YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM®

Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent

Facilitator Guide

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT

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Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent

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 at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified as online only in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.

The goal of this class is to be as interactive as possible. If possible, circle around during group exercises to ensure that the youth are engaged, and discussions are productive.

Class Description:

In this class, participants will discuss the challenges that they and their family members face as a deployed parent reintegrates and will identify skills and strategies they can use to facilitate reintegration for themselves and their family members.

Stage:

Post-deployment

DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this class 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.

Audience:

YRRP attendees

Time:

45 minutes

Equipment:

- Projector
- Laptop
- Flip Charts
- Markers
- Pens or pencils

Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- PowerPoint Presentation
  1. Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent
  2. Objectives
  3. The Cycle of Deployment
  4. Joys and Challenges of Reintegration
  5. Tips for Family Communication
  6. Review of Objectives
  7. Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent
- Handouts
  1. Plan Ahead
  2. Roll with Change
  3. Positive Problem-Solving

Exercises:

1. Understanding the Cycle: Your Family's Experience
2. Improve Family Communication

Objectives:

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

1. Understand the deployment cycle and recognize how it works in families.
2. Improve family communication.
   a. Anticipate and plan ahead for reintegration challenges.
   b. Roll with change.
   c. Use positive problem-solving techniques.

Introduction

SHOW Slide 1: Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent

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.

The goal of today's class is to provide you with some information about how families handle reintegration with a family member who has been deployed. **We know that reintegration can be a happy and exciting time for everyone, but it can also create some challenges.** Fortunately, there are some things we can do to make reintegration go more smoothly. For the next 45 minutes, we are going to present a number of activities and topics for discussion that will, hopefully, give you some skills and ideas to try in your own family. **If you have already been through the reintegration process, your experience is likely to be very valuable to others, and we hope you will share some of the things that did and did not work for your family.**

SHOW Slide 2: Objectives

Let's just quickly review our objectives. After completing this class, you will be able to do the following:

1. **Understand the cycle of deployment and recognize how it works in families.**
2. **Improve family communication.**
    a. **Anticipate and plan ahead for reintegration challenges.**
    b. **Roll with change.**
    c. **Use positive problem-solving techniques.**

Being able to anticipate and plan ahead can really help to avoid and reduce issues, so, today, we will do an exercise that could help you identify and plan for reintegration challenges that you and your family might face.

Change is inevitable during deployment and reintegration, and handling these

changes without getting stressed or overwhelmed is important. For this reason, we will review some ideas that might help you and your family *roll with change*.

Problems will come up during the process of reintegration, the trick is to handle them in a positive way. So, we will also discuss some tips for positive problem-solving.

Any questions?

PAUSE for responses.

SHOW Slide 3: The Cycle of Deployment

EXERCISE 1: Understanding the Cycle: Your Family's Experience

Facilitator Note:

The purpose of this exercise is to help participants think about what has changed and what will change as a result of a parent's deployment. Divide the youth into small groups. Give each group a flip chart and a set of markers. The first page of each flip chart should be pre-labeled with the header "What changed during my parent's deployment?," and the second page should have a header that says "What will change/changed again when my parent comes home?" This should take approximately 15 minutes.

Even though all families are different, there are some things in common that military families tend to go through when someone is deployed (Department of Defense, 2010; DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Huebner et al., 2007; Mmari et al., 2009). The picture on the slide shows the cycle of deployment. It includes the period when the family is getting ready for the parent to leave, the time when the parent is gone, and the occasion when the parent returns from deployment.

Anticipation of Departure/Detachment and Withdrawal

- *Family members may be nervous and worried*
- *Your parent who is leaving may be "checked out" and thinking about the mission*
- *Your at-home parent may be distracted and stressed*

Emotional Disorganization

- *Family members may experience a change in routines*
- *Family members may miss their deployed parent, worry about her or his safety, or feel overwhelmed*

Recovery and Stabilization

- *Family members settle into new routines and get used to the deployed parent's absence*

Anticipation of Return/Return Adjustment and Renegotiation

- *Family members may experience excitement, stress, anticipation, or worry about new changes*
- *It may take time to figure each other out again*

Reintegration and Stabilization

- *Family members try to establish a new normal*

OK, for our first exercise today, each group is going to talk about how your daily life has changed during your parent's deployment and how you think your life might change again now that your parent is coming home soon or is maybe home already. Each team needs to pick a secretary who is going to write ideas or topics on the flip chart and pick a reporter who is going to share the group's results with the rest of us. You can see that on the first page of your flip chart, there is a section marked "What changed during my parent's deployment?" Maybe you noticed that you had less free time, more chores to do around the house, or your parent, who stayed home, was more distracted or needed to spend more time at work. There is no right or wrong answer here, just include whatever you experienced. Make sure that everyone in the group gets to contribute. You will only have about 5 minutes to work on this, so be sure to stay focused. Any questions?

PAUSE for responses. ALLOW 5 minutes for group discussion.

