



Deployment ---

A Military Spouse's Viewpoint

For many spouses, when the deployment actually occurs, this is a reality check. Until now there was the possibility of a change in orders or some other eventuality to prevent departure. But the separation is inevitable.

When your spouse deploys, a piece of you goes too, but that's what you want...for part of you to be with your spouse. You find that you, too, keep your spouse present with you. When your spouse leaves, you go through a whole series of different emotions. About six to eight weeks before your spouse leaves, you both get very busy thinking about details that need to be tended to before departure. You both may feel excited, intimidated, and maybe a little worried about how you will manage. About three to four weeks before your spouse leaves, you may begin to put distance between the two of you, build a few walls, maybe withdrawing from each other. You may become irritated with each other and you may even have a fight. This distancing often reaches a peak about two to three days before your spouse leaves when you both think they should be gone so that you both can begin counting down to the reunion...which may seem an eternity away! This "distancing" is normal and allows you to permit this person who is so very important to you to go away...for a while.

When "the day" arrives, you may be thinking that some way, something, somehow will keep them home. Whatever you say to each other may seem awkward and not quite right, and afterward, when you reflect on not seeing each other for a long time, you may wonder why you couldn't have been more romantic such as a "warmer" good-bye.

You Are Normal!

For the first day or so after your spouse leaves, you may feel like a robot, just going through the motions, almost like you are in shock. You might just want to stay home. You may not want anyone around you. You may wonder if it was easy for your spouse to leave you. You may feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities you are facing. Then you may get angry with your spouse, with the military, your spouses' commander or duty section, perhaps even with the whole world! How could your spouse leave?

You will get over that too, and find you can handle the separation. You'll probably find yourself within a few weeks beginning to settle into a pattern. If you don't find some comfortable routine and continue to feel upset, reach out for support to family, friends, neighbors, and spiritual resources. Try some of the tips that follow for handling stress. You can also call the EAP to assist in dealing with this situation and reach them at 1-800-EAP-4YOU.

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This material is adapted from the "Predeployment Guide: A Tool for Coping" on the Air Force Crossroads website at <http://www.afcrossroads.com/famseparation/>

Federal Occupational Health

A component of the U.S. Public Health Service
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Handling Stress

- Take care of yourself. Don't try to fix family and friends.
- Get involved in things that make you happy and feel fulfilled.
- Avoid self-medication and abusing substances like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and food. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, but don't reduce stress.
- Be flexible; accept that you can't control everything.
- Attend to your spiritual needs.
- Plan for stress. Set realistic goals that leave time for breaks and limit work. Think less stress.
- Learn how to praise yourself and accept praise.
- Keep a sense of humor with you at all times.
- Avoid sulking. Let people know what you want.
- Exercise, sleep, and eat well.

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS CAN RECEIVE HELP COPING WITH DEPLOYMENT OR OTHER STRESSORS BY CALLING THE EAP AT 1-800-EAP-4YOU.

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healthy bodies
sound minds
a safe place to work

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