



Guide to Coping with Deployment and Combat Stress



For more information:

USAPHC Combat & Operational Stress Control

<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/bh/Pages/CombatOperationalStressControl.aspx>

**FM 6-22.5 - Combat and Operational Stress Control Manual
for Leaders And Soldiers**

http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/fm6_22x5.pdf

Army Suicide Prevention Program

<http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

In a crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273 TALK (8255)

Press 1 for Military Crisis Line



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To sustain performance over the long haul, you and your Soldiers need 7-8 hours of sleep out of every 24.

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Sleep Management and Soldier Readiness

Leaders and Soldiers

Sleep is a biological function that is essential for the brain to function properly. As the first element in the Army Surgeon General's Performance Triad (sleep, activity and nutrition), sleep is critical for sustaining the mental abilities you need for success in training and on the battlefield. Healthy sleepers are more accurate, more emotionally stable, they react quicker, make better decisions, have better memory, and learn quicker.

When we don't get enough sleep, our performance suffers, and we put both ourselves and our fellow Soldiers at risk. Our reactions are slower, it's harder to stay focused, it's harder to think, and we get stressed more easily. To make matters worse, the effects of sleep deprivation sneak up on us. In other words, when we don't have enough sleep, we are not good judges of the impact that sleep deprivation is having on our abilities and performance.

Sleep Tactics for Sustained Operations

Sleep is critical for sustaining the mental abilities you need for success in during operations. Even simple tasks such as communicating, driving, or plotting grid coordinates can be impaired by inadequate sleep (anything less than 7—8 hours every 24 hours). Soldiers can correctly site a target – but they might select the wrong target.

Combat operations can create situations where inadequate sleep becomes the norm. Soldiers who do not get enough sleep accumulate a sleep debt that must be paid off by getting the needed sleep. It's mission-critical to make sleep your top priority.

Inadequate sleep impairs these (and other) abilities:

- Detecting and appropriately determining threat level
- Requesting indirect fire

Sleep and fatigue countermeasures (in order of priority):

1. Shift scheduling to maximize the time available to sleep for all soldiers.
2. Use sleep bank/sleep recovery before and after continuous operations.
3. Use naps short-term to recapture some sleep debt and maintain alertness and performance over several days.
4. Protect the sleep environment.
5. Judicious use caffeine to improve alertness in the short term (but caffeine use doesn't replace sleep debt. Only sleep can replace sleep debt.)

Before Sustained Operations

- Get at least 7–8 hours of sleep every 24 hours the week before the operation so that you start the mission with a full sleep bank.

During Sustained Operations

- If possible, get 7–8 hours of sleep every 24 hours.
- If 7–8 hours is not possible, take naps when mission permits to minimize your sleep debt.
- Use caffeine to temporarily sustain mental performance until you can obtain sleep.

After Sustained Operations

- Get extra sleep each day to pay off your sleep debt and resupply your sleep bank.

Using Caffeine

Note: The caffeine doses listed are for people who ingest caffeine in amounts similar to 2-3 cups of coffee per day. If you already regularly ingest more than this much caffeine, then the ability of caffeine to keep you alert will not be as pronounced.

Sustained operations (no sleep)

- 200 milligrams (mg) at about midnight
- Take 200 mg again at 0400 and 0800 hours, if needed
- Use during daytime (1200, 1600 hours) only if needed

Night Ops with Daytime Sleep

- 200 mg at the start of night shift
- 200 mg again 4 hours later
- Last dose: at least 6 hours before sleep period

Restricted Sleep (< 6 hrs)

- Take 200 mg upon awakening
- Take 200 mg again 4 hours later
- No caffeine within 6 hours of lights out

Caffeine sources

50 mg = 1 16-oz. bottle of Coke®

60 mg = 1 squirt (1/2 tsp) MiO® Energy Water Enhancer

60 mg = 1 16-oz. bottle of Diet Coke®

80 mg = 1 8.3-oz. can of RedBull®

100 mg = 1 piece of Stay Alert® chewing gum

160 mg = Monster® Energy Drink

200 mg = 1 tablet of NoDoz®

330 mg = 1 16-oz. Starbucks PikePlace® Roast coffee

Use of trademarked name(s) does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Army but is intended only to assist in identification of specific products.

