



## Single parenting while your partner is deployed

### Defence Community Organisation

**While your partner is deployed and you are at home with the children, there may be times when you feel like a single parent. Although the situation is temporary, there are emotional, financial and practical day-to-day adjustments you will need to make as you cope with this transition.**

**How can you calm your children's fears about their parent when you are worried too? Where will you turn to when you need help? The information below will help you adjust to life as a temporary single parent.**

#### **PREPARING FOR WHAT'S AHEAD**

Adjusting to life while your partner is deployed should go more smoothly if you take some time beforehand to think through and discuss some of the issues you may face. Try to anticipate what might happen and put systems in place to make it easier.

**COMMUNICATION** Discuss how you will communicate with one another, and how often. Talk about how the deploying parent will stay in touch with the children. It's comforting for children to know they are in their parent's thoughts, even when that parent is far away.

**LEGAL** Be sure you have a power of attorney before your partner deploys. This will allow you to act on his or her behalf during the deployment. Make sure your Wills are up to date as well.

**FINANCES** If your partner takes care of the bills, have him or her go over the process with you. Set up joint bank and credit card

accounts if you don't already have them in place.

**PLAN AHEAD** Plan strategies for handling everyday and emergency issues. Figure out what you will do when you or your child is sick or you have to travel for work. Make a plan for backup child care and be sure your child knows and understands the plan. Know who to contact for emergencies.

#### **ADJUSTING EMOTIONALLY**

A deployment can bring out a range of strong emotions, and some of them seem in direct conflict with each other. You may miss your partner terribly, yet at the same time resent his or her freedom from family responsibilities. Be aware that all of your feelings are normal reactions to a difficult situation and there is support available for you and your family.

Seek out a support system. You can contact the Defence Family Helpline for information on local resources and opportunities for families for deployed service members. Other strategies include getting to know your neighbours, taking on only what you can handle, learning techniques for stress management.



Whether you see a funny movie, join a yoga class, catch up with friends, take a short walk, or indulge in a quiet cup of coffee or tea at the end of the day, make sure you seek out opportunities for self-care.

Defence Social Workers can help you learn how to better manage any stresses in your life. Contact the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608 for information on stress management techniques or for a referral to a social worker in your location.

### HELPING YOUR CHILD ADJUST

Children may react to a parent's deployment as they would a more permanent separation. They may worry about what will happen to them and be afraid that the parent at home will leave too. The following are ways to help:

- Keep to your pre-deployment routines as much as possible
- Talk about the deployed parent
- Try to understand your child's fears
- Be consistent with discipline
- Tell teachers and other adults in your child's life about the deployment
- Plan special outings or activities on days when your partner would usually be home
- Let your child take on one of the absent parent's chores
- Help your child communicate with the deployed parent
- Help your child express their feelings

### MAKING THE DEPLOYMENT EASIER FOR YOU

Simplify your life as much as you can. You may feel you're short on one key ingredient – time. Raising children, working, and managing a household can be very hectic, but if you take steps to simplify your life, you may find it easier to cope. Some ideas include using a family calendar, pre-planning meals and getting a cleaner.

Most importantly, don't forget to take care of yourself. If you get enough sleep and exercise well, the adjustment to life without your partner will be easier for you and your family.

For more information on this factsheet and other Defence Community Organisation support services visit [www.defence.gov.au/dco](http://www.defence.gov.au/dco) or call the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

Defence Community Organisation offers a wide range of support services for the families of ADF members.

The best way to access these services is to call 1800 624 608. The Defence Family Helpline is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

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