DEPLOYMENT GUIDE
A guide to assist your preparation for deployment

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Produced in collaboration with 1st Psychology Unit
INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed to assist you in your preparation for deployment. It will provide you with information that will allow you to take full advantage of this opportunity in your military career. You will face many challenges as you prepare, deploy and return to Australia. The intent of this guide is to promote positive well-being and to enhance operational effectiveness.

The majority of ADF members generally find that they adapt well to the operational environment and related challenges. How do they do this? Through being psychologically resilient and using techniques to monitor and manage their reactions. You may have been taught such techniques during the ADF’s resilience program, BattleSMART. Resilience is all about having reliable and flexible methods for handling situations. Resilience allows you to operate at your optimum while under stress, bounce back and grow from tough situations, and enables you to help yourself and your mates. Military members develop psychological resilience by testing and adjusting their physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions to stressful situations as required, to optimise their performance. The following guide covers the strategies military members learn in BattleSMART to ensure they are deployment-ready and psychologically resilient. It also covers common issues or concerns military members face when preparing to deploy.

The guide has been divided into sections based on key areas of potential challenges identified from experiences of previously deployed personnel. To ensure quick access to this useful information, a directory is provided on the next page.
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REALITIES OF DEPLOYMENT

Deployment experiences are often as diverse or different as the deployed members themselves. However, previously deployed members have reported that there are some realities of deployment that are common to most. While not all of the following realities will apply to you and your deployment experience, you may expect to experience at least some of these. It is important that you realise and anticipate some of these realities, as you will cope better if your expectations are as closely aligned to reality as possible.

Most members report a positive overall experience and cope well

• The ADF deploys members who are robust, experienced and well trained. Many have deployed multiple times in the recent past and have developed adaptive and resilient attitudes and skills for managing the demands of the operational environment.

• Most members find deployment a professionally rewarding experience.

Deployment impacts every member mentally and emotionally

• No one is exempt from the mental or emotional impact of deployment.

• You may experience culture shock, and may find some parts of the culture in theatre very difficult to accept.
• You will enjoy your experience more if you view the experience as an opportunity to discover and build on your own strengths, both professionally and personally.

• Remember, most members who experience adverse psychological reactions to disturbing scenes recover quickly and return to normal functioning.

• Good preparation, realistic expectations and good communication with partners and families before, during and after deployment will reduce the impact of separation on relationships.

• Be mindful of your thoughts whilst on deployment. Rigid thinking styles, immature coping styles such as insubordination or avoidance, and romantic or unrealistic expectations increase the likelihood of poor adjustment.

• Conflict between work groups and services can be destructive to morale, breakdown communication, and potentially detract from the meaning of the mission. Remain tolerant and flexible to reduce the incidence of conflict and interpersonal strain.

• Prepare yourself for potential loss of motivation and adjustment difficulties after Relief out of Country Leave (ROCL) or Relief Out of Country Travel Fare Assistance (ROCTFA) leave. See the ROCL section for ideas.
• In order to appreciate what you have learnt from your deployment and how you have grown, reflect on the experience once you return to Australia and consider the skills you have gained and the knowledge you have acquired.
There will be periods of boredom and low motivation

- Boredom and low motivation are part of the deployment cycle. If you are feeling unmotivated, take steps to change your routine or set yourself goals. Learn a new skill, meet new people or try to improve your fitness. Alternately, take advantage of opportunities to visit other work locations, or work with a different group of people.

- Remember to use the social supports you have around you, mix widely and enjoy the benefits of a network of individuals who share similar values and aspirations.

- Those in a leadership position should ensure their subordinates’ training is up-to-date and they have opportunities to do different tasks, learn different skills and work with different people.

You will be isolated from family and friends

- You may be affected by separation from people you normally spend time with, turn to for support, and with whom you like to relax.

- To overcome these feelings of loss and fill this void, maintain communication with these people where possible.
Communications and information will be disrupted

- Before you deploy, set realistic expectations with family and friends about the amount of communication you can maintain, and potential challenges such as security black outs, limited access to communication equipment and being out on tasks. Consider some solutions. Ensure everyone understands and knows the limits of security.

- Communicating too often and knowing too much about what is happening at home can cause unnecessary stress, such as knowing every time a child is sick or when the washing machine breaks down. Whilst you may want to keep abreast of things happening at home and offer solutions, you should not become overly involved. Issues occurring in Australia are outside your scope of control and dwelling on them can cause undue stress and distract you from your mission. To prevent needless worry, make an agreement on information that you do not want to know while you are away and set expectations regarding how often you communicate.
Fatigue has to be managed

- Whilst on deployment you may be required to work long hours, using both mental and physical resources, with little time for rest. There may be times when you will not have a lot of nutritious food or water available. You may have to work in adverse environmental conditions. All of these factors will affect your energy levels and ability to concentrate.

- You need to adaptively manage your own fatigue. Sometimes people turn to excessive caffeine use, supplements or smoking whilst deployed in order to manage fatigue, but this sometimes worsens the fatigue problem as sleep patterns are disrupted by these stimulants.

- See the Fatigue section for strategies to manage and reduce fatigue.

Members frequently perceive failures in leadership

- Good leaders respect, inspire and motivate their subordinates, show concern for their welfare, demonstrate confidence in their team’s ability to achieve the mission, whilst managing their own stress and workload without letting it interfere with their ability to lead.

- Not every leader will be perceived by you or your mates as ‘good’. Double standards, interpersonal concerns and limited information sharing from leaders might be intensely frustrating to you, and can decrease your sense of team cohesion and satisfaction whilst deployed.
• Failure to lead well does not permit you to be insubordinant or dismiss orders. Rather, as appropriate, discuss your grievances with your relevant hierarchy and follow correct protocol. Voicing your concerns and disdain may not result in any changes. Realise that some things are within your control, such as your behaviour and reactions, some things you can influence, and other things are outside of your control, such as the behaviour of someone else.

You may be exposed to threat

• Perceived threats to your life or abilities can invoke physical and psychological reactions which affect your ability to function effectively. Strategies to minimise these reactions include:

1. Focus on what you can control
2. Concentrate on your job
3. Avoid worrying about the ‘what ifs’
4. Expect to start to get jumpy around loud/sudden noises
There may be combat

- Military members are trained to kill the enemy. During and after combat it is likely that you will experience a psychological reaction. This reaction can be lessened if you can reflect on your contribution and know you did the right thing at the right time.

There may not be combat

- Whilst combat may be a stressor for some, lack of combat can be intensely disappointing for members who deployed with differing expectations. Sometimes members feel like their tour has been a ‘waste of time’ unless they have actively engaged in combat.

- This reaction can be lessened if you consider the meaning of the mission, and manage your expectations accordingly, prior to arriving in theatre.

Colleagues may be injured or killed

- If a colleague is injured or killed, expect to feel grief and loss. Support your mates in these times and use them as support for yourself. If you or your mates are not coping, ensure you get appropriate help.

- Plan to deal with the practical tasks that need to be done.

- Take part in rituals, memorials and ceremonies.
You may have to handle dead bodies

- Being exposed to dead bodies is not an everyday human experience.

- The dead bodies you may handle could be that of local nationals (including children), enemy, coalition forces or your mates.

- If you are exposed to dead bodies you may feel sorrow, regret, guilt, repulsion, disgust, anger or futility. These are normal reactions to such a situation.

- Being prepared may help you cope with this situation. You can do this by orienting yourself with how to ‘search,
bag, and tag human remains. Ensure you are familiar with the required equipment and have masks, gloves, body tags etc.

- Limit your exposure to the remains, move away from the scene whenever possible and avoid looking closely at the body or personal effects.

- Don’t look at or handle the body if you don’t have to.

**Remember support is available**

- As in Australia, support on operations can be sought from padres, MOs, psychologists, chain of command, friends and family.