Signs of Insufficient Sleep:

- Struggling to stay awake during mission breaks, guard duty, or driving
- Difficulty understanding or tracking information
- Attention lapses
- Irritability, decreased initiative/motivation

Overcoming Sleep Distractors:

- Nap as much as possible to get 7-8 hours of sleep every 24 hours
- If tactically permitted, use soft foam earplugs and a sleep mask or room fan to block noise and light
- Do not use any drugs (prescription or over-the-counter) to help you sleep unless you are taking them under the guidance of your healthcare provider

Best Sleep Habits:

- Sleep 7-8 hours every 24 hours
- No caffeine within 6 hours of lights out
- Finish PT 3 hours before lights out
- Establish a wind-down routine starting 30–60 minutes before lights out. Stop using electronics. Read or listen to relaxing music instead.
- Empty your bladder just before lights out so the need to urinate won't interrupt your sleep
- Sleep in a safe, quiet place: if tactically permitted, use soft foam earplugs or a fan to block sounds; use a sleep mask to block light
- Wake up at the same time every day of the week
- If you still have sleep problems 2 weeks after correcting your sleep habits, talk to your healthcare provider

• Tips for Leaders

- » Develop a unit sleep management program that gives Soldiers enough time off so they obtain 7-8 hours to sleep out of every 24
- » Soldiers trying to sleep during the day require longer (or more frequent) opportunities to sleep to compensate for the body's normal reaction to sleep cycle disruption
- » Never put your Soldiers in a position where they must choose between adequate sleep and other important off duty activities (personal hygiene, calling home, etc.) They will always sacrifice sleep in these situations.
- » Arrange sleep schedules that give Soldiers opportunities to sleep at a consistent time.



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Know the signs of combat and operational stress and how to manage the reactions.]



Combat & Operational Stress and Combat Operational Stress Reactions

Combat is more stressful and unpredictable than any training. The enemy will try to stress, confuse and demoralize you. Security and support operations can also involve heavy stress, even without direct combat. Mental, emotional, physical and spiritual fitness will help you endure the stress of combat and sustained military operations. Know the signs of combat and operational stress (COS) and how to manage or respond to combat operational stress reactions. (COSR), including seeking assistance.

Preventive Actions to Combat Stress: for Soldiers

- Try to stay as calm and self-controlled as possible
- Focus on the mission and your lane
- Recognize what is and is not within your control
- Follow SOPs, and Rules of Engagement
- Practice critical thinking - remain resilient
- Breathe deeply and relax
- Know that COS is normal and COSRs manageable
- Keep open communication with your team
- Gather facts and avoid rumors
- Respond, don't react
- Avoid alcohol and drink plenty of fluids
- Eat well balanced meals
- Maintain personal hygiene
- Practice quick relaxation techniques
- Sleep at least 7-8 hours in each 24 hours, if possible
- Attend or request a Critical Incident debrief after unusually stressful events

- Share grief and loss with a friend, a leader, or a chaplain
- Focus on why you and the Army are here
- Welcome new team members and build cohesion

Preventive Actions for Combat Operational Stress: Leaders

- Be decisive and assertive; demonstrate competence and fair leadership.
- Preserve Soldiers' welfare, safety, and health.
- Model self-control, even when feeling strong emotions
- Enforce sleep discipline.
- Optimize sleep opportunities for your Soldiers and yourself. A tired leader makes bad decisions and bad decisions kill Soldiers.
- Be aware of environmental stressors such as light level, temperature, and precipitation.
- Learn the signs of stress in yourself and others.
- Recognize that fear and anxiety are a normal part of combat stress.
- Rest minor stress casualties briefly, keeping them with their unit.
- Help Soldiers to address any Family concerns, separation, or economic problems. Refer as necessary
- Provide an upward, downward, and lateral information flow of communication.
- Foster open communication with Soldiers.
- Understand that stress in response to threatening or uncertain situations is normal and adaptive up to a point, (Adaptive Stress).

