



Some Practical Pointers

Encourage your children to ask questions.

- Use language suitable to the age and development level of each child in answering the questions. Let children know that their thoughts and feelings are important to you.
- If a child has trouble verbalizing thoughts, suggest another way of expression, such as drawing, telling stories or playing with puppets.
- Keep routines as consistent and predictable as possible; children are reassured by structure and familiarity.
- Let your children be children! Even in times of war, kids need to play, laugh and continue to grow and learn.

Talking to Your Kids About War

Kids have lots of questions about war and what it means for the mom or dad who is away.

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Your child may be anxious and fearful about what is happening to the deployed parent. It is imperative for these fears to be discussed in a calm manner.

Tips for all Ages

Early Childhood

- Be calm around babies and toddlers.
- Keep to your normal routine as much as possible.

Pre-schoolers

- Setting and sticking to bedtimes is very important. Looking at books, reading stories and tuck-ins are vital.

- Give kids lots of hugs and physical reassurance.
- Safety is a real concern for this age group. Reassure them that adults are in charge and will keep them safe. Let them know you will protect them and keep them safe.

Elementary School

- Be open. Ask the kids if they have any questions and answer them without over-reacting.
- Spend extra time together to provide additional reassurance.
- Limit television use and continue normal routines, especially at bedtime.

Middle School

- Children this age are extremely aware of their surroundings, so encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Remember not to burden them with any fears you might be experiencing.
- Use historical examples — the Civil War or World War II, for example — to provide kids with a sense of hope and to explain how the United States has survived very difficult times in the past. (Continued)



Tips for All Ages

(continued)

High School

- Some teens make jokes, so remember that humor can be a way to cope with difficult emotions they might be experiencing.
- Be open and allow them to express their feelings in different ways.
- Teens are focused on the events in their own lives; they might not want to talk about the war at all. Encourage conversation but do not force it.

Red Flags

If the following symptoms occur regularly or disrupt daily behavior, consult your pediatrician:

- headaches, stomach aches
- inability to sleep
- not eating or eating too much
- social withdrawal from friends, acting out at school or at home.

Resources

www.militarychild.org

www.militaryonesource.com

www.emilitary.org/links.php