

MENTAL HEALTH AND READINESS

In Combat, Soldiers: Were constantly alert, revved-up, aggressive when necessary, and may have worked long hours.

At home, Spouses: Maintained individual and family mental well-being.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may display behaviors that cause Spouses or children to worry, including inappropriate anger, difficulty sleeping (including nightmares), startling easily, and excessive drinking. Soldiers who need help may not seek it. Spouses and children who need mental health services may have difficulty accessing care.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Behaviors that are causing problems in your family need to be addressed. Realize that you might not be the person the Soldier will accept help from. Know what mental health resources are available for you and your family.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Recognize changes in yourself that might be signs you should get help; seek assistance if you need it. Accept help from others, including your Spouse. Avoid pushing away or lashing out at those who try to help you. Don't attempt to avoid or treat problems with alcohol or drugs.

INDEPENDENCE

In Combat, Soldiers: Made decisions that revolved around their deployment duties and were less available to participate in household decisions.

At home, Spouses: Functioned alone or as a single parent by making household decisions with less input from Soldiers.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may want to change household decisions that were made during the deployment. Spouses may feel they need to give up doing things they enjoyed during the deployment, which may lead to resentment. Soldiers may feel left out or excluded due to Spouses' increased independence.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Don't assume life will be as it was before or during the deployment. Take into account your Soldier's preference about how the house is run. Be willing to compromise.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Respect and appreciate your Spouse's decisions that were made during the deployment. Your home life will likely be different than it was before you deployed. Don't fix what's working; ask how you can help.

NAVIGATING THE ARMY SYSTEM

In Combat, Soldiers: Followed rules and regulations.

At home, Spouses: Navigated the Army environment, using the available resources in order to better integrate into the military community.

Potential Concerns: Spouses may be angry and resentful for having to deal with a complicated, bureaucratic organization (e.g., TRICARE, DEERS) while Soldiers were gone.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Continue learning the Army system by asking questions. Be patient, it takes time.

Recognize that you need to maintain the skills you obtained for future deployments and separations.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Share all information you have about Army services with your Spouses. Recognize that it can be difficult to navigate the Army system; help your Spouse with the navigation.

DENIAL OF SELF (SELF-SACRIFICE)

In Combat, Soldiers: Literally put their lives on the line for their fellow Soldiers in service of their country.

At home, Spouses: Often sacrificed their own needs and desires (careers, educational goals, proximity to family and friends, etc.) by placing their needs last.

Potential Concerns: Both Spouses and Soldiers may feel that they have sacrificed a lot and are not being fully appreciated.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Tell your Soldier you appreciate their sacrifice and that you know that being a Soldier is difficult.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Be aware that you are not the only one making sacrifices. Show your Spouses how much you appreciate their hard work and encourage them to pursue their own interests.

CUES FOR HELP

If any of the following are severe, persistent or interfering with daily life:

Spouses:

Feeling depressed, down, angry, tense, irritable, hopeless or resentful; Repeated crying episodes, sleep problems or appetite changes; Using medications, illegal drugs or alcohol to cope; Taking out frustrations on others; Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent or actions; Isolation or withdrawal from important relationships and activities; Family, coworkers or friends tell you that you need help.

Soldiers:

Strong memories, nightmares or other sleep problems, easily startled; Conflict, arguing, anger or hostility; Aggressive driving; Excessive use of alcohol or other substances; Performance problems at work or home; Distant from family, talking of divorce/separation unwanted by Spouse; Feeling down, unable to enjoy life, not making future plans; Suicidal or homicidal thinking, intent or actions; Family, NCOs, or friends tell you that you need help.

Changes in normal behavior and persistent problems:

Children:

Irritability; Problems controlling temper, fights, hitting/biting/kicking; Attention problems; Withdrawal, sadness; Academic problems; School personnel, friends or others tell you your child needs help.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- Military or Civilian Religious Personnel
- Mental/Behavioral Health Services
- Army Community Services (ACS)
- Social Work Services (SWS)
- Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- Child Youth Services (CYS)
- New Parent Support Program (NPSP)
- School Counselors

Army/Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

www.militaryonesource.com

WRAIR Land Combat Study Team

(301) 319-9607

The opinions and views expressed here are those of the Land Combat Study Team, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.

Updated 19 JAN 07.

www.battlemind.org

Spouse Battlemind Training



Helping You and Your Family Transition From Deployments

Training Timeframe: POST-DEPLOYMENT



Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR)

Spouse Battlemind is the Spouse's ability to face deployments with resilience and strength, allowing easier separations and smoother reunions.

Key components include:

- **Independence:** the capability of having a fulfilling and meaningful life as part of an Army Centric Family.
- **Resiliency:** the ability to overcome setbacks and obstacles and to maintain positive thoughts during times of adversity.

The effects of deployments on families can:

- Vary amongst family members.
- Have a positive impact and bring you closer together.
- Introduce issues that may affect your or your family's well being.

