

HOMEFRONT

Summer 2020

7 COUNSELING OPTIONS
FOR RESERVISTS AND
THEIR FAMILIES p.8

FAMILY WELLNESS:
STRENGTHEN YOUR
FAMILY TIES p.34

How to support
children during
deployment
p.12

10 TIPS TO KEEP
RELATIONSHIPS STRONG
DURING SEPARATION p.33



HOMEFRONT

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Airmen from the Reserve 419th Fighter Wing and active duty 388th FW board a plane headed to Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates last week from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. This marks the first Middle East deployment for U.S. Air Force's F-35 Lightning II. The photo was rotated on it's vertical axis to better fit the magazine layout. (U.S. Air Force photo by R. Nial Bradshaw)



We couldn't do
it without our
families and
loved ones!



...a word from the program manager

Welcome to the first issue of HomeFront—the official magazine of the Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Program for family members.

We hope that HomeFront will offer Reserve Airmen and their loved ones information and resources to assist them throughout the deployment cycle.

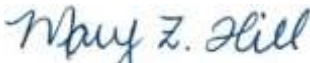
Usually by inviting you to our Yellow Ribbon events, we offer this information. We host about 20 events per year in major cities across the country. A typical event includes a variety of sessions on topics such as healthcare, long-distance communication, education, stress management and many more. Reserve Airmen as well as their friends and family may attend the event, and on-site licensed childcare is included, giving children their own curriculum tailored to their age group.

While these events have proven to be effective and popular, we recognize that many of our Reservists and their loved ones are extremely busy and unable to attend. To serve our members and their loved ones regardless of their ability or desire to attend an event we created HomeFront – we hope you will find it interesting and educational.

The magazine highlights many of the same topics that are covered during a Yellow Ribbon event. And while the HomeFront can't replace the face-to-face communication that occurs during an event, the magazine has the benefit of being a permanent resource that can be referenced as needed in the future.

As you browse this first issue of HomeFront, you'll notice that we focused on strengthening personal relationships, taking care of our military children and managing stress. Future issues will have different focuses, but the overarching priority will always remain connecting Reserve Airmen and their loved ones with information and resources that will assist them throughout all phases of a deployment.

Warm wishes,



Mary Z. Hill

AFR Yellow Ribbon Program Manger

P.S. We welcome your suggestions for future topics. Please send feedback to afrc.yellowribbon@us.af.mil.



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Andrews (459 ARW)
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240-857-2765

Barksdale (307 BW)
SMSgt Matthew Himes
318-529-1372

Beale (940 ARW)
MSgt Xavier Bryant
530-634-1771

Carswell (301 FW)
MSgt Rene Garcia
817-782-6940

Charleston (315 AW)
Capt Julia Lesage
843-963-7667

Dobbins (94 AW)
TSgt Barbara Etterle
678-655-9356

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MSgt Erica Weatherspoon
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Duke Field (919 SOW)
MSgt Rina Gatzman
850-883-6054

Grissom (434 ARW)
MSgt Jarred Gentile
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Elmendorf (477 FG)
TSgt Yvonne Patnude
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Hickam (624 RSG)
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Hill (419 FW)
SMSgt Tamara Wass
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Homestead (482 FW)
Capt Augusto Reyes
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Keesler (403 AW)
TSgt Dishau Jeanjacques
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Lackland (433 AW)
Lt Deshunn Barnes
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Luke (944 FW)
TSgt Daniel Pottinger
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March (452 AMW)
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Maxwell (908 AW)
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McChord (446 AW)
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McGuire (514 AMW)
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Minneapolis (934 AW)
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Nellis (926 WG)
MSgt Randi Ross
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2nd Lt. Shamiqa Mason
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Patrick (943 RQW)
TSgt Catherine Herr
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MSgt Roy Wunderlich
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Pittsburgh (911 AW)
MSgt Joseph Bridge
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Schriever (310 SW)
MSgt Roy Wunderlich
719-556-7359

Scott (932 AW)
SMSgt Barbara Woodruff
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Seymour Johnson (916th)
Capt William Dunn
919-722-0384

Tinker (507 AW)
MSgt Katie Johnson
405-734-7207

Travis (349 AW)
SMSgt Andrew Piehl
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Westover (439 AW)
CMSgt Ryan Hellyar
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Whiteman (442 FW)
SMSgt Eric Harris
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Wright-Patterson (445 AW)
TSgt Stephanie Blevins
937-257-5645

Wright-Patterson (655th)
SMSgt Bob Ewest
937-257-8023

Youngstown ARS (910 AW)
MSgt Skye Tancer
330-609-1715



AIRMAN & FAMILY READINESS CENTERS

Andrews AFB, MD
240-857-7058

Barksdale AFB, LA
318-456-1807

Beale AFB, CA
530-634-2863

JB Charleston, SC
843-963-4399

Lackland AFB, TX
210-925-3650

Lackland (960 COG)
969-8864*

Davis Monthan AFB, AZ
228-0694*

Dobbins ARB, GA
678-655-5004

Dobbins (622 CEG)
678-655-3309

Dover AFB, DE
302-677-3120

Duke Field / Eglin AFB, FL
850-883-6474

Elmendorf AFB, AK
907-551-4721

Fort Worth (Carswell), TX
817-782-7435

Grissom ARB, IN
765-688-4812

Hickam AFB, HI
808- 448-0212

Hill AFB, UT
801-775-2422

Homestead ARB, FL
786-415-7329

Kessler AFB
228-376-8253

Little Rock AFB, AR
501-987-5952*

Luke AFB, AZ
623-856-8324

March ARB, CA
951-655-5322

Maxwell AFB, AL
334-953-9018

McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ
609-754-8229

MacDill AFB, FL
813-828-7781

McChord AFB, WA
253-982-2755

McConnell AFB, KA
316-759-2589

Minneapolis ARS, MN
612-713-1516

Moody AFB, GA
229-257-333 CC

Nellis AFB, NV
702-679-0879

Niagara Falls ARS, NY
716-236-2097

Patrick AFB, FL
321-494-5980

Peterson AFB, CO
719-556-2944

Pittsburgh ARS, PA
412-474-8544

Randolph AFB, TX
210-652-9340

Robins ARB, GA
478-926-2912

Robins AFB (HQ AFRC)
478-327-1294

Schriever AFB, CO
720-847-1643

Scott AFB, IL
618-229-7556

Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC
919-722-8761

Tinker AFB, OK
405-734-6278

Travis AFB, CA
707-424-1616

Tyndall AFB, FL
662-434-4484

Westover ARB, MA
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Whiteman AFB, MO
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Wright-Patterson AFB, OH
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Wright-Patterson (655 ISR)
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330-609-1305



7 COUNSELING OPTIONS FOR RESERVISTS & FAMILIES

Courtesy of Military OneSource

The Defense Department provides a variety of counseling options to all active-duty, National Guard and Reserve service members, survivors, designated expeditionary civilians and their families.

1. INSTALLATION CHAPLAIN

In addition to offering spiritual guidance, chaplains in military units and commands are trained counselors who are attuned to military life. Many military members find a level of comfort and camaraderie in talking with a chaplain who offers confidential assistance and referral services for concerns that require additional help.

2. THE FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The Family Advocacy Program is a supportive resource for service members and their families. The program provides support and resources to help families develop and sustain healthy, strong relationships. They can provide individual, couples or family counseling, as well as support groups and other resources. The Family Advocacy Program also assesses, refers and provides counseling for families experiencing domestic violence or child abuse and will also refer at-risk individuals for other immediate professional, medical mental health treatment.

3. TRICARE OR MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITY

Therapy services may also be available through TRICARE. Your primary care manager can refer you to appropriate counseling through a military treatment facility or a network provider in your area. If you are using TRICARE, make sure you understand what services will be covered and what co-pays you may be responsible for.

4. VETERANS AFFAIRS

The VA provides counseling services to assess and treat mental health issues. Veterans Centers have highly trained staff specializing in suicide prevention and offer free readjustment counseling to combat veterans and their families, including those still on active duty.

