



Facilitator Guide Teen Tips: Managing Stress During Reintegration

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Teen Tips: Managing Stress During Reintegration

Facilitator Note:

The following two symbols are used as indicators:

 (computer) indicates it is time to advance the slide on the associated PowerPoint;

 (hand) indicates there is an exercise associated with the content.

*Essential class content is noted in **bold**.*

All class handouts are available for download on the [YRRP website](http://www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout) at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.

The goal of this class is to be interactive and skill-focused. For all group exercises, it is ideal to divide the youth into small groups (5-7 people). If possible, facilitators should circle around to the groups to make sure the youth are engaged in the exercises and that discussions are productive.

Class Description:

This class helps teens understand the differences between good stress and bad stress and recognize the sources of good stress and bad stress in their own lives with regard to reintegration with a deployed parent. The class also teaches teens effective ways for coping with stress that is related to reintegration.

Stage:

Post-deployment

DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this material has been developed for the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has reviewed the class and is responsible for content management.

If you have additional information or updated research to be considered for inclusion in this class, please send your suggestions to yrrp@psu.edu.

Audience:

Adolescents aged 12-18

Time:

45 minutes

Equipment:

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Pens or pencils

Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- Handouts
 1. Good Stress and Bad Stress
 2. Steps and Strategies for Managing Stress
 3. Stress Management for Teens: Handling Reintegration



Exercises:

1. Good Stress vs. Bad Stress
2. Reintegration Stressors
3. Dealing with Stressors

Objectives:

After completing this class, participants will be able to do the following:

1. Define stress and understand the differences between good stress and bad stress.
2. Identify stressors associated with reintegration with a deployed family member.
3. Identify positive strategies for dealing with stress.
4. Practice effective stress management strategies to cope with stress around reintegration.

Introduction

Facilitator Note:

Introduce yourself as the facilitator. State your name, military experience or affiliation, and perhaps one additional brief bit of relevant personal information that establishes your credibility (i.e., your professional training or experience).

Please limit your personal introduction to no more than 2 minutes to maximize the time attendees are able to engage with course content, practice skills, and participate in self-reflection activities.

Hi everyone. Thanks for coming today. The topic of today's class is managing stress related to reintegration with a deployed parent. By the end of this class, we hope you will have a good sense of what stress is, why reintegration causes stress in families, and ways to manage stress so that you do not end up feeling overwhelmed.

Let's just quickly review our objectives. **We may talk a lot about being “stressed out,” but, hopefully, this class will help you better understand what stress actually is and does and how you can deal with it more effectively.**

After completing this class, you will be able to do the following:

1. **Define stress and understand the differences between good stress and bad stress.**
2. **Identify stressors associated with reintegration with a deployed family member.**
3. **Identify positive strategies for dealing with stress.**
4. **Practice effective stress management strategies to cope with stress around reintegration.**

Stress

As I said, many people talk a lot about being “stressed out.” Some may even use that term almost every day. When you think about being stressed out in your own life, what comes to mind?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: homework or chores; too much to do in a day; worries about friends; conflicts with family members; not enough time to relax; worries about grades; worries about sports or other extracurricular activities)

Excellent, you've all come up with a good list, and a lot of us identified similar items or events as stressors in our lives. So, it is clear that **stress is a very common thing that affects almost everyone.**

EXERCISE 1: Good Stress vs. Bad Stress

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is to help youth understand that stress is not necessarily negative and highlight the differences for them between good stress, which helps people become stronger and more confident, and bad stress, which undermines people's ability to function. This exercise should take approximately 10 minutes.

We usually think of stress as a bad thing or as a problem. However, sometimes stress can be thought of as a challenge that motivates you to do better even though it may make you uncomfortable.

Good stress is when we face a challenge that we are able to handle and overcome. This process of managing the challenge makes us stronger and more confident and better able to handle new challenges that may arise (Compas, 1987; Elder, 1974; Hauser, Allen, & Golden, 2006; Seyle, 1976). **Bad stress is when we are faced with a challenge or problem that is overwhelming, and, if this lasts for a long time or happens too often, bad stress can cause physical or mental harm** (Evans, Kim, Ting, Teshler, & Shannis, 2003; McEwen, 2007; McEwen & Seeman, 1999; Shonkoff et al., 2012). So, now we're going to break into teams, and each team is going to read a scenario that demonstrates either good stress or bad stress.

Team 1, your job is to read Scenario 1: Good Stress and complete the question below it. Team 2, your job will be to do the same for Scenario 2: Bad Stress. Each group should choose a reporter. You will have 5 minutes to brainstorm the answer to your scenario, then the reporter will tell the rest of the class what the group came up with. I will give you about a minute to figure out who your reporter is.

PASS out Handout 1: Good Stress and Bad Stress; make sure all participants have a group and that each group has identified a reporter.