**WHAT IS RESILIENCE?**

Resilience is all about having reliable and flexible methods for handling situations. It allows you to operate at your optimum while under stress, bounce back and grow from tough situations, and enables you to help yourself and your mates. Resilience is important in all facets of life, particularly at times when you are faced with many stressors, as it enables you to perform at your optimum regardless of the situations you may face. You can improve your resilience by knowing and accessing reliable and flexible strategies for managing stressful situations. Some of the most useful strategies you can employ are described in the BattleSMART presentations and model.
Situation

Physical Reactions

Thoughts

Behaviours

Emotions

Test

Adjust

Optimal Reaction and Performance
The BattleSMART model demonstrates that our reactions to a particular situation encompass physical reactions, thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Examples of stress reactions can be found in the section entitled ‘Signs of Stress’. As the model suggests, our initial reactions to a stressful situation may not always lead to optimal performance, and we therefore need to ‘test’ them against two key questions:

‘Is this reaction reasonable given the circumstances?’, and
‘Is this reaction helpful?’

If you answer ‘no’ to either of these questions then you need to ‘adjust’ your reaction to achieve optimal performance.

**Strategies to adjust your reactions**

As the BattleSMART model suggests, you may have many different reactions to any given situation, and these reactions can be categorised under four quadrants - physical reactions, thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Sometimes these reactions can improve your performance. However, sometimes these reactions are either not reasonable, or not helpful, or both. In this case, we need to adjust our reactions in order to ensure we are reacting and performing optimally.

There are several strategies you may use to adjust your initial reaction, if it is unreasonable or unhelpful. You could start by assessing what aspects of the situation you can control, and working out what can you do to improve it. Once you’ve controlled what you can control, you need to accept that
the other parts of the situation cannot be changed, and work at changing your reaction. Remember, your reaction is always within your control.

Strategies to adjust your reactions may include:

- **Physical reactions:** Use simple relaxation techniques, including controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation or a meditative relaxation strategy (see details below); and exercise.

- **Thoughts:** Change self-talk from negative to positive; accept the reality of the situation; challenge your thoughts by critically examining the evidence against your thoughts; reinterpret the situation emphasising its positive aspects; use humour; and/or use thought stopping strategies to prevent negative thoughts lingering in your mind.

- **Emotions:** You feel as you think, so identify your negative thoughts and question why you are being negative; practise thought changing strategies; revisit your motivation for joining the military; and reflect on the meaning of the mission.

- **Behavioural:** Your thoughts generally drive your behaviour. Use thought changing strategies; relaxation; good sleep strategies; and seek support from mates, the chain of command or support providers when required.
EMOTIONAL RESPONSES ACROSS THE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE

Across the deployment cycle, different stages have been identified that can result in a variety of responses in preparing for the deployment, being away from home, and returning home. Understanding the different responses that may arise across the deployment cycle can assist you, and your family and friends to better understand behaviour changes and emotional reactions.

As an example, the model below illustrates the various stages that you, and your family and friends may progress through across the Deployment Cycle of a six month deployment. As individuals, we all react and respond differently, and deployment time frames differ, so this model should not be considered a definitive template. Rather, it is designed to provide a general understanding. Not everyone will progress systematically through the stages, and time frames are very individual.
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Stage 1: Anticipation of loss

It can be both an exciting and challenging time in the weeks leading up to your deployment. Your emotions may be polarised, ranging from excitement and eagerness to put your training into action and apply your skills to a real operation, to feeling saddened and restless due to leaving family and friends behind. You may also experience fluctuations in energy levels and enthusiasm.

Common Reactions:

• Eagerness and anticipation to put training into practice.

• Fluctuations in energy level and mood.

  » On the upside - feelings of excitement, urgency, challenge and enthusiasm. This can be due to the new experience of a deployment or if you have already deployed in the past, the chance to experience it again.

  » On the down-side - feelings of sadness, anger, restlessness, anxiety, or depression. These feelings may be due to leaving behind family, friends and your regular routine and lifestyle. You may also have some uncertainty as to what the deployment involves.
Strategies:

• With loved ones, discuss everyone’s roles and responsibilities over the period you are deployed. This provides clarity and reassurance for you and those remaining at home. Discuss expectations of each other, discretion to make independent decisions, socialising with friends, budgeting etc. Consider what you would like to happen if a particular problem arises. Who would your partner or family turn to in the event of a crisis? Whilst it may be uncomfortable, talk about how death, injury and illness will be handled during your absence.

• Resolve conflicts and family issues before you deploy to ensure they do not worsen in your absence. Seek professional advice if you are concerned or are having difficulties reaching an agreement.

• Talk to family and friends about how they feel about you deploying. Listen carefully to their opinions and concerns. Discuss everyone’s feelings openly and in a calm, reassuring manner. Express all your fears to each other and try to be completely honest.
Stage 2: Detachment and withdrawal

This stage will generally occur in the final days before departure. Detachment and withdrawal is a normal process where we begin to emotionally detach from loved ones prior to leaving. It can ease the act of separation and minimise associated complications. The feeling of withdrawal that accompanies detachment highlights that you are now shifting your focus to the job ahead.

It can be a challenging time but most people manage this transition with little difficulty. Be sure to maintain a good sleep routine and organise your time effectively to alleviate fatigue and emotional strain. Make the most of the time you have before leaving.

Common Reactions:

- Excitement and anticipation as the departure date draws near
- Reduced emotional and sexual intimacy
- Feelings of impatience and some irritability
- Mixed emotions

Strategies:

- Accept your feelings as normal reactions to challenging circumstances.
- Communicate as openly and honestly as possible. Pre-deployment preparation may lead to arguments
within the family. Whilst upsetting, these arguments can provide a way of allowing emotional distancing to occur between those remaining and the deploying member. These behaviours are part of preparing for the separation and are natural coping strategies.

• Be patient with yourself, your family and friends, and face your emotions. Sexual relations may change in the lead up to deployment and this may cause misunderstanding. It is important to not interpret loss of interest in sex as rejection, but rather understand it as a reaction to the present circumstances.

• Encourage contact between your family and unit as this may provide another form of social support. Ensure that ADF welfare and support agencies are aware of your absence and how to best approach your family with offers of assistance. If you are the only member of your unit deploying, discuss a welfare plan with your unit, should support be required.

• Be honest about the conditions. An honest appraisal of the threats to your life will provide clarity to your loved ones and reduce potential anxiety about your safety. Exaggeration or understating the dangers should be avoided, even if they are said in jest. Discussing these issues with older children provides an opportunity to recognise their fears. Also discuss OPSEC requirements and explain to your family and friends that you may not be able to speak openly about everything you experience whilst on deployment.
Stage 3: Emotional disorganisation

It is natural that the first few days after departure can generate a variety of emotions. These can range from feeling free and relieved to feeling sad and lonely. It is important to keep everything in perspective and remain positive during this stage. Tips for those at home are available further on in this guide.

Common Reactions:

- Having a sense of freedom
- Feeling relieved and ready to move forward to new challenges
- Change in focus from home life to operational life
- Culture Shock
- Fatigue
- Stress
- Sleep and appetite changes
- A variety of emotional reactions/feelings (eg guilt, anger, numbness, depression, confusion, disorganisation, indecision, loneliness, vulnerability, irritability, aimlessness)

Strategies:

- Remaining positive and focussed on your tasks will help you adjust to your new environment.
• As operational conditions permit, make regular contact with family and friends to reaffirm your care and commitment. Communication offers reassurance of your safety and signals that your relationship is secure and meaningful despite the strains of separation. Having
lists of topics to talk about can be helpful to keep the conversation flowing, avoid breaching security and ensure the conversation is not uni-directional. Some people find that pre-arranging call times can avoid loved ones feeling like they are “trapped at home” in case they miss your call. Others find it better for their family if calls are not pre-arranged, as loved ones may worry that something is wrong if the usual call time cannot be met. You need to find a system that works best for your family.

• Letters are emotional lifelines to home and loved ones, and can boost morale. It is helpful to number the envelopes so when several letters arrive at once the recipient knows the order in which to read them.

