

POE AND FRIENDS REINTEGRATION VIDEO

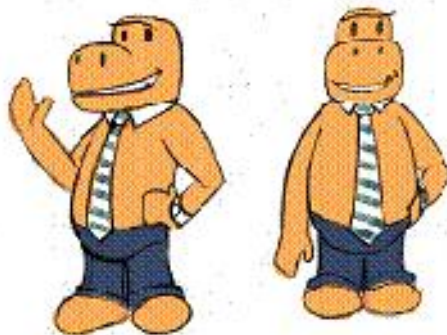
Facilitator's Guide

“Getting back together as a family after being apart.”

Congratulations. You have in your hands a communication tool to help children deal with reunion issues after family separation. This animated video has been developed by a group of concerned military professionals and family members with a passion for helping children deal with family separations. Volunteers from all over the world, military and civilian, from all Services and job descriptions, reviewed the script and its content to be sure that it addressed real issues of children undergoing separation from family members. Children and their families were asked to read the script to ensure it was useful and accurate (see script credits). They pooled their talents with the intent of providing a learning tool that would engage children and their families, in a format that would allow them to speak out and address worries, fears, and concerns surrounding impending or actual separation from loved ones (parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, guardians, etc.).

There are plenty of materials to be used by adults, but not so many specifically developed at a child's level of understanding, for them. Experts say, “If you want to get through to a child, get down on the floor, at their level.” Whether you are parent, guardian, family member, healthcare care provider, or simply a concerned community member, use this child-friendly format to help children you know deal with issues related to family reunions after long deployment separations.

Welcome to the world of Mr. Poe and friends.



Whether you use this video in your home as a family care provider or as part of a community reintegration program sponsored by a military readiness group, we suggest the following:

1. Review the video before using it. The original concept was developed and funded with a military chaplain's grant. Imbedded in the script are references to prayer and to God. Make sure they are acceptable for your presentation and audience.
2. Assess your target group, the local environment and phase of deployment they are currently in (see Deployment Cycle handout). This may influence which sections of the video you decide to use at this time. It was written specifically to be used during the sustainment phase of deployment, just before redeployment, but can be used at any time. Content was written to target reunion issues at the developmental level of an elementary school-age child 6-12 years of age, to generate further discussion. It can be viewed in small or large groups, together with family, friends, teachers, clergy, and/or specific military units.
3. This video can be used by viewing the program in its entirety with follow-up discussion at later date and time, or by pausing as needed to interject additional information, asking questions of the viewing audience as they come up. The program has three separate sections that can be played on separate occasions if limited time is a factor (I.e. in elementary or Sunday school classes). Mr. Poe, the narrator and unit family readiness group coordinator, summarizes each section, indicating good places to pause to have a discussion, if you wish.
4. Example discussion questions for each of the three sections have been provided to assist you in facilitating meaningful discussion. If staff resources and time permit, consider breaking up into small groups and asking questions provided to elicit responses from the viewers about what they have just seen. In this way, you may identify children with more serious personal issues who would benefit from assistance in dealing with separation and/or reintegration issues. By all means, rephrase the questions to suit your group's situation and add others, as appropriate.
5. Knowing the point-of-contacts in your community; chaplains, teachers, doctors, social workers, unit and school counselors, who you could refer the child and family to, would be very helpful.

Additional information is provided on the DVD. Contact numbers for the originators of the video are provided along with the script. You may want to consider putting on this presentation 'live' in your community, altering the lines to best fit your community's circumstance(s). Handouts provided with this guide also give useful information on deployment cycle phases, depression signs and symptoms, and where to get other reference materials.

SECTION CONTENT/ CONCEPT **& DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

SECTION #1, SCENES 1-6

Family relationships are strained by military deployments or any long separation from a loved one for any reason. While adults are able to handle most changes and make necessary adaptations, children may have a much more difficult time accomplishing them without outside help.

Children are certainly aware that things are different; that their world has changed (or is changing), but they don't always know why. Children are prone to believe that they, personally, had something to do with causing the negative feelings generated by family separations.

Mr. Poe and friends discuss the questioning phase and deal with some healthy ways families can anticipate and deal with separation, maintain contact while separated, and prepare for family reunions. The scenarios will help answer some questions we all have about deployment and how it might affect our family.

DISCUSSION: Ask questions dealing with how the children are feeling and understanding the situation they are now in. Responses should be affirming, modeling healthy ways families deal with separation. This would be a good time to go over the normal reactions of people going through a separation/deployment, if it hasn't been discussed before (see Deployment Cycle handout).