5. COMBAT STRESS CONTROL TEAMS

Combat stress control teams are available as field resource support for service members during deployments. These teams of mental health professionals are embedded with units and offer unlimited access to help service members address concerns that arise in the field.

5. NON-MEDICAL COUNSELING RESOURCES

Non-medical counseling programs provide confidential, short-term counseling with service providers that possess advanced degrees in a mental health field and are licensed to practice independently. These services are designed to address a variety of issues, including marital stress, adjustment issues, improving relationships at home and work, stress management, parenting, and grief and

loss issues. The two primary resources for non-medical counseling services are Military OneSource and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program.

Non-medical counseling services are available face-to-face, by telephone, online and video.

7. OUTSIDE MILITARY SUPPORT CHANNELS

Some people may be more comfortable working with counselors outside of the military. If you choose a civilian provider for professional assistance, make sure you understand the costs before you begin a treatment program. Community mental health services often use a sliding scale for fees based on the client's ability to pay or may require copays associated with individual insurance.

Many service members will avoid seeking the help they need for fear of stigma and negative implications for their career. Don't be afraid that counseling will negatively impact your career or the career of your spouse. By and large, counseling falls under protected information and is kept confidential. There are certain limits to privacy, which you should review with your counselor.

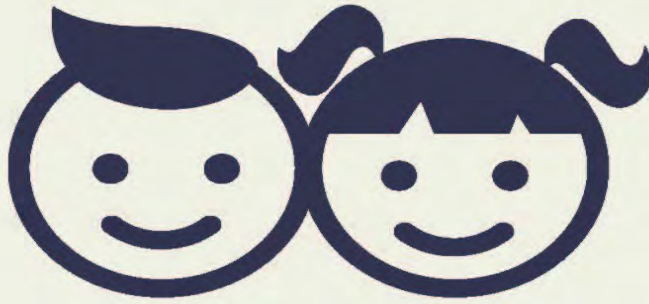
For service members or their families seeking counseling through military support channels, those services are confidential and family members may use counseling services without notice or consent of the service member. The only exceptions to confidentiality are for mandatory state, federal and military reporting requirements (for example, domestic violence, child abuse and duty-to-warn situations). Even then, only those who need to be notified will be informed. ☺



MILITARY FAMILIES IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENTS: RESERVE COMPONENT CHILDREN

www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/reports-and-surveys

There are 606,883* children of Reserve component members. The Reserve Component Spouses provides insights into how parental impact children.



7 Years Old

The average age of the child most impacted by deployments



71%

of Reserve spouses reported their husband/wife had one or more children at home at least

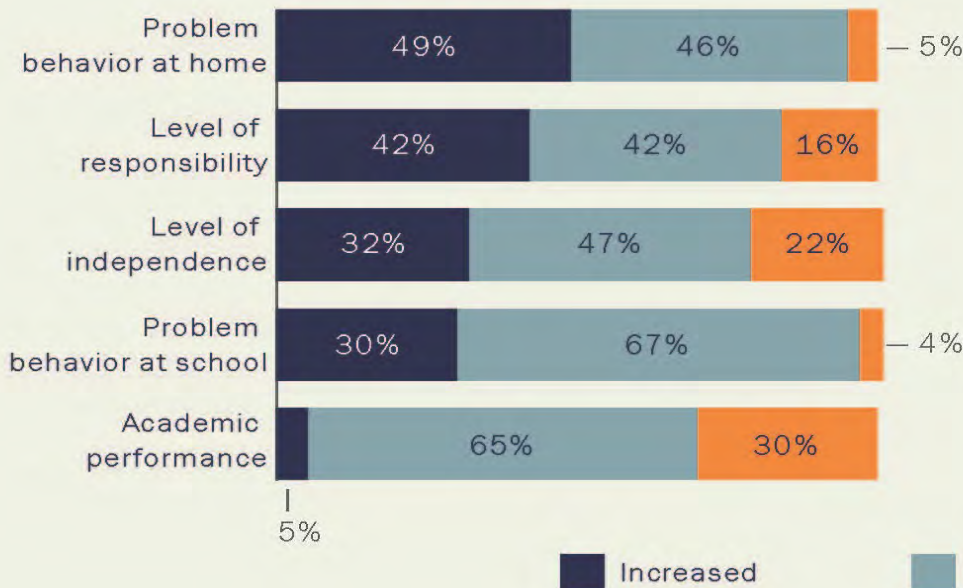
83%

indicated their child's behavior increased during deployment

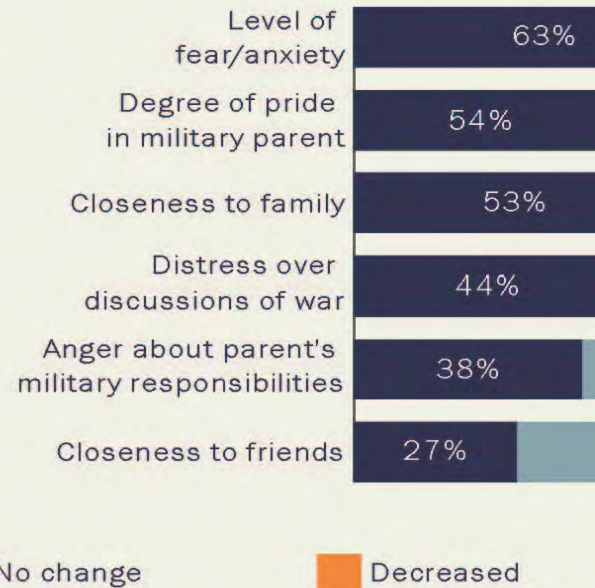


Impacts of Deployment

ON BEHAVIOR



ON EMOTIONS



Sponsored by Military Community and Family Policy, conducted by the



*This data point taken from the 2016 Demographics
‡ As reported by Reserve spouses about their children
Data presented are reported by Reserve component spouses
2017 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses



Coping with Deployments

keys

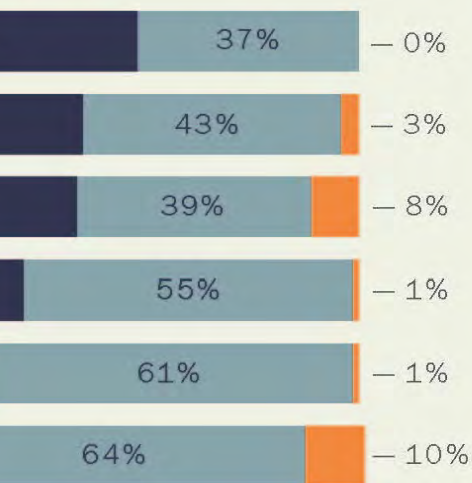
The 2017 Survey of Military Deployments



houses whose recently deployed parent are children living at part-time

use of child care during the most recent

CONCLUSIONS



Profile of the Military Community. Military spouses who experienced a deployment about their children on the

58%

indicated their child(ren) **coped well** with their parent's most recent deployment

73%

indicated their child(ren) **stayed well connected** to their deployed parent during the deployment

82%

indicated their child(ren) **reconnected well** with their deployed parent upon their return home

5 Most Important Coping Mechanisms[‡]

- Home parent's ability to maintain stable household routine
- Communication with the deployed parent
- Home parent support for the deployment
- Family member support for the deployment
- Geographic stability

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Military spouses can receive support at no cost, including family life counseling, at:

MILITARY ONESOURCE

800-342-9647

www.militaryonesource.mil

4

WAYS LOVED ONES CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN DURING A PARENT'S DEPLOYMENT

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Grandparents, aunts and uncles, family friends and loved ones can make children of service members feel more secure and loved when their parent is deployed. Come deployment time, here are things large and small you can do to be there for and nurture the bond you have with the military children in your life.

GROW THE RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNICATION

The most important thing for a child to know is that they have many people who care for them.

Keep in touch with the child. Send them a postcard, call them on the phone, or text - whatever method is going to be most comfortable for them. Some find it special to receive mail, emails or short texts to know someone is thinking of them.

