

# Experiencing Parental Absence

in Royal Navy and Royal Marines Families

NEW FOR  
2023



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Issues Pertinent to Naval Life</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Research about Children from Armed Forces Families</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>No-contact Deployments and Operations</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Emotional Cycle of Deployment</b>	<b>12</b>
- The Emotional Cycle of Deployment – What is Happening in Adult Relationships?	13
- Feelings and Behaviours for Adults During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle	14
- The Emotional Cycle of Deployment – What is Happening for Children?	16
- Babies, Toddlers and Pre-schoolers: Characteristics of this Age and Stage	17
- Feelings and Behaviours for Babies, Toddlers and Pre-schoolers During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle	18
- Primary School-aged Children: Characteristics of this Age and Stage	22
- Feelings and Behaviours for Primary School-aged Children During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle	23
- Teenagers: Characteristics of this Age and Stage	29
- Feelings and Behaviours for Teenagers During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle	30
<b>Sources of Support and Information</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Books for All</b>	<b>40</b>





**You are the expert on your own family, and you are doing a great job!**

In response to the feedback Royal Navy and Royal Marines families have given us about their experiences, we wanted to produce a dedicated Naval Service resource to address some of the specific circumstances and needs they have described to us.

If you are going through challenges, we want you to know that you are not alone.

The purpose of this resource is to draw together some useful information about parental absence and separation, and provide some strategies to help families thrive. It is a starting place to think about some of the issues. **It's written by a parent, for parents, based on feedback from parents.**

We frequently hear from families who want people in their support network to have a better understanding of the challenges they face. These families don't want to make a fuss. They are just getting on with it, but sometimes they need those around them in their communities, extended families and school settings to have a better sense of what parental absence is like for them and their children. If you are one of these families, this resource is something you can pass on to others in your team. Because you do need a team. The information here harnesses the experiences of families who have talked with us. You are welcome to contact us with your own thoughts, constructive ideas for improvement or suggestions for future useful guides.

“ In situations where one parent is frequently absent or away for long periods of time, it is inevitable that there will be challenges to shared parenting. ”

# Issues Pertinent to Naval Life





**Weekending** – a term often used to describe when a serving person works away from their home address during the week, and comes home at weekends. There are different perspectives on this, and these may vary according to the family's circumstances at any given time. For some families, weekending makes the time spent together at weekends feel precious in a positive way. Work is set aside and families make a conscious effort to spend quality time together, doing things they enjoy...often it is easier that one person at the family home just gets on with it during the week without having to factor in another viewpoint or need! On the other hand, it can involve a lot of pressure to make the most of the time at the weekend. You might put off issues that need discussing, as no one wants an argument, and there is limited opportunity to make up after a disagreement. It can be tiring for the person who is at home taking charge of childcare, work, DIY and domestic chores; you may feel socially isolated because you cannot leave the house after your child's bedtime, and you may not have access to childcare. The 'weekending' partner may lose touch with the sheer amount of effort the other is putting in at home. When a serving person is coming home after a busy week of work, they may wish to relax, but their partner may need them to help with chores, or have other expectations. The disruption of weekending can be challenging and perhaps even more so for families with children with certain special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Mindful that children with an autism spectrum diagnosis have difficulty adjusting to changes in routines, and need a consistent approach that minimises disruption. Getting on the same page and working as a team is key! It can be incredibly hard to find time for couple relationships when you are parenting a child with special needs, and this is made even harder for couples who are weekending or experiencing other kinds of separation. Supporting children with SEND is a specialist area; see the back of this booklet for recommended resources that may help.

**Preparing for time apart** – planned deployments and short notice changes to programmes.

These can present an additional layer of challenge, as there is no time for you or your children to do the emotional and practical preparations that can give a sense of control over the situation. Short-notice departures can be a real shock to the system, and both children and adults may experience a sense of unreality and take time to adjust to the new situation. Feelings may be magnified or feelings may be absent for a time, the early days may be both physically and emotionally draining. Sticking to routines and maintaining the normal rhythms of life can help while everyone 'catches up' with the new situation.

“

I try to eat healthily and look after myself while he's gone.”



**The feelings of anxiety and restlessness** that exist before any planned deployment may be heightened. It can be difficult for the serving person to know how best to approach the subject of risk with their loved ones, whether to share their own worries or to try to protect their family members from them. Communication can become more difficult as a result. It can be helpful for family members to keep in mind that the training and preparation that will have occurred beforehand has equipped their serving person for the task ahead. They will usually be part of a well-practised and cohesive team who will look after one another.

### **Know where important documents are and who to contact in the event of an emergency.**

There are times when serving family members are involved in activities which we know or suspect will expose them to significant risk. There are practical aspects to preparing for such events, for example:

- Ensuring that Wills are up to date
- Checking that the family have contact details for the [Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre \(JCCC\)](#)
- Making sure next of kin and emergency contact details are correct on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system;
- Signing up to the [Royal Navy Forum](#) so that information and updates are accessible.

### **Agree what forms of communication work best for you, your children and your spouse and partner. The following questions may help prompt discussion:**

- What is the best way for you to communicate – is it email, WhatsApp, Facetime, post, video chat or another method?
- What is the best way for the absent parent to communicate with their children and young people? Think about what is meaningful to their age and stage of development.
- What is the likelihood of there being times without communication? How will you deal with this?
- Submariners – does your loved one know how the Familygram works and about its limitations?

- What if your children don't want to talk or communicate with the person who is away?
- Is there a time of day that the deployed person should avoid making contact (e.g. the school run, bath times, working hours)?
- Does each family member understand what information they can and cannot share about the deployment on social media?
- Do you have any specific worries about the deployment that you need to discuss?
- Do your children or young people have any specific worries that they need to discuss?
- Is there anything the serving person can do before they leave or during the deployment to support their child or young person?
- Does your child or young person's school know that their parent is being deployed?
- Does the school understand how this may affect feelings and behaviour?
- Does everyone know what to do in the event of a family emergency?

“ I find it helps to make plans for things to do when they are away. They don't have to be big things, but it helps to break up the time if I know I will be seeing a friend one weekend. ”



# Research about Children from Armed Forces Families



Research Lead	Title of Research	Date Published
<b>Naval Families Federation/ King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR)</b>	The effect of non-operational family separations on family functioning and well-being among Royal Navy and Royal Marines families	February 2019
View here <a href="https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NFF_KCMHR_Full_Report.pdf">https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NFF_KCMHR_Full_Report.pdf</a>		
<b>Kathleen Vestal Logan (US based)</b>	The Emotional Cycle of Deployment	1987
View here <a href="https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1987/february/emotional-cycle-deployment">https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1987/february/emotional-cycle-deployment</a>		
<b>Naval Children's Charity and Anglia Ruskin University</b>	The Impact of Service Life on the Military Child: The Overlooked Casualties of Conflict– Update and Review Report	May 2021
View here <a href="https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-The-Overlooked-Casualties-of-Conflict-Update-and-Review-Report-Interactive-Singles-1.pdf">https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-The-Overlooked-Casualties-of-Conflict-Update-and-Review-Report-Interactive-Singles-1.pdf</a>		
<b>Royal Navy Family and People Support</b>	Coping with Separation	2020
View here <a href="https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/-/media/royal-navy-responsive/documents/welfare/emotional-support/coping-with-separation-booklet.pdf">https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/-/media/royal-navy-responsive/documents/welfare/emotional-support/coping-with-separation-booklet.pdf</a>		
<b>King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR)</b>	Perceived effect of deployment on families of UK military personnel	2017
View here <a href="https://preview-kcl.cloud.contensis.com/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/2017/Thandi-2017.pdf">https://preview-kcl.cloud.contensis.com/kcmhr/publications/assetfiles/2017/Thandi-2017.pdf</a>		
<b>RAND (US based)</b>	Deployment Life Study	2016
View here <a href="https://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/frp/deployment-life.html">https://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/frp/deployment-life.html</a>		



If you are interested in reviewing other research which focuses on the Armed Forces community, please visit these websites which host a range of published reports:

