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Deployment Success Strategies

Being separated from people you love is not easy. It's always helpful to learn how other Navy families handle deployments. If you have suggestions you are willing to share, send them to handbooks.feedback@navy.mil. Here are some great tips from experienced Navy family members:

Tip From Amy

To keep my Sailor feeling like he's involved with his son while he is in Iraq I set up a blog where I post a photograph of our son every day and a little bit about what he doing. Check it out at <http://brendenzane.blogspot.com>.



Cunningham Family (Photo by: Erika Mounts)

Tip from Janet

Hi, my husband is an active duty reservist, and is on his second IA deployment to Iraq.

I have a very busy pet sitting business that I have been doing for seven years. I go to people's homes and board pets. I left LL Bean in 2002, and wish I had done this sooner. Caring for pets is my passion in life; something I feel called to do.

In addition to my business, I rescue animals, mostly dogs, cats, and an occasional farm animal. I live in New England, and we have our share of pets in need. We pull highly adoptable pets from shelters, place them into foster homes, which I participate in, and find them wonderful, lasting homes.

I also have fundraisers to raise money to help these pets. It is very expensive to pull a pet from the shelter, get them vetted and place them. We have to pay for transport, and anything they need while in foster care.

I could go on and on about this as it what keeps me busy while my Sailor is gone.

If anyone has a love for animals, foster homes are always needed. A foster parent has no financial responsibility as that is taken care of by the rescue. Foster families provide love and a safe, happy home until a furever home is found.



Janet and her pup.

Tips from Donna

My suggestion is to find a way to believe this will not be the worst year or two of your life. Find some friends to have fun with (at least one time per week). Find a home improvement project. (Redo the flowerbeds or repaint your bedroom a new, relaxing color.) Make a list of all the books you have wanted to read and start working your way through them now that you have the time. If you have children and no time to read, then find a way to make time for yourself—daily.

Whatever you decide to do write it down somewhere so that at the end of the deployment you can look back and see all the good things you accomplished.

Tips from Rosalyn

This is my first go round as a deployment survivor. What helped me was my husband prepared me for what I would deal with before we decided to get married. Like a coach and a team member he put me through drills and test. I would have to complete tasks on my own and do research to see what would work best for me while he was away.

As a newlywed we stayed faithfully in the church and prayerful at home. It makes for a great, solid relationship. Here is a list of things I am doing now to make the days go by fast.

I recommend:

- Keep a journal and write how your day went. You're not the only one who worries or has thoughts. It will be great for him to read when he comes back.
- Get involved with a Family Readiness Group as this is a great way to get to know other Navy family members.
- Invite friends and family you can trust to visit and keep the time going. Nothing is more important than family and friends who can help support your tears and venting moments when you feel all alone.
- Stay in contact with the Ombudsman.
- Take a trip to Fleet and Family Support Center. They have a lot of great training courses you can schedule weeks and months ahead of time. This gave me great knowledge about the Navy and things I needed to be prepared for while he is away and when he returns.
- Have a day out once or twice a month. Grab a few of those new friends and spend time together. Be it the grocery store, mall, movies, etc. You will find that some spouses will be a great help to you and vice versa.
- Workout or take a walk. Nothing is better than a workout or a walk when I am stressed or worried. I have lost pounds and gained energy.
- Most importantly, focus on the positives and eliminate the negatives. I love my Sailor who knows how to be selfless and make sacrifices so that we may live in a country full of freedom.



Rosalyn

Tips from Lori

Keep Busy!!! Through my numerous deployments and moves I have found work as a wonderful way to occupy my time while my husband is gone. Also, shopping for things to put in the next care package you send is a way to stay connected and it makes you feel good that you are sending things you know they like and probably miss from home.

Tips from Reneé

Spend the time when your Sailor is gone working on YOU—pampering you, loving you, doing those things you want to do but might not be able to do while your spouse is there. For example, eat what you want. Do the dishes (or not) whenever you want. Hog the remote. Take care of you!

It's OK to have fun. It's not OK to feel guilty for having it. We become bored/boring and resentful when we don't allow ourselves to experience the pleasure that comes from doing things we enjoy.