Consider sending the child a care package, a craft or a subscription box geared to their age and interests.

If you live nearby, try to attend their special events, like performances, sports games and school activities.

If you live far away, ask their primary caregiver if there would be a good time to visit, and see if you can make that happen. Don't rely on the other parent or solo caregiver to make the plans; you can do that to relieve the burden on them.

Invite the child to visit you, either with or without

their caregiver. (Talk to the grown-up first to see if this can happen, so it doesn't end in disappointment.)

Read books to them over video chat or use apps to play games together on your phones.

SUPPORT THE CHILD'S PRIMARY CAREGIVER

Solo parenting can be lonely and hard on the primary caregiver, whether it's mom, dad, a grandparent or someone else. No matter how you're related, or where you're each located, there are ways you can make their life a little easier, which gives them more time and energy for both themselves and their child.

When you're going to the grocery store, call and ask them what they need. If they are far away, consider ordering groceries to be delivered to their home.

Offer specific assistance, such as 'I'm free to watch the kids on Tuesdays,' or 'I know your child's birth-

day is coming up, let me take care of the cake.' That's more helpful than generic 'let me know how I can help.'

If they call you to talk, be willing to listen to their frustrations without judgment. Help with household tasks that are hard to do when you're alone with kids, like mowing the lawn or cleaning the gutters. If they are comfortable with it, consider offering to pay for a service such as lawn or house maintenance service.

If there are multiple kids, offer to babysit a few so they can have one-on-one time with an individual child or just some downtime for themselves.

If there are multiple kids in activities, ask if there are any scheduling conflicts where you can help with transportation or child care.

Ask if there is a particularly tough time of day, and if it would be helpful for you to call or keep the child engaged at that time. For example, you can read a book over video chat while mom or dad cleans up after dinner, takes out the trash or showers. Keep an eye out for signs of stress but don't push; each family manages deployment in their own ways.

Remind the caregiver of the resources available to them, including Military OneSource consultants, private organizations, their installation's Military and Family Support Center, and on-base programs.

NURTURE THE CHILD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SERVICE MEMBER

Throughout deployment, encourage a gentle focus on the child and their parent. Here are some sugges-

tions you can choose from based on age appropriateness. Tell stories or share pictures of their deployed parent when they were younger.

Talk about where their parent is right now, and what their life might look like. Do they sleep in a tent or on a ship? Where and what do they eat?

Keep communication open by letting tweens and teens bring up topics that interest them. Take a trip with them to where their parent grew up or one of their parent's favorite places.

Ask them how their responsibilities have changed since their parent's deployment.

Assemble a care package together or help them write

a letter to their parent.

Check out some ways to help a teen deal with deployment. When their parent comes home, give the family some time alone before you plan a visit.

BE A POSITIVE FORCE

Make an effort to keep your conversations with the child positive. It can be hard, because you're missing your service member too. Emphasize the parts of the experience that are normal while still empathizing with their feelings. It can be a hard balance, and you might not always get it right, and that's okay. On the flip side, acknowledge their frustrations, fears and sadness. Talk about the positive things that the service member is doing while they are gone.

Avoid talking about your opinions on the reasons the service member is deployed. It's important to be supportive. 🍌





Military Community and Family Policy Fact Sheet

Data



Currently in the United States, 12.7 million children and adolescents, ages 2-19, are obese.

Additional information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/index.html>

Resource Center for Obesity Prevention

<http://www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/initiatives/obesity-prevention>

5210 Healthy Military Children

<http://5210.healthymilitarychildren.psu.edu>

Background

In 2010, the president established a Task Force on Childhood Obesity to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation and develop an interagency action plan to address this goal. Obese children and adolescents are more likely to be obese as adults, which can put them at greater risk for health problems, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The Department of Defense already strives to support the health and well-being of military service members and their families, and their participation in the White House's Task Force on Childhood Obesity will augment these efforts. As a part of this task force, the DoD will help identify strategies to prevent and treat childhood obesity within the military community.

Highlights

- Healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can lower the risk of becoming obese and developing related diseases.
- The DoD is focused on ensuring high standards for physical activity and nutrition at installation child development centers.
- The DoD created the Resource Center for Obesity Prevention to further address this issue.
- The DoD is promoting the 5-2-1-0 model to support healthy military children. The model advises that on a daily basis, children and youth:
 - Eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables
 - For 2 years and older, closely monitor and limit screen time
 - Get 1 or more hours of physical activity
 - Drink 0 sweetened beverages





PILLOWCASES POPULAR WITH YELLOW RIBBON PARTICIPANTS

By Jaimi L. Chafin, Air Force Reserve Command Public Affairs

Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Program participants receive free pillowcases imprinted with family photos to take on deployments.

"I wish we had something like this when my husband was deployed and my kids were young," said Kimberly Wren, the key spouse from the 440th Airlift Wing at Pope Field, North Carolina. "The families get so excited when they see the pillowcases."

Wren joined the Key Spouse Program 18 months ago and volunteered to provide pillowcase support for the first time at a Yellow Ribbon training event. Key Spouse is a commander's program that promotes partnerships with unit leadership, volunteer spouses, families, and representatives from Airman & Family Readiness Centers and other agencies.

It has been standardized across the Air Force to address the needs of all military families with special emphasis on support to families across the deployment cycle.


During Yellow Ribbon events, Key Spouse volunteers set up a table with sign-up sheets, hot presses and a tablet or laptop. Families can stop by to sign

up for one or two pillowcases depending on if they are pre-deployment or post-deployment. Then the family decides whom they want in the photo to be pressed on to a plain white pillowcase. A volunteer takes the picture, prints it onto transfer paper and then presses the image onto the pillowcase. The pillow cases and presses are funded by various professional groups and associations from throughout the Air Force Reserve community.

"We take a picture of the kids, the spouse, the member, or the whole family depending on what they want," said Kelly Gay, lead key spouse at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts.

The program can help bridge the emotional distance for families who are about to deploy.

"I will never forget one event, we took a picture of a family -- two little girls, mom and dad," said Gay. "When they came to pick them up, one of the little girls started crying and thanking us."

While families are at the table ordering pillowcases, volunteers tell them about their ability to provide support and access to resources for families of deployed reservists. 

MANAGING STRESS

IN THE EXTENDED MILITARY FAMILY

Courtesy of Military OneSource

You may feel pride that your child, grandchild, brother, sister, significant other or friend is serving our nation. At times, that may also cause you stress. Your concern can grow during deployments, trainings, relocations and other life events.

Stress is both normal and understandable. But know your service member is well trained for their military job. Part of your job as a key member of your loved one's support network is to have confidence in them.

As a result, consider taking steps to reduce your own anxiety to get a handle on it before it affects your mental health, and your loved ones.

IDENTIFY THE SIGNS OF STRESS

The first step in keeping a healthy emotional balance is recognizing the signs of stress:

- Difficulty completing tasks or concentrating
- Extreme hunger or lack of appetite
- Difficulty making decisions
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Crying for 'no apparent reason'

- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Headaches or stomach problems
- Irritability and anger
- Difficulty sleeping
- Sadness and depression
- Excessive drinking or drug use
- Feeling powerless or withdrawn

If you notice one or more of these symptoms on a regular basis, then anxiety may be impacting your health.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

By focusing on the present moment and accepting your feelings, you can cope with anxiety and worry without it overwhelming your life. You can do this by finding a relaxing and 'mindful' hobby such as yoga, tai chi, meditation or journaling.

Even just doing something calming - such as gardening or coloring - can make the difference between a day spent worrying and a day focused on positive actions.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

It may seem simple, but remember to care of your body as well as your mind during times of stress. Are you drinking enough water? Allowing yourself enough time for sleep? Are you eating well?

Something as basic as walking the dog or going for a jog can make big difference in your mindset.

LEAN ON YOUR COMMUNITY - AND ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

You don't have to face your worries alone. Just like you provide support for your service member, your personal support network can help you stay well and manage stress.