- Anglia Ruskin University Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research
- Combat Stress
- Forces In Mind Trust Research Centre
- Forces In Mind Trust
- King's Centre for Military Health Research
- Northumbria University – The Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research
- University of Chester Westminster Centre

Details about ongoing research studies can be found here:

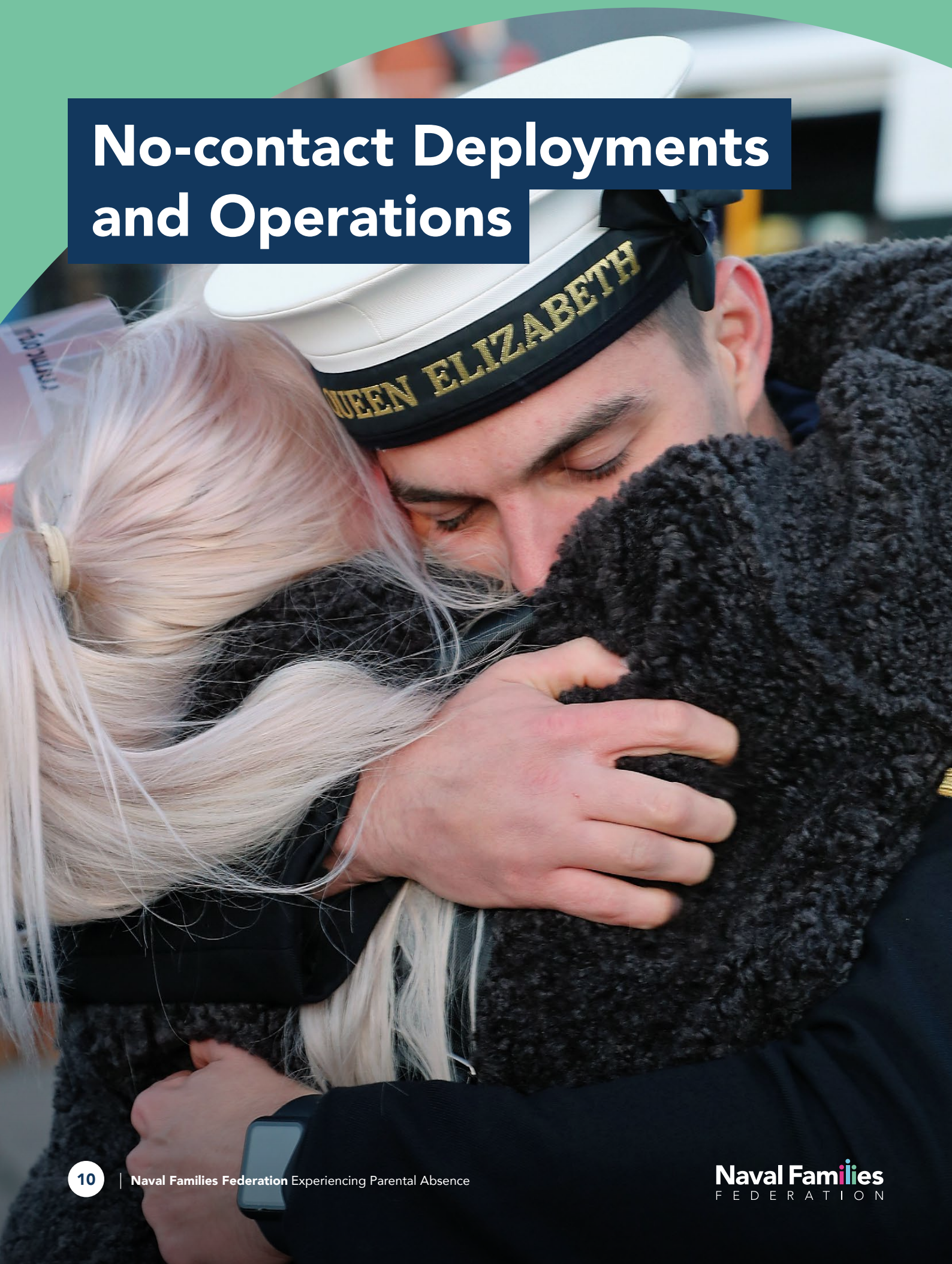
- FiMT Research Centre Ongoing Research
- The Northern Hub for Military Veterans and Families Research

“  
I think we manage pretty well  
when he's away. I'm quite proud  
of myself actually.”





# No-contact Deployments and Operations





When you have limited contact with a serving person or when they cannot share with you details of where they are going away, it can be a tricky situation to handle. With limited information, there is scope for your imagination to go into overdrive and family members can find themselves speculating on all sorts of situations that often bear little or no resemblance to what is actually happening. When we dwell on worst case scenarios, anxiety and fear tend to set in. As we are now so well connected, loss of contact may be eased by focusing on what is known; what is actually happening for us and our children? Where possible switch focus to your wellbeing and make time for what brings you joy, explore avenues such as mental health, wellbeing apps or podcasts for support.

When considering the need for support from family members, either long or short term, please consider any relevant **visa and immigration rules**. Armed Forces personnel joining from other countries do so via a different route to civilians; **please seek advice from a specialist adviser to avoid incorrect and expensive mistakes!** The Naval Families Federation has Office of the Immigration Service qualified caseworker(s) that can answer your questions or see our website for a range of top tips: [nff.org.uk/uk-visas-citizenship](https://nff.org.uk/uk-visas-citizenship)

**One size does not fit all!** Whether you call in help from family, turn to friends to help with practicalities or you power through and cope with separation for the duration of a deployment, please remember that you are not alone. With or without children, you may relate to comments made by some of our naval families:

“ I kept picking fights with my partner before he left, and then I felt guilty afterwards. Next time we will try to talk about it and recognise what it is about. ”

“ My husband deploys on Tuesday and I wish he'd just go already. It helps to know that it's normal and that other people feel the same way – that it's nothing to do with our relationship. ”



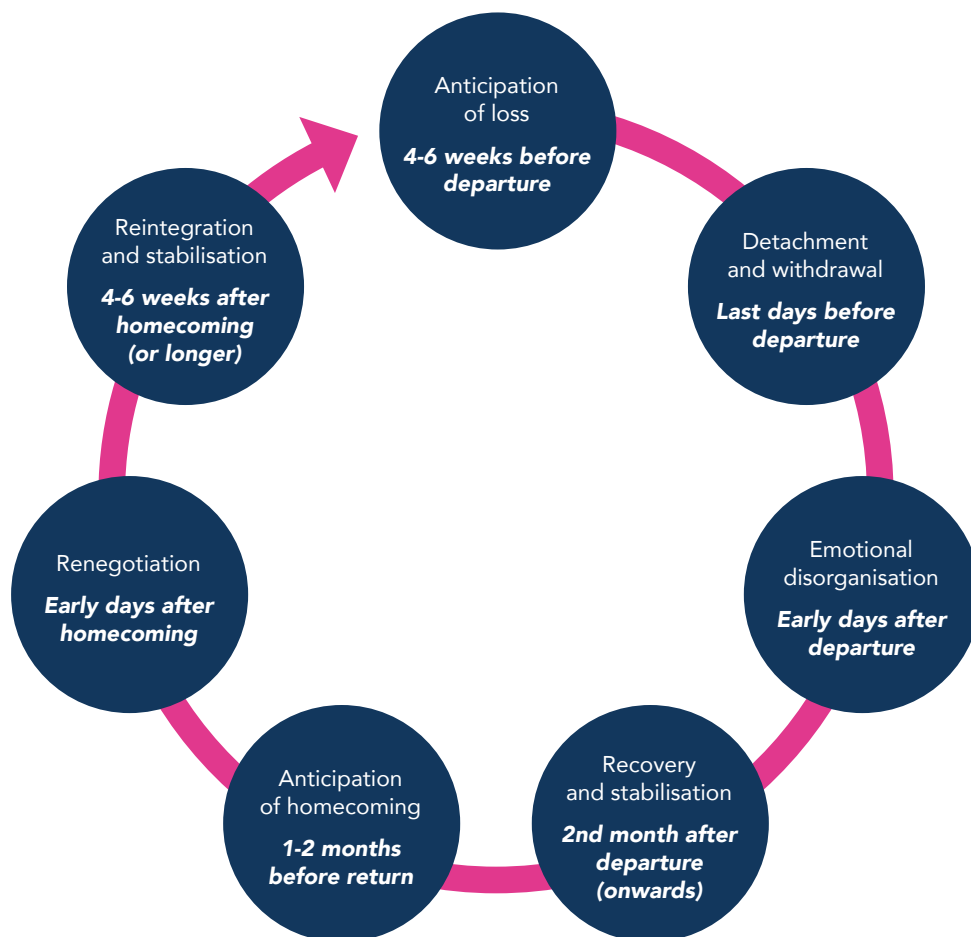
# The Emotional Cycle of Deployment





The Emotional Cycle of Deployment is a model that was developed for naval families by Kathleen Vestal Logan in 1987 and published in Proceedings Magazine<sup>1</sup>. While times have moved on deployments can be short or long and are often extended, it is still a helpful tool

in understanding and explaining changes in feelings and behaviour resulting from deployment. There will be individual differences in how people feel, and each deployment will be different.