- Create a spirit to win under stress and change.
- Conduct tough, realistic training.
- Ensure training includes understanding of COS and how to deal with it.
- Look for stress signs and a decreased ability to tolerate stress in combat.
- Keep Soldiers well supplied with food, water, and other essentials, including shelter.
- Provide mail, news, and information avenues.
- Arrange the best medical, logistical, and other support available. Know your resources well.
- Maintain high morale, unit identity, and esprit de corps.
- Keep unit members together and build cohesion.
- Encourage experienced unit members to mentor and teach new members.
- When operationally feasible, protect the sleep environment. Ensure your Soldiers have relatively quiet and dark sleeping accommodations.
- Consider removing or restricting electronic devices (games, computers) from sleep environments.

Common Combat & Operational Stress Reaction (COSR)			
Physical		Emotional	
Tension:	Aches, pains	Anxiety:	Keyed up, worrying, expecting the worst
Jumpiness:	Easily startled, fidgety, trembling	Irritability:	Complaining, easily bothered
Cold sweats:	Dry mouth, pale skin, eyes hard to focus	Attention:	Poor; unable to focus or remember details
Heart:	Pounding; may feel dizzy or light-headed	Thinking:	Unclear; trouble communicating, distorted or irrational thinking
Breathing:	Rapid; out-of-breath; fingers and toes start to tingle, cramp and go numb	Sleep:	Troubled; awaken-ed by bad dreams
Stomach:	Upset: may vomit	Grief:	Crying for dead or wounded
Bowels:	Diarrhea or constipation	Guilt:	Self-blame for errors or what had to be done
Bladder:	Frequent urination, urgency	Anger:	Feeling let down by leaders or others in unit
Energy:	Tired, drained; takes effort to move	Confidence:	Low; loss of faith in self and unit
Eyes:	Distant, haunted "1000-yard" stare		

**Combat & Operational Stress:
Adaptive Responses Versus Destructive and Illegal Behaviors**

Adaptive Stress Management, Resiliency and Thriving Responses	Misconduct Stress Reactions and Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit cohesion • Loyalty to battle buddies and leaders • Identification with unit tradition • Sense of uniqueness • Sense of mission and purpose • Thriving response and Posttraumatic growth (PTG) • Alertness, vigilance and focus • Strength, endurance • Tolerance to hardship • Managing pain and injury • Increased faith and patriotism • Courage, heroic acts or selflessness. • Greater self-awareness, compassion and empathy • Wisdom and maturity based on responsibility and service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathy, hopelessness, resignation • Fraternalization • Excessive sick call • Alcohol and drug abuse • Recklessness, indiscipline • Neglecting injuries or medical attention • Shirking, malingering • Combat refusal • Self-inflicted wounds • Going absent without leave (AWOL), desertion • Mutilating enemy dead • Killing noncombatants • Torture, brutality • Killing animals • Fighting with allies • Looting, pillage, rape

Management of Combat & Operational Stress Behaviors

Combat Operational Stress is inevitable, but Combat Operational Stress Reactions and casualties are not. Good leadership counts! COSR casualties can be restored to duty if rested close to their units and treated quickly with a positive expectation of return to duty. Use your behavioral health, medical and chaplain resources

Keep with battle buddies if:

Symptoms: The amount or type of combat operational stress does not endanger the Soldier or others or interfere with the current mission

Actions: Reassurance of being normal, focus on mission, rest, clean up, feed, sleep, and keep on duty with battle buddies. Stay in the fight!

Rest in parent or support unit if:

Symptoms: Signs that the Soldier is not too much of a risk or burden to stay with his or her own battle buddies, but needs a change.

- Section can provide safe, stable environment for recovery *before* COSR develops.
- Soldier is not disruptive or dangerous
- No urgent medical evaluation is needed

Actions: Assign less critical duty in safer areas.