• Maintain satisfactory nutrition to sustain your energy levels. Operational demands, location, temperature, humidity, sleep loss and quality of sleep will impact your fatigue levels. Eating well will help minimise the effects. Additionally, good sleep can aid recovery from fatigue, improve your alertness and ability to respond to task requirements and emergency situations. See the section entitled ‘Sleep' for sleep strategies.
• Prepare emotionally for significant dates and events such as Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries. You may feel isolated and discouraged at these times, therefore communication with your loved ones and your peers will be particularly important. Some people find pre-purchasing and scheduling delivery of gifts on special days is a good way to remind loved ones they are remembered.

• During your handover you may think about alternate, potentially more efficient, ways to do tasks. While it is fine to talk about your ideas during the handover process, respect the achievements of the person you are replacing. Making changes in their presence may be viewed as a criticism of their efforts and be a disappointing end to their deployment. It may cause confusion for other members of the team, or divided loyalties between you and who you are replacing. Discussing your ideas with others before changing also ensures you don’t try strategies already found to be unsuccessful.

• Acknowledge cultural differences in your new location and remain flexible to minimise culture shock (see the section entitled ‘Culture Shock’ for other strategies).

• Utilise stress management techniques (see the section entitled ‘Stress Management’ for strategies).
Stage 4: Recovery and stabilisation

You will notice that in time you will adapt to your new environment and the demands of the deployment. Settling into a routine is something that military members are accustomed to and you will notice a stabilisation of emotions, but the challenges will remain both demanding and exhilarating.

Common Reactions:

- Feeling a sense of job satisfaction
- Stress
- Concern that your family is coping so well that you are no longer needed
- Increased feelings of isolation and separation
- Feelings of increased confidence, independence, competence, freedom, pride, isolation, anxiety, depression
- Worry about problems at home
- Confidence - an 'I can do this' mentality
Strategies:

• Enjoy learning new skills and having freedom and independence. Use the opportunity to establish peer networks, both within the ADF and any other forces.

• Use the strengths within the team to guide task outcomes. Be mindful of small team dynamics, ensure they aren’t destructive to team unity.

• Manage stress and fatigue (see the sections on Fatigue and Stress Management).

• Acknowledge your achievements and let others know of them. Likewise, celebrate the achievements of those at home when you talk to them on the phone or in letters/cards/emails.

• Access your peer and family networks for support and advice.
Stage 5: Anticipation of homecoming

Preparing for homecoming is often filled with excitement and some apprehension. Both those at home, and yourself will have hopes and expectations about the homecoming. These thoughts can at times be idealistic, so the reality of the situation needs to be placed into perspective. Emotionally preparing for going home allows you to think about the challenges and discuss plans with loved ones and friends.
Common Reactions:

- Increased energy and activity
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Feelings of joy, excitement, anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, impatience
- Distraction from operational role and tasks

Strategies:

- Remain focussed on your work to ensure all tasks are completed in time before returning to Australia.
- Reassure your family of your love and commitment. Share your feelings of excitement and apprehension and your expectations and desires for homecoming with your loved ones. Include children in planning for the homecoming celebration.
- Plan to have some family time.

Stages 6 and 7 are covered in the homecoming guide that you will receive during your Return to Australia Psychological Screen (RtAPS).
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR:

• The single member
• The single parent
• The deploying member with adult dependents (elderly parent care)
• Preparing children for the deployment
• The partner

For the single member

Common thoughts and concerns:

• Where am I going to store all my stuff?
• Who is going to look after my car?
• I can’t wait to get over there.
• Do I need to disconnect my mobile?
• Will my girlfriend/boyfriend be there when I get back?

Single members encounter unique challenges when preparing for deployment. You may need to store household goods or vehicles, organise the payment of bills, redirect mail and organise someone to water your plants or care for your pets. These tasks can be difficult to organise as you may live far away from immediate family.
**Relationships:**

If you’re in a relationship, you may have concerns about whether your relationship will survive your deployment, who your partner will socialise with in your absence, or whether they may meet someone else. Before deploying, discuss these concerns openly and honestly.

**Friends:**

Contact or see friends before you go, as you would family. A farewell party is a good way to see a number of friends at once. If you would like a farewell party, organise one with your friends. You may be disappointed if you are expecting a surprise party and one is not arranged for you. Take responsibility for initiating and maintaining contact. Some friends may reduce their contact as they focus on their own lives. Try to understand that they may not appreciate what a military deployment involves or means to you. Maintaining contact with friends will make it easier to fit back in on your return home.

**Family:**

Be prepared for strong emotions during a family farewell. Parents, in particular, may display ‘out of character’ heightened emotion and open displays of affection. This may seem embarrassing but understand they are concerned for your safety and welfare, despite your age and independence.
For the single parent

Deployment is particularly stressful for single parents as there are extra challenges both for the parent and the child. A single parent must organise full-time care arrangements for their children while they are deployed. Always ask people you trust most to fulfil this role in the first instance. You may need to discuss financial, legal and medical matters with the caregiver.

For older children, involve them in the organisation of their care arrangements. Discuss your deployment and any fears or anxieties they may have about your absence and their care arrangements. For younger children, ensure they understand this is only a temporary arrangement, that you are coming back and they have not done anything wrong.

Organise for children to spend time with their caregiver before you deploy. Discuss and practise new routines that will occur during the deployment, such as walking children home from school instead of picking them up. Discuss discipline strategies with the caregiver, and roles and responsibilities the children currently have to help them maintain a routine in your absence. Organise how you will maintain communication with the caregiver and your children while you are away and provide the caregiver with suggestions for talking with your children about you, your absence and your return.

Prepare a ‘backup’ plan. Organise for someone to be able to take over the responsibilities should the caregiver be unable to provide guardianship of your children.
Provide detailed instructions and guidance to the caregiver, even if they are a close family member. Include detail covering:

- Daily schedule

- Location and phone numbers of schools, extra-curricular commitments and before and after school care

- Description and location of a toy or blanket that may bring comfort to a child in times of crisis

- Names of medications, dosages and schedule
• Special needs or requirements

• Location of important documents - insurance, birth certificates, will etc

• Contact phone numbers for your children’s health care providers, your unit, Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and other relevant support services

Taking these steps will give you peace of mind while you’re deployed and ease separation difficulties for both you and your child.

For the deploying member with adult dependents (elderly parent care)

Consider making arrangements for someone to check on or care for elderly parents or other adult dependents while you are away. For occasional care giving assistance, consider supportive services such as home delivered meals, chore maintenance or visitor/companion services. Defence Community Organisation and local councils can provide guidance on services available in a particular area.

If your loved one requires direct care, contact home health care services to enquire about professional in-home caregivers who may provide assistance. If your loved one is in a long-term care facility, inform them and the facility of your plans and make arrangements for friends, family members or professionals to visit regularly. Keep your loved one informed of family and care giving changes and reassure him or her that the situation is temporary.
Your parents may have experienced war time before, and will have their own anxieties about your deployment. Openly discuss these anxieties and your deployment with your parents. Include them in your welfare arrangements (e.g. contact calls from your unit or being included in unit activities) and provide them with DCO contact details.

**Preparing children for the deployment**

Deployments can be particularly tough on children. There are, however, benefits to separation which enable children to grow and mature through the experience. Military children often take on additional responsibilities in a parent’s absence, enabling them to develop new skills or pursue hidden interests or abilities. During a deployment, children learn the importance of flexibility in dealing with everyday life, strategies for coping with separation, how to begin new friendships and may strengthen their bonds with other family members.

Keep the absent parent part of the family’s life. Don’t be scared to talk about the separation with the children. Whilst this can make the separation more strongly felt, it can minimise the effect on children and make the reunion stage go more smoothly.

Pre-deployment may be a confusing time for preschool aged children. They may sense tension between yourself and your partner and understand something is happening, without fully appreciating the situation. Your preoccupation with the deployment may result in some emotional and physical withdrawal from the children.
Adolescent children may be open about their reactions, expressing anger, feelings of abandonment or sadness.

When preparing children for your departure:

• Be open and honest. Lying will only confuse them and lead them to conclude the worst.