Once or twice a month, schedule "me" time. Find someone to watch your children and do something nice for yourself. This is vital to your mental and emotional well-being.

Get connected to other military spouses. No one understands what you are going through better than someone who has or had a spouse deployed. You will need the empathy that comes from someone who has "been there, done that."

Join a church. Join a gym. Enroll in a class. Volunteer. Participate in military family support groups. It helps to stay connected to others. It is very easy to give in to the isolation you feel when your spouse leaves. This can lead to depression and anxiety.

Weekends are the worst! They are notoriously long and lonely. Plan fun activities with the kids; go to church services, volunteer, go visit family—it helps.

Don't sit around and feel sorry for yourself, it will only make time go by extremely slow.

Exercise! It's a great stress reliever. It helps channel some of the pent up (wink, wink) "energy" that occurs when your partner is gone. Plus, everyone wants to look extra cute when their Sailor comes home!

Beware of retail therapy. In small doses it might help, but engage in it too often and it can cause financial hardship.

It's OK to cry. It's not OK to cry all the time. There are people who can help you figure out how to cope. www.MilitaryOneSource.com is a great place to start.



Reneé—NMCB24 Command Ombudsman



Grab' n' Go Kit

Hurricane season begins June 1st, but even if you don't live in an area that is subject to hurricanes you still need a stash of emergency supplies in case a natural or man-made disaster occurs. Here is a supply list recommended by NOAA's National Hurricane Center:

- Water—1 gallon per person per day for 3–7 days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food—enough nonperishable packaged or canned food/juices for the family for 3–7 days.
- Manual can opener, cooking tools/fuel, disposable plates and utensils.
- Wet wipes, toiletries, hygiene items.
- First aid kit, medicines, prescription drugs.
- Seasonal clothing and rain gear, sturdy shoes.
- Blankets, pillows.
- Battery-powered or hand-crank weather radio with tone alert, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Fully charged cell phone with extra battery.
- Cash with some small bills and credit cards (banks and ATMs may not be available).
- A waterproof container of important documents—driver's license, Social Security cards, proof of residence, insurance, medical records, prescriptions, bank account numbers, birth and marriage certificates, deeds, wills, tax records, etc.
- Extra keys.
- Include unique family needs, such as infant and pet supplies. Don't forget a supply of toys, books, and games for children. Many shelters do not allow pets, but if you are taking them, bring along a leash and ID tag, immunization records, medications, an ample supply of food and water, and a carrier or cage.



Store your supplies in one or two easy-to-carry containers—plastic bins, backpacks, or duffel bags—and make sure everyone in the family can access them. Keep maps and a toolset in your vehicle, and keep the gas tank filled.

Boots CD

When your spouse deploys, the challenges can seem overwhelming. Journalist and military spouse, Jacey Eckhart provides strategies to help you prepare for deployment, survive (and even thrive) while you're "married but single," and get ready for homecoming on a free CD from Military OneSource. Go to www.Militaryonesource.com to order yours.

Kids and Moving Web Site

The Department of Defense launched a brand new web site for military children called *Military Youth on the Move* <http://apps.mhf.dod.mil/pls/psgprod/f?p=MYOM:HOME:450393068920669>.

The web site has age specific information for elementary, middle and high school kids with topics such as: *We're Moving Again? But I Won't Know Anybody* and *What's There to Do?*



GI Bill Transfers

For the first time ever, starting in June, Sailors can sign up to share their GI educational benefits with family members. Rules require a service member to have at least six years of service and make a new commitment to serve an additional four years to transfer benefits to a spouse or children. There are some temporary rules that apply to Sailors who will be retiring soon. Many spouses and children could begin using benefits this fall if their Sailor signs up quickly enough. To learn more go to <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

Helpful Web Sites

The following web sites will help you stay current on "Navy news" throughout the deployment:

- www.ia.navy.mil.
- www.ffsp.navy.mil.
- www.militaryonesource.com.



The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center provides information and support to IA Sailors and their families. Contact them at:

ECRC IA FAMILY HELPDESK
ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil

WEBSITE
www.ia.navy.mil

ECRC IA HELPDESK
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