Take to aid station or medical company

Symptoms: Warning signs that the Soldier needs medical attention

- Soldier is experiencing COSR, impairing the ability to execute the mission
- Soldier is disruptive or potentially dangerous to self, others or the mission
- Soldier could need urgent medical treatment for illness or injury
- Soldier does not improve following rest, sleep or basic care

Actions:

- Take to aid station, behavioral health provider, or medical treatment facility
- Maintain contact or visit Soldier if not returned in hours. Consider Combat Stress Control Restoration Center
- Welcome Soldier back into unit upon return (65-85% return to original unit in 1-3 days; 15-20% to limited duty in 1-2 weeks)
- Do not tolerate stigmatization. We are trained to seek help when necessary

If things start to feel out of control, contact the unit sergeant, chaplain, medic, behavioral health or commander immediately.



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The day-to-day stress of stability and support operations (SASOs) can be as bad as that of major combat.

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Coping with Stress: Stability in Operations

The day-to-day stress of stability and support operations (SASOs) can be as bad as that of major combat. The danger may be just as high, the mission may be unclear, civilians may be hostile, and the rules of engagement may be stricter than in combat whether the enemy abides by them or not

Threats can be hard to recognize. Steady progress is difficult to see. There is boredom, a lack of privacy, restricted movement, and separation from home with poor communication. Under these conditions, anyone can begin to show signs of distress. Knowing how you can help yourself, your battle buddies, and your subordinates is important.

Learn effective relaxation techniques:

- play cards or sports
- write a letter or keep a diary
- take slow, deep breaths
- watch an engaging video
- continue spiritual growth
- talk with friends
- read a book
- work out
- imagine a favorite place

Relaxation techniques can help you refocus in action, recharge you after grueling or boring work, and can help you get to sleep. Request training on relaxation or mindfulness techniques from Behavioral Health or Combat Stress Control Teams or Unit Ministry Teams in your area.

What to do for yourself:

- Remind yourself that the way you are feeling is normal given the situation;

- Make certain that you get enough sleep, food, water, and exercise – if you are physically stressed, your ability to deal with the day-to-day SASO stressors is reduced;
- Focus on the mission at hand – break down objectives into smaller tasks and reward yourself with rest breaks after each task is accomplished;
- Stay tied in with battle buddies in your unit;
- Maintain contact with friends and Family at home whenever you can – if something at home is bothering you, talk about it with your battle buddies, your leaders, or a provider like the chaplain or behavioral health.
- If things start to feel out of control, contact your unit sergeant, behavioral health provider, chaplain, medic, or commander immediately.

What to do for your battle buddies:

- Know the members of your team and welcome newcomers when they arrive—help them learn the skills they will need to thrive
- Be on the lookout for sudden changes in how your battle buddies act – if you see such a change, ask them about it or bring to another’s attention
- Offer encouragement and recognition when your battle buddies do something well;
- If you’re concerned for your battle buddies, talk to them about how they’re doing;
- If you think that your battle buddy may be having a really hard time and won’t talk to you, contact your supervisor or a provider and let them know about your concern. If suicidal, use the Ask, Care Escort (ACE) Model and refer to behavioral health or chaplain.

What to do for your subordinates:

- Keep your team informed of new developments as they come up but be careful not to pass on rumors – say you don't know and will tell them when you do.
- Be on the lookout for changes in behavior or performance and act to address issues before they become problems.
- Organize team events to help your Soldiers relax and have some fun; give them some private time when you can.
- Check in with team members on how they're handling the deployment and how things are going back home.
- Be aware that home front stress may be worse than combat.
- Talk with any Soldier you are concerned about and listen to them.
- Conduct sensing sessions as frequently as possible, and make sure Soldiers' feelings and thoughts are expressed and heard.
- Refer Soldiers to unit chaplains, behavioral health or Combat Stress Control team assets for help if they need it.
- Encourage Soldiers to direct Family members to Social Work Services, Army Community Services, Military OneSource, etc., for help. Let your rear Command Team know if your family is "at risk." Immediately. Do not allow a family member to suffer!



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If you see a battle buddy upset, fuming or brooding alone, you can help and should help

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Providing Support to Soldiers in Distress: Battle Buddies

In any operation, a Soldier can run into rough times. Examples of difficult situations include: seeing destroyed homes; dead bodies (including children); hostile reactions from civilians; being ambushed; small arms fire; IEDs; knowing someone is seriously injured or killed; long deployments; lack of privacy and personal space; separation from Family, family problems, difficult communication back home.