OK everyone, get started! You have exactly 5 minutes!

PAUSE after 5 minutes. Have each reporter read the scenario before going over his or her group's answers.

OK, let's start with Team 1. Please read your scenario.

PAUSE for reporter to read. (Scenario 1: Good Stress - Laura had to do a lot of growing up while her dad was deployed. She took over the lawn care and a lot of the cooking, and her mom trusted her to manage her own schedule. When her dad returned, he tried to enforce her old curfew and started interfering in the routine that Laura and her mom had established. Laura found herself feeling really annoyed and frustrated with her dad.)

And what did your group come up with for positive consequences as a result of this stress?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: Laura and her dad have a mature, calm discussion about the situation; Laura is not only able to think about what she wanted, but she appreciates her dad's point of view also; her dad is very impressed by her handling of the situation and agrees that she was acting very grown up and deserves more freedom; he agrees to back off on the curfew; he and Laura are able to use the same approach to other problems that came up during reintegration)

Great job. Let's now have Team 2 read their scenario.

PAUSE for reporter to read. (Scenario 2: Bad Stress - Since coming home from Iraq three months ago, Tyler's dad has hardly spoken to the family. He sits alone watching TV and yells at Tyler, his mother, and his younger sister Lisa if they do not immediately do what he says. Everyone feels like they are walking on eggshells at home. Tyler feels like he can never relax.)

What did your group come up with for negative consequences as a result of this stress?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: Tyler has a knot in his stomach all the time and can hardly eat; he feels angry and resentful and has trouble controlling his temper; he cannot concentrate at school and recently failed a test; recently when his dad yelled at Lisa and made her cry, Tyler felt like hitting him)

Were there any similarities in answers across groups?

PAUSE for responses.

It is important to remember that the same stressor can affect people in different ways. Some people may feel bad stress in situations where others feel good stress and vice versa.

Reintegration Stress

EXERCISE 2: Reintegration Stressors

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to discuss the good stress and bad stress in regards to reintegration and to identify who is affected by the stress and how. Use a flip chart to record the answers. Set up the flip chart beforehand and include an example that can be provided to participants before they begin thinking of their own. The following items should be listed on the flip chart:

Title: What's Stressful about Reintegration?

Column 1

- *Heading: Source?*
- *Example: roles and responsibilities in the family are disrupted*

Column 2

- *Heading: Who is Affected?*
- *Example: everyone*

Column 3

- *Heading: Good or Bad?*
- *Example: bad because this can cause a lot of disruption and frustration for all family members; good because family members can work through this challenge and feel like they've really accomplished something important*

Column 4

- *Heading: What are the Effects?*
- *Example: everyone communicates better and adjusts to the new routine*

This exercise should take approximately 8 minutes.

**This exercise was borrowed with permission from the Mindfulness Strengthening Families Program (SFP; Coatsworth, Duncan, Greenberg, & Nix, 2010; Coatsworth et al., 2015).*

OK everyone, now that we have a good understanding of what stress is and how it can affect people, let's talk more specifically about reintegration with your deployed parent. **There are probably aspects about reintegration that are going to be stressful for everyone in the family, and some of these stressful components may create good**

stress, and some may create bad stress (Chandra et al., 2011; Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011; Gorman, Eide, & Hisle-Gorman, 2010; Lester et al., 2010). **Also, each family is different, and no two families are going to have exactly the same stressful experiences, but there may be some stressors that are common to many families** (Lester et al., 2011). So, now we are going to generate a list of stressors that family members who are going through reintegration might experience and discuss what the effects of these stressors are likely to be for different family members. You can see we have one example written here. Under “Source?” it says “roles and responsibilities in the family are disrupted.” Under “Who is Affected?” it says “everyone”; although, that might not be true of all the stressors. Under “Good or Bad?,” we have two points written. First, we have bad written because this situation can cause a lot of disruption and frustration for all family members. We also list good, though, because family members can work through this challenge and feel like they’ve really accomplished something important. So, where it says, “What are the Effects?” we have written “everyone communicates better and adjusts to the new routine.” Who can think of another stressor related to reintegration?

ALLOW the youth to generate and write down their ideas and guide them through the four steps. Have several ideas handy in case the group is quiet and needs help getting started. List ideas for about 8 minutes until you have a decent list of 5-10 stressors identified.

OK, that is a lot of stress!

So, what are some things I could do with all the stress?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: hide it; deal with it)

When you try to hide or ignore your stress, it can end up affecting your mind and your body. It might make you feel cranky or short-tempered or depressed, and it might give you headaches or stomach aches or trouble sleeping (Greene, Walker, Hickson, & Thompson, 1985). And, of course, if the stress keeps accumulating, what will happen eventually?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answer: explode)

Obviously, this is not what we want to have happen. So, we’re going to talk about some strategies for dealing with stress related to reintegration that do not involve trying to hide the stress or letting it burst and overwhelm you.