Talk with your friends about your concerns and worries. Tell them what they can do to support you – and accept their help when it is offered. If you're spiritual, consider reaching out to your local faith community.

It may help to find a military-focused support group. There are many social media groups for parents, siblings, friends or significant others of service members. Or, you may find other military-minded people in your community by volunteering your time to help at a military-focused charity.

If you feel that you are not able to manage your anxiety, reach out to a professional health care provider. Knowing when to ask for help is a sign of strength, not of weakness.

LEARN MORE ABOUT MILITARY LIFE - ESPECIALLY YOUR SERVICE MEMBER'S EXPERIENCE

Doing what you can do to feel connected to military

life can help make your concerns more manageable.

Try not to let your mind run in circles with unknowns and 'what ifs.' Instead, learn more about military life by: researching and looking up things like your service member's branch of the military, their specific unit and military job and subscribing to official publications for friends and family of service members.

Learning some military acronyms and common military traditions so your next conversation with them is easier to follow.

Understand that your service member may not be able to tell you everything about their location, job or mission. This is for their protection.

Also, be aware of your news consumption. It's important to stay informed about the world, but focusing on negative news, or paying attention to rumors on social media, can add to your anxiety and harm your well-being.

Be reassured that as part of the world's best prepared and trained military, your service member understands their job and has been trained for their military life. They are a professional.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

While they are serving, members of the military must trust their safety and well-being to their training, their unit and their command. But you are still a part of your service member's network of support, and your well-being and your example matter. Stress and worry are a part of military life. Practicing good self-care, and reaching out for help if you need it, is a healthy and productive way to manage your worries and improve your life.

After all, if your service member sees you making your own health a priority, it can serve as a powerful reminder that despite occasional stress and anxiety, you both can thrive. 🌟



Retired Lt. Col. Lynne Hull speaks about the challenges of military deployments to an audience of 500 Nov. 23, 2019, at an Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Integration Program event in Orlando, Florida. Hull retired in 2016 after 28 years in the military and shared advice learned from her own Air Force deployments and those of her husband and father. Photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Monteleone

Retired officer experienced deployment from all angles

By Chief Master Sgt. Matt Proietti, 4th Combat Camera Squadron

When retired Lt. Col. Lynne Hull was 16, her Air Force pilot father went to South Vietnam for a year. Or was it Korea, she wondered aloud in front of an audience of 500 during her presentation about the myths of deployment Nov. 23 at an Air Force Reserve Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program event.

She later remembered that it was actually Saudi Arabia. Her father deployed often in his career so she wasn't surprised to misremember the detail.

The important thing, she said, was that the separation actually brought her closer to her father than she would have been if he'd remained home.

"We talked more in that year through letters than we would have if he'd been around all of the time," she said. "They were really love letters between a girl and her Dad. I still have them."

Hull said her family moved relentlessly in her childhood due to her father's career and she remembers pleading with her parents to let her stay behind to live with the families of friends. Her father leaned on the same platitude each time, telling her that the moves built character and to get in the car.

In addition to being an Air Force "brat," Hull, 55, has been an active-duty and Reserve officer, spouse of a career GI and mother to an Air Force pilot. She spent 28 years as an officer before retiring in 2016 as deputy commander of the 419th Maintenance Group at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and works as the senior aerospace instructor in a high school Junior ROTC program.

From 2012 to 2014 she was the 419th Fighter Wing's representative for Yellow Ribbon, which promotes the well-being of reservists and their loved ones by con-

necting them with resources before and after deployments. Each year, 7,000 Air Force reservists and those closest to them receive training in education benefits, health care, retirement information and more through Yellow Ribbon.

She and her husband, Ken, a retired Air Force pilot who now flies for an airline, have been married for 27 years and have three children: a son who flies E-8 Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System aircraft for the Air Force; a daughter studying for a master's degree in business; and a son who is an Air Force ROTC student. Ken Hull, then single, was among those who flew the first combat missions of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 in Iraq. His commander in Hill's 4th Tactical Fighter Squadron was then-Lt. Col. Mark Welsh, later Air Force chief of staff from 2012-2016 as a 4-star general. Welsh had his Airmen write farewell letters to their loved ones in case they didn't return home, Lynne Hull noted.

"I've been the Mom who left kids to deploy," she said. "As a commander, I've deployed with people who are struggling. The hardest role is my current one as parent to a GI I can't protect. It's scary."

She cited research by psychology professor Dr. Les Parrot and his therapist wife, Leslie, which shows the attitude of a military family is primarily based on the female lead, whether that is a deployer or the spouse of one.

"If she's bitter about the deployment, no matter who's deploying, the whole family will be," Hull said. "Just know that it doesn't have to stink. It depends on your attitude."

Hull, who deployed multiple times, said it always irked her that people offered her condolences when she was tapped to head overseas. Military duty is satisfying, she said, and comes with rewards such as education benefits and healthcare coverage.

"Deployers get to really go do their job instead of just training to do it. Be proud of what you do. You are part of the 1 percent who serve in the military. You are awesome. Don't let society dictate (that it's negative) to you."

She recalled deploying to Iraq through the 2006 holidays. Feeling forlorn one chilly night, she was outside looking at stars when she realized she'd never been as close to the original Christmas setting and that her military career was responsible for the special moment.

The former personal trainer challenged every person in her audience to develop an exercise regime during deployments, whether they are GIs or loved ones staying at home. She encouraged each half of a couple to keep a journal during their separation and then share them with each other post-deployment to give their partner a view as to what they were thinking while apart.

"You can grow through this," Hull said. "Relationships can grow from a deployment."

The key, she said, is communication before, during and after.

"Unmet expectations lead to conflict. When I deployed, I let my family know they had to keep my plants alive. Talk to your children. Their greatest concern may be who's going to take them to soccer practice. You must always stay connected. Some people want to hear from the deployed person every day. Others are like, 'I told you I loved you when we married. If that changes, I'll let you know.'"

Adults should set priorities and accept that they won't meet all of them, Hull said.

"Nothing will be perfect when the family is split," she said. "Maybe the kids get macaroni and cheese for dinner four times one week. That's OK."

She urged audience members to take advantage of military resources – among them the Psychological Health Advocacy Program, chaplains, first sergeants, key spouses, Military OneSource, and Airman and Family Readiness Centers -- and encouraged post-deployers to talk to pre-deployers about what to expect and how to prepare.

"You aren't in this alone. There are folks here in this room who have ideas you haven't thought of for coping with separation caused by deployment."

Hull shared a deployment memory of a woman sitting next to her on a commercial flight during an early leg of travel overseas. She was in no mood to talk but relented when the woman asked where she was headed.

"On a military deployment but the worst is over," Hull told her. "I just said goodbye to my husband and kids."

Then the woman closed her eyes and seemingly went to sleep for the entire flight. Hull later felt the woman's hand on her leg and heard her say that it was going to be OK. 🌈

PREPARING FOR DEPLOYMENT



Courtesy of Military OneSource

Since 2001, the Air Force Reserve has contributed a major portion of the approximately three million U.S. service members who have deployed to support national defense objectives.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program aims to share the lessons learned from those deployments to help prepare Reserve Citizen Airmen and their loved ones for the deployment experience.

These lessons apply to seasoned veterans and

first-time deployers alike.

Deployment preparation can be broken down into four separate areas: (1) legal, administrative, medical and financial matters that must be completed prior to deployment; (2) civilian job considerations pertinent to pre-deployment; (3) emergency preparedness and notification processes; and (4) strategies for preparing children for a loved one's deployment.



LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Wills

To prevent financial hardship on their loved ones, Reserve Citizen Airmen should prepare a will that states their wishes pertaining to their assets in the event of a tragedy. Without a will, Reservists will not have any say as to what happens to their assets and their state of residence will decide how

they are distributed.

Regardless of the size, nature, or extent of the estate, every Reservist should consider having a skillfully prepared will or estate plan that carries out their wishes.

