Navy-wide as "Channel Fever." Nobody complains about the symptoms – sleepless nights and a constant state of excitement.

Its cause? Being within hours of seeing loved ones and friends for the first time in many months.

If you talked to these service members, they might say…

"During the transit home, the deployment is still fresh in our minds. We still have feelings of frustration, anxiety, and helplessness. We still feel the heartache of being away from families and the fatigue from the 12, 14, and sometimes 24-hour workdays that deployments bring."

"We hope that our spouses are aware of how demanding our days have been… that we haven't spent the last six months taking a 'pleasure cruise.' We spend those last days before homecoming fantasizing about things will be… thinking about promises made (and maybe not kept) and hoping that homecoming will be perfect for both of us. We feel a little scared. What if my children don't remember me? What if my spouse has changed?"

"We're also aware that homecoming is just the beginning. We know we have to get used to our family lifestyle all over again. Sometimes it's hard not to feel like a stranger in your own home and to be willing to understand and accept all of the decisions your spouse has made while you were gone."

If you were to talk to the awaiting spouse, he/she might say…

"It feels as if homecoming will never get here, even though these past few days are really busy. Sometimes I think I'll never get everything done before the ship pulls in. I want everything to be perfect for him/her. I still need to make a trip to the commissary.

It's been almost six months since I've bought any of his/her favorites. The first night home, though he/she wants to order pizza. Who wants to spend time cooking anyway? I've got other plans for our first night together."

'We've both really changed during this deployment. I feel really great about how I've handled the many crises that came up. I've really grown in his/her absence. I hope he/she will want to be a part of my new interests and friends. I've been waiting so long to share them with him/her."

Their child might say…

"I am so excited I can hardly wait for Daddy/Mommy to come home. I have a hard time sitting still and doing my work at school – I feel like I might explode inside. It seems like I can't do anything right anymore. I keep getting yelled at, and everyone tells me to settle down. I don't know how to. I want so much for Daddy/Mommy to be glad to see me. I'm afraid he/she won't be. I wonder if he/she will be mad at me about my last report card of yell at me because I kept forgetting to take out the trash on trash day like I was supposed to while he/she was gone."

"What is it going to be like to have Daddy/Mommy home again? I wonder if I'll have to go back to early bedtime again. It was so fun staying up a little later at night. I guess it'll all be worth it to have Dad Mom home again though. I missed him/her so much."

• STRENGTHS

The homecoming experience can be difficult as well as joyful. It provides an opportunity few civilian families have — a chance to evaluate the changes that have occurred in the family, to determine the future direction of this growth, and to experience renewed and refreshed family relationships. Reunion creates an opportunity for family members to see one another in a new light. We've all heard the phrase "absence makes the heart grow fonder." After a separation, military family members tend to appreciate each other more and view their family as "special" for successfully completing yet another deployment.

Reunion requires children to learn about making adjustments, renegotiating roles, accepting change, and developing new skills. These skills support an increased ability to adapt to new circumstances, new environments, and new ideas. As adults, many of these military children will cope more effectively with change than their civilian counterparts.

• STRESSORS

Homecoming day can be the most exciting day in the life of a military family. It is an emotionally charged experience in which a wide range of feelings can emerge. Recent research done with Navy families in the Hampton Roads, VA area shows that the reunion period can be more stressful than the deployment. Stressful reunions can occur regardless of the duration of the separation — a two-week exercise or a six-month cruise. In shorter separations, units may return home just as abruptly as they departed, allowing families little time to prepare for reunion.

Despite the length of the separation, couples build up fantasies about one another and what the reunion will be like. This is also true for parents and children. Many parents returning from a deployment have visions of the "perfect reunion" — their child running down the pier shouting "Mommy, Mommy" or across the tarmac, arms open, yelling, "Daddy, Daddy." They may envision their child immediately hugging and kissing them, and listening intently to all their stories. Some parents may be thinking nothing has changed since they've been gone — the kids, spouse, and the house are all the same.

Extended family members or friends who have little familiarity with military family life often see homecoming as an idyllic event and a solution to any problems that existed during the deployment. Even though reunion is generally a happy time for most families, it's important to remember:

- Parents and children may experience confusing feelings – worry, fear, happiness, and excitement.
- Children may be unsure about what to expect from the returning parent.
- Change is stressful for children and adults.
- Families and the returning parent change during separations. Everyone has grown physically, emotionally, and socially. The parent at home may enjoy the independence experienced during the separation. The twelve-year-old daughter who used to hang around with Dad on Saturday, may now want to spend free time with her friends. The toddler who ran to Mom with bumps and scrapes, may now run to Dad for comfort.
- Expect the adjustment period to last for several weeks.

STRATEGIES

Guidance counselors, teachers, and school administrators can assist children and parents prepare for homecoming. Refer families to military family support centers for information on reunion workshops, free educational materials, or counseling services.

It's also important to understand children's reactions to homecoming. The following are common reactions parents and teachers might observe children after reunion.

COMMON REACTIONS AFTER REUNION

Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)

- Feels guilty for making parent go away.
- Needs some warm-up time.
- Demonstrates intense anger at home or school.
- Needs "proof" that the parent is real – pokes, hits, test limits.
- Acts out to get parent's or teacher's attention.
- Is demanding.

School age (5 to 12 years)

- Runs to greet returning parent at homecoming.
- Feels guilty that they didn't do enough or weren't good enough.
- Dreads the parent's return if they believe parent will discipline them for all the wrongs committed during the separation.
- Boasts about the service and parent.
- Talks the entire way home on homecoming day trying to bring the parent up-to-date.

Teenager (13 to 18 years)

- Exhibits excitement if parent/child relationship was strong.
- Feels guilty for not living up to standards.
- Is concerned about rules and responsibilities.
- Feels too old or is unwilling to change plans to meet the ship/plane when parent returns.

Consistency between home and school can assist students during this adjustment period.

Family support centers offer the following suggestions to the returning parent as he/she reintegrates with the family:

- Go slowly – Don't "take over" when you return.
- Be firm – Don't give in to children's demands.
- Observe – Examine your family's schedule and rules.
- Be flexible – Don't expect things to be the same.
- Be realistic – Don't expect the impossible.
- Communicate – Discuss your feelings and concerns.
- Reestablish co-parenting – Coordinate discipline with your spouse.
- Be generous – Spend time with your family.

Family support centers offer the following advice to school personnel:

- Expect a period of readjustment for the entire family. Problems experienced by a child during a parent's absence will not immediately disappear when the parent returns. New problems may replace the old ones.
- Set up a courtesy conference with parents and their child. This is a good opportunity to praise the child for their strengths and suggest ways that the parents and the child can work together on areas needing improvement.
- Project Me Club, which prepared educational materials for military families and professionals during *Operation Desert Storm,* suggests ideas about dealing with reunion that counselors might utilize in a deployment group.

Teachers could also use classroom activities such as:

- Facilitate class meetings or discussions to talk about:
  a. How hard it is to wait until a parent returns from deployment.
  b. What their reunion will be like. Talk about going to meet the parent and how they might feel.
  c. Their fears of being abandoned again.
  d. What changes in their families might happen when the deployed parent comes home.
- Get the children to brainstorm ideas of how they would like to celebrate. Have them make a list of celebration ideas and take it home.
- Create a system of "No Homework Passes." This entitles the student to a night off from homework after the deployed parent returns. Time normally allotted for completing homework would be spent getting reacquainted.
- Have each child make an "I'm Proud List" of positive things done while Mom/Dad was away. Many children may believe they have not done well. Boost their self-esteem by hanging the lists up around the classroom.
- Notice positive social interactions between kids. Write their names on the chalkboard when they share, listen, help, cooperate, or do things for each other. This helps build self-esteem and heal social problems that may have developed.
- Praise positive school achievements, particularly among those kids who are struggling. Children who experience difficulty with separations often blame themselves. Receiving praise for school achievements helps these children challenge their feelings of "badness" or their belief that they are somehow secretly responsible for the separation.
- Some children have already had a parent come home. Ask them to think of something they can do for a classmate who is still waiting, like leaving a note on the classmate's desk saying it's hard to wait for someone to come home or spending time talking or playing with that classmate.