• Inform your children of your leaving date, how long you will be away and when you are scheduled to return.

• Encourage your children to ask questions and talk about their feelings. Begin by telling your children, in a language they can understand, that they may be sad when you leave and miss you while you are away.

• Spend quality time with your children individually before deploying. That time is special and just for them.

• Have caregivers display photographs of yourself to give your children a feeling of being connected during the separation, and ask them to frame pictures sent home from the deployment.

Children usually take emotional cues from adults around them, especially parents. Therefore, it is important for you and your partner to remain calm and respond to your child’s concerns in a controlled and rational manner. Explain to your child’s teacher that one of the child’s parents is deploying, as it can provide a context for behavioural changes and allow the teacher to respond more effectively.
Children may like to write letters or emails about school, sports or other hobbies and forward these to the deployed parent. Alternately, they may like to make a video with a care giver’s assistance. They could read a book, perform a play, sing songs or just tape regular daily routines on the video in order to help them feel connected to the deployed parent.
Common reactions of children to deployment

This table below may help you anticipate typical behaviours exhibited by children of different ages. Any combination of the feelings listed in the left column could lead to any of the behaviours listed in the right column.

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<th>Adolescents</th>
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Independence | Behaviour problems
---|---
Anger | Discipline problems
Aloofness “I don’t care” attitude | Friends take on increased value

**For the parent at home**

Children’s reactions will vary according to their personalities, age and coping skills. Remember, you are the expert on your child. As their parent, you know what normal behaviour is for your child and will be the best person to notice when things are not right. Provide children with additional support and attention, and reassure them by maintaining normal rules and routines (as much as possible), being consistent with their discipline, and reminding them that daily activities will not change. Talk about the separation and missing the deployed parent with your children.

Minimise the amount of exposure children have to information on a conflict or major disaster, particularly articles related to their parent’s deployment. Continued exposure can be detrimental to the child’s well-being, particularly if they are not able to differentiate between what their parent is doing, where their parent is and what the media is showing. For very young children, anyone in uniform will be seen as ‘mum’ or ‘dad’ regardless of their individual features. Discuss with children what they see and how it affects them. Whilst it is important to know what is going on, it is also okay to take a break from the constant media exposure. Ensure you have a strong support
network as it is vital to maintaining a balance between the demands of caring for children and your personal needs as an individual.

Maintain contact with the deployed parent and incorporate their deployment into your daily routine to assist children to cope with the situation and enhance the reunion process. Don’t ‘demonise’ the deployed parent by threatening your children about what is going to happen when they return home.

Children may appreciate having a map on the wall with a corkboard for pictures. You may like to follow the route your partner travels. Use of maps, calendars, paper chains or jellybeans in a jar may help younger children to visualise the location and length of the deployment.

Children who cope well often have:

• A good relationship with their parents
• A strong sense of self-worth
• An understanding of their parent’s job and why it is important for them to go on deployment
• Dependable communication between the deployed parent and family
• An adult who will listen and talk to them

DCO and National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) can assist if you are concerned with how your children are coping.
THE PARTNER

A partner’s deployment can evoke a range of strong emotions and sometimes they may seem in direct conflict with each other. You may miss your partner terribly, yet resent their freedom from family responsibilities whilst they’re away.

It is normal to question your situation, and feel resentful on occasions. You might find yourself thinking or asking:

• Is my partner really going to leave me with all this?
• My partner’s happy to go but I am angry about it.
• My partner won’t talk openly with me about the separation.
• Where is my partner going exactly? How safe will it be?
• How am I going to cope?

Other common reactions in the lead up to deploying include restlessness, anger, depression and resentment. It is important to be open and communicate how you feel. Your partner will also be experiencing a range of emotions and it may be easier to face these feelings and thoughts together.

Before your partner leaves, prepare yourself by:

• Creating a list of local repairmen. This does not mean you are incapable of finding a repairman if needed, rather should anything go wrong at home, you have a list you can access easily to organise the repair.
• For security and emergency support, meet your neighbours. Ensure you know who to contact in emergencies.

• Discuss how you will keep in touch during the deployment.

• Establish unit contact details. Determine and communicate how much welfare support you would like from your partner’s unit.

• Ensure you know what bills to expect, pay arrangements and other financial matters.

• Develop support networks and contacts, both within and external to the military.

• Discuss which jobs can safely be left for the duration of the deployment, which can be allocated elsewhere, such as arranging a contractor to mow the lawn and clean the gutters, and which tasks you should do.

**Whilst you are deployed**

While a deployment is frequently acknowledged as a potentially stressful situation for the serving member, the partners who stay at home are often faced with challenging situations which are not as commonly recognised. Partners often must fill new roles as single parents, and make decisions that would have previously been made by either the departed partner or by both partners together. In remote locations, the remaining partner may be without significant social and emotional support. They may experience a wide range of reactions, including:
• Fears about your safety
• Loneliness
• Added responsibility for maintaining the household
• Problems with communication
• Problems with legal issues
• Financial worries and problems

At the same time, you may have to adjust to:
• Working in harsh climates/terrain
• Living in close quarters and uncomfortable conditions
• Limited opportunities to maintain personal hygiene
• Excessive noise
• Long days and inadequate rest
• Ambiguous roles and taskings
• Interpersonal problems with peers
• Fear of injury or death
• Exposure to violence, death, injury, devastation
• Limited opportunities for recreation
• Boredom
• Separation from loved ones
To ensure a successful homecoming, recognise that both of you have experienced challenges as a result of the deployment. Try to view the experience as a positive for both you and your partner, and a chance for each of you to develop and grow as individuals.
ADAPTING TO THE NEW CULTURE

Culture shock

The term culture shock describes the anxiety and uncertainty experienced when someone moves to a new environment, usually a foreign country. On deployment, the cultural experience is quite unique - the deployed member is exposed to the different culture of the host nation, the varying cultures of coalition forces, and the different cultures between Army, Navy and Air Force and other Australian organisations. As a result, it is normal to experience some lack of direction, a feeling of not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate, and uncertainty about how to do things in the new environment.

Stages of culture shock

Culture shock is a multi-stage reaction in response to exposure to a new culture. The list of stages below is a guide to assist you to better understand your reaction or those of others. As everyone responds differently, not everyone will progress through these stages systematically. Rather your reaction is determined by your mental health, previous experience, familiarity with the culture, support systems etc.

Stage 1. Honeymoon: Everything is new and exciting.

Stage 2. Transition: Difficulties may be encountered with language, feelings of discontent, impatience, anger and a sense of loss.

Stage 3. Understanding: Becoming more familiar with, and gaining an understanding of, the new environment.
Stage 4. Integration: Recognition of the ‘good and bad’ of the new environment, a sense of belonging is experienced.

Stage 5. Re-entry: Almost a ‘reverse culture shock’ as the individual returns to their country of origin they recognise things have changed at home.

**Signs of culture shock**

- Changes in mood

- Feeling sad, lonely, powerless, depressed, angry, resentful
• Socially withdrawing
• Longing for family
• Identifying with/idealising your home country
• Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity
• Developing stereotypes about the new culture

**Tips for enhancing your adaptation**

• Accept and, if possible, appreciate the cultural differences.

• Be patient and recognise that it takes time to adjust to a new culture.

• Talk to the locals. You may find you have more in common with them than you think.

• Learn about the history of the country and what it is like now.

• Recognise and accept what you can’t change.

• Maintain contact with your peers in country, and family and friends in Australia.

• Recognise what you miss about home and acknowledge your feelings but focus on your transition to the new culture.

• Maintain a sense of humour.

• View your deployment as a challenge and an opportunity to learn rather than as a threat or chore.