A properly drawn will provides a mechanism to distribute money, property and assets in almost any manner the individual chooses.

A living will documents an individual's wishes

in terms of medical care and life support if the individual becomes incapacitated. More information on creating wills can be found at installation legal offices and online on Military OneSource. The bottom line is: every Reserve Citizen Airmen should have a will.

Powers of Attorney

A power of attorney is a legal way to allow one person to act on behalf of another.

There are two types of powers of attorney — a general power of attorney and a special power of attorney.

A general power of attorney authorizes a person to act on another person's behalf in most affairs.

A special power of attorney authorizes a person to act on another's behalf only during specific situations such as obtaining emergency medical care for children or performing specific functions like registering a car or serving as temporary guardians for children.

Businesses are not legally bound to honor powers of attorney, and Reservists and their loved ones are encouraged to check the requirements for using powers of attorney where they may need it before they may need it.

Most attorneys and legal assistance officers are in a position to furnish general powers of attorney that cover most contingencies. They can also provide advice as to what will be most useful in each individual's personal situation.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance

One benefit provided to service members is SGLI, which is a low-cost group life insurance. It is available up to a maximum of \$400,000 in \$50,000 increments.

Probably, the least known benefit under SGLI is Traumatic Injury Protection. Every service member who has SGLI has TSGLI. This protection provides short-term financial assistance to severely injured service members and veterans to assist them in their recovery from traumatic injuries incurred on

or off duty. TSGLI coverage will pay a benefit of between \$25,000 and \$100,000 depending on the type of loss that resulted directly from the traumatic injury.

As of the effective date of Reservists' deployment orders, SGLI coverage automatically increases to the maximum amount allowed by law. Premiums are adjusted accordingly. However, during deployment, the Department of Defense reimburses the premium for up to the maximum \$400,000 of SGLI coverage and the TSGLI premium.

The primary purpose of life insurance is to prevent financial hardship for a family due to an unfortunate occurrence to a service member's life or health. Therefore, service members must be sure the beneficiary listed on their SGLI is current.

Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System and Identification Cards

It is important to verify DEERS enrollment, so Reservists' families can take advantage of TRICARE benefits they are entitled to during deployments.

It is also important to ensure dependents have the appropriate ID Card. The color of the ID card identifies the benefits for which dependents are entitled. Most dependents of Reservists have pink ID cards, but they should obtain an orange/brownish card when their Reservists go on active-duty status for more than 30 days. It is also important to check the expiration dates on all ID cards.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

All service members are required to complete a pre-deployment health assessment within 120 days of the expected deployment date. The Pre-DHA is an electronic form, which must be reviewed and discussed in a face-to-face interview with a credentialed healthcare provider. The goal is to optimize health readiness by employing countermeasures against potential health and environmental hazards.

The Pre-DHA is incorporated into readiness and mobilization processes, policies, and regulations.

When service members are called to active duty for more than 30 days, they become eligible for active duty benefits and are automatically enrolled in TRICARE Prime. Their family is covered as active duty family members. Service members should be notified of their eligibility when their orders are issued. Eligibility can be verified in DEERS.

Choose Family Member Plan

TRICARE Prime is a managed care option, similar to a health maintenance organization program in which beneficiaries are assigned a primary care manager. TRICARE Select is a self-managed, preferred provider option in which beneficiaries manage their own health care without a PCM and choose which TRICARE authorized providers they see. It is important for Reservists to select the Tricare plan that will be most beneficial for their family. Depending on where they live, family members may also be eligible for TRICARE Prime Remote or the US Family Health Plan. These plans require enrollment. The TRICARE website provides details about various plans.

Review Plan Benefits

Prior to deployment, family members should review their plan's benefits and ensure it can be accessed when necessary. Family members have 90 days from the date the service member became eligible for active-duty TRICARE benefits to make any enrollment changes.

For those who are covered by other health insurance, TRICARE is always considered the last payer except for those on Medicaid.

Those who choose to stop using their employers' healthcare coverage during de-



FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

ployment must remember that Uniformed services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protections, which ensure an employer-sponsored health plan can be reinstated, do not go into effect until the member reports for active duty. Therefore, service members and their families are strongly encouraged to consider retaining their employers' health coverage until the service member actually reports for active duty. At that time, service members and their family members are fully covered by USERRA protections. For additional information on USERRA, visit the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve website.

Prescriptions

Family members should check whether individual prescription drugs are covered and where prescriptions can be filled under the chosen plan. Visit the pharmacy section of the TRICARE website for more information.

Dental

Reservists and their family members are eligible for TRICARE dental coverage regardless of the sponsor's status. While on active duty, service members get most of their dental care from military dental clinics.

Family members may enroll in dental coverage through the TRICARE Dental Program. While their sponsor is on active duty, their dental premiums will follow the active-duty rate. Family members who enroll in the dental program are encouraged to become familiar with the requirements to access those benefits. Visit the dental section of the TRICARE website for more information.

Vision

Dependents covered under TRICARE for medical and dental benefits are eligible for vision coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Go to the Benefeds website to check eligibility, or contact the TRICARE representatives within your region.

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

The Servicemembers Civil Relief Act can provide many forms of relief to military members. Some of the most common forms of relief include a six percent cap on interest rates, mortgage relief, termination of leases, protection from eviction and stay of proceedings.

Under SCRA, creditors must reduce the interest rate on debts service members incurred before active duty to six percent per year during your period of military service. SCRA is not automatic. Prior to deployment, service members must contact the legal assistance office for information about SCRA and how it applies to the service member and his or her family.

Direct Deposit and Checking Accounts

Make sure direct deposit is set up on the service member's accounts and discuss the plans paying bills.

Service members could have their paycheck directly deposited into their account and have an allotment to cover bills sent to their financial caretaker's account. An allotment is a portion of your pay that is automatically set aside each month for an individual, a mutual fund, creditors or any other monthly payments.

Conversely, service members may choose to deposit their paycheck into a joint or caretaker's account and open a second checking account with an allotment for themselves during deployment. This is a convenient way to make sure that the service member and the family members receive funds on a regular basis.

Taxes

Those service members deployed to a combat zone automatically have their deadlines for filing tax returns, paying taxes, and filing a refund extended by 180 days and the remaining time they had remaining prior to the April 15 tax day. For

example, service members who enter a combat zone April 1 will have 195 days to meet their tax deadlines upon redeployment (180-day extension plus the 15 days remaining until tax day).

Those who are owed a refund can make arrangements to file their taxes via the legal office or via a specific power of attorney. Free tax filing and assistance is also available through Military OneSource.

Leave and Earnings Statement

Service members receive an LES that shows pay for the preceding month and any changes that will affect pay for the current month. The LES can be accessed on the MyPay website. During deployment, most Reservists can expect their LES to reflect several categories of pay, including:

basic pay, basic allowance for housing, basic allowance for subsistence, family separation allowance and hazardous duty pay.

Those who are unfamiliar with reading an LES can visit the Defense Finance Accounting Services website or contact a family services representative at the Reservists' unit.

Savings Deposit Program

The SDP will pay 10 percent interest on monies up to \$10,000 deposited during deployment and for three months upon returning. Any military finance office in theater can help service members establish an account and assist in setting up the deposit method most convenient for the service member.

Family Separation Allowance

While on deployment and separated from dependents for more than 30 days, Reservists are entitled to Family Separation Allowance. FSA provides compensation for added expenses incurred because of an enforced family separation under one of the following conditions: transportation of dependents is not authorized at government expense, and the dependents do not live in the vicinity of your permanent duty station; transportation of dependents is authorized at government ex-



pense, but the service member has elected an unaccompanied tour due to a dependent's certified medical reasons; or the service member is away from the permanent station continuously for more than 30 days and dependents are not residing at or near the TDY station.

FSA is payable at the rate of \$250 per month (pro-rated to \$8.33 per day for periods less than a month). To apply for FSA, service members should submit a completed DD Form 1561 to their servicing personnel office.