Exemplary Efforts

Many schools presented special programs to celebrate the return of military personnel from the Persian Gulf and bring a sense of closure to *Operation Desert Storm*. Some schools offered musical presentations featuring patriotic songs, and others held special ceremonies on Flag Day, which was the last day of the school year. Military parents who served in the Persian Gulf were the honored guests at these events. These were wonderful examples of school personnel recognizing and actively participating in the homecoming process. Some of these creative ideas could be restructured and implemented on a smaller scale to recognize those military parents who deploy on a regular basis. Schools can have a positive impact on military families going through the return and reunion process when schools and parents work together to support military children.

References

Breger, Eli, "On Navy Separations," *Wifeline*, Spring 1981

Bruning, Carol L., "Be Prepared for the Reunion," *Navy Times*, 26 March 1990: 57

Logan, Kathleen, "The Emotional Cycles of Deployment," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1987

McCall, Celeste, "Your Problems Aren't Over When He Gets Home," *Air Force Times*, magazine supplement, March 1981

Suggested Readings - Adults

Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc., "About Reunion, "#48637, Scriptographic Booklet, 1991, phone 800-628-7733 to order and request item #48637

Kersey, Katherine, and Schwenke, Janet, "Military Daddy: Now You See Him, Now You Don't", *Ladycom*, June 1982

Lester, Marianne, "When Daddy Comes Home," *Air Force Times*, magazine supplement, 20 September 1976

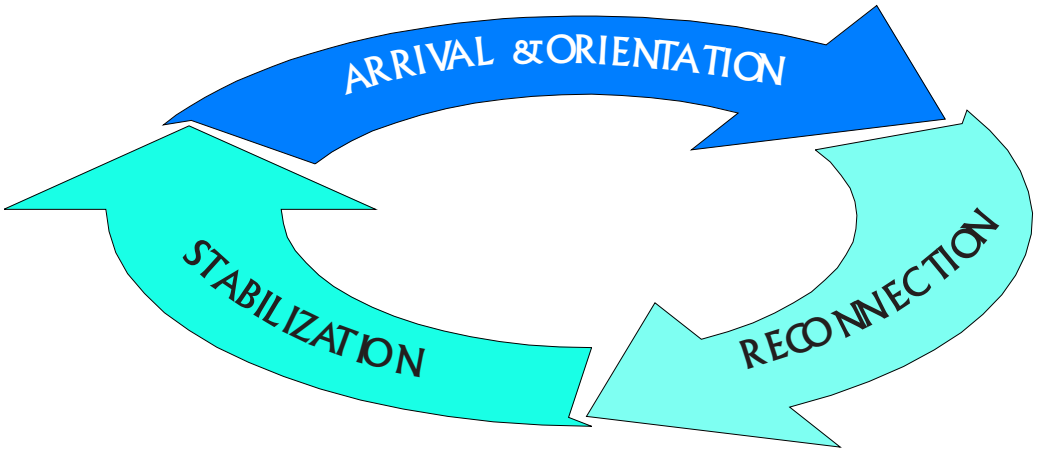
Suggested Readings - Children

Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc., "Let's Talk About Reunion," Scriptographic Booklet, 1991, phone 800-628-7733 to order and request item #56838

Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc., "Your Parent Is Coming Home," Scriptographic Booklet, 1991, phone 800-629-7733 to order and request item #56820

Embry, Dennis D, PhD, and Rubenstein, Alice, EdD, "They're Coming Home," Project Me, Inc., Books 3, 4, and 5, of the *Reunion Support* series, 800 N. Swan, Ste 114, Tucson, AZ 85711, 1991, call (602) 322-9977

RELOCATION



The cycle of relocation, beginning with awaiting new orders and ending with the final adjustment in the new duty station, can range from two to twenty-four months. Military personnel know that mobility is a condition of employment. In general individuals and families become experienced, resourceful, and resilient with respect to coping with relocations that can occur as often as every two years.

GLOSSARY OF RELOCATION TERMS:

- **CONUS** – (Continental United States) – the 48 contiguous states and District of Columbia. All area outside CONUS is called OCONUS (Outside of the Continental United States).
- **DITY** – (Do It Yourself Move) – a family can elect to move themselves at a government rate.
- **EAOS** – (End of Active Obligated Service) – date that signals the end of service member's obligated service.
- **ETS** – estimated time service member would complete commitment to his/her branch of service.
- **HHG** – (Household Goods)
- **INTRO** – (Individual Newcomer Treatment and Orientation)
- **Lending Locker** – hospitality kits available for loan to military families needing household items on a temporary basis.
- **OTIS** – (Overseas Transfer Information System) – maintains information about traveling or transferring to overseas locations.
- **PCS** – (Permanent Change of Station) – relocation of military personnel from one permanent location to another. Certain financial entitlements are available to pay the cost of relocation.
- **POV** – (Privately Owned Vehicle) – military families are entitled to have a POV shipped to a new duty station depending upon location.
- **PPSO** – (Personnel Property Shipping Office) – assists military with arrangements to relocate household goods.
- **PRD** – (Projected Rotation Date) – date which service member is due to begin next rotation of service.
- **RAP** – (Relocation Assistance Program)
- **RAU** – (Relocation Assistance Unit) – provides a variety of services to newly reporting or detaching members such as information, household rental items, workshops, etc.
- **Sponsor** – a person assigned to a relocating service member of like rank, age, and marital status in the new duty station to facilitate adjustment.
- **TMO** – (Traffic Management Office)

RELOCATION

INTRODUCTION

Geographic mobility has become a fact of life for modern American families on a quest for a better life. Figures indicate that the average American family moves once every five years. However, for some military families this figure can escalate to relocation every two years, twice the national average. A career in the military could result in ten to twelve relocations.

Few subcultures influence the course of their members' lives as dramatically as the military. Military members have limited ability to choose where their next duty station will be, and subsequently how this will affect their families' lifestyle, job opportunities, education, and friendships. Single parent families, step or blended families, dual career families, and dual active duty families may encounter even greater challenges during military relocation. With the full cycle of adjustment to a relocation taking up to two years, this can mean families who move every one to four years have barely adjusted to one location before they are relocating again.

Just as lifestyles, adjustment periods, and frequency of relocations vary from family to family, so will the family's reactions vary. However, there are general patterns and consistencies that emerge in response to relocation. These include denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment. The reactions are typically associated with the varying stages of relocation.

In the pre-move stage, people may feel emotions ranging from anxiety and depression to enthusiasm and euphoria. During the actual move emotions are often suppressed as the focus is on the logistics of completing the tasks at hand. There may be irritability, fatigue, restlessness, and an overall feeling of being overwhelmed. Once the move has been completed, feelings of isolation and depression may emerge for some. Others may be anticipating the exploration of their new environment with enthusiasm. The final stage of acceptance and commitment to the new duty station may be realized immediately for some while taking up to a year or more for others.

One often-overlooked aspect of military family relocation is cultural shock, when returning from an overseas tour of duty. The change in cultural settings can also result in school adjustment difficulties. Normally, these difficulties resolve with time and patience.

The effect of relocation on the children depends on the age and developmental level of the child. The children who are most vulnerable to the emotional effects of relocation are young children just beginning to feel secure being away from their parents in a school setting. When children are part of decision-making regarding the move, they express a more positive outlook on the new location and adjust more quickly.

STRENGTHS

The challenges of relocation can provide military families with some positive opportunities:

- Opportunities for active duty personnel to advance to a better assignment.
- New activities or ways to get involved because of a new geographic location/climate.
- Ways to meet new people and broaden cultural horizons.
- Improved career opportunities for non-military spouses.
- New ways for community-involved spouses to apply their skills and talents, as well as share their experiences

The "key" to the positive nature of a relocation experience from a child's point of view is based on the parents' perception of the move. If the parents view the change as the fulfillment of some hope or ambition, the feelings transmitted to the children will be positive and supportive. The younger the child the more likely their attitude will match that of their parents.

In general, military children are viewed as having benefited from their mobile lifestyle. A number of studies indicate that military children tend to be:

- Culturally aware and knowledgeable in geography and social studies.
- Independent, self-reliant, and better "team players."
- Sophisticated, reaching out to newcomers and friends more easily.
- Politically aware and likely to develop into good citizens.
- Better able to develop more portable achievements, skills, and talents

In fact, some studies suggest that typical "mobile" military youth believe:

- Their life is reasonably normal.
- They face moving problems squarely and believe they can be solved with some help from their friends.
- They have fewer problems with people in general than do their civilian counterparts.
- They can adjust no matter where they live.