## The Emotional Cycle of Deployment – What is Happening in Adult Relationships?

Here is a summary of the feelings and behaviours that are common for adults during different stages of the deployment cycle. You might want to show this to your partner, to others in your support network, or to someone you know who is experiencing these changes. It is helpful if you can recognise and understand your

own feelings as an adult. You can bring this knowledge to your parenting role. Children and young people learn a lot from seeing how you approach challenges; you can help them to understand their own feelings and work out how you can support each other.

<sup>1</sup> Vestal Logan K (1987). The Emotional Cycle of Deployment. Proceedings Magazine, February 1987 Vol. 113/2/1,008.

## Feelings and Behaviours for Adults During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle

Stage	Name	When does it happen?	How you and/or your loved ones may be feeling	Common behaviours
1	<b>Anticipation of loss</b>	4-6 weeks before deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased tension</li> <li>• Pressure to get stuff done/time slipping away</li> <li>• Worry</li> <li>• Unexpressed anger</li> <li>• Restlessness</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Guilt (person who is leaving)</li> <li>• Resentment (person who is staying)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being busy</li> <li>• Cramming in projects</li> <li>• Increased arguments</li> <li>• Bickering</li> <li>• Organising family visits &amp; social events</li> <li>• Unexpected tears over small things</li> <li>• Thinking about ways to help children manage the separation</li> </ul>
2	<b>Detachment &amp; withdrawal</b>	Final days before departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Emotional detachment</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Ambivalence about sexual intimacy (feeling like you should, but also wanting to keep at a distance)</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Impatience to 'get on with it'</li> <li>• Frustration (particularly if departure is delayed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners may stop sharing thoughts &amp; feelings with each other</li> <li>• Difficulties in communicating</li> <li>• Focusing on individual tasks</li> <li>• Having sex because it's your last chance or avoiding sex altogether</li> </ul>
3	<b>Emotional disorganisation</b>	Early days after departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shock</li> <li>• Relief (may be followed with guilt at feeling relieved)</li> <li>• Numbness</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Sense of disruption</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Sense of being overwhelmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty sleeping (responsible for 'security') or excessive sleeping</li> <li>• Withdrawal from friends and neighbours</li> <li>• Self-medicating with alcohol or food</li> <li>• Doing tasks outside your comfort zone that your partner would normally do</li> </ul>
4	<b>Recovery &amp; stabilisation</b>	Second month after departure onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased confidence and independence</li> <li>• Isolation can still cause sense of vulnerability</li> <li>• Pride in ability to manage alone</li> <li>• Feeling a bit asexual – missing physical intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settling into a routine</li> <li>• Establishment of new family patterns</li> <li>• Being more outwardly independent</li> <li>• Cultivating new friends and sources of support</li> <li>• Stretching self and abilities</li> <li>• Finding new skills</li> </ul>



Stage	Name	When does it happen?	How you and/or your loved ones may be feeling	Common behaviours
5	<b>Anticipation of homecoming</b>	One to two months before return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joy and excitement</li> <li>• Apprehension</li> <li>• Nervousness</li> <li>• Worries about effect that return will have</li> <li>• Worries about how you will feel about each other</li> <li>• Worries about what the other partner will think about decisions and actions that have been taken</li> <li>• Sense of running out of time to get the 'deployment list' completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning and re-evaluating the relationship</li> <li>• Preparing by doing household jobs and personal care</li> <li>• Preparations for the homecoming</li> <li>• Big decisions may be postponed until the homecoming</li> </ul>
6	<b>Renegotiation of the relationship contract</b>	Early days after homecoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjustment from being 'single' to behaving like partners</li> <li>• Sense of a loss of freedom and independence – having to be answerable to another person</li> <li>• Resentment</li> <li>• At-home partner feeling out of control</li> <li>• At-home partner feeling protective of children</li> <li>• Returning partner feeling out of place in their own home</li> <li>• Sex may initially seem weird – there can be a sense of 'entitlement' not matched by feelings of intimacy</li> <li>• Can be both joyful and difficult</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting priorities and loyalties in relationships – from 'oppos' on board/friends/support network to partner/spouse</li> <li>• Changes to family routines and activities</li> <li>• Too much togetherness causing friction</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities being renegotiated and changing</li> <li>• Clash of parenting styles, renegotiation of joint approaches</li> <li>• Talking about issues as they come up, having the first 'Big Argument'</li> </ul>
7	<b>Reintegration &amp; stabilisation</b>	4-6 weeks after homecoming (sometimes longer depending on type of deployment/separation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of sense of being back together as a family</li> <li>• Enjoying more warmth and closeness</li> <li>• Sense of normality</li> <li>• Being more relaxed and comfortable with each other</li> <li>• Back on track emotionally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New routines being established</li> <li>• Partners talking about 'we', 'us' and 'our' instead of 'I', 'me' and 'my'</li> <li>• Planning ahead</li> <li>• Returning to a more balanced social life including extended family, mutual friends and individual activities</li> </ul>

**It is important to say that deployment is not always necessarily a negative experience for couple relationships.** There can be complex feelings involved, but feelings themselves are neither good nor bad, they just are. It is okay to feel whatever you feel!

The unique nature of Service life can drive some couples to be more consciously aware of their feelings and reactions, and to put greater emphasis on cultivating and nurturing their relationships. Having to negotiate challenges and change can strengthen and enhance the bond between partners.

## The Emotional Cycle of Deployment – What is Happening for Children?

Having considered adult responses to the different stages of deployment, let us turn to how a child may experience a parent's deployment.

How children respond to parental absence through deployment, and to their parent's return home, will depend very much on their age and stage of development. Not all children will experience deployment in the same way, and some children move through the process relatively smoothly. Children can be very surprising and resourceful, and may take things in their stride. Nevertheless they are likely to be dealing with some complicated and strong feelings, and will need help to navigate these. A good first step would be to share this information with your child's school or other caregivers.

We have considered the deployment cycle roughly by age and stage of development in this section. Not all children fit neatly into these 'boxes'. **For convenience we have merged together some of the stages of development in the pages that follow as this resource was in danger of becoming a book!**

Obviously there is a huge range of development between a new-born baby and a pre-schooler, but the idea is to help you to think in general terms about the fact that children's experiences change along with their cognitive development.

If you have any concerns about your child's feelings or behaviour, do speak with your Health Visitor, GP, child's teacher, or other appropriate professional. You may need to provide them with some background to your situation to help them to understand the context if they have had little contact with the Armed Forces.

Many of the ideas and strategies here come from parents who have been through deployments themselves. This guide is a starting point and you may have other strategies that work for you. All children, young people and families are different. Do get in touch with us and let us know your ideas – we always love to hear from you.

“

All parents can benefit from support. It makes us more relaxed, and our children learn by watching us give and receive help. They learn that they don't have to go it alone. They learn that it is OK to ask for help. They see the value of helping other people and of being helped. This is important because you are modelling strategies that your children can use in the future.”