Example questions:

1. Has it been the same for you? How has your life (how have you) changed?
2. How has it been different (or the same) for you than for Billy?
3. What are you feeling? Why do you think you feel the way you do?
4. What things did you do getting ready for your dad or mom to go? What have you done since they left?
5. Did anybody have fights and get angry with anyone before they left?
6. Anyone have a situation like Franky, with homework, and getting mad?
7. Moms, can you relate to the mother's comments?
8. How did you stay in touch with your deployed parent?
9. What do you think the deployed person has been thinking?
10. How has your mom or dad at home handled the situation? (How are they doing?)
11. Has anyone been worried or scared?
12. What do you think of the news on TV? Do you watch it? Where can you find out the truth about what's going on where your parent is deployed?
13. Does belief in God help a person when someone is gone for a long time?

SECTION #2, SCENES 7-8

Every family has in its structure the individual or individuals who provide the basis of authority and discipline. When an authoritative family member is gone, the authority structure changes, if only temporarily. Each family situation is different concerning who is now “in charge” during this time of family transition.

Those who become the “in charge” parent, by default, assume the roles and responsibilities of the one absent, but they are not always aware of the dynamics of family change. The person who has separated from the family may not have ‘officially’ relinquished this responsibility, unless it was specifically talked about. Subsequently, the at home parent may not appreciate the change in their family role.

The resolution of authority that occurs when a family is reunited may cause emotional stress for everyone, with an inability to adjust to the new family configuration. The person returning may feel unneeded, or not appreciated, and those who filled in may feel usurped and not appreciated or cared about as well.

One of the most sensitive situations is where we put expectations on an older sibling to care for the younger ones to “help out.” They invariably mature with this responsibility. This may not be recognized by the returning parent. The older child should be allowed to regress for a time and “be a kid again” without getting “in trouble.” Many may want to retain some of that learned responsibility, if appropriate. A child who has been asked to be in charge will sometimes get the response “YOU’RE NOT THE BOSS OF ME NOW,” if they continue to try and be ‘helpful’ once dad or mom returns to the household.

Many families have children who stay with grandparents or other guardians during the separation, especially if they have a single parent or dual military parents. The child may have been “getting away with things” that the parent wouldn’t have allowed. These behaviors may need to be reversed, if they are not appropriate within the reunited family. The child needs to be reminded this was a temporary situation and be given time to return to doing things their parent’s way.

Example questions:

1. Who’s been “in charge” in your house during this time? Who will be “in charge” when mom or dad gets home again?
2. Has anyone had to take care a younger brother or sister during the deployment? Have any of you younger kids been “bossed around” by the older ones?
3. Has anyone been living in a different place during the separation?
4. Have you been able to “get away with” things during this time you couldn’t before? Will that stay the same, do you think?

SECTION #3, SCENES 9-12

Family intimacy, or sharing of time and affection, often changes depending on family dynamics before separation, the length of the separation, and the relative ages of the family members. Also, returning service members may have experienced things while deployed that will make them less available emotionally at first than they were before the deployment. Unrealistic expectations are common that things will be “better than ever” or will go back to feeling just like it did before the separation. The “honeymoon period” is often short-lived, and then problems that were there before the deployment resurface.

Families should discuss how “routines” have changed. Family members may inappropriately feel that they are no longer needed or appreciated, triggering feelings of depression and disappointment. Children may feel angry that the parent has returned, removing a privilege they’ve become used to, leading to statements like, “I wish you’d never come back.” Prevent this with daily opportunities to express honest feelings. Review symptoms of depression and encourage family members to watch for it in each other (see depression handout).

Families separated for longer periods, especially if unprepared, will require more time for healthy family readjustment to occur. Expectations are often unrealistic about how initial time will be spent together and what affection will be shown. Prepare for a gradual readjustment in these areas. Many units feel that the deployed service member shouldn’t be totally separated from the family at first to “put things away” or thrown back into the family situation full time. They are given half days with the family to readjust. “Block leave” comes later. Avoid the tendency to rush things, wanting to get “back to normal” right away. This is difficult if the old “normal” relationship no longer exists. Most people can relate to this recalling how we expect things to go back to “normal” after a long vacation. Balancing time alone and together helps everyone adjust in a healthy way.