The fact is that all of us can sometimes feel down, anxious, or angry. **If you see a battle buddy upset, fuming or self-isolating, you can help your battle buddy** through what may be a painful and sometimes risky time. Emotionally distracted Soldiers can endanger the mission, the unit, and themselves. Often, just talking, listening, and focusing on their strengths and positive beliefs is all that a battle buddy needs to find their own answers. **Try the following suggestions:**

1. **Be a good friend, talk with your battle buddy and find out what's wrong. Listen and be understanding. Be compassionate.** Ask questions. For example, say, "Something seems to be bothering you. How can I help? I can listen actively."
2. **Listen and encourage** your battle buddy to talk about what is bothering him or her. Listen not merely to the words, but the feeling and beliefs. **Stay calm and objective.** Maintain vigilance.

3. **Don't criticize or argue with the Soldier's ideas and emotions, but feel free to ask clarifying questions such as, "How do you mean that?"**
Encourage your battle buddy to continue to tell you what's wrong. **Allow time for your battle buddy to find words.** Reframe ideas for clarity.
4. **Acknowledge your battle buddy's grievances** against others, but don't make it worse by agreeing without clarifying, or escalating emotion.
5. **Ask questions to understand** the problem and the feelings. If the talking stalls, **summarize what has been said** and ask if you have it right.
6. **Don't give a lot of advice.** It is okay to plant the seeds of new ideas but don't drive them in with a hammer. Remember you don't need to have all the answers for the Soldier's problems. Refer to a professional like the chaplain or behavioral health.
7. **Praise your battle buddy** for the work he/she has been doing under such difficult circumstances and for talking with you.

If your battle buddy gives any hints or clues of thinking about suicide, or seriously harming or killing someone else, remember your Suicide Prevention Training!

Signs of Potential Suicide: Soldiers will show a wide range of behaviors and emotions. Try to recognize the behaviors that are different. Be aware of Soldiers who suddenly become quiet and show significant change of behavior. Other signs to watch for:

- **Recent break-up in a relationship**
- Excessive use of **alcohol or drugs**

- **Significant financial problems**
- **Poor work performance**
- **Recent administrative or legal action**
- **Appears depressed:** sad, tearful, poor sleep, poor appetite, hopeless, or numb
- **Threatens suicide or speaks of escape**
- **Unit adjustment difficulties or isolation**
- **Talks about wanting to die or stop pain**
- **Deliberately injures self or acts recklessly**

What to do if you're concerned about suicide

Follow the acronym ACE.

“Ask” your battle buddy: Ask questions that will give you a better idea of what your battle buddy is thinking. Ask directly if he or she is having suicidal thoughts. Ask, “Are you thinking about killing yourself or someone else?” or “I see how distressed you are. Do you wish you were dead?” or “Have you thought of how you would kill yourself?” Your asking will NOT cause them to become suicidal.

- Know the warning signs you might see in yourself or battle buddy if he or she is suicidal.
- Look for any outward sign that shows a deviation from your battle buddy's usual self.
- **Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow your battle buddy to express his or her feelings.**

“Care” for your battle buddy: Care for your battle buddy by understanding that your battle buddy may be in pain.

- Active listening may produce relief. Calmly control the situation: do not use force.
 - Take action by removing any lethal means, such as weapons or pills. If your battle buddy is armed, say, “Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk.” Ask a buddy for help if needed.
- “Escort”** your battle buddy: Escort your battle buddy immediately to your chain of command, chaplain, or behavioral health professional.
- After your battle buddy has talked as much as he or she wants, say, “I need to get you help for this. People here can help you.”
 - Don’t keep your battle buddy’s suicidal behavior a secret. Never agree to keep silence, or counsel if not qualified.
 - Adopting an attitude that you are going to help your battle buddy, one way or another may save his or her life.
 - Stay with your battle buddy until he or she receives appropriate help. Don’t leave your battle buddy alone.