• Stressors

Due to the frequency of moving, military families may be particularly susceptible to the stressors of relocation. The most frequent logistical problems encountered during permanent change of station (PCS) moves are:

- Packing up one household and setting up another.
- Temporary lodging expenses and the costs of transporting the family.
- Selling a home in one location and buying a home in another.
- Adjusting to a higher cost of living.
- Finding employment for the non-military spouse and family members.
- Continuing with educational goals of family members.

Although school staff may not immediately know that the children are under stress, there are certain "red flags" that can alert them that the relocation process is causing some disruptions for the military family:

a. Family is unable to pay book fees or similar district financial obligations upon arrival to new school. Disruptions in paychecks can occur with relocation and may take several months to resolve. Direct the family to appropriate family support centers or relief organizations for financial assistance/counseling.

b. School children may be wearing the same clothing repeatedly, or inappropriate clothing (unprepared for climate changes from previous duty station), or even clothing that is less well cared for due to difficulties with laundry arrangements. These situations signal a difficulty with arrival of household goods, temporary housing, financial hardships, etc. Refer to appropriate family support center for assistance.

c. Children returning to the United States after an overseas tour of duty may need to reaclimate to their culture.

• Strategies

School counselors, administrators, and classroom teachers can support families in any stage of relocation by:

a. Encouraging parents to hand carry their child's home file/records to the new school district. This step can make a difference between having educational services start immediately or waiting for a delay of up to six months. The STOMP project (specialized training of military parents) has developed a home file/records checklist for the special needs child that is especially helpful to anyone transferring a child between schools.

Checklist

- Birth certificate
- School records:

  Academic achievements report (tests, report cards, etc.)

  Psychological evaluations

  Physical therapy, speech/language evaluations, occupational therapy

  Current and past individual education plans (IEP)

  Behavioral/social/vocational evaluations (interest, skills, aptitudes)
- Immunization records
- Relevant medical records
- Samples of child's work
- Other achievements
- Communication with teachers
- Correspondence with school administrators/ teachers
- Child's social security number

b. Assisting parents in making the choice of when to move the children to a new duty station. A move during the school year allows children to go from one school setting to another, surrounded by potential new friends. A summer move reduces the child's chances for meeting friends. Months or weeks later when school starts the child is still a stranger to the school.

c. Encourage involvement in national organizations such a YMCA, Girl/Boy Scouts, 4-H, etc. This will foster a smoother move into new community activities.

Exemplary Efforts

- A West Coast elementary school organizes a poster contest each year entitled "My Navy Adventure." Students are encouraged to design posters highlighting the many locations where they have lived. This activity could encompass all branches of the military.
- A Virginia Beach elementary school holds a weekly "Welcome Seminar" for newly arriving students. Each classroom has a trained student "host" to assist new students during first week in the new school.
- In one school the child who is leaving is presented with a photo album of teachers, friends, school building, etc.
- Another school assigns the incoming child a special space for their locker/belongings. A photo and announcement of new student's arrival is posted in the school to make the child feel welcome.

Resources

Relocation support services are available through Fleet and Family Support Centers, Army Community Service Centers, and Air Force Family Support Centers. These comparable services include:

- **Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP):**
  Army programs which assist family members seeking employment.
- **Spouse Employment Assistance Program (SEAP):** Navy program which assists military spouses to bridge the unemployment gap caused by relocation.
- **Employment Resources Program (ERP):**
  Air force program which assists service members and their dependents bridge the unemployment gap caused by relocation.
- **First Term Airman's Course (FTAC):**
  Program for those new to the Air Force.
- **Home-buyer's School**:
  Home buying tips and techniques.
- **Home-seller's Workshop**:
  Home selling tips and techniques.
- **Hospitality Kits:**
  Low or no cost rental of household goods.
- **Welcome to the Military:**
  Workshop for family members who are new to the military lifestyle.
- **Overseas Transfer Workshop**:
  Addresses the mechanical side of moving OCONUS, as well as the human, emotional, and cultural aspects.
- **Relocation Information Center:**
  Books, brochures, and educational videos are available to help plan move.
- **Smooth Move Workshop**:
  Addresses the mechanical side of moving CONUS, as well as the human and emotional aspects.
- **Welcome Aboard Packets/Relocation Packets:**
  Guides to duty stations around the world.

Online Resources

- **http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites/ SITES (Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service):**
  DoD-sponsored program providing up-to-date installation-specific information such as housing, education, employment, and health services via the Internet.
- **http://dticaw.dtic.mil/mtom:**
  Military Teens On The Move is an interactive site which has information about military installations, teen sponsorship, and school information. Includes links to other sites.
- **http://www.housing.navy.mil**
- **http://www.lifelines4qol.org:**
  The Quality of Life (QOL) Mall is an on-line resource sponsored by DoD that offers information on a wide variety of services and topics of interest to military personnel and their family members.

References

Conquest Corporation, "Kids on the Move, Teen Talk", Birmingham: Conquest Corporation, 1985

Conquest Corporation, "Tips for Relocating Your Spouse, The House that Waited," Birmingham: Conquest Corporation, 1985

Kohls, L. Robert, "Survival Kit for Overseas Living," Intercultural Press, 1979

O'Beirne, Kathleen, "Pass It On, How to Thrive in a Military Lifestyle," West Mystic: Lifescope Enterprises, 1991

Suggested Readings — Adults

"American Automobile Association (AAA) Travel Activity Book," Available at bookstores or AAA offices.

Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc., "Making the Right Move, A Relocation Guide for Military Families," Scriptographic Booklet, phone 800-628-7733 to order

Conquest Corporation, "Kids on the Move, Teen Talk," Birmingham: Conquest Corporation, 1985

Conquest Corporation, "Tips for Relocating Your Spouse, The House That Waited," Birmingham: Conquest Corporation, 1985

"Family Travel Guide Catalog," Carousel Press, P.O. Box 6061, Albany, CA 947606

"Games for the Road" and "More Games for the Road," forty-minute audiocassette tapes, Valentine Productions, Catalog, 1-800-544-8322

Kohls, Robert L., "Survival Kit for Overseas Living," Intercultural Press, Inc., 1979

O'Beirne, Kathleen, "Pass It On, How to Thrive in a Military Lifestyle," Lifescope Enterprises, West Mystic, CT, 1991

"We Loved You – Buckle-Up," Teaching kit for traveling with children, kit #746, NAEYC, 1834 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, DC 20009

Wuebker-Battershell, Robin, MEd, "Moving and the Military Family," Bureau for At-Risk Youth, Huntington, NY , 1994

"Your Moving Monster Extermination Kit," Mayflower Transit Inc., PO Box 107, Indianapolis, IN 46206-0107

Suggested Readings — Children

Aliki, L., "We Are Best Friends," Greenwillow Books, 1982

Amoss, B., "The Very Worst Thing," Parents, 1972

Bansk, Ann, and Evans, Nancy, "Goodbye House," Harmony House, New York, 1980

Brown, Myra, "Pip Moves Away," San Carlos: Golden Gate, 1967

Craig, J., "New Boy on the Sidewalk," W.W. Norton, 1967

Delton, J., "The New Girl at School," E.P. Dutton & Co., 1979

Godden, Ruth, "Little Plum," Viking Press, New York, 1963

Keats, Ezra, "The Trip," Greenwillow Books, New York, 1978

"Let's Get A Move On," video, TMA Kidvidz, Newton, MA

Milord, Sue and Jerry, "Maggie and the Goodbye Gift," Lothrop, Lee and Shepherd Books, New York, 1979

Neville, Emily Cheney, "Berries Goodman," Harper and Row, New York, 1965

Rogers, Fred, "Moving," J.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987

Slote, Alfred, "Tony and Me," J.B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1974

Tobias, Tobie, "Moving Day," Fred A. Knopf, 1976

Zolotow, Charlotte, "Janey," Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1963

Zolotow, Charlotte, "A Tiger Called Thomas," Lothrop, New York, 1963

CRISIS

Crisis – an unstable state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending… a psychological or social condition characterized by unusual instability caused by excessive stress and either endangering or felt to endanger the continuity of the individual or the group.

The normal human response to trauma follows a pattern called the crisis reaction, involving a physical response and an emotional response.

