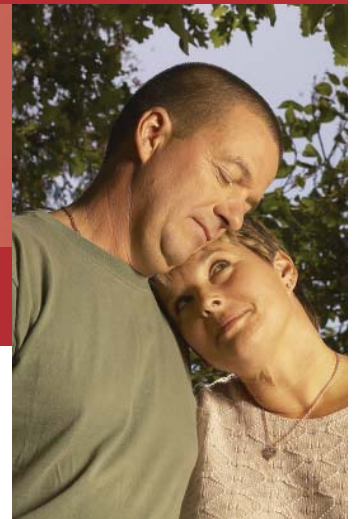


When a Spouse is Deployed

Coping with Separation

Family separation periods provide for a time of self-growth. Not many spouses have such an opportunity to take a good look at their own lives.



What Is Your Attitude?

Your attitude is the state of mind with which you approach a situation. Your attitude is important because it affects how you look, what you say, and what you do. It affects how you feel, both physically and mentally, and it greatly affects how successful you are in achieving your purpose in life. What could be more important?

Negative attitudes make life difficult for everyone. Positive attitudes help everyone get the most out of life. Though talent is important and knowledge is essential, the most important key to success is your state of mind!

When your spouse goes away, you have to make a choice. You can apply a positive attitude, and make the best of the time you have apart, or you can apply a negative attitude, draw the drapes, withdraw, and complain until he or she comes home. Given the two choices, the first one is healthier and more to your advantage.

Time passes quickly when you are busy. It also makes for better, longer, and more interesting letters to your spouse. Find something you enjoy doing. Something that says YOU! Set goals for tomorrow, next week, and next month.

The completion of a project will give you a sense of satisfaction. Have you thought about the following:

- Going back to school?
- Taking up a new hobby?
- Pursuing an aerobic or weight program?
- Seeking part-time or full-time employment?
- Volunteering?

Handling Stress

- Take care of yourself. Do not try to heal family and friends.
- Get involved in things that make you happy.
- Avoid self-medication and abusing substances like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and food. Liquor and drugs reduce the perception of stress, but do not reduce stress.
- Be flexible and accept that you cannot control everything.
- Plan for stress. Set realistic goals that provide time for breaks and limit work.





Handling Stress

- Take a stress reduction class.
- Learn how to praise yourself and accept praise. Turn off the “constant censure” voice that always says, “you shouldn’t.”
- Keep a sense of humor with you at all times.
- Start thinking about what you really want out of life and begin to work toward those goals.
- Take a mental health day every two or three months.
- Avoid sulking. Let people know what you want.
- Learn how to express irritation and appreciation to others.
- Pick out somebody you work with and tell them something about yourself that you have not told anyone else.

When the Blues Get Bluer: Loneliness

Most people find the dinner hour and Sunday afternoon to be the times when they miss their spouse the most, and everybody has an occasional blue Monday.

If your blue days are increasing in frequency, pay attention to what is going on around and in you. Are you—

- Letting things go?
- Gaining weight?
- Yelling at the kids?
- Constantly watching TV?
- Sleeping in late?
- Withdrawing from people?
- Dropping out of organizations?
- Spending a lot of time with your thoughts?
- Drinking more than usual or drinking alone?

No one takes a giant leap into depression. It is more of a cumulative process. Some use alcohol and drugs as a remedy, but that does not work. Drinking does nothing to answer life’s problems. In fact, drinking just helps you temporarily ignore your problems—but the problems are still there.

Handling Depression

The cure for depression is the same as the prevention. Take positive action. Behavior is changed by thoughts and feelings. If you can, talk to a friend. If you are alone your problems seem overwhelming, contact a Mental Health professional. They can help.

When your spouse is away, you need to feel that you are moving up and forward.

This material is adapted from the “Predeployment Guide: A Tool for Coping” on the Air Force Crossroads Web site at <http://www.afcrossroads.com/famseparation>.