• Try to remain positive, patient and understanding.
ENHANCING PERFORMANCE THROUGH STRESS MANAGEMENT

We all experience stress in our lives - at work, at home etc. In moderate levels, stress can be motivating and can improve our performance. The trick is to maintain an optimal level of stress that will enable you to perform at your best. Too little stress (e.g. boredom) and too much stress (e.g. burnout) will deteriorate your performance, well-being and effectiveness. Stress management is essentially ‘performance enhancement’. Therefore it is important for you to be able to determine when stress is becoming problematic so you may take action to alleviate it.
Operational stressors

Whilst on deployment you will be exposed to unique stressors. These stressors may be acute and/or cumulative in their effect.

**Acute stressors** are a single event, or a cluster of events, that have the potential to cause immediate distress, e.g. combat or a critical incident. Such events are, or are perceived as, life threatening or threaten serious injury to oneself or others.

**Cumulative stressors** are relatively more minor frustrations which increase our stress levels over time. They are detrimental to individual well-being and impact on factors such as cohesion, morale and capability. Some common cumulative stressors are:

- Working with foreign organisations/defence forces
- Concern about exposure to contaminants or disease
- Exposure to poverty or human misery
- Poor communication and lack of information
- Poor leadership, morale and lack of cohesion
- Poor cultural adaptation
- Communal living
- Problems with administration
• Separation from family and friends
• Domestic issues (e.g. health and welfare of family/friends)
• Boredom
• Concern about motor vehicle accidents
• Hostile, anti-war sentiment expressed by the local or Australian population

**Signs of Stress**

The longer you ignore your stress, the more difficult it may become to manage and the greater impact it may have on various facets of your life and the people within it. In order to manage your stress, you need to be able to recognise when your stress levels are not at their optimum. People’s reactions, like their perceptions of stress, vary from person to person, however, listed below is a table of some common stress reactions that tend to surface when stress levels are not at their optimum.
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<td>Headaches</td>
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<td>Sleep disturbance</td>
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<td>Excessive sweating</td>
<td>Over reacting</td>
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<td>Muscle tension</td>
<td>Increased risk taking</td>
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<td>Low motivation</td>
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<td>Irritability and short temper</td>
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<td>Anger</td>
<td>Decreased decision making ability</td>
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<td>Delayed Stress Reactions</td>
<td>Negative self talk</td>
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A guide to assist your preparation for deployment
Managing stress on deployment

There are numerous strategies which can be used to manage stress reactions. Be prepared to try a few different strategies to find out which one suits you best.

The following strategies are designed to assist in managing operational stressors and maximise performance.

**Allow adjustment time:** Give yourself time to adjust to the new environment. Take the time to observe and familiarise yourself with the new routine and learn your role and responsibilities. Be willing to ask for assistance in settling in or have routines and responsibilities explained to you if you are not clear.

**Eat well, sleep well, be well:** Maintain, as best you can, good nutrition through a sensible diet. Ensure sufficient and proper rest/sleep and exercise regularly.

**Change your thoughts:** Your perception of a situation determines how frustrating or stressful it is. By changing your perceptions and thoughts you can decrease your stress levels. In particular, try to maintain a positive attitude and realistic expectations.

**Time management:** Prioritise your tasks. Establish a routine and include effective work/rest patterns as often as possible. Use your leisure time for rest and relaxation, not work.

**Mentally rehearse stressful situations:** Think through likely situations which are of concern to you. Consider your possible reactions and the options you have to deal with these.
possibilities. Think about the worst thing that could happen - often it is not as bad as you initially believe it could be.

**Accept reality:** Understand there are things you can control and change, things you can influence, and things which are beyond your control and influence. Only expend your effort on things within your control and influence. Be open-minded and flexible.

![Image of control and influence circles]

**Exercise:** Exercise is one of the best physical stress-reduction techniques. It helps reduce muscle tension and sleeping difficulties, and causes the release of chemicals called endorphins into your blood stream which positively affect your sense of well-being. Exercise also improves blood circulation which carries the sugars and oxygen to the brain necessary for intense thinking.

**Talk it out:** Talking is one of the best strategies to get something off your chest. When you are particularly upset it can be obvious to those around you. Use your peers and mates as sounding boards - sometimes it may help to vent, other times it may help you to develop a solution. Friends are often just waiting for you to approach them to have a chat.
Write letters/journals: You may prefer to write down your feelings and thoughts. This may help you clarify your thoughts and feelings, or it may help you to simply relax. You may use these written words as a starting point for discussion with others or choose to keep them private. Just because you choose to write your thoughts in a letter does not mean you have to send it. In fact, be cautious about sending anything you write in these circumstances as you may regret it later.

Relaxation techniques: There are a variety of physical and mental relaxation techniques that can be used to manage stress reactions. These include imagery, controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation and self-hypnosis. Try a number of techniques to find out which one works best for you. These techniques are used widely, particularly by elite sportspeople to enhance their performance, and are detailed in the ‘Relaxation Techniques’ section of this guide.

Limit caffeine (including energy drinks), tobacco and alcohol intake: These substances are unhealthy and are likely to exacerbate, rather than reduce, stress. They may seem to offer temporary relief; however they mask or disguise problems and can become unhealthy habits. If alcohol is available to you on your deployment, consider whether drinking it is the right decision for you.

Humour: Laughter can reduce tension. Be sensitive in its use as it can be perceived as inappropriate.
Acknowledgment of Emotions: Realise it is okay to feel frustrated or upset. These are natural reactions to stressful circumstances. It is healthy to admit to and work through your emotions.

Seeking Assistance

There are times when stress becomes so overwhelming you can’t manage it alone. Seeking assistance is not a sign of weakness but rather a recognition that the situation is beyond our normal coping abilities. In this situation you can choose to ignore/deny the issue, which will negatively affect your well-being and potential operational capabilities, or seek professional support through medical staff or a psychologist.

The following list is not complete, but indicates circumstances in which you may need to seek assistance with stress management:

- You are experiencing chronic (ongoing) signs of stress
- Ongoing disturbed sleep and/or nightmares
- You have no-one with whom you can talk
- Deterioration in ability to do work efficiently or safely
- Inability to meet work obligations
- Your relationships (work and social) are suffering/deteriorating
- You are having frequent accidents or difficulty concentrating
• You have noticed changes in your emotions or behaviours that are concerning

• You have thoughts of self-harm or suicide

Additionally, the ADF All Hours Support Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 1800 628 036 (FREECALL within Australia) and +61 2 9425 3878 (outside Australia).

Helping your mates deal with stress

In an operational environment it will often be your mates or colleagues who will be the first to notice when you are stressed. Actively seek help from your friends when you find it difficult to cope and also be there to listen when they need help. The following are some tips for helping your mates manage stress:

• **Realise stress reactions do occur.** Everyone reacts differently to stress and different stressors cause different stress reactions.

• **Accept stress responses in others.** Reassure them that it is okay and these reactions are normal.

• **Be available and approachable.** Your mates will feel reassured if you show an interest and offer your support.

• **Listen.** This is not always easy; it takes time and practise however it is one of the best ways to assist a friend.

• **Be careful with advice and do not judge.** Avoid saying, “it could have been worse”, or “you shouldn’t have let them do that” as these comments do not change or
help the situation. Remain optimistic but avoid making promises that may not come true, such as “everything will be alright”.

• **Be sensitive to changes in people.** Changes in behaviour, mood and personality can be warning signs that someone isn’t coping. Such warning signs should not be ignored. Ask the person if they are okay. If you aren’t convinced that they are, despite their response, seek help.

• **Know your limits.** Helping others deal with stress can be stressful. Do not let your own well-being suffer by taking on too many emotional problems of others. Use resources you have available to you, such as psychologists, doctors or chaplains. To make your friend feel more comfortable, you may like to go with them to see the psychologist.
Relaxation techniques

Using relaxation techniques on a regular basis can be very beneficial in helping us cope with the stress of day-to-day life. Anyone can use relaxation, almost anywhere and at any time. Relaxation techniques can be self-administered and with little practise, most people find them easy to master. When used on a regular basis, relaxation techniques can prevent stressful events from becoming cumulative stressors as they help to ‘break the stress cycle’. They can improve energy levels, vitality, concentration and memory and alleviate insomnia and fatigue.