Physical Response to Crisis:

- Shock, "frozen fright"
- Fight or flight
- Exhaustion

Emotional Response to Crisis:

- *Stage one:* Shock, disbelief, denial
- *Stage two:* Anger/rage, fear/terror, grief/sorrow, confusion and frustration, guilt/self-blame, depression
- *Stage three:* Return of equilibrium, forgiveness/ acceptance

In the first stage of dealing with a crisis, one's initial feelings may be shock, disbelief, and denial.

During stage two, people attempt to reorganize themselves to find a point of equilibrium, often searching for others with whom to link. Stage three begins reconstruction and healing. The success a person has in coping with these stages can affect their ability to manage stress and cope with later life events.

GLOSSARY OF CRISIS TERMS:

- **CACO** – (Casualty Assistance Calls Officer) – a Navy person who assists and informs next of kin of military member's missing in action or reported death
- **CAO** – (Casualty Assistance Officer) – an Army officer who informs next of kin of military member's missing in action or reported death
- **ECC** – (Emergency Coordination Center) – 1-800-information line established during crisis to provide up to date, accurate information to support immediate family members and CACO's
- **FAC** – (Family Assistance Center) – may be opened a as response to mass casualties to provide families with immediate services in a private setting
- **FAIRS** – Family Assistance, Information and Referral Services
- **FIC** - Family Information Center
- **Mortuary Affairs Officer** – an Air Force officer who coordinates funeral arrangements to include casket, military honors, burial etc.
- **NOK** – (Next of Kin) – to be notified in event of casualty
- **PAO** – Public Affairs Officer
- **PNOK** – Primary Next of Kin to be notified in event of casualty
- **SNOK** – Secondary Next of Kin to be notified in event of casualty

RESOURCES

The ability to cope with crisis is dependent upon several factors:

- Individual's perception of the seriousness of the event
- The duration or magnitude of the event
- Preparation time and suitable warnings
- Existence of coping skills and past crisis experiences
- Existence of resources and supportive networks

Pastoral Counseling – each branch of the military has a chaplain corps representing various religious denominations. They are available to provide counsel and comfort to families and service members during times of crisis.

Counseling Services – at many military centers professional social workers and financial counselors are available for counseling to help individuals, couples, and families recover from crisis situations or continuing stressful events. Referrals for long-term assistance are made to community agencies when necessary.

Family Centers – nearly every military installation has a family center. In the Navy and Marine Corps they are called Family Services Centers; in the Air Force, Family Support Centers; and in the Army, Army Community Service. They are staffed by professionals and volunteers with a variety of backgrounds and offer a wide range of services. Crisis assistance can be obtained at these centers. Services may include information and referral; emergency child care; financial assistance; counseling; and crisis intervention. A Family Programs Administrator coordinates services for the Coast Guard community.

Readiness and Support Services – preparation and training is a key aspect of the military lifestyle, for the active duty member and family members. Family Service Centers typically offer a wide range of programs designed to enhance the coping skills military families already possess. Topics addressed often include:

- Stress Management
- Building Effective Anger Management Skills (BEAMS)
- Suicide Prevention
- Parent Education
- Financial Management
- Spouse Abuse Prevention
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
- Family Advocacy
- Spouse orientation

INTRODUCTION

Children are affected not only directly by a crisis, but also by their parents reaction to the crisis. The nature of the crisis itself, the child's sense of security prior to the crisis, and the child's ability to comprehend what has happened all contribute to the child's crisis response. While there is individual variation in children's reaction to crisis, some common reactions are seen in same age children.

Studies suggest that as many as half of the children who lose a parent or significant adult are likely to show severe responses in the early phases of the grief process which can last several months. Age specific notions of death are also seen in children. Preschoolers have some idea of death, but they see it as reversible and not universal. Five- to ten-year-olds have some understanding of the finality of death and realize that death is a event with a cause often leading them to believe that death is a form of punishment for "bad" behavior. Children over ten years of age understand that death is final, universal, and inevitable.

Acute grief reactions may include:

- little interest in food
- health complaints
- dazed state of mind
- nightmares
- nonstop talk about loss
- fear of abandonment by others
- major mood swings
- sleeplessness

Chronic or long-term symptoms may include:

- regressive behaviors in toileting/dressing/feeding
- antisocial behavior and anger toward other children and adults
- severe anxiety, fear, panic, and lessened trust in adults
- learning and memory disruptions/difficulties with concentration
- behavior problems at school, lessened impulse control
- difficulty with relationships/friendships
- nightmares and difficulty sleeping

• STRENGTHS

Military families demonstrate significant strengths and have often proven to be very resilient in crisis situations. Many believe that managing the stressors associated with a mobile military lifestyle actually help one to cope with rigors of crisis. Some of the strengths associated with this lifestyle are:

- increased knowledge of world events
- broadened cultural awareness
- ease in meeting new people, new challenges
- adaptability
- organizational abilities
- role flexibility
- self sufficiency

• STRESSORS

Most military families learn to cope successfully and grow stronger during deployments. Mobilizations and deployments during times of international crisis present additional issues that prove challenging for even the most resilient military family.

- Suddenness of deployment – during times of normal military operation, families typically know in advance when an active duty member is to be deployed. This preparation time allows for the normal cycle of emotions associated with separation. Communication plans can be made, children are able to adjust to eventuality of absence, and all necessary steps can be taken with regard to finances, power of attorney, etc. In rapid mobilizations and deployments, families may have little or no time to prepare.

- For Coast Guard members and their families, the very mission of the Coast Guard, response to coastal emergencies such as search and rescue operations, pollution control, or port security due to threats, creates an ever-present potential for immediate deployment.

- No return date – when the specific return date is unknown, military families must also endure the uncertainty. With regular deployment cycles, families use techniques like a countdown calendar to pace themselves over the usual deployment period. These effective coping tools are of little use when the return date is unknown.

- Hazardous duty – Military families routinely deal with the possibility of their loved ones being killed or severely injured. Mobilizations and deployments during a crisis usually increase the concerns of family members about the safety of their loved ones. In the Air Force, in the absence of the extended family, units comprised of squadron/flights form strong support systems. An aircraft accident, particularly those involving a fatality, cause severe stress on the entire unit, beyond the next of kin, thus affecting the underlying support system.

- Media coverage – Modern media, with its 24-hour coverage and extensive technology, now brings world events to the living room. During *Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm* and again during the conflict in Kosovo, viewers found themselves on the "front line." The easy access to this stream of information became addictive to Americans searching for ways to better understand and deal with wartime stress.

- Additional concerns may emerge involving the possibility of hostage taking or POW (Prisoner of War) status and MIA (Missing in Action). Safety is an everyday concern for service members.

Additional hardships on the family may include:

- possible interruptions in financial support, particularly true for activated reservists

- changes in housing – necessity of moving in with in-laws/family/friends

- escalated concerns and/or problems with children's behaviors/discipline

- exacerbated medical/emotional problems

- time constraints for working spouses/child care issues

- loneliness/missing spouse/absence of a social life

• STRATEGIES

Educators and professional counselors working with the children of military families can be instrumental in identifying families and children struggling with a crisis situation. Schools may also be called upon to participate in the action plan regarding mass casualties. The following strategies will provide background information for educators pertinent to the handling of military-crisis situations.

- Contact the local installation PAO or family center for accurate information regarding the crisis and/or range of services available.

- Encourage military spouse/parent to seek assistance through family service centers and/or systems established to deal with military crisis situations.
- Identify services available through the school for family assistance, i.e., parent support groups, counseling services, etc.
- Identify faculty, staff, and students who have relatives involved in military action. These are the students and staff who may need more support.
- Obtain information/literature/handouts from resources to be kept in central location in school and available to personnel.
- Select personnel in school to be designated as a crisis team empowered with implementation of school's crisis plan.
- Ongoing deployment support groups geared to helping children develop age specific coping skills.
- Presentations and programs for the entire student body focusing on calming children's fears and instilling group support for children whose loved ones were deployed. Assembly programs ranging in format from puppet shows to displays, explanation, and hands-on familiarization with military safety gear.
- Adoption of active duty pen pals. These service members receive letters, care packages, photos, and drawings from entire classes of children.
- Support groups and educational programs for military spouses at their local schools.
- School administrators coordinating with local military family service centers for crisis response planning and training of school personnel.