OK, I heard a lot of good discussion in your groups. Which group would like to go first and present your list?

ALLOW each group to report.

Great job everyone. You were able to identify a lot of changes that occurred for you as a result of your parent's deployment. Now, what I would like you to do is turn to the next page of your flip chart. You will see that it says "What will change again when my parent comes home?" For some of you whose parents are home already, you will be listing things that are already happening; other people will be listing changes that might happen in the future. Some of you have been through this already and are speaking from experience. All of that is fine. This time, in addition to listing what is going to change with reintegration, I also want you to put a plus sign next to something if you think it is or will be a positive change. Place a minus sign next to an item if you think it is or will be a negative change. If some people think that something is positive and others think it is negative, you can put both a plus and a minus. Does this make sense?

PAUSE for responses. GIVE an example or two if needed.

OK, go ahead and get started. You will have about 5 minutes again.

ALLOW 5 minutes for group discussion.

Alright! I'd like to hear from all the reporters again about some of the changes you came up with.

ALLOW each group to report. WRITE things that the groups have identified under two headings entitled "reintegration joys" and "reintegration challenges."

Reintegration and Family Communication

SHOW Slide 4: Joys and Challenges of Reintegration

This slide lists some of the joys and challenges of reintegration with a deployed parent that other kids have identified (Huebner, et al., 2007; Mmari et al, 2009):

Joys:

- **Parent is safe**
- **Family is together**
- **No more worry or missing the Service member**
- **Parent at home is not so distracted and overwhelmed**
- **Fewer responsibilities**

Challenges:

- **Deployed parent feels different and unfamiliar**
- **Deployed parent is irritable and angry**
- **Parents fight**
- **Deployed parent wants to be the boss**
- **Routine is disrupted again**

As you can see, it is pretty similar to some of the items you identified. It is clear in talking with thousands of young people that, while there are a lot of happy things about reintegration, there are some really hard things about it too. Next, we are going to talk about some tips that may help make these challenging aspects of the reintegration process go more smoothly for you and your family.

SHOW Slide 5: Tips for Family Communication

EXERCISE 2: Improve Family Communication

Facilitator Note:

Handouts 1, 2, and 3 will be used. The purpose of this 2-part exercise is for participants to come up with ways to improve family communication. For the second part of this exercise, divide youth into two groups and have them complete Handouts 2 and 3. This should take approximately 15 minutes.

As you have probably figured out, **some ways of communicating with your parents and other family members work a lot better than others. These tips will help you use good communication, which goes a long way toward helping families handle some of those challenges with reintegration that you just identified** (Lester et al., 2011; Lester et al., 2012):

- **Plan ahead**
- **Roll with change**
- **Positive problem solving**

OK everyone, for this 2-part exercise, we will all be drafting a Dear Deployed letter on **Handout 1: Plan Ahead**.

GIVE participants 5 minutes to draft a letter.

As you probably guessed, the whole point of the Dear Deployed letter is to encourage people to plan. **Planning can help prevent problems because people are thinking and communicating ahead rather than just waiting to see what happens.** If you try this strategy, you may find that you and your parents are really on the same page. It is also possible that you will be thinking about a problem or concern in a different way than your parents are considering it. Writing a letter like this can help you recognize ahead of time where problems could crop up, find time to discuss the situation, and prepare a plan for dealing with problems or concerns.

For this next part of the exercise, I will divide you into two groups. Each group will be doing something slightly different. Group 1, you are responsible for figuring out how to roll with change using **Handout 2: Roll with Change**. Group 2, you will work on positive problem-solving using **Handout 3: Positive Problem-Solving**. Read the directions on your handout, and I will come around to answer any questions you might have. Everyone has about 5 minutes to complete the exercise, and then your reporter will present.

GIVE participants 5 minutes to complete the handout assigned to their group.

As it turns out, family members who can accept changes without getting really upset often have the best reintegration experiences. We know from the deployment cycle that things are going to change, but there are things you can do to plan for these changes and communicate about them effectively. Let's hear from Group 1. What are some ways you can roll with change? Please read the situation first so that we all understand what communication challenge you were discussing.

ALLOW this group to share their results.

The following scenarios and questions are listed on Handout 2:

Mark is 15. While his dad was deployed, Mark had to step up and help out a lot around the house. He took over several of his dad's chores, including mowing the lawn, doing all the raking and snow-shoveling, and cooking dinner two nights per week when his mom had to work late. Mark has gotten into the groove of doing these jobs and feels he has matured a lot since his dad left. He is worried that when his dad returns, his dad will want to go back to the old way of doing things and that he will treat Mark like a kid.

What are some of the changes Mark is likely to experience when his dad returns?

(Possible answers: it may take time for all of Marks family members to adjust to reintegration; Mark may have to give up some of his responsibilities; household roles may change; discussion may be necessary in order to renegotiate household roles and responsibilities; it may take time for Mark's dad to understand how Mark has matured)

How does Mark probably feel about these changes?