The Army has fielded other professionals for Soldiers with such problems. Beyond the **immediate NCO** and **Officer leaders**, you can encourage the Soldier to talk about problems with the following personnel.

- **Unit Medic**
- **A Chaplain** or chaplain assistant
- **Battalion Aid Station, medical unit or health care provider**
- **Behavioral Health or Combat Stress Control**
- **Behavioral Health officers, NCOs, and Combat Stress Control teams in your area**

Get help immediately! A suicidal person needs immediate attention and immediate escort to a professional.

For more information, access the Army Suicide Prevention Program website at

<http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

In a crisis call the
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1-800-273 TALK (8255)

Press 1 for Military Crisis Line



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Emotionally distracted Soldiers
can endanger the mission, the unit
and themselves.]



Providing Support to Soldiers in Distress: Leaders Guide

In any operation, a Soldier can run into rough times. It could be any combination of:

- Seeing destroyed homes, dead bodies (including children), destruction, poverty, environmental stressors;
- Hostile reactions from civilians;
- Being ambushed, receiving small arms fire, improvised explosive devices;
- Knowing or seeing someone killed or seriously injured; having close calls; chronic fatigue
- Long deployments; lack of privacy and personal space;
- Separation from Family, difficulty communicating or interacting with Family members at home.

All of us can feel badly at times. **If you see a fellow Soldier who is upset, fuming or self-isolating, you can help** him or her through a painful and sometimes risky time. **Emotionally distracted Soldiers can endanger the mission, the unit and themselves.**

Often, just talking to a friend (or leader) who listens, tries to understand, and praises their strengths, is all people need to find their own answers. The following can be useful ways for a Soldier to help a battle buddy:

1. **Be a good friend.** For example, say, “Something seems to be bothering you. How can I help? I can listen without judgment.”

2. **Listen attentively** and encourage him or her to continue telling you what's wrong. **Stay calm and objective. Don't criticize or argue** with the Soldier's thoughts and feelings, but listen and allow silent time for them to find words. Clarify beliefs.
3. **Acknowledge the Soldier's grievances** against others, including Command, **but don't amplify them** by agreeing with them blindly.
4. **Ask questions to help you understand** the problem, the underlying beliefs and feelings. **If the talking stalls, try to summarize what has been said** and then ask if you have it right.
5. **Delay offering different perspectives or practical advice** until you believe your Soldier knows that you really know the situation and understand why he or she is upset.
6. **Plant the seeds of new, adaptive ideas.**
7. **Praise the soldier** for the work he or she has been doing under such difficult circumstances and for talking with you.

Sometimes the problems are too big to resolve after one talk or without additional outside help.

Remember the Army deploys trained professionals for Soldiers with such problems. Help for Soldiers, beyond yourself and other military leaders includes:

- **Unit Ministry Teams** in the maneuver battalion, brigade HQs, and Combat Support Hospitals.
- The **primary medical providers** in battalion aid stations and medical companies should know where these helpers are and how to contact them, as well as being helpers, too.

- **Behavioral health officers, and technicians, NCOs, and specialists** at the brigade, division and area support medical units.
- Behavioral health officers and enlisted technicians in **Combat Stress Control teams** that cover those areas and can come forward to battalions, companies and remote outposts.

If the Soldier seems preoccupied with death, hints at having thoughts of suicide, or makes threats toward others, remember your Suicide Prevention Training!

- **Say something like**, “I can see that you feel distressed.” “Have you thought of hurting yourself or someone else?” or, “Do you wish you were dead?”
- Then “Have you thought of how you could kill yourself?” (or whomever);
- **Don’t act shocked** or alarmed! Encourage the Soldier to talk. They are tracking your responses, so remain calm
- **If the Soldier is armed**, say, “Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk.”
- **After the Soldier has talked** as much as he or she wants, say, “**I need to get you help for this. There are people nearby who can help you.**”
- **Don’t leave this person alone.** Secure any weapons. Immediately take the Soldier to your chain of command, behavioral health, chaplain, or to medical care. Have a battle buddy assist you but do not leave alone unless you are at risk.