Exemplary Efforts

Throughout the coverage of *Operations Desert Shield/Storm*, in newspapers and on television, at local levels as well as in national reports, exemplary programs, services, and people were brought to the public's attention for praise and applause. Just as meaningful and significant, but less reported or identified, were the great numbers of specialized efforts conducted quietly in schools across the country with sincere feelings for the military child/parent.

Most elementary schools interviewed, regardless of the numbers of military children enrolled, provided a full range of services: support groups, individual counseling, classroom activities, and some form of full-school project to honor military parents/families.

Two factors worked to unify the efforts of the Virginia Beach School System, a system with approximately 24,000 military dependent children during the crisis of *Operation Desert Storm*:

- A strong organization of elementary counselors who met monthly to share information, techniques, activities, and served as a support network for counselors during the war crisis.
- A system-wide Crisis Intervention Plan identified and prepared for use in each elementary school.

Some of the innovative programs initiated by the Virginia Beach and Chesapeake school systems in Hampton Roads, VA to support children:

Suggested Readings

Barret, CAPT, "Grieving Children", Lifeline, Winter 1990/Spring 1991

Burman, Sheldon, and Jones, Susan, "Telling About The War In the Persian Gulf: A Discussion Guide For Parents And Teachers," in cooperation with Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc., "About Grief," Scriptographic Booklet, 1997 phone 800-6287733 to order and request #16816

Channing L. Bete, CO., Inc., "About Dying," Scriptographic Booklet, 1990, phone 800-6287733 to order and request item #16501

"Coming To Terms With Death, Also Death In The Family: How To Help Your Children Cope," Winters Communications, Inc., Tampa FL 33613

"Crisis Intervention With Military Families," a guide for community support agencies, Depart of Defense, Force Management and Personnel, 1/09/91

"Handling Stress," National Institute of Mental Health, Division of Communications and Education, Plain Talk Series, Ruth Kay, Editor

"Kids Ask About War," Corporation for Public Broadcasting, staff of educators for Social Responsibility, Cambridge, MA, 1991

Lefler, Melissa, JO1, "Riding Out The Desert Storm," Lifeline, Winter 1990/Spring 1991

"What Parents Need to Say," Newsweek, February 25, 1991

I. D. Card

Age

Primary and (some) upper elementary level

Use

Group/individual

Goals

1. To assist children with understanding military lifestyle.
2. To stimulate self-disclosure and self-esteem.
3. To assist children to identify, label, and normalize feelings.
4. To reinforce current coping skills for moving.

Materials

- Attached handout
- Colored pencils, opaque markers or crayons
- Colored sticker dots (optional)
- School picture
- Glue
- If laminating machine is available, "cards" may be laminated.

Procedure

1. Introduce self and explain that members will learn about themselves, their peers, and can share thoughts and feelings about moving. Review group rules and group confidentiality.
2. Discuss what a military I.D. card signifies (children receive this card at age 10, so some students may already have an "official" card):
   a. Proof of relationship status to service member parent (dependent)
   b. Distinguishes child as a separate individual, apart from parents.
   c. Reinforces the fact that the child is growing up.
   d. Card contains individual's picture (show maturation).
   e. Represents special privileges (i.e., commissary entrance, etc.)
   f. Wins bearer acceptance as active duty or dependent worldwide.
3. Introduce cards. Encourage children to brainstorm feelings associated with being a military dependent. Focus on how military is a family. Services and benefits for families are available to them. Focus on how fortunate this is. Talk about how a "green" or "brown" card is recognized all over the world as a military I.D. and that many children can "relate" to what the military lifestyle entails. Give children time to fill in their cards. Ask children to color card with favorite shade.
4. Request that children share components of being a military child with group members… share feelings especially… point out commonalties.
5. Ask children to share experience from previous locations/schools. Focus on universal positive aspects and coping styles.
6. Optional-counselor could laminate "cards" with contact paper or have laminated. A variation for younger children: Use only the front side of the "card." If a group is meeting on an ongoing basis, ask children to think about what last week was like; draw a "feeling" face (see "Feeling Finders" in the Deployment Chapter) on a sticker dot to represent how they felt. Tell them, "we will share our feelings like this at the beginning of each meeting." Stick the dot on the blank space, which indicates the week prior to the session. Stickers provide visual awareness/accountability for counseling process to students, counselors, and parents. Cards are kept in the counseling office until the group ends, when children take them home.

I.D. CARDS

	Place of birth	
Schools attended	Places I've lived	Symbol of a favorite family past-time
	Best part of being a military family	
Symbol of me (hobbies, likes, etc.)	Worst part of being a military family	Symbol of what you look forward to when you move

(Lightly shade entire card with your favorite color)	Card number						Issue/Expiration dates
							Relationship to sponsor (active duty member)
	Hair	Eye	Height	Weight		DOB	Age / Name of sponsor (parent)
School picture	Current address						New address
	Favorite hobby						Favorite food
	Best thing about you						Word to describe yourself
Symbol showing branch of service involved (anchor, plane, etc.)	Signature						

Pipe Cleaner Characteristics

Age

Primary elementary level

Use

Group

Goals

1. To assist children with understanding military lifestyle and the important, positive characteristics military families have.
2. To increase self-disclosure, build self-esteem, and identify coping behaviors.

Materials

Multicolored pipe cleaners (bright colors) one per child, each a different color.

Procedure

1. Tell children the group will be talking about military lifestyle and some of the important characteristics that military families have.
2. Pass out pipe cleaners
3. Going around the group, have children describe their pipe cleaners to each other. For example: it bends; it's useful; you can make things with it; it's a pretty color, it can be used to hold things together; it can be twisted tight or left "loose," etc.
4. After describing the pipe cleaners, have children go around the group and discuss the importance of some of these characteristics.
5. Discuss how pipe cleaners are similar and different from each other.
6. Discuss how pipe cleaners are sort of like military families; they are flexible! Focus on what flexibility and family individuality means for each child.
   a. Are there times when he/she must be "flexible" due to parent's schedule?
   b. What is special about military families? What makes military families similar to other families?
   c. What does his/her service member parent do at work? Is he/she in the air, sub, or surface community?
   d. What makes his/her dad different from other group members' parents?
7. Have each child tell of one experience he/she had with his/her parent, which was connected to the parent's job. Example: saw a movie at the base theater, attended a "family day," took a tour of parent's workplace (i.e. ship tour), went to a special parade or ceremony. Have child focus on what he/she though about the event, and especially, how the even made him/her feel.
8. End group session by having each member complete: "What makes being a military child special to me is."

My Deployment Journal

Age

Upper elementary

Use

Group/Individual

Goals

1. To record thoughts, feelings, and events by the child.
2. To promote their communication with the absent parent.
3. To elicit personal responses about life during deployment.
4. To consider parents' feelings and need for support and communication during this time.

Materials

- Small spiral-bound notebooks/stapled sheets of paper
- Markers, pencils
- Construction paper, newspapers, magazines
- Glue

Procedure

1. Among the group, discuss the importance of communication with the absent parent, and how letters can be slow, making communication confusing/difficult.
2. Follow up discussion of feelings from prior session; ask how a journal can be helpful with some of the problems members have discussed (a safe place to enter thoughts, feelings).
3. Allow children time to consider the feelings their parents may have while away. (What do you think your parent would like from you that you have within your power to give? A LETTER.)
4. Explain "the journal's purpose is two-fold: private communication with yourself and personal communication with your parent-you decide what you care to share." Encourage children to glean parts of their journals (or all, if it is comfortable to do so) for inclusion in weekly letters. Discuss with children how this type of sharing is especially important to a parent who must be away.
5. Reinforce the idea that "many children are dependable, consistent writers; yet, children sometimes wonder, "What else can I write about – I've written to my parent twice this week!" By using themes, journal entries can be exciting and very unique. "Journalizing" helps children convey thoughts and feelings to others; and, to chronicle daily family interactions, community news and school happenings.
6. Present each child with a notebook and allow him/her to personalize the cover by cutting/pasting designs, logos, etc. so that each cover is unique and represents the child. Permit children to keep these books for daily writing. (See attached worksheet)
7. Encourage children to share their creative journal covers.