## Babies, Toddlers and Pre-schoolers: Characteristics of this Age and Stage

- Babies live in the moment and respond instinctively. They have little sense of time.
- They need to have a close bond with at least one main care-giver. They can connect in loving ways with more than one familiar care-giver.
- Evidence shows that the close bond with a main care-giver shapes a child's brain development, and influences outcomes later in life.
- From 4-7 months babies develop 'object permanence' – the concept that something a baby cannot see does still exist. This is the basis of 'peekaboo' games.
  - Object permanence is the reason why babies start to exhibit separation anxiety when a parent leaves a room – they know that you can come back again.
  - This is also linked to stranger anxiety – babies are able to recognise different people.
- Younger babies do not recognise themselves as separate beings. Self-recognition arrives at around 15 months. This is also when toddlers begin to exercise their independence and tantrums occur.





## Feelings and Behaviours for Babies, Toddlers and Pre-schoolers During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle

### 1. Anticipation of Loss – 4-6 weeks before deployment

#### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

May not understand what is going on but may sense increased tension.

#### Common behaviours:

- Babies and toddlers are unlikely to be aware of imminent changes.
- Pre-schoolers are likely to carry on as usual as they cannot anticipate the changes.
- Changes in behaviour in all babies and early years children are likely to result from them picking up on your feelings of anticipation of something significant being about to happen.
- Babies and small children may become more fussy, clingy or irritable in response to any changes in your feelings at this stage.

#### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- This is a good time to give your baby or toddler the opportunity to become familiar with other trusted care-givers, so that they feel secure with more than one adult.
- For older toddlers and pre-schoolers, where possible, visit the ship, or show pictures of where the parent will sleep.
- Serving parents might want to record a bedtime story, or choose some special picture books to be shared when they are away. They can prepare some surprises or treats (e.g. a treasure hunt, pick a special film to watch on a rainy day, a 'busy box' or 'quiet bin' of things to keep a toddler occupied when their care-giver needs a break).
- Think now about how you want to approach co-sleeping if the at-home parent thinks they wish to have a child sharing their bed while the serving parent is away. If this isn't what your family normally do, and the child will be immediately ejected into his/her own bed when the serving person returns, consider other solutions to night-time waking.

## 2. Detachment and Withdrawal – last days before departure

### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

May not understand what is going on but may sense increased tension.

### Common behaviours:

- Many carry on as usual.
- May express their feelings through increased tantrums, be clingy, or show swings between moods of great dependence and independence.
- Sleep or eating may be disturbed (although of course this is common anyway). Toddlers and pre-schoolers tend to live in the moment and respond to what is happening around them now – they may have difficulty comprehending that a parent is leaving while they are still there.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Let nursery and other caregivers know about the deployment.
- Keep to your usual family routines right up to the day of departure.
- Let children help the serving person pack if they want to.
- Help them to pack a photo of themselves somewhere safe.
- Make plans for how you will stay in contact.
- Plan for what will happen during special occasions while the serving person is away – write in birthday cards or choose gifts.
- Spend time with each child individually.
- Exchange 'comfort items', e.g. a soft toy, personal memento, or item the child has made.
- Keep goodbyes short.

## 3. Emotional Disorganisation – early days after departure

### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

Younger babies will have little awareness of what has happened, provided they have access to their usual care-giver.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers may be confused, as they have a limited ability to understand what has happened.

### Common behaviours:

- Babies may become more fussy, clingy or irritable in response to any changes in your feelings at this stage.
- Toddler behaviour can be erratic at the best of times, so it can be difficult to work out what the cause may be. You may see behaviours such as: clinging to people or favourite toy or blanket; unexplained crying or tearfulness; hitting, biting people or things; shrinking away from people or becoming very quiet; sleep difficulties or disturbances (waking, bad dreams); eating difficulties or change in eating patterns; fear of new people or situations.
- Toddlers may look for the absent parent.
- Pre-schoolers may regress to behaviours that had finished, e.g. toilet training may regress.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Take proper care of yourself and try to maintain healthy habits like eating a balanced diet and getting some exercise.
- Try to stick to normal routines – for example regular meal and bedtimes.
- Remain consistent with your household rules; this helps children to feel secure.
- Give extra support and attention. Continue to talk about the absent parent and show pictures. Although this may be painful, it will help the subsequent reunion to remember the person who is absent.
- Set up a visual countdown calendar.
- Put words to their feelings – "I can see you are feeling very angry/sad/frustrated".



#### 4. Recovery and Stabilisation – 2nd month after departure onwards

##### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

- Things start to feel normal and settle into a routine.
- Increased confidence.
- More settled, sunnier temperament.

##### Common behaviours:

- Regressive behaviours settling down.
- Routines getting established.
- Improvements in sleep patterns, but not always.
- Reduction in tantrums, but again not always – tantrums are a normal part of development.

##### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Keep a scrapbook or memory box of things you are doing, so that you and your child have a record to share with the returning parent. This can help you all to re-connect.
- Take help when it is offered. This is a marathon and not a sprint. There are no prizes for stoically going it alone.
- Provide predictable separation and reunion routines for drop-offs and pick-ups – be there when you say you will.
- Seek support from your health visitor or GP if you have any concerns about your child or about your own well-being.

#### 5. Anticipation of Homecoming – 1 to 2 months before return

##### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

Toddlers may have difficulty remembering what it was like to be around their serving parent.

##### Common behaviours:

- May not really understand what is happening until the homecoming is imminent.
- Behaviour may become more erratic as they sense impending changes.

##### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Send pictures from the children to the absent parent. Update them on new skills acquired and things that have changed.
- If not discussed prior to deployment, agree between the primary care-giver and returning parent how you will navigate the homecoming with regard to extended family members. Where possible, the homecoming person should take charge of managing expectations on his/her side of the family. It may be necessary to explain the need for the immediate family unit to have time and space to re-integrate before having extended visits.

“

When he gets back it's all lovely at first and then having his stuff everywhere gets on my nerves. I usually bite my tongue for the first couple of weeks and then we have a row. After that things get back to normal!

”

## 6. Renegotiation – early days after homecoming

### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

- Picking up on parental feelings of wellbeing or tension.
- Beginning of sense of being back together as a family.
- Enjoying more warmth, closeness and cuddles.

### Common behaviours:

- Tendency to default to the primary care-giver for cuddles and reassurance.
- Initial wariness or even rejection of returning parent.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Returning parent: take your cues from the person who has been the primary care-giver to begin with.
- Allow time for emotional re-connection – if children are a little wary to begin with, this can be upsetting but it will resolve. Spend time with each child individually. Watch them play and give positive attention and praise. Describe what you see them doing (a bit like a commentator). Share their scrapbook or memory box of what has happened during the deployment.
- Build up trust and closeness again by easing in gradually to changes in routines with younger children.

## 7. Reintegration & stabilisation - 4-6 weeks after homecoming (sometimes longer depending on type of deployment)

### How babies and early years children may be feeling:

- Sense of normality.
- Learning to be more relaxed and comfortable with returned parent.

### Common behaviours:

More equal expectations of both care-givers.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- For couples – invest in your own relationship and communication as this is one of the most helpful things you can do for your family. You can access support through Relate for all aspects of couple and family relationships.
- Continue to spend one-to-one time with each child doing something they enjoy.





## Primary School-aged Children: Characteristics of this Age and Stage

- Dip in and out of strong feelings.
- Have a sense of the past and future.
- Younger children have 'magical thinking' – they wish things and have strong imaginations.
- Fears seem very real. Common fears are things such as darkness, being hurt, a parent not being there.
- Self-centred and are just developing a sense of their impact on others. Learning empathy but this takes time.
- May have ideas about cause and effect – did the person leave because of something they did?
- Developing a better understanding of what is happening.
- Memories of the absent parent are more permanent – children can understand they are elsewhere.
- Somatisation – feelings and anxieties are expressed in physical ways e.g. tummy aches.
- Feelings of protection for parents – not wanting to upset them.