(Possible answers: worried; confused; nervous; excited; frustrated)

What are some ways that Mark and his family could make the transition go more smoothly for everyone?

(Possible answers: Mark could explain to his dad how he has changed and matured throughout deployment; household roles and responsibilities can be renegotiated as a family; family members can try to accept changes without getting upset)

Keisha is 17. Her dad is due back next month following a long deployment. While he was gone, Keisha and her mom got really tight. They also got used to doing things their own way. They often eat ready-to-eat dinners in front of the TV, and Keisha has a lot more freedom now to go off with her friends. Keisha is worried that when her dad gets home he won't go for any of this.

What are some of the changes that Keisha is likely to experience when her dad returns?

(Possible answers: Keisha may have less freedom; Keisha and her mom may not eat as many ready-to-eat dinners in front of the TV; it may take time for Keisha's dad to understand how things have changed since he's been gone; it may take time for all family members to renegotiate household roles and responsibilities)

How will Keisha probably feel about these changes?

(Possible answers: worried; confused; nervous; excited; frustrated)

What are some ways that Keisha and her family could make this transition go more smoothly for everyone?

(Possible answers: household roles and responsibilities can be renegotiated as a family; family members can try to accept changes without getting upset; new curfews may need to be agreed upon and established)

This group has come up with some great suggestions for accepting the changes that are coming without allowing these changes to upset family members too much.

Last but not least! The first exercise has helped us to anticipate the changes that might be coming and the first group had helped us to figure out strategies for communicating about them and accepting them. Now, let's hear from the Group 2. They discussed how to handle problems when they do arise. Can someone read your first situation?

HAVE someone read the first scenario, then have the group share their analysis of how the situation should and should not be handled. If there is time, have them also process the second scenario.

The following scenarios and questions are listed on Handout 3:

Joe's mom returned from deployment a month ago. While she was gone, Joe did a lot of growing up and became pretty independent. Although Joe was really happy when his mom first got home, he was not too pleased that she immediately started meddling in his life and treating him like he was a little kid. One Saturday Joe was headed out the door to meet up with friends when his mom called him back. "Hey," she said, "You cannot just walk out of here. I need to know where you are going and who you are with." Joe turned around and he…

How is Joe feeling right now?

(Possible answers: frustrated; disappointed; confused; worried)

What are three things that Joe definitely should NOT do right now?

(Possible answers: talk back to his mom without answering where he is going and who

he is going with; ignore his mom and walk away; bring up everything that has upset him since his mom has returned)

What are three things that Joe could do that might help this situation?

(Possible answers: explain to his mom where he is going and who he is going with; discuss his feelings about how things have changed; request to sit down as a family and renegotiate household responsibilities)

Kaylee's dad returned from Iraq a few weeks ago. While he was gone, Kaylee changed her hairstyle and started wearing more mature clothes, and her dad is having a hard time with this. In addition to being more short-tempered and withdrawn than he was before he left, he is now super critical of everything Kaylee says and does. One morning she comes down with a new shirt on that he does not like. "Get upstairs and change into something decent!" he shouts. "And while you are at it get rid of that stupid black nail polish!" Kaylee turns to her dad and…

How is Kaylee feeling right now?

(Possible answers: frustrated; disappointed; confused; worried)

What are three things that Kaylee definitely should NOT do?

(Possible answers: yell back at her dad and tell him that he left her as she grew up; ignore him and walk away; change into something inappropriate to make him even more mad)

What are three things that Kaylee could do that might help keep this situation from escalating?

(Possible answers: respectfully explain how things have changed while he was away; request to sit down as a family and renegotiate household responsibilities; be patient as everyone in the family adjusts to reintegration; talk to a trusted adult if her dad's behavior is, or becomes, worrisome to her)

OK, thanks very much everyone. You all did a great job.

Summary

SHOW Slide 6: Review of Objectives

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **What is the Deployment Cycle and how does it work in families?** *PAUSE for responses.*
   (Possible answers: it includes the period when the family is getting ready for the parent to leave, the time the parent is gone, and the process of coming back together when the parent returns from deployment; even though all families are different, there are some things in common that military families tend to go through when someone is deployed; stages of the cycle include: Anticipation of Departure/Detachment and Withdrawal, Emotional Disorganization, Recovery and Stabilization, Anticipation of Return/Return Adjustment and Renegotiation, Reintegration and Stabilization)

2. **How can planning ahead, rolling with change, and using positive problem-solving techniques improve family communication?** *PAUSE for responses.*
   (Possible answers: everyone is thinking and communicating ahead of time rather than just waiting to see what happens; you and your family will be on the same page; it can help family members have a positive reintegration experience; things are going to change, and planning for these changes can make the transition smoother; positive problem-solving may help decrease conflict)

SHOW Slide 7: Teen Tips: Reintegration with a Deployed Parent

Thank you, and please complete your evaluation for this class.

References

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