DEPLOYMENT

The most fun I ever had with Mom/Dad was _____

_____

The most fun I ever had with my whole family was _____

_____

The proudest I ever felt was when _____

_____

The biggest surprise I ever received was _____

_____

The funniest trick I ever pulled was _____

_____

The biggest mistake I ever made was _____

_____

The best decision I ever made was _____

_____

The most angry I ever got was _____

_____

The most excited I ever got was _____

_____

My ideal vacation would be _____

_____

If I could be someone famous I would be like _____

_____

My best friend and I _____

_____

Someday I wish _____

_____

FEELING FINDERS

AGE

Primary

USE

Group/Individual

GOALS

1. To increase awareness and normalization of feeling concerning parental deployment.
2. To acquaint children with others who have similar feelings/experiences.
3. Stimulate self-disclosure.
4. Build self-esteem.
5. Assist children with developing improved coping skills.

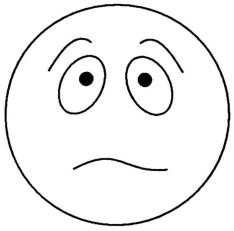
MATERIALS

- One medium/small bag/basket
- Cut–out paper disks of colored paper with "feeling faces" drawn on them, blank papers disks for children to draw on.
- "Feeling faces" (see attached). Some examples of "feeling faces:" Happy, mad, bored, worried, sad, silly, tired, guilty, lonely, jealous.

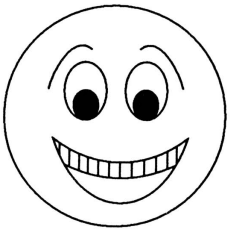
PROCEDURE

1. Introduce self. Explain that members will learn about themselves, their peers and can share thoughts and feelings about their deployed parents. Review group rules and group confidentiality.
2. Lead group in a discussion of "what a feeling is." Children brainstorm different feelings associated with parents' deployment.
3. Pass the "feeling finders" bag around the circle. Each child chooses a face without looking into a bag. Circulate the bag until all disks are chosen.
4. Each child is asked to tell about a time when he/she felt the way the chosen "feeling face" looks. Focus the group members on their parents' deployment. Point out universal experiences.
5. Going around the group, ask each child to pantomime a feeling he/she is experiencing – since the deployment - that he/she would like help with. Group members identify feelings and share similar needs.
6. At the end of the session, give each child two blank sticker-dots. Ask children to draw a face on one of the dots showing how they feel about being in the group (and how it feels to know others have similar feelings and care about them.) On the second sticker, draw a face symbolizing how they feel about their parents' deployment.
7. If desired, stickers can be placed on a chart to show feelings throughout the group process. Similar questions may be asked at the end of each session to gain awareness of growth and needs.

FEELING FINDERS



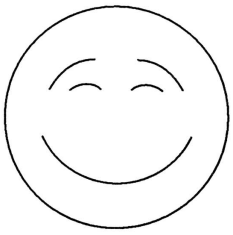
AFRAID



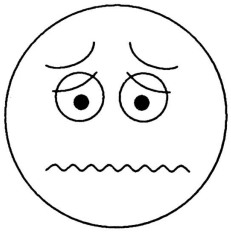
HAPPY

SAD

SCARED

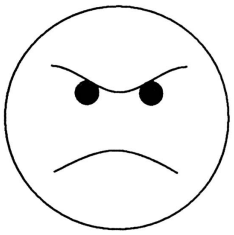


GLAD

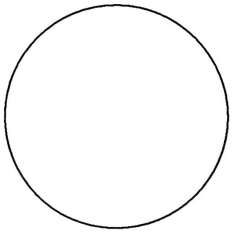


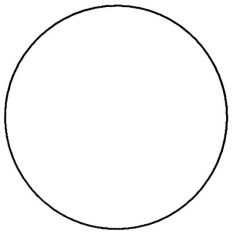
CONFUSED

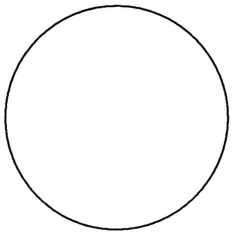
EXCITED

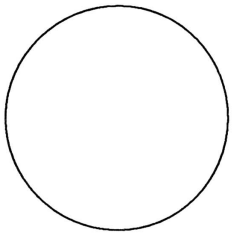


ANGRY









Past, Present and Future: Solving the Puzzle

Age

Upper elementary

Use

Groups/Individuals (collage only)

Goals

1. To prepare for homecoming through preliminary consideration of what homecoming often entails for military families.
2. To normalize feelings.
3. To help develop rapport with returning parent.
4. To set emotional goals for reunion.
5. To build self-esteem.

Materials

- Pictures and words cut out from old magazines – children bring in
- Magazines to be cut up, if some children neglect to bring in pictures
- Poster board – large piece ("puzzle lines" pre-drawn on back)
- Glue
- Scissors

Procedure

1. Ask students if they have thought any more about their homecoming expectations. Discuss thoughts and feelings.
2. Reflect what took place in earlier sessions regarding initial expectations.
3. Ask students to present pictures/words brought from home. Tell them, "we will make a collage to show how you feel about your parents' homecoming… a collage is a bunch of pictures or cut out words which help you express to others what is going on inside of you."
4. Tell children, "since our focus is on coming back together, we'll make our individual collages on big puzzle pieces that I will cut out while you finish looking for more items in these magazines. Once you have finished gluing the collages, we'll put them together to see how they look; later you can take them home to share with others, if you feel comfortable with this. Think of the collage as a statement for how you feel; this is just another way to communicate."
5. During cut and paste time, discuss some of the following:
   a) What are some feelings you have about homecoming? Tell us about them.
   b) What is a main concern for you?
      (1) Will my parent be proud of me/respect my accomplishments?
      (2) Will my parent accept my changes in responsibility/freedom?
      (3) What will my role in the family be? ("baby," "adult," "caretaker," etc.)

(4) Will my parent love me as much?

(5) Does my parent still trust me; do I trust him/her?

(6) How much control will I have over decisions I have been permitted to make?

(7) Will my parent be glad to be home?

(8) How long will my parent be home?

(c) What are your plans for dealing with these concerns? Groups help each other.

(d) Has anyone ever felt jealous before… what are the signs? When Mom/Dad comes home, with whom will you have to share him/her?

(e) Has anyone ever had a friend he/she had not seen in a long while? What was it like getting reacquainted?

6. After discussion, have group put puzzle together signifying the bond that unites the group (allow children to discuss the universality of the group experience). Encourage the group to talk about their bonds with their moms/dads.

7. Summarize main points: puzzle can be apart and make sense (each group member is an individual), but part of a larger whole puzzle makes more sense. At homecoming, putting the puzzle back together again will take patience, time, and understanding, but it will be worth it!

A Walk Down Memory Lane

Age

Primary and upper elementary level

Use

Groups/Individuals

Goals

1. For children to consider the events which have taken place in the absence of their deployed parents.
2. To refine communication skills.
3. To raise self-esteem.
4. To increase empathy for the parent as he/she returns home.
5. To set goals for the reunion.

Materials

Children bring in mementos from deployment period:

- Pictures of family, especially of deployed parent
- Souvenirs
- School work that shows outstanding achievement
- Letters/souvenirs from deployed parent
- Other

Procedure

1. Explain to children that while their parents were gone, they may have learned many new and different things. Facilitate a discussion of:
   a) New places you have been…
   b) New friends/people you have met…
   c) Improvements/personal changes you have attempted… (and have you achieved them?)
   d) School experiences…
2. Ask students to spend majority of this session showing their "scrapbooks" and describing one experience, one improvement, one new friend, one new place, etc., per child. If possible, informal scrapbooks can be constructed with some colored paper, staples and glue, provided permission is granted from the parent to alter the pictures (by gluing), souvenirs, etc.

3. Introduce the concept that all of these experiences add up to growth. Say something to the effect: "Children grow taller, heavier, and so on – this is physical growth. Most of you will notice you have "grown" physically while your parent was away. Another way we grow is mentally; this means that we learn new things, get new ideas, understand things better than before… Do you think that adults ever grow, once they are all grown up? Well, adults do keep growing, believe it or not. Does anyone have an idea of how your mom/dad may have grown while he/she was gone?" Allow children to brainstorm:
   a) Learned more about his/her job
   b) May have made new friends
   c) May have met new people who are from different cultures, learned new language
   d) May have seen new places of interest
   e) May have learned to like a new food (or one he/she did not like before)
   f) May have learned some new skills or tried new ways of doing old jobs
   g) May have read books on topics of interest…

Note that "parents may not always act the same way they used to… may be tired upon return. Be PATIENT! Parents will still love you, but may show it differently."

