

Strengthening the Homefront: A Tactical Toolkit

This tactical toolkit is intended to provide behavioral health providers with targeted interventions that address key resiliency factors across the deployment cycle. The toolkit is intended to complement more comprehensive programs, and is designed to be parent-focused, empower by taking healthy action, enhance positive familial interactions and communication, and support parent *and* child coping.

A: Take **A**ction B: Protect the **B**ond C: Help the family **C**ope D: **D**iscuss

| PRE-DEPLOYMENT | |
|---|---|
|  | -Plan how to mark time towards deployment completion. Focus on strategies that allow for mastery and accomplishment. Ex: puzzle piece/day, building block/day, time towards skill/craft mastery |
|  | -Pre-record bedtime rituals and special wishes -Pre-deployment emotional checklist |
|  | -Adults: stress management and coping ahead plans, including resources to be used or contacted -Kids: develop a coping box or cozy corner |
|  | -Honestly discuss details: where, how long, basic rationale -Young children: create a social story using real pictures -All: create a communication plan and family rules/expectations |
| DEPLOYMENT | |
|  | -Allow kids to help pack and prepare -Maintain basic routines and allow time for self-care -Postpone big decisions |
|  | -Intentional good-bye with two parts: 1 – There is an important job to do 2 – The child(ren) and spouse are just as important as the job |
|  | -Implement tools identified during Pre-Deployment -Lean on others who understand |
|  | -Give room for big feelings (crying is a form of communicating, too) -Schedule time for being upset and monitor for child exposure to adult words and expressions of feeling |

| SUSTAINMENT | |
|---|---|
|  | -Daily/weekly accomplishment and challenge log Ex: on paper at home, on shared online document, through creative expression (such as developing a field of flowers) |
|  | -Create new “love you” rituals that span time and distance (paper hugs, good night to the stars or moon) -Couples’ gratitude journal and virtual “date nights” |
|  | -Teens: self-guided “Build a Stress Management Plan” (https://parentandteen.com/teen-stress-management-plan/) -Adults: WHO “Doing What Matters in Times of Stress” |
|  | -Talk (about anything) -Encourage kids/teens to talk with military peers -Create small or silly reasons to celebrate |
| RE-DEPLOYMENT | |
|  | -Develop family countdown activities -Let kids share as a way of re-engaging |
|  | -Don’t panic or force engagement -General mindset: time to establish the “new normal” |
|  | -Turn to comprehensive programs if/as significant challenges arise -Refer for treatment if high conflict |
|  | -Prioritize catching up on big changes to the family first -Prioritize communication to reconnect emotionally |
| POST-DEPLOYMENT | |
|  | GROW and extend! |
|  | -Child-focused time – let the child lead in play and conversation in structured, scheduled time -Redefine family: identify strengths, expand roles, attune to emotions |
|  | -Monitor level of detail shared about deployment -Strengthen areas of challenge |
|  | -Communicate with “I messaging” and problem-solving approach -Create a family narrative about the deployment |