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Deployment can be an emotionally difficult time for all Family members

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Coping with Deployment Separation: Deployed Parents and Caregivers

Separation from a loved one who is deployed can be an emotionally difficult time for all Family members. Symptoms resulting from separation can include low energy levels, feelings of sadness, anger, excitement, restlessness, tension, frustration, resentment, and depression. Additionally, there are many challenges for military Families to overcome during deployments. It is important to recognize, understand, and face these challenges in order to effectively cope with the separation during deployment:

Avoid the pitfalls that are often associated with deployments:

- Realize that arguments or detached behavior prior to deployment are common. Generally, this is the result of stress due to upcoming separation. Try not to take them too seriously.
- Discuss family concerns such as child rearing, financial management, or intimacy issues prior to deployment. Attempting to resolve disagreements around family concerns from long distance can be challenging. Seek an intermediary or telephonic counselor if needed.
- Avoid trying to resolve marital issues that precede deployments. This is very difficult over long distance and is best left until the Soldier returns home. Relationship counseling may occur individually in theater or back home. Try to schedule collateral sessions when you return.

- Understand that dates of departure and return often “slip” forwards and backwards. Do not commit to a certain date! You will return when you do.
- Avoid listening to or spreading rumors. It is best not to repeat the rumor. Because of rapid communication, rumors can spread unchecked causing great psychological harm to Soldiers and Family members. An example of a rumor is one Family Readiness Group (FRG) member spreading allegations of infidelity about another group member. Such rumors cause harm to Soldiers, Family members, FRGs, and unit cohesion.
- It is important to accept change and growth by all Family members. It is unrealistic to be reunited and expect everything to be the same as before the deployment. Be grateful your Family endured your absence with honor.

Some general tips to help the spouse and Family cope while the Soldier is deployed:

- If disagreements arise, leaving the issue until you are face-to-face with your spouse may help. Try to avoid fighting via the internet.
- Establishing and maintaining a support network helps the Family cope. Try to avoid negative influences at home and while deployed.
- Include breaks in the daily routine. This may include weekly get-togethers with other Family members and monthly outings for the children to a favorite park, restaurant, picnic, etc.

- The parent at home will need time away from the children. A regular “Mommy’s or Daddy’s day out” is important to maintain sanity.
- Encourage all Family members to share feelings and ideas, reassure your partner of your love and commitment, and try to see the deployment as a challenging opportunity for growth.
- Communication is important between the Soldier and Family member. Use all available avenues of communication (telephone calls, e-mails, letters, social media). It is important to keep in touch; however, try to end phone conversations and letters on a positive note.

Some general tips for caregivers to help children cope while the parent is deployed:

- Be honest with children about their parent’s deployment. Share information about the Soldier’s work and what the parent is doing for our country. Answer questions openly and honestly using words your children can understand.
- Give children a method of measuring the passage of time. Provide a calendar to help your child count the days the parent has been deployed.
- Make sure your spouse’s parents are kept informed including if they are not adapting. The Soldier’s parents share your concerns about the health and welfare of their deployed son or daughter. Grandparents and spouses can support each other during the deployment. as can their religious community if applicable.

- Continue to provide a structured, stable and safe environment for your children. Children require reassurance that they are loved, cared for, and safe while the other parent is away.
- Make sure the deployed parent is part of everyday conversations and decisions.
- Help your children sort out what they hear and see in news reports. Find out what your children know and understand and talk with them about their feelings. Follow your child's lead. Give a small piece of information at a time and see how your child responds before deciding what to do next.
- Use school and independent counselors who understand military mission and separation.
- Provide your children with a way to communicate to the deployed parent such as letter writing, e-mailing or live video.
- Try to maintain Family routines and traditions during the other parent's absence.
- Keep children involved with outside activities and maintain constant communication with schools
- Remember that we all grow through adversity. We call this Post-traumatic growth. Expect that challenges will make your Family stronger when you resolve them.
- Remember that our families allow us to serve our countries and serve themselves. Thank them for their service.



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Army Suicide Prevention Program website at
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These techniques and coping skills cannot make a horrible and tragic event acceptable or easy, but they can help you and your teammates better cope with the stress in order to complete the mission.

