

National Demographics

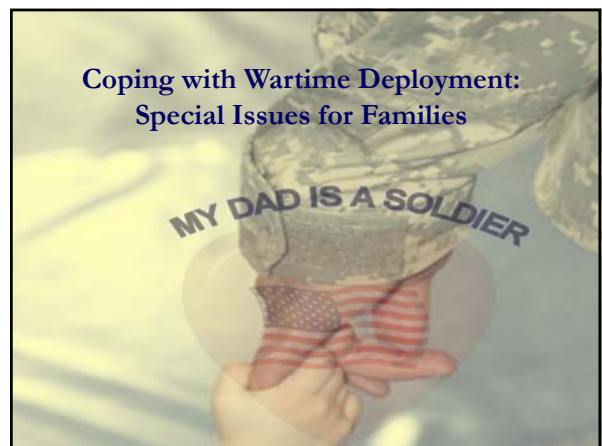
- Over 1.6 million U.S. Forces have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan
 - 49% Former Active Duty
 - 51% Reserve and National Guard
- 85 % Male, 15 % Female
- 52% is between 18 and 24
- 24% between 25 and 30
- Remaining 24% over thirty
- More than 40% is a racial or ethnic minority

National Demographics

Education

HS/GED	45%
Some college	39%
Associate	7%
4 year degree	8%
Graduate degree	1%

- 51.5% of military members are married and 47.1% have children
- greater than 30% of the fighting force have been deployed more than once



Emotional Cycle of Deployment

- Initial intense fear and worry
- Detachment and withdrawal as deployment nears
- Loneliness and sadness soon after soldier leaves
- Adjustment period
- Reunion
- Effect of pre-existing difficulties

Coping With Fear of Unknown

- Limited communication with deployed
- Impact of media
- Internet
- Need to maintain realistic perspective

Changes in Family Structure

- Expanded definition of family
- Changes in family structure
- Younger families may choose to move to be near their parents
- Spouse at home faced with managing unfamiliar tasks
- Impact of mothers being deployed
- Every service member and their family are affected in some way
- Families that are flexible regarding roles and responsibilities better able to adapt

Homecoming After Deployment



What Is Normal Reintegration?

- Limited scientific research
- Time varies from one individual to another
- Behaviors and emotions vary from one individual to another
- There is no set process for reintegration

Post-Deployment Readjustment

“Normal” Reactions
to
“Abnormal” Events

What are the “Abnormal” Events?

- Serving in a war zone can be rewarding, maturing, and leave people with a great sense of pride and purpose
- However, there are many aspects of this experience that are quite stressful and even traumatizing



Major Stressors While In Theater

- Separation from family/friends
- Concerns about home
- Difficult living/working conditions (poor food, lack of privacy, climate, extreme physical exertion, etc.)
- Multiple demands, long hours

Major Stressors While In Theater

Daily Life...

- Periods of intense violence followed by inactivity
- Need to maintain an unprecedented degree of vigilance
- Rules of engagement change often
- Sleep deprivation



Major Stressors While In Theater

- Witnessing human suffering (poverty, close friends seriously injured/killed, etc.)
- Witnessing the aftermath of war (death – enemy and civilians, destruction, dead and mutilated bodies, horrific injuries, devastated homes, communities, handling human remains, etc.)
- Constant threat of death/injury (mortar attacks, IEDs, suicide bombers, urban warfare, etc.)

Major Stressors While In Theater

- Combat exposure, including: being shot at, firing own weapon, etc.
- Sexual trauma
- Every day decisions/behaviors take on a life and death significance
- Struggle over what Service members “know” about right and wrong and what they must do to survive – -- inflicting injury and death (enemy, civilians, friendly fire)

Contextual factors

- Sense of preparedness
- Personal support, conviction for the war
- Morale of unit
- Cohesion of unit
- Uncertainty regarding length of tour

Women Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan

- 2007 – Review of records from the Defense Medical Surveillance System – medical encounters of US military service members, including active duty and reserve members
- Database contained over 860,000 records of service members deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan
 - 12% received a specific mental disorder diagnosis
 - highest rates seen in women (17.4%)
- 22% of women suffered from “military sexual trauma” (includes sexual harassment or assault), compared to 1% of men

Post Battle Debriefing

Reintegration

- Happiest day of a soldier's life
- Feelings of detachment, not belonging, the world went on without them.
- The soldier tries to use the same skills that they used in a combat situation to cope with adjustment
- Large variability between the National Guard/Reserve Component and Active Duty Component

Returning Home Stressors for Military Members

- A lot has changed since deployment
- Feels a bit out of place
- NG and Reserves lack the interaction with other soldiers experienced by active duty units “feel all alone”
- Less support for single soldiers
- Civilian life mundane and insignificant when compared to combat
- Americans seem not interested or concerned about the soldiers in Iraq
- “Did you kill someone over there?” “Did you get shot at?” “Why did you go?”
- What to do with all the free time

Family Reintegration

- Roles have shifted and have been reestablished
- Couples have learned to live apart and independent and a new relationship needs to be explored
- Losing developmental stages of a child's life
- Not knowing when to “jump in” with child discipline
- Split feeling of being overwhelmed with the responsibility of the family and bored with the mundane part of life
- Life becomes more hectic
- Some male partners experience resentment or misunderstanding towards their returning woman veteran.

Returning Home Stressors for Family Members

- A lot has changed since deployment
- Doesn't understand why things can't be the "way they were"
- Family members may feel all alone in trying to assist loved one
- Life becomes more hectic
- Family members, especially children may feel emotionally disconnected
- Some male partners experience resentment or misunderstanding towards their returning woman veteran.
- Parents face similar stressors
- Triggers

Society Reintegration

- Simple tasks seem difficult
- Driving is not comfortable and often reckless
- Being irritable over small issues
- Not being comfortable around people
- Denial about the fact that they have changed as a person

Other Considerations That May Impact Family Reintegration

- Military member suffered a loss of limb or is seriously wounded
- Traumatic brain injury
- Other medical conditions – loss of hearing; orthopedic injuries, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal disorders
- Possible exposure to both sexual assault and combat trauma

Special Concerns for National Guard and Reservists

- Financial hardship
- Absence of consistent community
- Effect of prolonged deployments
- Suddenly military
- Feelings of isolation
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Stigma



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