## Feelings and Behaviours for Primary School-aged Children During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle

### 1. Feelings and behaviours for primary school-aged children during the stages of the deployment cycle

#### How children may be feeling:

- Shocked (if they have just found out), in denial, worried, sad.
- Angry (sometimes unexpressed), restless, resentful.
- Confused.
- Children may dip in and out of negative feelings and forget all about the impending changes for periods of time.
- Some children who have had positive experiences of deployment before may take the news in their stride.
- A child's response may depend on the type of deployment and the perceived level of risk to the serving person.

#### Common behaviours:

- Children may find it difficult to talk about their feelings because they are not quite sure about their own emotions – it is a confusing time.
- Testing rules and boundaries, outbursts of anger, low-level 'whinging', clinginess, regression to behaviours they had outgrown.

#### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Listen to your child, make opportunities for them to talk and ask questions.
- Answer concerns honestly and in an age-appropriate way.
- Try not to overburden them with your feelings but be clear that the serving person would like to stay with them and will miss them.
- Talk about how well prepared the serving person is, how their team trains and works together to keep each other safe.
- Offer reassurance that their feelings are normal. Be calm.
- Explain that the serving person is going and that they are coming back.
- Talk about where the serving person is going and what they will do. Find out information about it together.
- Where possible, visit the ship, or show pictures of where the parent will sleep.
- Record a Storybook Waves story. Check out the RN Forum for helpful resources regarding deployment. Some families create a 'deployment wall' with a map, photos and special information about the serving person.

## 2. Detachment and Withdrawal – last days before departure

### How children may be feeling:

- Sad.
- Worried.
- Anxious.
- Emotionally detached.
- Withdrawn.
- Guilty.
- Irritable.
- Bereft and empty.
- Angry.
- Proud.
- Excited.
- Responsible for the serving person leaving – may feel somehow at fault as the situation is hard to understand.
- Impatience to 'get it over with'.
- Frustration (particularly if departure is delayed).

### Common behaviours:

- Tearful and sensitive.
- Angry outbursts, sometimes followed by sad or clingy behaviour.
- Wanting attention and physical contact.
- Feeling protective of the remaining parent and young siblings.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Stick to your usual family routines right up to the day of departure. Consider organising something special, like a family party or outing to look back on.
- Let children help the serving person pack if they want to. Help them to pack a photo of themselves somewhere safe.
- Make plans for how you will stay in contact.
- Plan for what will happen during special occasions while the serving person is away – write in birthday cards or choose gifts.
- Spend time with each child individually.
- Exchange 'comfort items', for instance a soft toy or a personal memento, an item the child has made.
- Share memories with your children about ways they have coped with other difficult situations in the past.
- Acknowledge and name feelings (yours as well as theirs) honestly and openly.
- Avoid placing inappropriate responsibility on children by telling them that they are 'the woman/man of the house' while the serving person is away. Don't tell children to 'look after mum/dad'.
- Keep goodbyes short.



### 3. Emotional Disorganisation – early days after departure

#### How children may be feeling:

- Shocked.
- Relieved (may be followed by guilt at feeling relieved).
- Numb.
- Pained.
- Lonely.
- Anxious.
- Sense of anti-climax.
- Sense of disruption.
- Bereft or empty.
- Confused.
- Sense of being overwhelmed.

#### Common behaviours:

- Any of the signs listed above, and:
- A rise in complaints about stomach aches, headaches, or other illnesses.
- More sensitive than usual.
- Problems about school (does not want to go, not paying attention, general complaining).
- Anger towards at-home parent.
- Testing the limits to see if the rules are the same.
- Withdrawal from family and friends.
- Bedwetting.
- Sleep disruption.

#### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Take proper care of yourself and try to maintain healthy habits like eating a balanced diet and getting some exercise.
- Try to stick to normal routines – for example regular meal and bedtimes.
- Remain consistent with your household rules; this helps children to feel secure.
- Give extra support and attention.
- Talk openly and honestly about separation and what they miss. Although this may be painful, it will help the subsequent reunion to remember the person who is absent.
- Set up a visual countdown calendar.
- Talk with school and other caregivers about what is happening.
- Find a trusted adult at school that your child can talk to.
- Try to remain calm and continue to communicate with your child if behaviour becomes challenging – early deployment difficulties most usually subside with time.
- Put words to their feelings – ‘I can see you are feeling very angry/sad/worried’.
- Be prepared for some questions about death (‘Will mummy/daddy kill people or be shot?’). Address these calmly and honestly, even if you are worried about the same thing.
- Create a worry box together so that talking about worries is confined to a set time of day and ‘posted’ out of sight, out of mind.
- Predictable bedtime routines and comfort objects – share familiar stories, have a soft nightlight and/or music.
- Talk to your doctor or health visitor if bedwetting or other concerning behaviours persist.

#### 4. Recovery and Stabilisation – 2nd month after departure onwards

##### How children may be feeling:

- Things start to feel normal and settle into a routine.
- Increased confidence.
- Lift in mood – more positive, creative and funny.
- Proud of their ability to help with household jobs.
- Made anxious by news reports.
- Persistent sense of vulnerability and irrational fears about safety.

##### Common behaviours:

- Regressive behaviours settle down and resolve.
- Sleep patterns improve.
- Able to manage feelings better.
- Learning new skills and taking on new responsibilities.

##### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Keep a scrapbook or memory box of things you are doing whilst the serving person is away, so that children can have a record to share with the returning parent.
- Try to filter the amount and type of news from operational areas. Provide opportunities to talk about the absent parent and be sensitive to when children would prefer not to talk.
- Model non-fearful behaviour.
- Provide predictable separation and reunion routines for drop-offs and pick-ups – be there when you say you will.
- Make plans for weekends and holidays.
- Seek support from a GP, health visitor or school nurse about any behaviours that are unresolved and continuing to cause concern (such as bedwetting).

##### Deployed parent –

- Make small and consistent efforts to stay in touch (Submariners and those on remote ops – you might need to be very creative and plan ahead to leave notes for special occasions and surprises before you go. Perhaps a number of special books to read together or a hidden treasure hunt).
- When sending postcards, mark an 'X' where you stood on the picture.
- Communicate with each child individually, even if it is brief.
- Keep a list of things to talk about – ask them about their friends, hobbies, interests.
- For young children, tangible objects like letters/pictures tend to work better than e-mails or texts.

## 5. Anticipation of Homecoming – 1 to 2 months before return

### How children may be feeling:

- Joyful and excited.
- Apprehensive and nervous (particularly older children who may feel that rules will change and newly-won freedoms be lost).
- Confused and uncertain – younger children may have difficulty remembering what it was like to be around their serving parent.
- Guilty about negative feelings.

### Common behaviours:

- Often will carry on much as normal until close to the event, especially younger children.
- May communicate any worries through unpredictable behaviour.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Send letters from the children to the absent parent, updating them on new skills acquired and things that have changed.
- If not discussed prior to deployment, agree between the primary care-giver and serving parent how you will navigate the homecoming with regard to extended family members.
- The serving person should take charge of managing expectations on his/her side of the family. It may be necessary to explain the need for the immediate family unit to have time and space to re-integrate before having extended visits.
- Ask children how they would like to prepare – would they like to make a banner or a cake? It doesn't matter if they don't, giving the invitation also invites them to mentally prepare for another change.
- Explain what will happen. Amid the excitement, try to resist the urge to build up the homecoming into a massive deal - this increases the pressure of expectation of things to be perfect and can add to the stress.

## 6. Renegotiation – early days after homecoming

### How children may be feeling:

- Beginning of sense of being back together as a family.
- Enjoying more warmth, closeness and cuddles.
- Sense of a loss of freedom and independence – having to be answerable to another parent.
- Resentful and angry at the separation which could not be expressed at the time to the serving parent.
- Tense, expecting that everything will be perfect when it may not be.
- Unsettled – a sense that things are changing and that renegotiation needs to happen.