Over the next few pages you will find strategies and scripts to help you practise relaxation techniques. Some people like to have these pre-recorded onto an .mp3 file, so they can simply listen to them. Others are comfortable reading/removing the instructions for each. Choose what works for you.

Controlled Breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Inhale deeply through your nose and hold the air for a count of three (inhale, two, three). As you inhale, the hand on your abdomen should rise higher than the hand on your chest. This ensures that your diaphragm is pulling air into the base of your lungs.

Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of three (exhale, two, three). Once all the air is released, gently contract your abdominal muscles to evacuate any
remaining air. You deepen respirations by completely exhaling, not by inhaling more air.

Repeat the cycle nine more times for a total of ten deep breaths, establishing a breathing rate of one breath every 6 seconds (or ten breaths per minute).

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

If you are lying down, lie on your back with your arms alongside your body, but slightly away from your sides. Turn your palms upward. Let your fingers curl so that your thumbs and index fingers form circles. Your legs should be slightly apart with the toes turned outward.

If you are sitting up, put your feet flat on the floor and sit with your spine straight but not stiff. Close your eyes.

Tighten your face muscles by squinting your eyes, wrinkling your nose and tightening all your facial muscles ... tight ... tight ... tighter ... really tense ... tenser ... then relax them completely. Inhale very deeply and slowly through your nostrils. Then exhale very deeply and slowly. Feel the tension and strain flowing out of your face.

Take your awareness to your neck and shoulders. Tighten them up ... really tight ... tighter ... tense ... tense ... tenser ... then relax completely. Inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly through your nostrils. Feel the tension and strain flowing away.

Become aware of your arms. Make a fist and tighten all the muscles in your arms. Tense up your hands, palms, forearms
and triceps. Tighten them ... tighter ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax. Let your hands and arms go completely limp in your lap or by your sides.

Take your awareness to your chest. Tighten all your chest muscles really tight ... really tense ... tighter ... tight ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax. Inhale very deeply and slowly ... and exhale very deeply and slowly.

Take your awareness to your legs. Stretch them out in front of you. Arch your toes and tighten all the muscles in your legs ... your thighs, your calves, your feet ... really tight then relax completely. Feel your legs sinking into the floor. Inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly.

Take your awareness from the very tip of your head to the very bottoms of your feet. Tighten the entire body ... make a face ... curl your hands ... arch your toes ... tense your arms ... chest ... stomach ... buttocks ... legs ... face ... tighter ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax completely. Inhale very deeply and slowly through the nostrils ... exhale very deeply and slowly. Again inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly. Relax for a few minutes in this position, breathing normally.

**Suggested exercises for specific muscle groups**

There are a number of isometric techniques that can be used to help identify the feeling of tension in specific muscles. Some suggested exercises for specific muscle groups include:
• While sitting, slowly tense your leg muscles by crossing your feet at the ankles and pressing down with your upper leg while trying to lift your lower leg, or trying to pull your legs in opposite directions;

• Place your hands palm against palm, and press down with your top hand while trying to lift your lower hand;

• Place your hands under the sides of a chair and pull into the chair;

• Place your hands behind your head and interlock your fingers. Try to pull your hands apart while pushing your head backwards into your hands;

• Tightly grip an immovable rail or bar and let the tension flow up your arms;

• While standing, lock your legs stiffly straight, then release;

• Facial muscles can be tensed and relaxed in a variety of ways, often by exaggerating different expressions (e.g. smiling and frowning).

**Simple Meditative Relaxation**

Sit comfortably with your back well supported, your feet flat on the floor, your head in a comfortable alignment with your shoulders, and your hands in your lap. Close your eyes or let them be downcast.

Start your relaxation by taking your attention outside, into the distance, and begin to listen to sounds far away ... finding a sound ... being aware of it ... leaving that sound
and searching with your mind for another ... just moving from one sound to another ... leave the sounds outside and bring your attention into this room (or into this building) searching for sounds close to you ... again just moving from one sound to another.

Leave the sounds and bring your attention to the whole of your body, sitting on the chair ... feeling comfortable... relaxed ... be aware of your legs being so relaxed that the floor takes all the weight (and your knees probably roll in or out a little) ... be aware of all your trunk being supported by the chair ... no tension in your tummy muscles ... your shoulders feeling relaxed, your arms heavy and your fingers free ... feel your jaw release ... no tension in the little muscles around your eyes ... and your forehead so relaxed that it becomes smoother and free from the furrows of tension.

Take your attention to your breathing ... not controlling it in any way ... just observing it ... and as you breathe, start repeating a word or sound to yourself-just repeating the word ‘one’ or whatever word you prefer, each time you breathe out ... using the constant repetition of the breath as a rhythmical pattern on which to repeat that word ... let your mind continue to dwell on that repeating word ... when thoughts or ideas or images come into your mind, it doesn’t matter ... just allow them to pass by and return your mind to focus again on the rhythm of the breath and that repeating word ... when you find you are daydreaming or your thoughts get busy, once you become aware that this has happened, let those thoughts go and return again to your chosen focus ...
Treat sudden sounds and disturbances in the same way ... if they intrude on your relaxation and you become aware of that sound, again just let it go, and return to repeating your word ... and ... if itches or bodily discomforts intrude, treat them the same way, too ... just let them go or if necessary move a little to rub the itch or change position and then leave that itch or discomfort and return again to the comfortable rhythm of the breath and the word you have chosen.

Continue now for some minutes in silence..... and now ... slowly ... cease repeating the word and cease being aware of the breath, and bring your attention back to the whole of the body sitting in this room ... as you start to come out of your relaxation think about the way you are sitting, the colours and furniture in the room around you ... start moving your hands .. and your feet ... and when you are ready ... in your own time ... open your eyes ... stretch, rub your face and yawn if you wish .. and finish your relaxation feeling refreshed, alert and awake.

Sit quietly for a few moments before returning to normal activity.
FATIGUE

During deployment, where pressures for reduced sleep time are often beyond individual control, development and maintenance of healthy sleeping practices and fatigue management is essential. In an operational environment fatigue is usually a product of one or more of the following:
• Intense emotional strain and mental workload
• Strenuous and/or prolonged physical exertion
• Inadequate food and water intake and/or food lacking nutrition
• Adverse environmental conditions, including low light levels
• Periods of monotonous, boring activities, and/or
• Disrupted and lost sleep

Why is fatigue a problem?
Physical and mental fatigue can affect many important areas of operational functioning. Military effectiveness is dependent on initiative, motivation, physical strength, endurance, and clear, quick thinking. Therefore, the longer an individual goes without good sleep, the less effective they are and the slower they respond. Lapses in attention can occur, performance worsens and speed is sacrificed to maintain accuracy.

No one is less vulnerable to fatigue, not even commanders. By contrast, commanders at all levels are generally more prone to fatigue than their troops as mental tasks can be more draining than physical tasks. Commanders must cope with the effects of fatigue and sleep loss on their own performance and monitor these effects in their subordinates.
How fatigue affects performance

Fatigue lowers mood. It can reduce attention, communication and concentration abilities. Fatigue can impair vigilance and attention to detail, resulting in careless errors. Our ability to comprehend and learn new information is slowed; thinking may become muddled; short-term memory may become faulty; perceptions and reactions may be slowed; and some people may experience hallucinations.

Fatigue prevention and management

It is essential to manage fatigue on operations so you can make well considered decisions and respond quickly and appropriately to unexpected events and emergencies. Fatigue counter-measures can be divided into two broad categories: Preventative Strategies - used before work and during rest periods; and Improving Wakefulness Strategies - used at work to manage the symptoms of fatigue.

Preventative strategies

- Maintain healthy sleep practices. Develop a before-sleep ritual to help trigger sleep. Relaxation, reading or listening to music can help you prepare for sleep.
- Avoid stimulants before sleep, including tea, coffee, coke, diet coke, energy drinks, and bodybuilding supplements.
- Don’t eat or drink too much close to bedtime.
• If alcohol is permitted, minimise your intake. Whilst alcohol may assist in falling asleep, it disturbs the sleep cycle and can cause early wakening and exacerbate fatigue impairment.

