A FEW TIPS FOR KIDS

- ***"Just Visiting."*** It may be very helpful to help your children understand that the soldier parent is just visiting. They still have a job in Iraq that is not finished yet, but they do get to visit.

- ***Special Time.*** Soldiers should try to spend special 1-on-1 time with each child; it means a lot to them (and you).

- ***Reactions.*** Recognize that kids will react differently & maybe unexpectedly. They may regress from recent developmental milestones. Have patience!

HELPFUL COPING STRATEGIES DURING THE DEPLOYMENT

- ***Communicate.*** Make efforts to write, call, and e-mail each other. Try to discuss feelings as well as events. Be honest. It may help to keep a journal. Involve the kids in this process as well.

- ***Get connected.*** Keep in contact with friends and other spouses in the unit. Participate in the unit FRG. Volunteer and keep active. Don't go it alone!

- ***Maintain Routines.*** You may need different routines than what you had before, but routine helps pass the time and provides stability for children.

- ***Financial Planning.*** Without a plan, things can get out of control. Have a financial plan that includes savings for R & R and reunion trips, and stick to your plan! Be sure your expectations fit within your budget.

- ***Go easy on expectations.*** This is a very stressful time for everyone. Recognize and praise each person's efforts and accomplishments, and don't dwell on disappointments.

- ***Stay busy.*** Soldiers stay focused on the mission. Not only will this help keep you and your buddies safe, it also helps the time pass more quickly. Spouses can volunteer or get involved in activities that help pass the time.

- ***Relax and Unwind.*** Every person has his or her own way to relax and unwind: work out at the gym, listen to music, read, sports, movies, etc. Even downrange, make efforts to relax and maintain balance in your life.

- ***Reject Rumors.*** It is rarely helpful or healthy to believe or repeat unfounded information from uncertain sources. If you hear a rumor about your loved one, assume it is false! Then ask your spouse directly to get the truth.

- ***Seek help*** when needed. The unit RD and the FRG are there for assistance. Installation agencies can also help. For soldiers, unit leaders, chaplains, and mental health professionals will help.

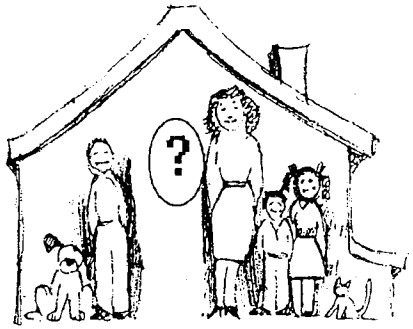
- ***Keep others informed.*** Notify the RD, school, FRG, or friend of plans or trips away from your home. Be reachable.

- ***Plan for emergencies*** – Know the Red Cross system. Even if you don't need it, you may help a friend.

MAXIMIZE **YOUR**

R & R

A GUIDE FOR SOLDIERS, COUPLES AND FAMILIES



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Combat deployments are stressful for everyone, and couples & families can expect that this stress will impact their relationships. The Army has provided this R & R so that soldiers, spouses, and families can have a break in the deployment, and reduce this relational stress.

This brochure is designed to help you prepare wisely and to maximize this time together.

Long separations during deployments cause couples and families to make adjustments in their daily lives - structures and normal routines are changed in an effort to cope with the separation. Both those that remain at home, and those that deploy, are affected by these changes.

R & R also has the potential to be stressful. Lots of changes and new experiences have already occurred, and you many feel anxious about how these changes may impact your relationships. Issues such as coping strategies, personal growth, sexual fidelity, finances, child behavior, and lack of appreciation may be present.

With intentional preparation, most couples and families will find R&R to be relaxing and enjoyable. Some couples and families may require additional assistance to work through difficult issues. Your chaplain is available to help you before, during, or after your R & R to help with these issues.

Let's look at some "R & R Tips for Success," as well as some pitfalls to avoid. Tips for kids are on the other side, along with some reminders about good coping strategies before and after R & R.

R & R TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Have realistic expectations about your time together. Everyone has their own needs, and negotiation is a good idea.
- Make deliberate plans to communicate; set aside time for just talking / listening.
- Tell your spouse about significant changes before you meet, such as hair styles, tattoos, children's behavior, changes around the house, etc.
- Be flexible and willing to change plans. Realize that arrival flights may change or be delayed.
- Make time for spiritual activities and conversations. Share new experiences and commitments.
- Plan ahead for parental visits or other extended family. Agree on time limits.
- Take steps for birth control, as needed.
- Remember to treat your spouse with kindness & respect, not as a fellow soldier or a child.
- Respect each other's need for personal space; both of you will probably need alone time too.
- Plan ahead for the "second goodbye." There's no "right way" to do it, and no way to make it easy. Each couple is different, and some may avoid talking about it and ignore it, while others will talk openly. Do what is best for you!

SPOUSE "PITFALLS TO AVOID"

- Don't plan too much; remember, this is rest and recuperation!
- Don't try to fix relational problems in two weeks; it may be too complex and could ruin your time.
- Don't make a long "Honey Do" list for your soldier. Treat this as a vacation.
- Avoid using R&R as childcare time to have elective surgery.
- Try to maintain a quiet environment. Soldiers have been hyper-vigilant for months, and may jump at noises.

SOLDIER "PITFALLS TO AVOID"

- Be sure everyone knows when you are coming back for R&R. Your "surprise" may find that no one is home.
- Avoid criticizing your spouse's decision making. You won't agree with everything they did; just let it go.
- Leave new household patterns and rules alone – you are a 2-week guest.
- Don't bring home your crude field manners: trash talk, bad hygiene, etc.
- Limit your alcohol consumption! This could easily ruin your time together.
- Be extra careful when driving your POV on high-speed roads.