Example questions:

1. Have things changed around your house? What’s the same? Different? What things will go back to the way it was before? What things do you want to stay changed?
2. Were there any things causing problems before mom or dad left that you’ll want to talk about when they get back?
3. What’s the first thing you’re going to do with them when they get back?
4. How long will they be at work when they get back? Will they be home a lot? (Discuss the local unit or command’s plan and philosophy on reintegration.)
5. How can you show someone you missed, and still need them?
6. How can you recognize that someone in the family is feeling depressed or sad?
7. How does going to a place of worship help a family adjust?
8. How long do you think it’ll be before things get “back to normal” for you? How long did it take for things to get “normal” again after your last vacation?

The Deployment Cycles/Phases

I. Phased Training Concept

- Predeployment Preparation (Training)
- Deployment (Separation)
- Redeployment (Reintegration)
- Postdeployment/ Reconstitution (Retraining)

II. The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

A. Pre-Deployment

- Long hours, train-up
- Getting all in order
- Anticipating mental/physical distance, loss
- Arguments

B. Deployment

- Disoriented, overwhelmed
- Sad, alone
- Sleep problems
- Security Issues

C. Sustainment

- New routines established
- New support resources found
- Control regained, in balance, independence
- New self-confidence

D. Redeployment

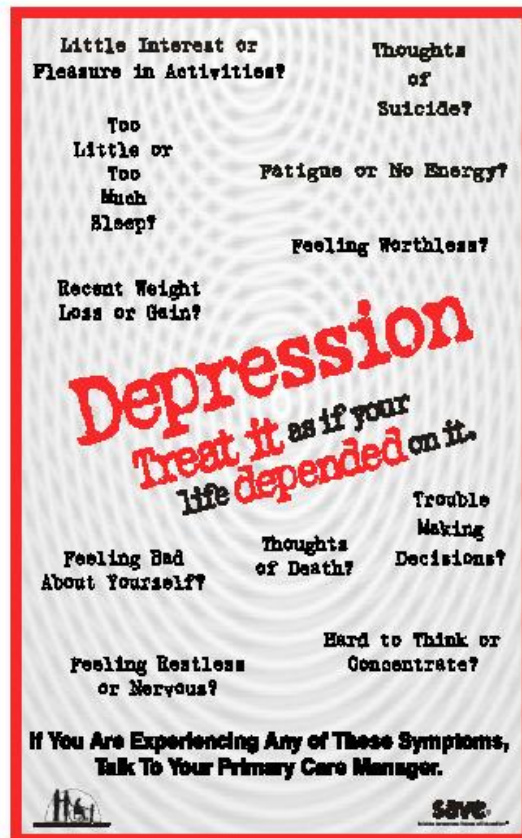
- Anticipation, expectations, excitement
- Apprehension
- “Nesting” energy
- Difficulty making decisions, confusion
- Deliberate reintegration plan to ensure well-being (I.e. Army 7-half day plan)
- Plan to accomplish major tasks by approximately 45 days (<http://www.per.hqusaar.army.mil/reintegration>)

E. Post-Deployment

- Honeymoon period
- Loss of independence
- ‘Forced’ return to prior routines, status Vs Renegotiating
- Need for ‘own’ space
- Reintegrating (formerly deployed) spouse

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things
2. Feeling down, depressed, hopeless
3. Crying (weepiness)
4. Trouble falling, or staying, asleep, or sleeping a lot
5. Poor appetite, or overeating
6. Feelings of being a failure, or letting your family down
7. Fatigue or lack of energy, apathy, inactivity
8. Trouble concentrating, making decisions, “staring into space”
9. Speech changes - mumbling, speaking too softly
10. Use of alcohol
11. Feelings of suicide



Helpful Websites

- **AAP Deployment Support Website -**
<http://www.aap.org/sections/unifserv/deployment/index.htm>
- **Military One Source -** <http://www.militaryonesource.com/>
- **AMEDD C&S -** <http://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/youth.aspx>
- **Army Behavioral Health Site -**
<https://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/Deployment/behavioralhealth.aspx>
- **Military Child Education Coalition -** <http://www.militarychild.org/>
- **National Military Family Member Association -**
<http://www.nmfa.org/site/PageServer>)
- **America Supports You -**
<http://www.americasupportsyou.mil/americasupportsyou/index.aspx>
- **Army Reserve Child and Youth Services Sites -**
<http://www.arfp.org/skins/ARFP/home.aspx?AllowSSL=true>
- **National Guard Child and Youth Services Sites -** <http://www.guardfamily.org/>
- **Army Child and Youth Services -** <http://www.armycysconnections.com/>
- **Family Readiness Groups -**
<http://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/Deployment/familyreadiness.aspx>