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Coping with the Injured and the Dead

In combat or disaster situations, you may see, hear, smell, and perhaps have to handle injured and dead people. They may be men, and women and even children. It is not about fairness.

You may be struck with combinations of feelings that include pity, horror, repulsion, and anger at the senselessness or malice of the event. You may feel guilty because you feel you think you should have prevented it, for surviving it, or for not helping enough. These reactions are a normal part of being human. You may initially blame yourself or the U.S.A. It hurts most when a victim reminds you of someone you love or yourself. Seek assistance to counter beliefs which depress you or create apathy.

Keep in mind that these beliefs and emotions are typical and confirm your humanity. At times, however, you may feel emotionally numb and may use “graveyard humor” to make the suffering and deaths seem less terrible. Whatever you feel, remember that the mission must continue.

The following are lessons learned by people who faced such intense experiences. These tips can help you do the mission and transform the memories without being haunted by them.

1. Remember the larger purpose of what you must do. You are acting honorably! You are showing care, giving hope, and preventing disease for the living. You are recovering the bodies for registrations and respectful burials.
2. Limit exposure to the stimuli: don't sightsee; use screens, poncho curtains, partitions, covers, body

bags, and barriers to keep away anyone who does not need to see, yet recall others also grow by seeing loss as you will.

3. Wear gloves and disposable uniforms if available.
4. Mask odors with disinfectants, deodorants, air-fresheners. Save perfumes or aftershaves for afterwards. Do not be surprised when odors trigger memories.
5. Be compassionate, but AVOID FOCUSING on any individual victims, especially those you most identify with. Do not focus on personal effects.
6. Have people who did NOT search the body examine the personal materials collected for identification of the body or intelligence.
7. Remind yourself the body is not the person, just the remains.
8. Keep humor alive, even “graveyard humor” with battle buddies who understand it, but don’t get too gross or too personal (no picking on each other).
9. Don’t desecrate or steal from the victims. These are punishable crimes and can place you and your fellow Soldiers in grave danger.
10. Say silent prayers; ask unit or local ministers to conduct memorial services.
11. Schedule frequent breaks; maintain hygiene, drink plenty of fluids, and eat good food. Command should arrange facilities for washing hands and face, and later for showers and fresh clothes.
12. Have your team get together for mutual support and encouragement. Acknowledge horrible aspects, but don’t dwell on these memories of details.

13. Help battle buddies or subordinates in distress by being a good listener. Do not jump in with “off the shelf” answers. Do not mistake his/her feelings as weakness. Tell them they are normal and honorable. Remind them that the mission must go on, and the team needs everyone.
14. If forewarned of the mission, prepare yourself for what you will see and do; take the supplies and equipment mentioned above.
15. Use Combat Stress Control, chaplains or behavioral health professionals.
16. Afterwards, do not feel guilty about having distanced yourself mentally from the suffering or tragic deaths of individuals. This is adaptive.
17. Do not be disheartened by horrible dreams, feeling tense, or intrusive memories. Those are normal, and it is better to have them now than to suppress them. Do not keep them hidden. Share them with your battle buddies, and keep that positive humor alive. Seek help as needed.
18. One to three days after exposure, participate in a critical event debriefing with trained people from your supporting unit ministry, behavioral health or combat stress control team.

These techniques and coping skills cannot make a horrible and tragic event acceptable or easy, but they can help you and your teammates better cope with the stress in order to complete the mission. Be proud of what you have done, and use what you've learned to take care of yourself, your battle buddies, and your family when you get home.



<http://phc.amedd.army.mil>

For more information:

USAPHC Combat & Operational Stress Control
<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/bh/Pages/>

CombatOperationalStressControl.aspx
<http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/healthyliving/bh/Pages/CombatOperationalStressControl.aspx>

**FM 6-22.5 - Combat and Operational Stress Control Manual
for Leaders And Soldiers**

http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/fm6_22x5.pdf

Army Suicide Prevention Program
<http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

**In a crisis, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273 TALK (8255)
Press 1 for Military Crisis Line**



<http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/>

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