### Common behaviours:

- Tendency to default to the primary care-giver for decisions.
- Confusion about which parent to ask for things.
- Clinginess, shadowing the returning parent.
- Seeking attention in both positive and less constructive ways.
- Testing to see if both parents will have a united front – playing one off against the other.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Returning parent: take your cues from the parent who has been the primary care-giver on matters of discipline and rules to begin with.
- Resist the urge to dive straight in with discipline until relationships have been firmly re-established.
- Allow time for emotional re-connection – if children are a little wary to begin with, this can be upsetting but it will resolve.
- Spend time with each child individually, doing an activity of the child's choice.
- Share their scrapbook or memory box of what has happened during the deployment.
- Build trust by easing in gradually to changes in routines.
- Give older children a bit of space and allow them to continue with their normal activities.
- Find out about their interests and use those as a springboard to talk.
- Ask for their advice about music and technology.
- Watch their favourite YouTube channel with them.
- Recognise that these early days tend to be emotionally challenging, with changes causing friction and clashes – this is normal and is not a reflection on the quality of relationships or an indication of how things will be in the future.



**7. Reintegration & stabilisation – 4-6 weeks after homecoming (sometimes longer depending on type of deployment)**

**How children may be feeling:**

- Sense of normality.
- Learning to be more relaxed and comfortable with each other.

**Common behaviours:**

- More equal expectations from both care-givers.
- Understanding and acceptance of rules and boundaries – although older children will continue to test these as a normal part of their development.

**Strategies and practical ideas that may help:**

- If differences in parenting approaches are making the adjustment challenging, consider undertaking a parenting course or doing some reading together on the subject, so that you can think about how to get back on the same page.
- For couples – invest in your own relationship and communication as this is one of the most helpful things you can do for your family. You can access support through Relate for all aspects of couple and family relationships.
- Continue to spend one-to-one time with each child doing something they enjoy.
- Think about your family traditions and ways you can strengthen the bonds between you while you are together.
- Schedule regular family time to have a film night, play games or have a meal together. Have fun.

“

I wonder if she will still like me when I come back. I know it is crazy, but you do think about it.

”

## Teenagers: Characteristics of this Age and Stage

- Exploring and asserting personal identity.
- Peer relationships take precedence.
- Necessary distancing from parents.
- Testing boundaries and increased independence.
- Risk-taking.
- Emotional brain develops far ahead of the rational brain.
- Developing empathy but still inclined to be self-centred.
- Developing political views and own values.
- Developing and exploring sexual identity.
- Highly connected via the internet and social media.



## Feelings and Behaviours for Teenagers During the Stages of the Deployment Cycle

### 1. Anticipation of Loss – 4-6 weeks before deployment

#### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Shocked, in denial, worried, sad.
- Angry, restless, resentful.
- Confused about conflicting feelings.
- Sense of pressure and obligation to make the most of the remaining time, and guilt at negative thoughts.
- Concerned about possible increased responsibility for siblings/household jobs.
- Concerned about keeping up favourite activities.
- Concerned about the parent left at home.
- Worried about what will happen in an emergency.
- Teens who have had positive experiences of deployment before may take the news in their stride, and welcome the opportunity for greater independence and less supervision.
- Responses may depend on the type of deployment and the perceived level of risk to the serving person.

#### Common behaviours:

- Challenging authority and testing the rules.
- Withdrawal into own space in their room or online.
- Unexpected tears or overreactions to small things.
- Spending more time with friends.
- Acting 'cool' and not bothered.
- Regression to behaviours they had when they were younger.
- Difficulty identifying and talking about their feelings.
- Angry.
- Clingy.

#### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Listening and asking open questions to help them to talk. Be available to speak as much as you can.
- Answer their concerns honestly.
- Try not to overburden them, but talk about how you feel and things that help you. Sometimes this can give 'permission' for them to talk about feelings they feel guilty about having. Offer reassurance that their feelings are normal.
- Remind your teen of difficult situations they have coped with in the past and talk about ways they can approach the new challenges.
- If the deployment is risky, talk about how well prepared the serving person is, how their team trains and works together to keep each other safe. Talk about where the serving person is going and what they will do. Find out information about it together.
- Decide together how you want to communicate as a family, whether that is through emails, WhatsApp, or other social media.
- Take the opportunity to check that your teen's privacy settings are secure, and that they understand what information they can and cannot share about the serving person's activities.
- Agree as a family what you each expect in terms of contact, and explain what the limitations are likely to be.
- If a serving parent is able to access social media, it is preferable for them to make contact directly with their teen before posting publicly, to reinforce the importance of the special bond they have with their young person.
- If your teen will assume more caring responsibilities for siblings or family members while the serving person is away, talk to the school about support, particularly if they are caring for someone with additional needs or a disability.



## 2. Detachment and Withdrawal – last days before departure

### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Sad.
- Worried.
- Anxious.
- Emotionally detached.
- Withdrawn.
- Guilty.
- Responsible for the serving person leaving – may feel at fault as the situation is hard to understand.
- Impatient to 'get it over with'.
- Frustrated (particularly if departure is delayed).

### Common behaviours:

- Lashing out, arguing.
- Unwilling to talk about their worries.
- Withdrawn and avoiding feelings.
- Wanting to be out with their mates.
- Curious and needing information.
- Changes in mood, eating and sleeping patterns.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Avoid placing inappropriate responsibility on teens by telling them that they are 'the woman/man of the house' while the serving person is away.
- Don't tell them to 'look after mum/dad'.
- Let school and other caregivers know about the deployment.
- Keep to your usual family routines right up to the day of departure.
- Consider organising something special, like a family party or outing to look back on.
- Invite your teen to help the serving person pack, but only if they want to.
- Make plans for how you will stay in contact if you haven't already discussed this.
- Plan for what will happen during special occasions while the serving person is away – write in birthday cards or choose gifts.
- Spend time with each teen individually.
- Acknowledge and name feelings honestly and openly.
- Keep goodbyes short.

### 3. Emotional Disorganisation – early days after departure

#### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Sad.
- Worried.
- Anxious.
- Emotionally detached.
- Withdrawn.
- Guilty.
- Responsible for the serving person leaving – may feel at fault as the situation is hard to understand.
- Impatient to 'get it over with'.
- Frustrated (particularly if departure is delayed).

#### Common behaviours:

- Common behaviours:
- A rise in complaints about stomach aches, headaches, or other illnesses.
- More sensitive than usual.
- Sudden or unusual problems at school (e.g. does not want to go, not paying attention, general complaining, getting into trouble) or outside school.
- Anger towards at-home parent.
- Testing the limits to see if the rules are the same.
- Low self-esteem and self-criticism.
- Misdirected anger (disproportionate anger over small things; directed at siblings/parent).
- Drop in performance in school.
- Loss of interest in usual interests and hobbies.
- Dealing with feelings through indirect means (changes in eating habits, exercise, sexual activity, use of alcohol/drugs).

#### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Recognise that the teenage years are marked by challenging rules and boundaries at the best of times, but look out for behaviours that are uncharacteristic for your teenager.
- If you are concerned about their behaviour, speak to a trusted member of staff at school or your GP.
- Try to remain calm and continue to communicate with your child even if behaviour becomes challenging. Early deployment difficulties most usually subside with time.
- Put words to their feelings – "You seem very angry/sad/worried."
- Teens may try to keep up a brave face, so try to be available to talk about concerns even if it appears that they do not want to.
- Try to maintain rules and boundaries that existed prior to the deployment.
- Reach out to your adult support network to avoid over-burdening teens who may feel responsible for caring for you.
- Ease off on articulating expectations of attainment/high marks at school.
- Be compassionate but firm about attendance and homework.
- Have your teen keep devices and charge their phone outside their bedroom so that they can sleep and have some down time, especially if the deployed person is on an operation with a high media profile.
- Listen to your 'gut feeling' if you sense that something is not quite right – seek professional advice/help.

#### 4. Recovery and Stabilisation – 2nd month after departure onwards

##### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Things start to feel normal and settle into a routine.
- Increased confidence and independence.
- Lift in mood – more positive, creative and funny.
- Proud of ability to help with household jobs.
- Stressed, arising from additional responsibilities.
- Anxious about news reports.

