SEVEN STEPS TO SURVIVING (and even enjoying) YOUR SPOUSES

TDY

1. Anticipate the Loss

Begin 4-6 weeks BEFORE deployment!

You'll feel lots of tension!
"Too much to do, too little time"

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-Feel free to bicker: provides emotional distance for the upcoming deployment
-restlessness
-mild depression
-irritability
-SPOUSE: angry & resentful
-MEMBER: guilty

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-isolation
-not spending any time together
-overwhelming guilt, or deep depression

STEP ONE ACTIONS:
-recognize the symptoms and talk about them
-do kind things for one another
-don't worry if everything doesn't get done, look to the unit for help

2. Detachment and Withdrawal

Begins 4-6 days before departure

Most difficult stage!

EXPECT PROBLEMS IF DEPARTURE IS SUDDENLY DELAYED!

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-lack of interest in sexual relations
-feeling that the marriage is out-of-control
-emotional distance: stop sharing thoughts and feelings
-SPOUSE: "If you have to go, just go."
-MEMBER: "I just want to get on with it."

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-isolation
-serious contemplation of divorce

STEP TWO ACTIONS:
-Don't force things, realize that even though the physical separation hasn't begun, the emotional separation has.
-Realize that this is the shortest most uncomfortable stage and will help you deal with departure.

3. Emotional Disarray

"If I really love my spouse, why am I glad he/she's gone?"

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-glad the spouse is gone (results from uncomfortable state of previous stage)
-numb, aimless, loss of purpose
-overwhelmed
-insomnia, or sleeping too much
-lonely, frustrated
-anger

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-isolation
-serious thoughts of divorce
-feelings of utter helplessness, inability to act

STEP THREE ACTIONS:
-set goals for the deployment
-begin establishing new routines

DON'T GET STUCK IN THIS STEP!
Getting stuck here will have and cause problems the entire deployment.

4. Recovery, Stability

"Hey, I'm doing O.K.!"

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-new family patterns and routines
-successful experiences lead to self-confidence
-new sources of support: new friends, new activities, new involvement in community
-high long-distance bills: contacting old friends
-give up real cooking for fast food
-mild depression
-sick more often
-anxiousness

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-not communicating with deployed spouse
-not getting to this stage
-serious thoughts of divorce

BENEFITS OF GOING THROUGH THE DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE:
Military spouses, as a group:
-are more mature
-are more outwardly independent
-have more opportunities to stretch themselves
-have a sense of independence, freedom, pride

5. Anticipate Homecoming

"Oh No! He's/She's coming home and I'm not ready!"

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-panic, the to-do list isn't done!
-joy and excitement about getting together
-feelings of apprehension (usually unexpressed)
-concerned about effects of spouses' return
-will he/she still love me?
-how have we changed?
-I want him/her back, but what will I have to give up?
-I can't go back to being dependent!

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-overwhelming anger, ready to let him/her "have it" the moment he/she walks through the door
-serious thoughts of divorce

STEP 5 ACTIONS:
-express apprehensions (you're both feeling them!)
-realize you will be making a decision to reaccept your spouse, it's normal, it doesn't mean there's anything wrong with your marriage
-feel comfortable with your tendency to leave some decisions until after homecoming.
-stay busy!

6. Renegotiate Marriage

Coming back together as a couple.
Stop being single and start being married again!

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-aggravation
-marriage will not be the same as before the TDY
-too much togetherness will cause friction
-"What's that man doing in my bedroom?"
-"Why do I feel like a stranger in my own home?"
-stories and experiences will be shared slowly
-sexual relations can feel awkward and uncomfortable

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-serious thoughts of divorce
-not doing anything together

STEP 6 ACTIONS:
-communicate!!!
-assumptions WILL NOT work!
-realize true intimacy will take time to restore
-sit down and re-evaluate the marriage, determine new directions to grow, evaluate changes

BENEFITS:
-a chance to meld the separate experiences during the deployment into a renewed and refreshed relationship

7. Stabilization

Four to six weeks after homecoming!

WHAT'S NORMAL:
-"my", "I" is replaced by "our", "we"
-family routines established
-husband/wife feel comfortable, relaxed with each other
-sense of being a couple and a family

WHAT'S NOT NORMAL:
-continuous fighting
-serious thoughts and talking about divorce

YOU MADE IT!

For more information contact the Family Support Center at:

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