"How will all this growth affect your parent? No one will know for sure until he/she returns. The point is that you communicate these changes to each other. Take time to reacquaint yourselves with your returning parent. How might you do that?" Allow group to brainstorm ideas:

- Fix a special meal for your parent
- Go to your favorite "quiet place" with your parent to talk
- Do something fun and inexpensive together… buy two kites, go to the park and fly them, play catch, ride bikes, go to a ball game, take a picnic, go to a playground, jog through your neighborhood, take a walk in the country, take a Sunday drive, go get a haircut together, read books to each other, ask for help with your homework, draw a "cooperative picture" (parent and child take turns, but no talking, to create an abstract picture), visit relatives together.

4. Summarize main points and be sure to focus on communication issues.

Packing to Move

Age

Primary/(some) upper elementary level

Use

Groups/Individual

Goals

1. To normalize feeling.
2. To encourage self-esteem.
3. To stimulate goal setting as a coping skill.
4. To gain a sense of purposefulness during and after the move.

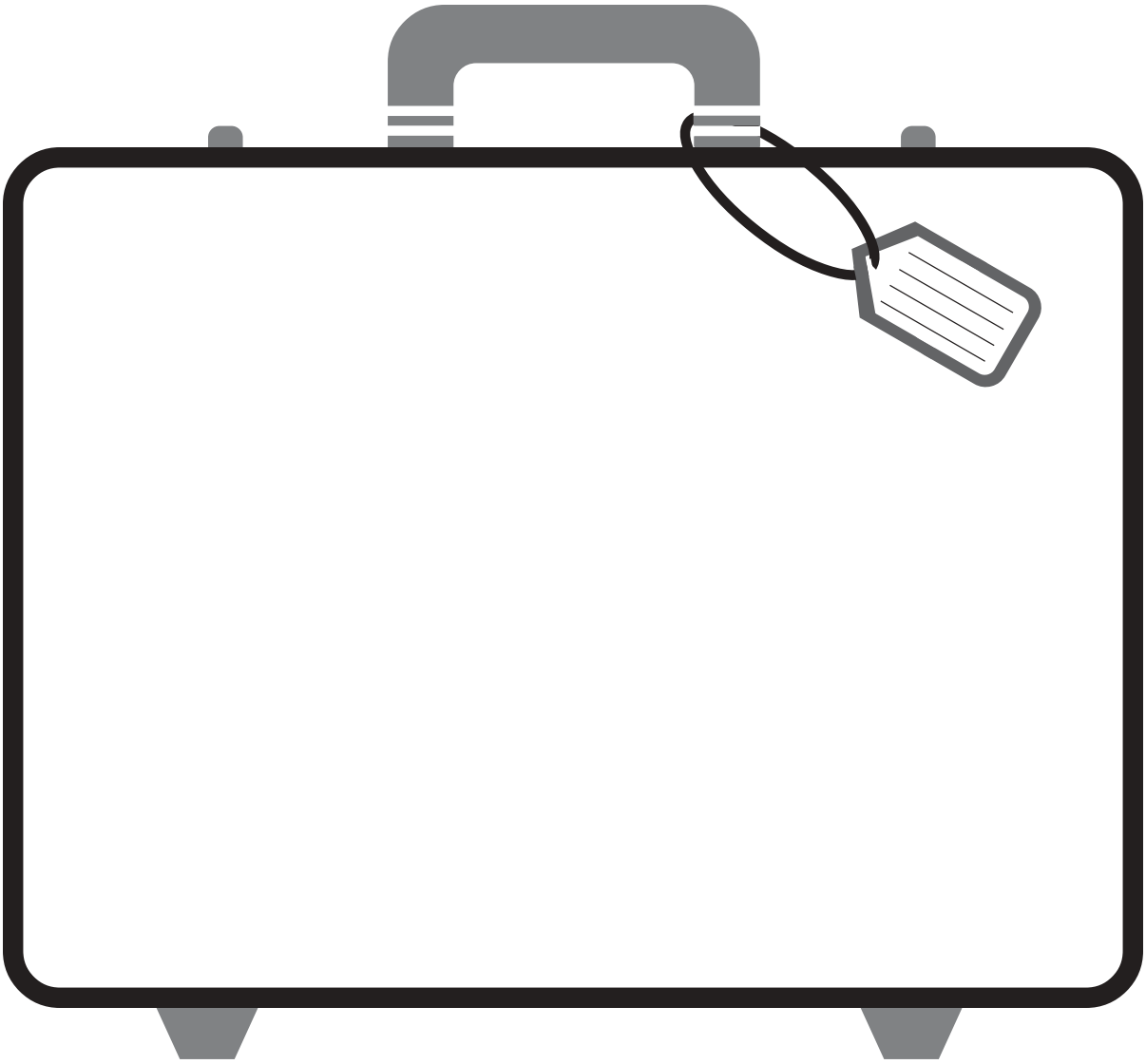
Materials

- Handout (picture of empty suitcase)
- Crayons/markers
- Music – soothing (with tape player, etc.) (optional)

Procedure

1. Relaxation exercise: Explain to children that to get in the mood to think about moving, it is helpful to be relaxed while doing this… relaxation can also be fun and interesting. Tell children, "today, we will be thinking about what it will be like when you move, so you'll have some different ways of looking at relocation. " Ask children to get into a comfortable position; lights may be dimmed, shades drawn, etc. Ask children to close their eyes. If desired, turn on music and quietly, smoothly/slowly talk to the group; incorporate some of the following: ask child/ren to mentally begin packing to go to new home. What is important and what is not. Have child/ren contemplate this; tell them to remember what they have packed. Move on to having child/ren picture themselves leaving their old homes. Walk children through the process of saying good-byes to friends in present town… driving/flying to new town… going through town in car/taxi… their impressions of new place (i.e., shopping malls, restaurants, parks, schools)… pulling into new neighborhood… walking up sidewalk… opening door to home… walking around in house… finding new room… what does room look like, feel like, etc…
   a) What did you see in your mind?
   b) How did you feel?
   c) What did you think about the exercise…was it helpful? Could it help you when you're nervous about moving?
2. Activity: Pass out handouts, crayons and markers.
3. Ask the child/ren to think of favorite belongings s/he will want to take to the new residence.
4. Allow children to write, draw, or color their "suitcases."
5. Facilitate the following discussion:
   a) Have you planned what you want to take with you?
   b) Will you have to leave anything behind?
   c) What are some thoughts and feelings that you have about a and b?
   d) What (role) part will you have in the move? Is this O.K. with you?
   e) If you want to be more involved with the relocation, what will you do?
6. If time permits, children share pictures of personal "suitcases" by explaining the importance of various items it contains. A variation: each child gives the counselor his/her "suitcase." Counselor shuffles and redistributes papers. Each child then guesses whose paper he/she has. Children tell how they came to their conclusions of each paper's owner.
7. Follow up (optional):
   a) Ask child to take a sheet of paper and pretend it is the outside lid of his/her suitcase.
   b) Have child decorate page with "bumper stickers" (either drawn on or use sticky blank mailing labels to show where s/he has lived and where s/he would someday like to live.
   c) Children circle places they have lived.
   d) Feature children's similarities/differences. Draw out coping skills of children who have lived near where a group member may be relocating.

PACKING TO MOVE



Change of Address Cards/ Autograph Album

Age

Upper elementary (can be modified for use with primary)

Use

Groups/Individual

Goals

To enhance interpersonal relations; to increase self-esteem; to improve coping skills through normalizing feelings; and to provide opportunities for goal setting.