##### Common behaviours:

- Cultivating friendships and sources of support.
- Taking on new responsibilities in the home.
- Increasing independence and confidence.
- Wanting their views to be taken into consideration and a more 'adult' role.
- Testing rules and boundaries (the job of all teenagers!).
- Wanting increased freedom.
- Trying out a new image.

##### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Try to filter the amount and type of news from operational areas. This is more of a challenge with teens – open a discussion about things that they may have read or seen on YouTube.
- Provide opportunities to talk about the absent parent and be sensitive to when children would prefer not to talk.
- Model non-fearful behaviour.
- Share 'ordinary conversations' about things that both you and they think about – social media, fashion, music, what's on TV, how your day has been etc.
- Make plans for weekends and holidays.
- Seek support from a GP, school nurse or teacher about any behaviours that are continuing to cause concern.
- Maintain rules and boundaries, but recognise that changes will occur and re-negotiation will take place during the deployment.

##### Deployed parent –

- Make small and consistent efforts to stay in touch if you can.
- Communicate with each young person individually, even if it is brief.
- Keep a list of things to talk about – ask them about their friends, hobbies, interests.
- Time invested by the serving person in maintaining the bond with their teen will pay dividends later.
- Expect it to be a one-way street and keep in contact as much as you can, even if your teen does not respond. Any contact you do receive in return is a bonus.



## 5. Anticipation of Homecoming – 1 to 2 months before return

### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Joyous and excited.
- Apprehensive and nervous (may feel that rules will change and newly-won freedoms be lost).
- Worried about what the absent parent will think about actions they have taken.
- Guilty about negative feelings.

### Common behaviours:

- May or may not wish to be involved in preparations for the homecoming.
- Appearing aloof and not bothered about it.
- Continuing focus on friendships with peers.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- If not discussed prior to deployment, agree between the primary care-giver and serving parent how you will navigate the homecoming with regard to extended family members.
- The serving person should take charge of managing expectations on his/her side of the family. It may be necessary to explain the need for the immediate family unit to have time and space to re-integrate before having extended visits. No one wants their first row to take place in front of their in-laws!
- Ask teens to think about how they would like to prepare – would they like to make a banner or a cake? It doesn't matter if they don't, giving the invitation also invites them to mentally prepare for another change.
- Try to resist the urge to build up the homecoming into a massive deal - this increases the pressure of expectation of things to be perfect and can add to the stress.

## 6. Renegotiation – early days after homecoming

### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Beginning to sense being back together as a family.
- Sense of a loss of freedom and independence – having to be answerable to another parent.
- Resentful and angry at the separation which could not be expressed at the time to the serving parent.
- Tense, expecting that everything will be perfect when it may not be.
- Feeling 'hemmed in' – a lot more togetherness and pressure to get along.
- Unsettled – a sense that things are changing and that renegotiation needs to happen.

### Common behaviours:

- Testing boundaries and limits.
- Clashes over how much time they spend at home.
- 'Checking out' or retreating to their bedroom/social media.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- Returning parent: take your cues from the parent who has been the primary care-giver on matters of discipline and rules to begin with.
- Resist the urge to dive straight in with discipline until relationships have been firmly re-established.
- Allow time for emotional re-connection.
- Hang out with your teen one-to-one doing something they enjoy, e.g. a computer game, watching a sport, cooking a meal.
- Give teens space and allow them to continue with their normal activities.
- Find out about their interests and use those as a springboard to talk.
- Ask for their advice about music and technology.
- Watch their favourite YouTube channel with them.
- Use time in the car or out for a walk to strike up a conversation – it feels less intimidating to teens than a one-to-one involving eye contact.
- Recognise that these early days tend to be emotionally challenging, with changes causing friction and clashes – this is normal and is not a reflection on the quality of relationships or an indication of how things will be in the future.

## 7. Reintegration & stabilisation – 4-6 weeks after homecoming (sometimes longer depending on type of deployment)

### How teenagers may be feeling:

- Sense of normality.
- Learning to be more relaxed and comfortable with each other.

### Common behaviours:

Understanding and accepting rules and boundaries – although they will continue to test these as a normal part of their development.

### Strategies and practical ideas that may help:

- If differences in parenting styles are making the adjustment challenging, consider undertaking a parenting course together so that you can think about how to get back on the same page.
- For couples – invest in your own relationship and communication as this is one of the most helpful things you can do for your family. You can access support through Relate for all aspects of couple and family relationships.
- Continue to spend one-to-one time with each teen doing something they enjoy.
- Think about your family traditions and ways you can strengthen the bonds between you while you are together, doing things you all enjoy and that allow communication.

## Final Thoughts

We hope that this publication is helpful to you, whatever your connection to Royal Navy and Royal Marines families.

**If you are a professional** working with Naval Service parents, children or young people, thank you for your interest. Please consider how you might share this to improve understanding of serving families' lifestyles and the support offered to families with an absent parent.

**If you are in a Royal Navy or Royal Marines family** and are coping with parental absence, you are doing a great job! We know that serving people, spouses, partners, and children often feel unappreciated when it comes to recognising the sacrifices that they make in family life.

The Naval Service can only operate effectively with the support of family members... thanks for all you continue to do.

Please follow the Naval Families Federation on social media, get in touch to share what Naval life looks like for you or visit [nff.org.uk](http://nff.org.uk) to access a range of current, relevant, and relatable information.

# Sources of Support and Information





## Carers Trust

<https://carers.org/about-us/about-young-carers>

Helps young carers to cope with their caring role through specialised services across the UK.

## Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Telephone: 0800 1111

A confidential UK helpline for children who want to talk about any problem, however big or small.

## Child Helpline International

<https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/>

A website that hosts contact details for child helplines across the globe, for children outside of the UK.

## Children's Society

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/youngcarer/help-for-young-people>

Advice and resources for young carers, and information on how to connect with other young carers.

## Education Advisory Team (UK)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-children-services-dcs>

Provides professional information, advice and guidance regarding the education of Service Children in the UK.

## Forces Children's Education

<https://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk/>

Provides information for education professionals and Armed Forces families in Scotland - created by the Association of Directors of Education (ADES), in conjunction with the Scottish Government, Local Authorities across Scotland and the Ministry of Defence.

## Forces Children Scotland

<https://forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/>

Supporting children and young people from armed forces and veteran families, including with mental health and wellbeing, education and learning and financial help.

## Home-Start

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/forces-families>

Home-Start is a local community network of trained volunteers and expert support helping families with young children through their challenging times.

## Kooth

<https://www.kooth.com/mod>

A free, safe and anonymous mental wellbeing platform which allows young people to chat with a friendly mental health practitioner, find support from a helpful community or access a range of self-help tools.

## Naval Children's Charity

<https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/>

Provides support to children and young people up to 25 years old of Serving and Veteran parents/guardians in the Royal Navy, Maritime Reserves and RFA. Support given in response to identifying individual needs of child/family either as financial grants, holistic advice and support working in partnership with other organisations, free resources for children, families, schools and other organisations. The charity has a team of caseworkers that work with families to identify and address crisis and issues they are facing, particularly child-centred need.

## Naval Families Federation

<https://nff.org.uk/>

Email: [ContactUs@nff.org.uk](mailto:ContactUs@nff.org.uk)

The Naval Families Federation exists to give Royal Navy and Royal Marines families a voice and representation to the Ministry of Defence, Ministers, other Government departments, the Chain of Command and other civilian service providers. As an independent charity, we provide support and guidance on matters affecting the daily lives of Naval service families, acting as an advocate when appropriate to resolve complex issues.

## Overseas Education and Supportability Team (OEST)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-children-services-dcs>

Provides professional information, advice and guidance for service personal and eligible MOD civilians regarding the education of their children in overseas locations.

## Reading Force

<https://www.readingforce.org.uk/>

Shared reading initiative encouraging families to read, talk, and scrapbook about books.

## Relate

<https://www.relate.org.uk/royal-navy-and-royal-marines-counselling>

Free relationship counselling support for serving and veteran Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and/or their partners and family. Face-to-face, by telephone, webcam or live chat, even if you are overseas.

