

# Questions & Answers about dangerous work

## 1. What should I tell my young children about the possibility of danger in my work?

Even very young children will have some idea about how dangerous your military work is. This is especially true when you have to be deployed or when they hear news about military conflict somewhere in the world. You can help your children by telling them what you know about the situation. You don't need to explain all the details, but you should answer your children's questions as truthfully as possible without worrying them.

## 2. How can I comfort my child who is afraid for my safety?

You can offer comfort to your child by reminding her that you are trained to be careful and will do everything you can to stay safe. Avoid making promises

*(I'll be home safely by your birthday)* you may not be able to keep. You can also ask your child to express her feelings about dangerous work through words, play, drawings, and other means. Help her make "bravery medals" as rewards for facing her fears.

## 3. I am not sure what my child is thinking. He doesn't always talk about things that are bothering him. How can I find out what he is thinking and feeling?

Let your child know that he can share whatever feelings he has about your dangerous work. Show him that you are ready to listen to all he has to say. Some children, especially young children, find it easier to talk while they are playing with toys. You can ask your child to share his feelings by drawing pictures and telling you about them. For example, you can

say, "Let's draw a picture about Dad or Mom and what we are doing." This may help your child tell more about what he is thinking.

## 4. What should I tell my children about how my spouse's dangerous work makes me think and feel?

Even your younger children can sense how you are feeling. If you are worried or afraid, they are going to know this by how you hold them and talk to them. It is okay for your children to know that you are worried or afraid. Tell them honestly how you are feeling, but also tell them how you are trying to deal with these feelings and what things give you comfort. For example, you may be comforted by your spiritual faith, by knowing that your spouse is well trained, or about the importance of the mission and the country's need.

## 5. Since my wife has been deployed my son doesn't want me to even leave the room. It is really difficult to leave him at the day care center. What should I do?

Young children often have a hard time understanding what

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has happened when a parent is away from home. Pre-school children, especially, do not understand that when someone is out of sight, they still exist. It may help to have pictures of the parent around so that your child can see them. You can also talk about what your wife is doing. Phone calls, if possible, may be another way for your young child to know that their mother is there.

**6. Last night my son saw news pictures of the fighting that was going on where my husband is serving. He says he is not afraid, but he doesn't seem to want to play outside or go to school.**

**What can I do?**

Some children will fear for their own safety when they see real or even fantasy violence on television. It is important to help your child see his fears for what they are. If he says he is afraid to go outside or to school, ask him questions about what it is that could happen to him. His worries may either be reasonable or unreasonable. Don't tell him that his fears are wrong, but help him see what is real and what isn't. Help your child think about what he could do when he feels afraid. Remind him of the people who are there to help. *"If you are worried about someone coming into your school and hurting you, who could help you?"* Ask him to practice what to say to a teacher or other adult to get help when he is feeling afraid.

**7. Can young children really understand what it means for a parent to work in a dangerous job?**

No, pre-school and young school age children will not understand the type of danger that a parent faces. However, if you don't try to help them understand, they may think that something even more dangerous could happen. The first step is finding out what your children are thinking and may already know. Answer their questions honestly, using words that they can understand. Don't try to give your children *all* the information. Follow their lead—answer questions as they are asked and watch how they respond before deciding what to say next.

**Sources:**

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