Materials

- Change of Address Cards (xeroxed sheets of attached handout)
- Pencils/pens
- Markers
- Spiral (small memo size) notebooks or paper folded and stapled into a small booklet

Procedure

1. As students may have a sense of powerlessness about the move, discuss coping strategies that give students a sense of connectedness and direction. Allow students time to discuss their issues related to relocation.
2. Change of Address Cards – as students discuss the difficulty of leaving old friends behind as part of relocation, encourage children by introducing the attached change of address cards.
3. Pass out change of address cards and ask each child to draw a special symbol on the back of each card that represents him/her individually (e.g. anything that represents the child's strengths, likes, desires, etc.). This should be something a friend can recognize easily.
4. Ask children to share their personal symbols. Show how symbols are unique. Encourage sharing of similarities and differences.
5. Show/describe how a person's uniqueness stays with an individual regardless of where they live or how often they move.
6. On the front of the cards, children may fill in information if it is known; otherwise, the change of address cards may be used as a catalyst to seek information from family members who can anticipate at least the general relocation area.
7. Autograph Book – Pass out booklets/notebooks. Children divide booklets into two sections; one area for current/old friends and one area for new friends. Tell the group that booklet can be used now, but later it may be saved as a keepsake. Instruct children to ask friends for school pictures, autographs, to write in poetry or special remembrances, draw pictures, write down jokes, and thoughts, addresses, birthdays, etc.
8. Ask students to report back to group next session with experiences… if children desire, they can give impressions of "what makes _____ (friends who have written in autograph book) special as my friend."
9. Tell children they may want to save the back section of their booklets for when they begin their new schools. Encourage children to get to know new children. Use the back section of the Autograph Book to include new friends and their interests, pictures, phone numbers, etc. Children may choose to share old friends with new friends.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS CARDS

Cut these cards out. Draw a small picture on the back of the card which will remind your friends of you. Then write your new address on the cards and give them to your friends so they can write to you at your new home.

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

I'm moving to a new home!
I hope you'll write to me!

MY NEW ADDRESS

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Here and Now

Age

Upper elementary level

Use

Groups/Individual (with facilitation by experienced guidance counselors)

Goals

1. To solicit and normalize thoughts and feelings.
2. To provide a coping strategy for dealing with crisis.
3. To stimulate communication of feelings.
4. To teach a means of empowerment in the midst of what may seem hopeless.

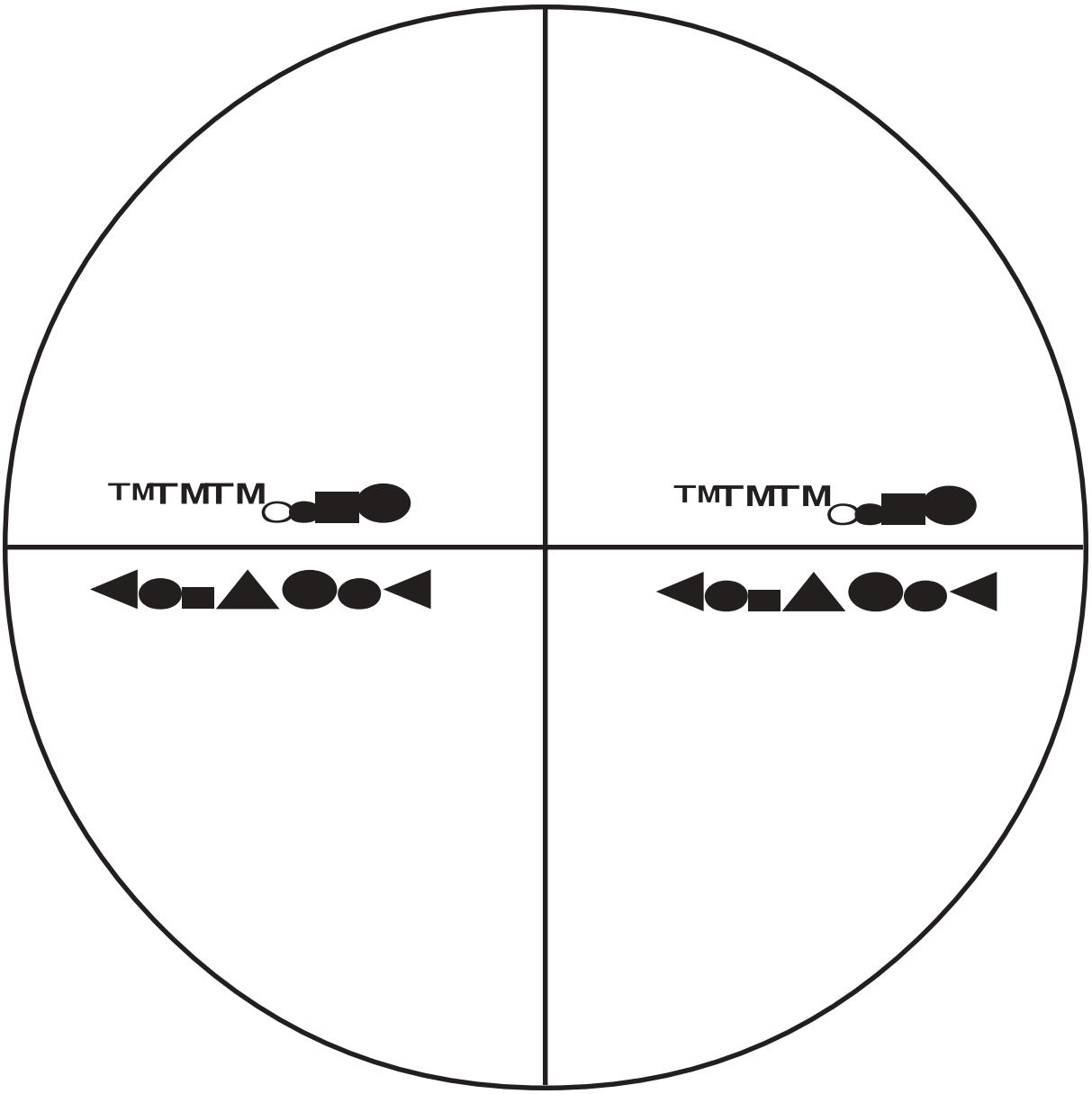
Materials

- Handout — "Here and Now Wheel"
- Paper or stationary
- Assorted stamp pads/stamps
- Pens/pencils/markers

Procedure

1. Tell children "we will spend some time talking about the thoughts and feelings you've experienced since _____(the crisis). After we've figured some of this out, we will write letters to whoever you wish… it may be victim(s)' family, the perpetrator, the President, God, "the enemy," etc."
2. Present handouts. Ask children to consider two feelings related to the incident. Children may record these answers in two quadrants of the "wheel." Likewise, have the children write in the remaining two quadrants two thoughts they each have regarding the crisis.
3. Ask group members to share their thoughts and feelings.
4. Pass out notepaper. Ask the children to think about whom they will write to. Allow time to create personalized stationary with the stamp pads, etc. During this activity period ask volunteers to discuss the reasons for choosing who each has written to. Facilitate sharing letters with the group.
5. Discuss the content of the letters, but more importantly, how did each person feel as s/he wrote? Did anyone feel more powerful… like they were at least doing something? Does anyone feel better, worse, or relieved? Discuss why or why not.
6. Discuss the benefit of putting frustrations, fears, and sadness on paper. Encourage children to continue this practice in other applications; letters to the editor, journalizing, letters not intended for mailing, etc.
7. Provide summarization and closure of the session's events.

HERE & NOW WHEEL



Paper Bag Puppets

Age

Primary and mid elementary level

Use

Groups

Goals

1. To facilitate communication of incident.
2. To normalize feelings.
3. To offer coping skills through the use of puppet role-plays.

Materials

- Paper bags
- Crayons/markers
- Yarn for hair/stapler
- Glue
- Moveable eyes (optional)
- Construction paper (optional)

Procedure

1. Facilitate group discussion of "why it can be helpful to share our feelings and thoughts with each other."
2. Tell children that the group will make paper bag puppets and then try to describe what happened by "role playing" with the puppets (clarify this concept for children). Let children know situations to be practiced will be derived by them (some children may not want to confront the actual crisis; rather, they may demonstrate issues surrounding the event).
3. Pass out bags. Instruct children to decorate bags to look like themselves. "Mouth" of puppet goes on bottom fold of the bag. Use crayons or cut and paste construction paper to decorate. (Have an assortment of "hair" to better personalize bags.) Counselor also makes a bag. Children will be asked to project themselves into group generated "situations."
4. During construction, ask children to brainstorm the types of feelings they have had during and since the crisis. Encourage students to think of possible alternatives to present opting skills (as many children act out negative behaviors). After some ideas are generated, ask for volunteers to play characters: one child can be a parent, victim, etc. and other children may play themselves. Ask for volunteers – do not force this activity.
5. At the end of the session, have children summarize personal feelings and any new coping skills the group devised. Reinforce the importance of talking with a caring adult about the issues surrounding the crisis; make sure facts are relayed in a timely manner.