Military Relief Aid Societies

Reserve Citizen Airmen on extended active-duty orders of more than 15 days who experience hardship may be eligible for interest-free loans and grants from the Air Force Aid Society. Visit the AFAS website for more information. Other organizations can help with financial emergencies, such as the American Red Cross and Military OneSource.

JOB CONSIDERATIONS

USERRA and ESGR

USERRA is a federal law designed to: 1) ensure that those who serve in the armed forces are not disadvantaged in their civilian careers because of their service; 2) ensure service members are

promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs upon their return from duty; and 3) ensure that service members are not discriminated against in employment based on past, present, or future military service.

Before deployment, service members must give their employer notice of the upcoming deployment. Giving employers notice and communicating with them will help ensure both the employer and service member have reasonable expectations pertaining to absence for military service. ESGR has programs to encourage employer support of Reservists, and they can educate employers on service members' rights under USERRA.

Professional Certification/Licensing and Small Businesses

Reservists who maintain certification or licensing at part of their non-military employment have rights associated with keeping their credentials current upon return from deployment. ESGR or unit legal offices can provide more information.

The Small Business Administration provides loans for small businesses owners impacted by deployment called the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan.

PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

Support Systems

Deployers and their families should have a plan for emergencies that may arise on the home front during deployment. Examples include: how to handle a medical emergency; what to do if a car breaks down; where to find the fuse box; and how to turn off a home's water main.

The emergency plan should include contact information for a support network family members can turn to when emergencies arise. Families are encouraged to reach out to their service

member's unit's family programs office for assistance. Nongovernmental organizations, such as the Red Cross, the USO and various veterans' service organizations, also provide emergency support.

PREPARE CHILDREN

Children of all ages can be very aware of adults' feelings and emotions. Feeling the tension and knowing their parent is upset but not understanding why can make deployment even more confusing for children. Children have their own worries and concerns about deployment. Set aside a time in which family members can share their feelings. Having the deploying parent or another adult around for support and to answer questions can be helpful because better and more frequent communication during pre-deployment is associated with greater adjustment in children.

The child's school should also be notified of a deploying parent. Using open communication with teachers can enlist their support and understanding of a child throughout the deployment cycle.

There are positives that can come out of deployment for children. It may foster maturity through additional learning opportunities and increased responsibilities. A loved one's deployment can also encourage independence and increase self-reliance. In addition, families have reported greater family closeness, independence, confidence, resilience and pride.

Summary

Taking care of pre-deployment matters related to legal, medical, finance, employment, emergency plans and the preparation of children will go a long way toward improving the deployment experience for service members and their families. 🌟





MILITARY FAMILIES

IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENTS: RESERVE COMPONENT SPOUSES

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/web/mos/reports-a>

There are 367,706* spouses of Reserve component members. The 2017 Survey of Reserve Component Spouses provides insights into how member deployments impact families.

In the past 2 years...

35% have had their Reserve component member be activated

17% have had their Reserve component member be deployed for 12 months or longer



Top-Cited Issues During Member's Deployment



92%

Increase in stress levels



88%

Loneliness



85%

Feelings of anxiety or depression

Deployment Support

89%

Received support **prior to** their member's most recent deployment



40%

Were satisfied with the support received **prior to** deployment

89%

Received support **during** their member's most recent deployment



31%

Were satisfied with the support received **during** deployment

66%

Received support **after** their member's most recent deployment ended



30%

Were satisfied with the support received **after** the deployment ended



Deployment Statistics for Reserve Spouses

nd-surveys

of Reserve
their spouses.

their Reserve
member be
or 30 days or more

ents



84%

Home/car
repairs/maintenance
and/or yard work

sified with the support
ployment

sified with the support
ployment

sified with the support
ployment ended

s Profile of the Military Community.
c spouses about their children on the

49%

Reported that their Reserve
component member's deployment
was to a combat zone

1.6

Average deployments in last
two years

Post-Deployment

12%

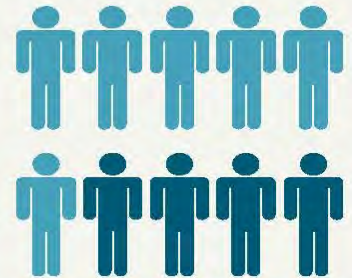
of Reserve spouses have had a
member return home from a
deployment in the past 24 months

76%

of Reserve spouses indicate that
readjustment and reintegration
are going well for them

59%

of all Reserve spouses support
their husband/wife staying in the
Reserve even with the possibility
of lengthy/frequent deployments



RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Military spouses can receive support at no
cost, including family life counseling, at:

MILITARY
ONESOURCE

800-342-9647

www.militaryonesource.mil

RECONNECTING AFTER DEPLOYMENT

*By Master Sgt. Luke Johnson,
943rd Group Public Affairs*

SAN DIEGO, Calif. -- Staff Sgt. Eric Gapp and his wife, Laura, have known each other for eight years and been married for about 18 months, but they are getting to know each other all over again following his recent deployment for the Air Force Reserve.

"I thought (it) was going to be hard, but I've found that reintegration is harder," Laura Gapp said during a March 23-25 event hosted by the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which promotes the well-being of reservists and their loved ones by connecting them with resources before and after deployments.

Her husband, a training manager for the 934th Airlift Wing at Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station in Minnesota, said it was difficult to turn off his deployment mindset when he returned home, which affected his closest relationships -- especially with his wife.

"You have to change the way



you operate during a deployment,” he said. “You’ve got to be direct with people in order to continue the mission safely. You have to disregard how people are feeling about what you are saying.”

The direct mindset and apathy toward the feelings of others led to challenges when he reunited with his loved ones.

“Sometimes, I can be a bit too direct to my family, especially with Laura,” he said. “During the deployment, there are high expectations, and when you come home and you put high expectation on your family they can easily let you down because you have a lot less patience.”

Laura Gapp labeled this deployment mindset as being “wound up.”

“They wind you up very hard when you are deployed,” she said. “You don’t get time to unwind. You don’t remember what unwinding is, and you don’t know the best way to do it.”

She said her husband’s mission-focused mindset negatively impacted their relationship as they were learning to reconnect. She said his first day home from deployment was “blissful” but then it became more difficult to adjust.

“You get lost trying to figure out what your next mission is and what your role is,” she said. “If it is undefined, it leaves you in limbo, and I think that for a lot of people, including Eric, who is goal driven, it leaves you frustrated with what to do next. If there is no set plan, it makes you angry or leaves a hole (in your relationships).”

She said patience has been the key for reconnecting with her spouse.

“Being flexible is very important, and you have to prepare that integration is not going to come

naturally to anyone. You need to find that routine again and give it some time.”

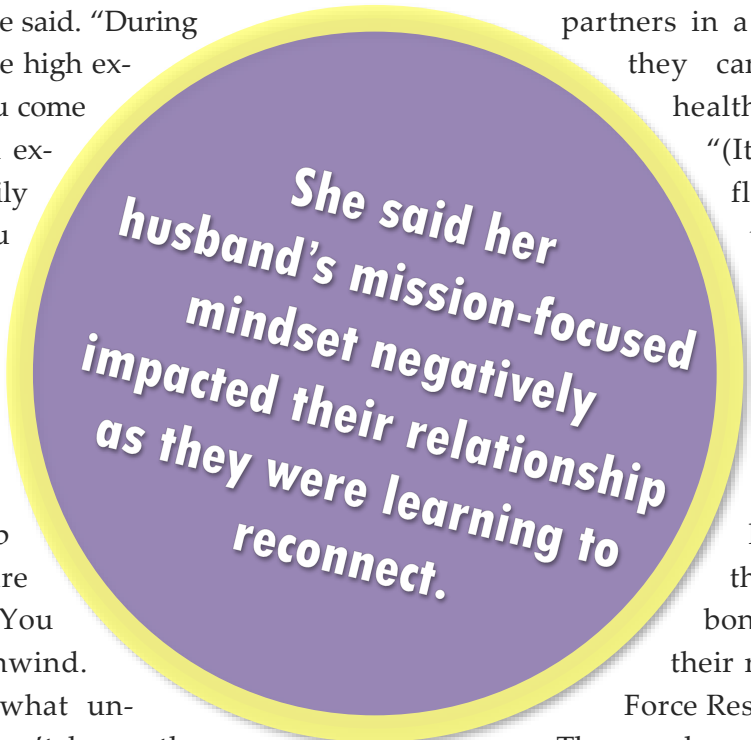
The Gapps found the Couples Enrichment Program class at the Yellow Ribbon event beneficial on their journey toward reconnecting with each other. It is designed to help those who are married, engaged or dating delve into their relationships to better understand themselves and their partners in a more profound way so they can build and maintain healthy unions.