Handling Stress

Facilitator Note:

Handout 2 will be used.

I think we have a pretty good idea what stress is, how it can affect us, and the ways in which reintegration can be particularly stressful (Chandra et al., 2010). For the last part of the class, we're going to be talking about strategies for coping with stress and practicing a few of these strategies. Now, please remember **no one method works perfectly for everyone, so the trick is to find a strategy that works for you.**

Let's talk about **breath control**. This is almost like the 9-1-1 of stress management, and it can be used in all kinds of situations. **This strategy involves getting control of your breath, which helps to settle our bodies, thoughts, and feelings** (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Jain, Shapiro, & Swanick, 2007; Rosenzweig, Reibel, & Greeson, 2003). Let's give it a try. **Please sit comfortably in your chair with your back straight so you can breathe in a long deep breath. If you want to close your eyes you can or just gaze softly with your eyes looking down at the floor. Take in a long deep breath – and as you do, count to yourself – one, two, three – and then exhale counting to yourself – one, two, three. Let's take another long deep breath. You can put your hand on your belly and notice your hand moves as your belly expands as you inhale – one, two, three. Now, notice your hand again as you exhale and your belly gets smaller – one, two, three. Let's do that a third time. Inhale – one, two, three – and exhale – one, two, three. Focusing on breathing can help you be calm and present or more focused** (Carlson, Specca, Patel, & Goody, 2003). **Now open your eyes if they were closed.** How was that?

PAUSE for responses.

When trying to deal with stress there are many strategies you can use. Consider breath control. This is effective right away and is useful any time; however, there are other strategies that can work over the long term to reduce your overall stress level (Berger & Owen, 1988; Gaines & Barry, 2008; Jain et al., 2007; Romano, 1992; Ziedan, Johnson, Gordon, & Goolkaisian, 2010). I'm going to give each of you a sheet that contains both general and in-the-moment strategies for coping with stress.

GIVE participants Handout 2: Steps and Strategies for Managing Stress.

Do any of these look like they would work for you? Which ones?

PAUSE for responses.

What other strategies do people use? Does anyone have strategies they want to add to this list?

PAUSE for participants to add to the list.

EXERCISE 3: Dealing with Stressors

Facilitator Note:

Handout 3 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is to help participants identify reintegration stressors they may have experienced, strategies to manage their stress, and possible outcomes. This exercise should take approximately 5 minutes.

OK, let's do some mental practice. I'd like you to imagine a stressful situation that you identified. Take about two or three minutes to really think about what the circumstance was like or what it might be like. Now think of one stress management technique that you think might work for you. On **Handout 3: Stress Management for Teens: Handling Reintegration** write down at least one of the stressors you thought of earlier and at least one possible stress management technique that might work for you. Then, write down what might happen if you use this stress management strategy. Remember, this will not be the same for everyone. One person might find jogging to be a good stress release, while another person might find jogging creates stress. I'm going to give you about 5 minutes to work on this, and then, if people want to share, we will have some time for that, but you do not need to share if you do not want to. The idea is to help you connect stressors you've experienced with possible solutions.

GIVE participants 5 minutes to work.

OK, would anyone like to share what they came up with?

PAUSE for responses.

Summary

Well, we are almost out of time, and I'd like to take just a few minutes to review a few of the key points from today's class. **First, reintegration is a happy time, but it can also be very stressful for everyone** (Lester et al., 2010). However, **if we think about stress as a challenge, then we can understand that stress is not always a bad thing, and we can come through stressful experiences with a sense of confidence and accomplishment** (Compas, 1987; Seyle, 1976). We learned a few strategies for coping with stress, so the stress doesn't overwhelm us and lead to negative consequences for ourselves or other people (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

I'd like to leave you with a final thought: consider the following **three things that you can do to manage stress**:

- **Take a deep breath**
- **Be calm**
- **Be present**

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **What is the difference between good stress and bad stress? PAUSE for responses.**
(Possible answers: good stress is a challenge, something that motivates you and can help you build your confidence; bad stress is too overwhelming and can be physically and mentally harmful)
2. **What are some examples of stressors that families experience during reintegration? PAUSE for responses.**
(Possible answers: changes in routines and familiar patterns; having to get reacquainted with the deployed parent; challenges related to the parent's deployment experiences)
3. **What are some positive strategies for dealing with stress? PAUSE for responses.**
(Possible answers: exercising; participating in enjoyable activities; drawing support from family or friends; practicing breath control; focusing on the present; staying calm)

I'd like to thank you all for coming today, and I hope you felt this class was useful. Thank you and please complete the evaluation for this class.

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