• Exercise. Late afternoon exercise is the perfect way to help you fall asleep at night. Aim to finish your exercise at least three hours before bedtime.

• If possible, create an environment conducive to sleep. Reduce noises and interruptions (use ear plugs); reduce light (eye mask); and ensure you are not too warm or too cold.

• Associate your bed with sleep only. Read books and watch DVDs in a place away from your sleeping area. If you are tossing and turning because something is on your mind, get out of bed and write it on a ‘to do’ list. If you just can’t sleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing, such as read a book or listen to music.

• Take the opportunity to nap. Short naps, between 10-30mins are not ideal, but are better than no sleep.

**Improving wakefulness**

• **Access social support.** Increase social support by pairing up or using teams to provide companionship, support and checks/double checks for one-another.

• **Stand up and walk around occasionally.** If possible, change posture and move around to help stay alert.
• **Take full use of breaks** to alleviate strain, boredom and complacency

• **Change routine** and rotate tasks, if possible.

• **Introduce novel background noise** (e.g. a radio) where possible for personnel completing mundane or repetitive tasks.

Whilst these strategies are helpful, they are no substitute for daily sleep. Six to eight solid hours of sleep is the amount required by the average person to stay alert. Due to operational demands, you may not get six to eight hours and as a result your alertness and responses may be affected. Communicate with your chain of command if you find that fatigue is affecting your work or safety.

**Shiftwork**

Your body is programmed to be awake and alert in the day and to rest at night. All body and brain functioning is based on your internal ‘bodyclock’. This biological clock relies equally on the external world, e.g. light and dark, and timing of meals to keep it on track. When you change the time you sleep and wake, you work against your biological clock, confusing the timing and biological processes. Attempting to sleep when your body is used to staying awake will shorten the amount of sleep you get, reduce your sleep quality and may ultimately take you longer to fall asleep.
Some helpful hints to maintain a regular sleep schedule for shift workers are:

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule: If you are working on continuous operations (i.e. recurring, round-the-clock schedules that last for extended periods) aim for a minimum of four hours sleep, but try to stay in bed for as long as possible. Rest without sleep is still beneficial for the body.

- Try different sleep times in the day to find which suits you best - straight after work, before the next night shift, or part of both.

- Develop ways of relaxing after afternoon or night shift - read, watch DVDs, write letters, ring home, email etc.

- Take a shower. A shower before bed can help you relax prior to sleep.

- Go through all the rituals of going to bed, as you would before a normal night sleep.

- Don’t get upset if you can’t sleep straight away. Remember, rest in itself is valuable.

- Let others know about your work schedule and sleep times so they won’t disturb you unnecessarily.

- Don’t dim the lights at work as this can cause drowsiness and a tendency to fall asleep, particularly around 0300h.

- Contact others on the same shift regularly. Interesting conversation and other social interaction will help increase alertness.
Jetlag

When travelling to a new time zone, our body clock is slow to adjust and remains on its original schedule for several days. This results in our body telling us it is time to sleep when it is the middle of the day, or to stay awake in the middle of the night.

You can do a number of things to minimise the effects of jetlag.

In the days leading up to deployment:

• Sleep well: Get plenty of sleep in the nights leading up to your departure.

• Avoid stress: Try to arrive at the airport relaxed and with plenty of time.
• Abstain from alcohol the night before the flight: A hangover not only feels similar to jetlag, it can exaggerate its effects.

Whilst on the plane:

• Drink plenty of water.

• Exercise and stretch: Walk around the cabin and stretch in your seat to reduce muscle cramping and swelling.

• Avoid alcohol, even if it is permitted and available. Alcohol causes dehydration and may exacerbate the effects of jetlag.

On arrival:

• Attempt to eat and sleep according to the new time zone.

• Go outside. Daylight assists your body clock in adjusting to the new time zone.

• Exercise. Exercise helps the body clock to adjust faster.

• Use sleep aids. If you have trouble falling asleep, try using some of the techniques noted previously, e.g. stretching, meditating, taking a quick shower or any other activity you find relaxing.

**Important points to remember**

• Know your sleep needs and limitations.

• Pay attention to your body clock.
• Make sleep a priority. Aim for six to eight hours of sleep if possible.

• Start your work as fresh as you can.

• Watch for signs of fatigue.

• Use fatigue management strategies at work.

• Maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Living and working together

Basic people skills are integral to getting along with people who you live and work alongside. Communal living functions better when people are able to listen to each other, manage and resolve conflicts, have self-awareness and an awareness of differences between people.

Good communication is an important skill. In order to resolve conflicts you will need to be able to listen to others, without interrupting them, and focus on understanding how they feel. Communication is most effective when all parties are honest; issues are addressed in a timely manner, before they build up; and people are assertive about what they want and what they feel is fair.

The ability to respect and value differences between people is important in communal living. Everyone needs to be flexible and respect other peoples’ living choices. If no harm is done to themselves or others, do not try and impose
your will on others. If a particular behaviour of someone else irritates you, talk about it with them and find out their point of view. If you request someone to change a particular behaviour, then you need to give them time to change and acknowledge their attempts. Habits can be hard to break. Also consider your own behaviour and whether it could be irritating or annoying to others. Finally, be considerate of others’ privacy, values, and belongings.

When conflict occurs
Conflict is the result of threat to one’s values, beliefs, goals, relationships, or material well-being. Although at times conflict is inevitable, it can be minimised, diverted, and/or resolved.

The Conflict Resolution Process
1. Create an effective atmosphere
   • Approach the issue honestly and openly
   • Try to start out on a good note
2. Clarify perceptions
   • Get to the heart of the matter and avoid side issues
   • Avoid stereotyping
   • Recognise others’ needs and values
   • Empathise and ask why they feel the way they do
3. Focus on individual and shared needs

- Be conscious about meeting others’ needs as well as your own

4. Look to the future, learn from the past

- Don’t dwell on negative past conflicts
- Assess what happened in the past to avoid making the same mistakes

5. Develop options

- Look for common threads
- Focus on options that seem most workable for all parties involved
6. Aim towards ‘win-win’ situations

- These give you lasting solutions to specific conflicts
- Consider the needs of the other person as well as your own
- Identify the basic things that cannot be altered or compromised
- Clarify exactly what is expected of you in the agreement

**Dealing with difficult people**

You may encounter people who are unwilling to participate in a conflict resolution process. Below are some tips to help you maintain composure when confronted with a difficult person.

- Remain focussed and be firm.
- Listen to them, maintain direct eye contact and speak in a clear firm voice.
- Avoid personalising the problem (e.g. don’t get defensive, try to be objective).
- Don’t exaggerate small offences.
- Typically in these situations arguing leads to a ‘no-win’ situation. Often the only way to cope is to choose not to engage in an argument.
Anger management

Anger can have a damaging effect on your relationships and quality of life. Below are a number of strategies to manage anger.

• Relaxation. Simple relaxation tools can help to calm down angry feelings. Try to breathe deeply from your diaphragm; slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as ‘relax’ or ‘take it easy’; or use imagery to visualise a relaxing place/experience.

• Change the way you think. When people are angry their thinking can become exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing exaggerated thoughts with more rational ones, e.g. ‘This is frustrating but it is not the end of the world’. Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix the situation.

• Problem solve. Anger can be the result of real or inescapable problems in our lives. Focus on how you can manage these problems. Make a plan to resolve the problem and check your progress along the way.

• Better communication. Pause and think before you speak. Avoid saying the first thing that comes into your head. Listen carefully to what others are saying and take your time before answering.

• Humour. Humour can be used to help ease tension. Rather than ‘laughing off’ your problems, use humour to help you calm down so you can face your problems more constructively.
• Change your environment. Sometimes our immediate surroundings cause our irritation and fury. Try to change your immediate surroundings, within the constraints of the operational environment.