“(It) teaches couples to reflect upon the simple things in life and to simplify the daily issues, which will help us reconnect,” Laura Gapp said of the training, which is aimed at post-deployers and their loved ones attending their second Yellow Ribbon weekend following their return. It is led by an Air Force Reserve chaplain.

The couple encourages Reserve Citizen Airmen to attend Yellow Ribbon events to learn about what resources are available and to not be afraid to reach out if they are experiencing problems or issues with your closest relationships.

“It has been helpful for us,” Eric Gapp said. “(People shouldn’t) be afraid to talk to a chaplain or to a mental health advocate if (they) need help.”

Yellow Ribbon began in 2008 following a congressional mandate for the Department of Defense to assist reservists and National Guard members in maintaining resiliency as they transition between their military and civilian roles. Each year, the Air Force Reserve program trains 7,000 reservists and those closest to them in education benefits, health care, retirement information and more. 🍌



TIPS FOR COPING WITH STRESS AS A COUPLE

The COVID-19 pandemic can strain even the strongest relationship. Whether you and your partner are together more than usual, or precautions have kept you apart, here are ways to cope.



Come up with a plan.

Uncertainty causes anxiety. Structure can help restore calm. Create a schedule with your partner. Decide together what your new normal will look like.



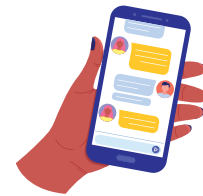
Give each other space.

This is especially important if you're sheltering at home. If you share close quarters, carve out separate zones and honor them. Give each other mental space. Earbuds or headphones are ideal for this.



Practice good communication.

Set aside time to talk when you're not distracted or overly stressed. If there's tension in your relationship, focus on the issue, not on who's right or wrong.



Check in on each other.

If you and your partner are away from each other because of the pandemic, try to connect each day by video or phone.



Be active.

Exercise is a great stress buster. Try to fit physical activity into each day. Find workout videos online and follow along alone or together. A personal health and wellness coach through [Military OneSource](#) or [CoachHub](#) can help you stay on track.



Breathe.

Give each other some slack. Breathe deep, practice gratitude and remember why you love each other.

MILITARY
ONE SOURCE

Turn to Military OneSource.

[Military OneSource](#) is always here. We offer non-medical counseling, specialty consultations, tools and resources to help you and your partner through these challenging times. Call **800-342-9647** or start a [live chat](#) to speak with a consultant. OCONUS/International? Visit our [webpage](#) for calling options.

10 TIPS FOR MAINTAINING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS DURING DEPLOYMENTS

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Whether this is the first time or the 20th time that your spouse has been called to active duty, relationships change when a spouse serves away from home. Luckily, there are ways to ensure you keep in touch and maintain a strong relationship with your partner.

1. TALK ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING SEPARATION

Set aside time to talk about your feelings and plan how each of you will manage during your time apart. Be sure to discuss how you'll handle emergencies, parenting issues and finances. Identify people you can connect with for support.

2. DISCUSS HOW YOU WILL STAY IN TOUCH

Explore options, such as email, phone calls, video-chat and regular mail. Talk about which forms of communication make you feel closest and which are most easily accessible.

3. SEND CARE PACKAGES

Care packages deliver a little piece of home to your deployed spouse. Be creative. Include treats, funny notes, personal coupons for when your partner returns and items that have special meaning for both of you.

4. ESTABLISH MUTUAL TRUST

Trust is important in relationships, but it's even more crucial when you're dealing with a separation or deployment. Practice open and honest communication.

5. KEEP BUSY AND STAY ACTIVE

Being active can help you get through separations and difficult times. Participate in social outings and clubs. Connect with other military spouses. Keep children occupied and on track.

6. SHARE DAILY HAPPENINGS FROM HOME

Hearing about your life will help your deployed spouse feel closer to you. Talk about what your children say, what your pet did, and the dinner you prepared. Details and descriptions will make these conversations more than just small talk.

7. LEARN ABOUT YOUR SPOUSE'S JOB & OTHER INTERESTS

Learn what your spouse's daily life is like to help you better understand his or her experiences. Though they may not be able to share some aspects of the job, you can talk about other activities that keep him or her occupied.


8. SHARE SONGS THAT REMIND YOU OF YOUR SPOUSE

Listening to songs that bring back happy memories keeps you connected and helps nurture your relationship.

9. JOURNAL THOUGHTS TO SHARE WITH YOUR SPOUSE

Consider keeping an online journal with pictures your spouse can access over the internet. This is a great way to keep your spouse up-to-date.

10. BE REALISTIC ABOUT COMMUNICATION

If your deployed spouse is in an area with limited mail or email service, communication may be sporadic. Remember, sporadic communication doesn't mean your spouse doesn't care. Trust that your partner will connect with you as soon as he or she can. 

FAMILY WELLNESS

Strengthen Your Family

Courtesy of Military OneSource

The first support community we join as human beings is our family unit. Service members thrive best with support from their families, and families in turn cope better with their service member's active participation in helping the family stay strong in the face of unique challenges they face as part of the Reserve community. Because the wellness of family unit hinges on the wellness of all the individuals involved, it's important to seek ways to keep your family connected, healthy and united.

What does 'family wellness' mean?

Family wellness means setting a good example through healthy behavior and creating a safe, stable environment for children during deployments:

Setting a good example with your behaviors helps children adopt good behaviors and habits themselves. Children are more likely to listen and respond positively when you are a good listener and act in ways that promote good choices. An added benefit: teaching your kids to make good choices will

Creating a safe, stable environment for children create a more peaceful household for you. is critical for maintaining family wellness, especially during a parent or sibling's deployment. Children who feel safe, loved and supported are less likely to develop behavioral or emotional issues, and sustain better health and social interactions.

Family wellness means devoting time to your family and being an active participant in your household.

Devoting time to your family reasserts that you are emotionally available to your loved ones when they need you, building feelings of trust, affection and loyalty. Families that spend time together are closer, more loving, and weather changes with greater ease than families that associate superficially. Being an active participant in your household may be difficult if you're coping with multiple or long-term separations. However, Reservists who cannot contribute to household chores, financial obligations or child-rearing due to separations can set

up routines and strategies the family can maintain while they are away.

Family Wellness means being flexible and compromising when possible and putting family first when confronted with a choice between acting in self-interest or in interest of the family:

Being flexible and compromising when conflict arises in your family helps sustain family unity and avoid serious conflicts.

Couples and families that master the art of compromise express mutual respect for one another and tend to experience less stress and anxiety related to arguments.

Putting family first can be achieved in a number of ways. For healthy families, that

includes practicing forgiveness, opening up to your loved ones, recognizing when members of your family need help, and making good lifestyle choices that support your entire family (instead of just you).

Tips for improving family wellness

Get closer to your spouse. A healthy marriage can create a strong foundation for your household, affecting all the areas that impact your family, including your health, finances, children and community. If you and your partner are experi-

encing marital problems, programs are available to strengthen your relationship.

Set aside special family time during the week. Plan a game night, go to the movies together, and

tell bedtime stories - these all qualify as ways to share your time with your family. If you're on a deployment, communicate as often as you can to let your loved ones know that they're on your mind and in your heart.