## Royal Navy Family & People Support (RN FPS)

<https://forum.royalnavy.mod.uk/contact>

Service support for Naval Service personnel, their families and communities. Social work service for Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families, community support, information, a moderated online forum and social media groups.

## Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC)

<https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/how-we-help/families-and-relationships>

From discounted activity camps to specialist practical assistance, 'Strengthening Families – By Your Side' offers Royal Navy and Royal Marines families the right support at the right time.

## Service Children in State Schools (SCISS)

<https://www.sciss.org.uk/>

An affiliation of state-maintained schools in England with Service children on roll. Led by an advisory group that informs the Government about effective practice and current issues.

## Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP Alliance)

<https://www.scipalliance.org/>

Partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children from armed forces families. Website hosts research and resources for practitioners.

## Storybook Waves

<https://www.aggies.org.uk/storybook-waves>

Email: [storybookwaves@aggies.org.uk](mailto:storybookwaves@aggies.org.uk)

Helps members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines maintain the link with their children by recording a bedtime story for them to listen to when a parent is serving away from home.

## Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru

<https://www.sseccymru.co.uk/>

A Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme. They have created a variety of resources to support Service families, schools and Local Authorities.

## Togetherall

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

Togetherall (formally Big White Wall) is an online, anonymous, and safe support community where you can feel heard and understood. It has supported more than 16,000 members of the Armed Forces community, including family members, personnel, veterans and older Service children.

## Thinkuknow – Internet Safety

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Resources for different age groups (children from 5 upwards) and for parents, made by CEOP. Films, Q&As, advice and solutions, to online issues such as understanding privacy, bullying, grooming, sexting, selfies and more.

## YoungMinds

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health. Resources and information for children, young people and parents, and a parents' helpline.





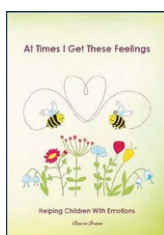
# Books for All



Thanks to the positive feedback we have received, we know that being able to access a range of relevant and informative books really helps busy Naval families.

**This recommended book list includes some old favourites as well as books that you may have only recently heard of!**

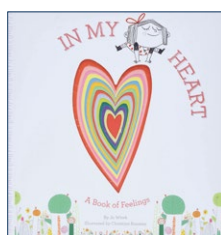
## Nursery & Primary School Age



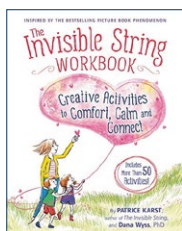
**At Times I Get These Feelings**  
Clare Shaw  
[Find out more](#)



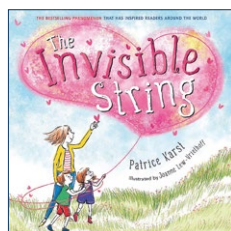
**The Huge Bag of Worries**  
Virginia Ironside  
[Find out more](#)



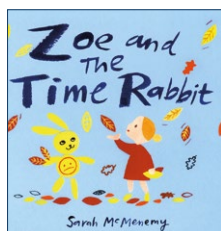
**In My Heart: A Book of Feelings**  
Jo Witek  
[Find out more](#)



**The Invisible String Workbook**  
Patrice Karst & Dana Wyss  
[Find out more](#)



**The Invisible String Story**  
Patrice Karst & Dana Wyss  
[Find out more](#)



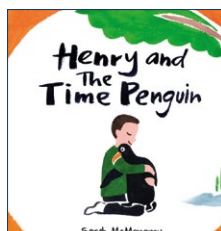
**Zoe and the Time Rabbit**  
Sarah McMenemy  
[Find out more](#)



**Sometimes: My Daddy's Gone Away With Work**  
Clare Shaw  
[Find out more](#)



**Sometimes: My Mummy's Gone Away With Work**  
Clare Shaw  
[Find out more](#)



**Henry and the Time Penguin**  
Sarah McMenemy  
[Find out more](#)

## Deployment Box for children aged 7-13 years



**A Better Day**  
Dr. Alex George



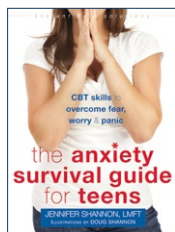
**Happy Confident Me**  
Annabel Rosenhead & Nadim Saad



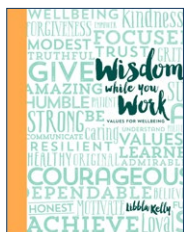
## Secondary School & Young Adult Age



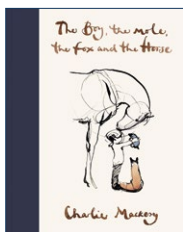
**Bullies, Bigmouths & So-Called Friends**  
J Alexander  
[Find out more](#)



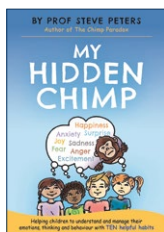
**The Anxiety Survival Guide For Teens**  
Jennifer Shannon  
[Find out more](#)



**Wisdom While you Work**  
Libbla Kelly  
[Find out more](#)

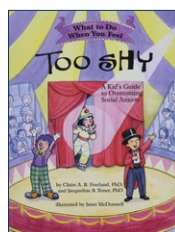


**The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse**  
Charlie Mackesy  
[Find out more](#)

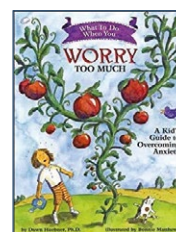


**My Hidden Chimp**  
Prof Steve Peters  
[Find out more](#)

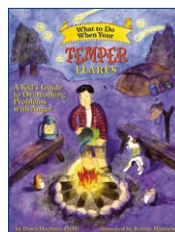
## Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)



**What to Do: When You Feel Too Shy**  
Clare A. B. Freeland  
[Find out more](#)



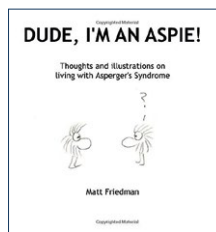
**What to Do: When You Worry Too Much**  
Dawn Huebner  
[Find out more](#)



**What to Do: When Your Temper Flares**  
Dawn Huebner  
[Find out more](#)



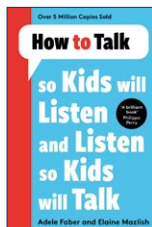
**What to Do: When You Dread Your Bed**  
Dawn Huebner  
[Find out more](#)



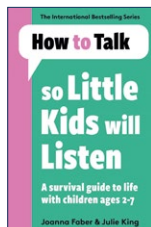
**Dude, I'm an Aspie!**  
Matt Friedman  
[Find out more](#)



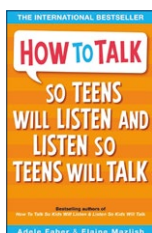
## Parenting



**How to Talk: So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk**  
Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish  
[Find out more](#)



**How to Talk: So Little Kids Will Listen (Ages 2-7)**  
Joanna Faber & Julie King  
[Find out more](#)



**How to Talk: So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk**  
Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish  
[Find out more](#)

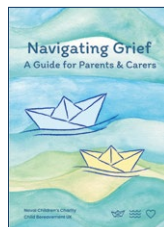


**Raising Children in a Digital Age**  
Bex Lewis  
[Find out more](#)

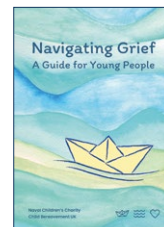


**Parenting Apart**  
Christina McGhee  
[Find out more](#)

## Bereavement



**Navigating Grief: A guide for Parents and Carers**  
[Find out more](#)

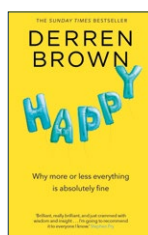


**Navigating Grief: A guide for Young People**  
[Find out more](#)



**You will be Okay**  
Julie Stokes  
[Find out more](#)

## Adult



**Happy: Why More or Less Everything is Absolutely Fine**  
Derren Brown  
[Find out more](#)

# Naval Families

F E D E R A T I O N

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