



IMAGINE STEPPING INTO YOUR CHILD'S WORLD AND SEEING THINGS FROM HIS OR HER POINT OF VIEW.

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Talking about preparing to leave

Deployment is a very stressful time for all family members, especially children. The uncertainty of when or if things will return to normal can make a child's life very difficult. What can you do to help make this trying time easier for your children? Here are a few ideas.

Take time to talk—and listen!

Children need to be told what is happening. This will give them time to think about the deployment, begin to accept it, and get used to their feelings about the separation to come.

Separating from children

Preschool children may feel they are the cause of the coming separation. Make sure they know that the deploying parent is *not* leaving because he or she doesn't love them anymore. School-aged children may ask more questions than younger children. They need to be told the deploying parent is leaving to do a special job for our country and that he/she plans to return to the family as soon as possible. They are likely to have concerns about how the separation will affect them and will need to know about changes in school, sports, and other activities that involve the deploying parent.

- Be available whenever your children want to talk and allow them to ask questions.
- Give open and honest answers using words your children can understand.
- Show patience when your children ask the same questions and you repeat the same answers.
- Treat all of your children's questions with respect and seriousness.
- Talk about the deployment during regular conversations with your children—at dinnertime, bedtime, or while playing.
- During alert status, help your children understand that the deploying parent must be ready to leave at any time.
- Discuss what will happen when the parent is away and what may be different when he or she returns.
- Talk about what each child will be doing during the separation.
- Invite your older children to share past deployment experiences with their younger brothers and sisters.
- Talk with your children's teachers about the deployment so that they are aware.
- Remember that separation can be a time for everyone to grow.