Spouse Battlemind skills increase your and your family's resiliency throughout the military deployment cycle

Buddies (Social Support)

Adding/Subtracting Family Roles

Taking Control

Talking it Out

Loyalty and Commitment

Emotional Balance

Mental Health and Readiness

Independence

Navigating the Army System

Denial of Self (Self-Sacrifice)

BUDDIES (SOCIAL SUPPORT)

In Combat, Soldiers: Often made strong ties with their fellow Soldiers.

At home, Spouses: May have developed new friends, strengthened existing friendships, became more involved in the Army community and participated in new activities. Some Spouses may have returned home to their families during the deployment.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may want to spend more time with their buddies than their Spouses. The fact that Spouses' new friends, strengthened friendships and new activities were developed without Soldiers may feel threatening to them.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Talk with your Soldier about how to balance time spent between family and friends. Introduce new friends to your Soldier; don't hide new friendships or activities.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Talk with your Spouse about how to balance time spent between your family and buddies. Respect, and if possible, become involved in, your Spouse's friendships and new interests. Appreciate those who helped your spouse in your absence.

ADDING/SUBTRACTING FAMILY ROLES

In Combat, Soldiers: Were removed from the daily lives of their families and missed family events (e.g., anniversaries, births, graduations, birthdays, sporting events, etc.).

At home, Spouses: Performed roles that might otherwise be shared.

Potential Concerns: Spouses and Soldiers may resist resuming and sharing roles. Children may resist Soldiers' return to authority. Soldiers may feel left out and fail to actively participate in family roles.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Help your Soldier resume family roles, despite possible resistance from your kids. Share day-to-day decisions and responsibilities upon reunion.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Upon your return, resume an active role, but don't force it too much, too soon. Don't let changes in roles and/or responsibilities cause you to withdraw from the family. Understand that your Spouse may need a break.

TAKING CONTROL

In Combat, Soldiers: Maintained strict control of their weapons and gear in order to survive and were not in control of what was going on at home.

At home, Spouses: Were the head of the household.

Potential Concerns: Soldiers may have an increased need for order and control upon return. Spouses and Soldiers may have different priorities for the family's time and money. Soldiers may feel treated the household as a military unit.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Renegotiate priorities and incorporate those of your Soldier. Recognize your Soldier's need for order and control may be due in part to his/her deployment experiences.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Respect and appreciate how your Spouse managed the household during your deployment. Be flexible and avoid treating family members like subordinates. Let go of the little things. If you have children, understand that they tend to like routine and predictability.

TALKING IT OUT

In Combat, Soldiers: Shared mission-specific information on a need-to-know basis and many had limited access to phone or email.

At home, Spouses: Could share only a limited amount of what occurred during the deployment due to communication limitations.

Potential Concerns: Spouses, Soldiers and children can't know all of the ways the deployment affected one another. Spouses may immediately want to know all about Soldiers' deployments, but Soldiers may not be willing or ready to tell.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Your Soldier may not share every deployment experience with you. Let the story come out with time, and in his/her own words. Deployment is difficult for both Soldiers and their family members; be prepared to hear all sides of the story.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Don't expect your Spouse to understand what it is like in a combat environment unless you share your experiences. Tell as much of your story as you feel you should, especially to your children. Recognize that your Spouse and children have a deployment story to share as well.

LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT

In Combat, Soldiers: Needed to know their Spouses were committed and looked forward to their return.

At home, Spouses: Needed to know their Soldiers were also committed.

Potential Concerns: Both Soldiers and Spouses may have issues of mistrust and jealousy and may be concerned about relationship commitment.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Tell your Soldier how much you missed him/her and how you coped with them being away. Address any issues of mistrust and get help if needed.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Tell your Spouse you love and appreciate her/him. Practice saying, "Thanks!", and say it often. Don't hesitate to get help for issues of mistrust.

EMOTIONAL BALANCE

In Combat, Soldiers: Controlled their emotions in order to be successful in missions.

At home, Spouses: Managed individual and family emotional well-being with less emotional support from Soldiers.

Potential Concerns: Spouse or Soldier expectations for emotional and physical intimacy might not be met upon return. The emotional control Soldiers used while they were deployed may lead to detachment or anger during reintegration. Children's emotional responses to reintegration can range from detachment to clinging to the absent parent.

ACTIONS SPOUSES CAN TAKE: Be patient. Emotional detachment is not uncommon in Soldiers returning from combat. It will take time and effort from you and your Soldier to renew emotional and physical bonds.

ACTIONS SOLDIERS CAN TAKE: Appreciate the difference between sex and emotional intimacy. Spend time with each of your family members individually; put in the time and effort to reconnect physically and emotionally with your Spouse. Practice the full range of emotions, don't limit yourself to anger or detachment. Express yourself in a variety of ways (email, phonecalls, flowers, notes, etc.).