Families who eat together, stay together. This tip relates closely to the one before it, except it refers more closely to doing the little things together in addition to special out-of-the ordinary things. Creating routines that involve all the members of your family - like getting together for dinner - is a way to

create stability and instantly fit family togetherness into your day.

Practice good communication. Good listening skills and open and honest communication are basic components of family wellness. Confiding in your loved ones will also help you feel supported. As a service member, this may include sharing information about your service to the National Guard with your loved ones in order to ease fears and prepare them for potential separations. 🍷

SIGNS OF FAMILY DISTRESS

- ♦ Inflexibility and unwillingness to compromise
- ♦ Impatience & irritability between family members
- ♦ Domestic violence
- ♦ Sexual, physical abuse
- ♦ Neglect
- ♦ Spouse/partner infidelity
- ♦ Poor financial decision-making
- ♦ Lack of routines
- ♦ Self-interest without concern for family wellbeing
- ♦ Poor self-care/care of family member

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS



THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE, CONNECTION AND PURPOSE

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Spirituality is expressed in many forms, whether tied to a religion, a moral philosophy, or an inherent sense of connectedness with something greater than oneself. In any form, spirituality is always personal.

The need for spiritual wellness is often downplayed as less important than emotional, physical or social wellness, but it plays a vital role in the sense of hope, belonging and purpose.

What does 'spiritual wellness' mean?

Spiritual Wellness means making time to contemplate your purpose in life and achieving greater mindfulness of your impact on the rest of the world:

Contemplating your purpose in life helps put you in touch with your potential to create, to affect change, and to proliferate good things in the world like love, compassion and peace. For service members engaged in the protection of our nation, connecting with a greater purpose strengthens morale and encourages unity.

Achieving greater mindfulness is necessary in order to locate yourself as a member of a global community. Every person has significance and importance to oth-

ers, including family members, friends, peers, neighbors and beyond. Spiritually healthy individuals sense their implicit connection to others inside and outside their sphere of influence. Spiritual wellness means achieving harmony with one's surroundings and balancing one's personal needs with the needs of others:

Harmony with one's surroundings is achieved when actions and intentions align agreeably with the environment to the benefit of all within it. Considering the impact of your actions on your world can expand your perspective and inspire acts of kindness, compassion and tolerance.

Balancing personal needs with the needs of others is part of fostering healthy relationships. Spiritually healthy individuals consider the needs of others in relation to their own needs so they are neither acting only in self-interest nor draining themselves for the sake of others.

Spiritual wellness also means having personal values and beliefs and acting compassionately in accordance with those values.

Personal values and beliefs may change throughout the course of a lifetime, taking shape through the influence of relationships, events and personal experiences. A spiritually healthy individual will be aware when their values shift, when to readjust them and when to reassert their importance.

Acting compassionately is the physical expression of spiritual intention. Examples of compassionate action include prayer, efforts to find understanding in the midst of conflict, mentoring a peer and expressing affection.

SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

- Loss of direction
- Sense of emptiness/feeling alone in the world
- Hopelessness and helplessness
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Self-destructive language
- Bitter or jaded outlook on life
- Fearfulness, dissociation
- Anger at God/higher power

TIPS FOR IMPROVING SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

Find some quiet time

It's easy to feel encumbered at the end of a long day, especially for service members and loved ones experiencing stressors related to deployment. Fit some quiet time into your day to recharge your inner battery, where you can observe the present moment, pray or read something uplifting.

Say something

Preferably out loud. Many faiths believe you can shape your world by speaking aloud the world you want to manifest. In psychology, the same idea is behind the recitation of affirmations. For many religions, it is achieved through prayer, chanting, liturgy and singing among other audible modes of expression. Whatever you believe, speaking your intentions out loud can change your thoughts and ultimately affect your life.

Ask the big questions

'What am I doing here?' 'What does it all mean?' The quest for greater truth begins with big questions, and you're not only allowed to ask, you're allowed to answer. Contemplating the meaning of life and seeking your greater purpose teaches the importance of the present moment and opens you to the infinite possibilities that lie ahead for your life.

Find out what you believe

Determining a set of values begins with discovering what's important to you.

Is tolerance important? Is it important to defend those who cannot defend themselves? Is love important above all things? Defining your values gives you a framework to live by - and it's important to revisit them from time to time to see if they've changed.

Be true to yourself

Living authentically can offer tremendous benefits. When you honor your true self, you are stronger in adversity, a better leader to your peers, and reap the added benefit of a clear conscience. Best of all, your confidence will rub off on your friends. 🌟



Zen Warrior

Finding resiliency through yoga

Staff Sgt. Mary A. Andom, 446th Airlift Wing

Master Sgt. Kathleen Myhre eases out of her office chair and kneels on the blue-speckled office carpet. With her feet shoulder-width apart, she drops her head backwards and leans back effortlessly. Her limber arms stretch to grab the rubber soles of her combat boots. She contorts her body into a physical letter “D.”

“This is camel pose,” she said. “It is one of my favorites, especially for office workers like myself. This stretch really opens up your lungs and chest, so you can breathe.”

The camel pose is said to improve spinal flexibility, improve posture and increase breathing capacity.

From improved mental concentration to lowered stress and anxiety levels, the ancient Hindu spiritual practice of yoga is breathing new life into fitness programs across the military.

In her office at the 446th Airlift Wing Airman and Family Readiness Center, the noncommissioned officer in charge, shared how becoming a yoga instructor has transformed her life.

The former juvenile rehabilitation counselor worked for Washington State's Department of Children, Youth and Families managing a caseload of the state's highest-risk youth.

"It was a really stressful job—at times fun, but also emotionally taxing," Myhre said. "I didn't feel as healthy."

In 2016, she decided to resign and promptly booked a 30-day trip to India to train as a certified yoga instructor.

When she landed at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi after a 17-hour flight, she began to panic when her driver was more than an hour late. It was her first lesson in yoga: how to be calm and accept change.

"I was afraid to leave the airport," Myhre said. "After a couple of phone calls another driver arrived and he took me on a tour of the countryside. It ended up being an amazing experience."

The eight-hour drive ended at Rishikesh—the yoga capital of the world. Nestled in the Himalayan foothills overlooking to the Ganges River, her peaceful yoga retreat eliminated many common distractions—no cell phones, no television and no internet.

Every morning Myhre meditated for an hour with other hopeful yoga instructors from Brazil, Australia and Spain.

"It was so calming and peaceful—very low stress."

During the day, they practiced mindfulness, studied philosophy, consumed a vegan diet and completed two 90-minute yoga sessions.

Two-hundred hours later, Myhre was an internationally certified yoga instructor.

She returned to America feeling renewed and refreshed.

Myhre longed to share with others in the military the mental, physical and spiritual benefits of yoga which can help alleviate the effects of mental and physical stress.

The Airmen in her wing have already reaped the benefits. From aerial port specialists loading equipment, to security force members who carry cumbersome gear, yoga is helping Airmen stretch their muscles and calm their minds.

When Col. Raymundo Luevanos, 446th Mission Support Group commander, attended Myhre's yoga class months ago, he thought it would be great physical exercise to stretch his muscles, but he discovered mental resiliency.

"Master Sgt. Myhre gave us great insight into how pushing your body is directly related to your mental concentration," Luevanos said. "Being mindful of your thoughts and breathing during difficult poses, can carry over into making your everyday life less stressful. It provides a sense of purpose and calmness, which can be a great long-term benefit."

Whether it's performing a physical fitness test or prepping for a last-minute deployment, in moments of stress we tend to involuntarily hold our breath.

These physiological changes, coupled with an increased heart rate and higher levels of adrenaline, can kick in the flight or fight mode.

"Looking for a great anxiety reducer?" Myhre said. "Breathe in deeply for four seconds, hold, then release with a six-second exhale."

Studies have shown yoga techniques, such as breathing meditation, have a positive impact on conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and addiction.

On days when Myhre feels the stressors of life pulling her in many directions, she reminds herself of the peace she experienced in India. She closes her eyes, takes a moment to pause and simply breathes. 🧘



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