RELIEF OUT OF COUNTRY LEAVE (ROCL)

Deciding what to do for ROCL

There are many ways to spend your ROCL. Some members will choose to return home to family and friends, while others will choose to meet family overseas to prevent disrupting the family routine. Some may travel alone while others may travel with their partner or friends. Any decision about how to utilise ROCL should be well considered and discussed with friends and family, as appropriate. Ultimately, your ROCL should provide you with an opportunity to rest and unwind.

Common issues

• Reunion can often be more stressful and emotional than separation.

• You may have very different expectations from your family and friends about the best way to spend your time on leave. You may want rest and they may want to party.

• Routines may be disrupted and/or changed.

• There may be an increase in disagreements over things that have (or have not) been done whilst you’ve been away.
• You may feel emotionally distant or have difficulty enjoying certain activities.

• Sexual intimacy with your partner may initially be awkward, as you both may have different hopes and expectations.

• You may have developed bad habits that might not be appropriate back at home (e.g. bad language or increased levels of smoking).

• Your tolerance for alcohol will be lower than it was prior to deploying.

**Useful tips**

• It is completely natural to feel nervous or apprehensive about returning home to see family and friends. It is quite likely they will be experiencing similar feelings. If you feel nervous, give yourself time to readjust, just like you would have done when you arrived in-country at the beginning of your deployment.

• Prior to taking your ROCL, organise how you would like to spend your time. Discuss these intentions with family and friends beforehand to minimise disagreements or misunderstandings. If you are returning home, avoid falling back into old routines which may leave you feeling like you never had a rest.

• Catching up with friends individually is time-consuming and draining. Avoid this by organising a large gathering and inviting all your friends. Use this opportunity to ask
what they have been doing while you have been away. This will help you to feel more in touch with what has happened at home in your absence.

- Plan a break or some other novel activity during your ROCL. Members who report positive ROCL experiences usually engage in unique and exciting activities that have helped them to completely unwind and forget about work. Alternately, consider taking a family holiday. This provides an opportunity for everyone to take a break and spend some quality time together. It may also lessen disruption to the family routine and minimise the impact on the family when you return to the operation.

- Talk openly and respectfully about sexual intimacy and each other’s expectations with your partner.

- Consider the effects alcohol may have on your body and how it may react with medication you need to take, such as Doxycycline.

- Have some flexibility in your plans should your trip be disrupted due to weather conditions, availability of transport or operational requirements.

- If travelling on ROCL, be realistic about what you can achieve in the time frame. Enjoy yourself but don’t try to do everything during the short time you have on leave. Remember, the aim of ROCL is for you to rest and relax.
Returning from ROCL

It may be difficult to say goodbye for a second time, so ensure you plan ahead and allow yourself and your family adequate time for farewells. If you have children, be mindful of their reactions and feelings, especially in relation to you going away again. Also, consider the effects of jetlag and its impact on your sleep patterns.

It is not uncommon for members to experience some difficulty settling back into their roles immediately after ROCL. This experience is known as the ‘post-ROCL blues’. The best way to overcome these feelings is to remain focussed on your work. It may also help if you set some goals to achieve before the end of your deployment.
Alternately, you can talk to your mates. If you are experiencing any difficulties adjusting, there is a good chance they have experienced similar concerns on this deployment or a previous deployment. Your peers may be able to offer you advice or give you some ideas on how to manage these feelings and concerns or at least help you to better understand them.

**FAMILYSMART**

Defence families and partners of Defence members are entitled to access programs and services offered by Defence Community Organisation (DCO), including FamilySMART. Similar to BattleSMART, FamilySMART is a series of seminars which develop Defence families’ resilience and teaches skills to help families respond effectively to stressful situations and unique military challenges.

During these seminars, attendees will learn self-administered calming and relaxing strategies, including grounding, progressive muscle relaxation techniques, problem-solving strategies and strategies to change self-talk. Contact your local DCO Office for more information on FamilySMART.

**POST-OPERATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SCREENS (POPS)**

Post-Operational Psychology Screens (POPS) are interviews conducted by Defence psychology personnel three to six months after a member has returned from deployment. These screens assess how the member is coping and
integrating back in to life in Australia and determine whether the member would benefit from additional education or professional help. Provided the member is willing and comfortable, their partner or a family member can request to attend.

During the POPS interview both the member and their partner are encouraged to discuss the impact of the deployment and how the member has reintegrated into home and work life since their return. Both the member and their partner will learn about behaviours which are normal and abnormal upon a member’s return, strategies to manage these behaviours and the services that are available to provide support and assistance.

**CONCLUSION**

Deployments are usually very positive experiences for members, who relish the opportunity to do their job on operations. While separation can be difficult, a period of separation can also be a positive experience for members and their families. The difficulties and issues discussed in this guide do not always eventuate. Both loved ones at home and in the AO can benefit from new experiences that separation offers. Many members who have deployed report positive changes due to the separation, including:

- Feeling more capable, having dealt with major challenges during the separation
- Being able to say things to their loved ones they couldn’t before, for example, how proud they are of them
• Relating more closely to one or both parents when previously you could not
• No longer worrying about trivial things
• Family members learning to support each other through periods of stress
• Feeling a sense of purpose that previously wasn’t there
• Having more clear goals in life
• Becoming less self-centred, more patient, more ‘worldly’, more willing to help those in need
• Gaining a renewed appreciation of Australian culture and lifestyle
• Gaining a deeper appreciation of the value of life and loved ones

Remember:
• There may be several emotional stages you and your loved ones go through during a deployment
• It may take you some time to adapt to the culture in theatre
• Stress and fatigue needs to be managed appropriately in order to maximise your performance on deployment
• Some things will change while you are away
• Roles may change in order for those at home to manage normal chores
• Communication over the phone may be difficult initially
• Your expectations may be different to your partner’s expectations

• Children may feel and behave differently during a parent’s absence

Tips for making the most of your deployment:

• Spend some time considering the realities of your deployment, and make plans to mitigate any anticipated stress.

• Be in regular communication with family and friends in Australia.

• Consider your unique issues, whether you’re single, in a relationship, have children or elderly parents. Make plans to ensure your loved ones are as well supported as possible in your absence.

• Remember to implement stress management strategies that you find effective - take care of yourself and your mates.

• Take a proactive approach to fatigue and conflict management.

• Discuss with family and friends how best to spend your ROCL in order to ensure you have maximum opportunity to rest and unwind.

• Participate in POPS three to six months after your return to Australia.

• Seek assistance while deployed if you need it.
Good luck. Prepare well for separation, ROCL and homecoming. Make effort to support your loved ones despite the physical gap of separation. There may be problems that will need to be worked through. Be sensitive to stress reactions in yourself and be prepared to seek assistance in dealing with stress if required.
SUPPORT SERVICES

National Welfare Coordination Centre:

- A 24 hour point of contact and information service for families of all Defence personnel away from their home locations
- Can pass urgent information to deployed personnel
- Provides mailing addresses and postal regulations for overseas deployments
- Ph: 1800 801 026

All Hours Support Line:

- Available within Australia and overseas
- Confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families in crisis
- Available services include psychology, medical, social work, and chaplain services
- Within Australia - Ph: 1800 628 036
- Outside Australia - Ph: +61 2 9425 3878
Psychology Support Team:

• A team may deploy with you on some operations or will visit areas of operation

• Your local medical staff can assist you to contact psychological support

Chaplains:

• May provide assistance at any time during a deployment, to the member in the AO and their family in Australia

Defence Community Organisation:

• Provide assistance to members and their families in all regional areas

• 24 hour crisis support in all military locations

• This support can be accessed through your local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day

• http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/

Family Information Network for Defence:

• Phone service which provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern

• Confidential service available to members and their families

• Ph: 1800 020 031
Lifeline:

- Non-Defence organisation
- Provides access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services
- Ph: 13 11 14
- http://www.lifeline.org.au

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service:

- Available to veterans of all deployments and their families
- Provide services including individual counselling, group programs, psycho-education and alcohol reduction programs
- VVCS also have a 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046)