



National  
Defence

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nationale

A-MD-007-144/JD-005



Preparing

*for*

DEPLOYMENT  
*Stress*

Canada

## *Foreword*

This publication is presented as a resource for Canadian Forces personnel, Regular and Reserve, and members of their families.

The information in this publication is based on research and experience with military communities, primarily Canadian, although American and European expertise has also been consulted.

Comments and suggestions for future editions are welcomed by:

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D Med Pol would like to thank the many people who generously shared their experience and expertise in the initial preparation and current review of this pamphlet, as part of the Deployment Readiness Project. Valuable contributions were made by many peacekeepers and their families; Rear Party, unit, and Military Family Support Program personnel; as well as representatives from the helping professions and every level of Command.

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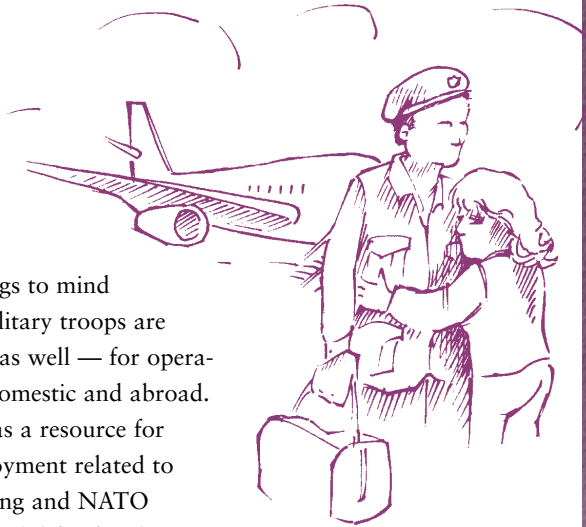
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# Deployment

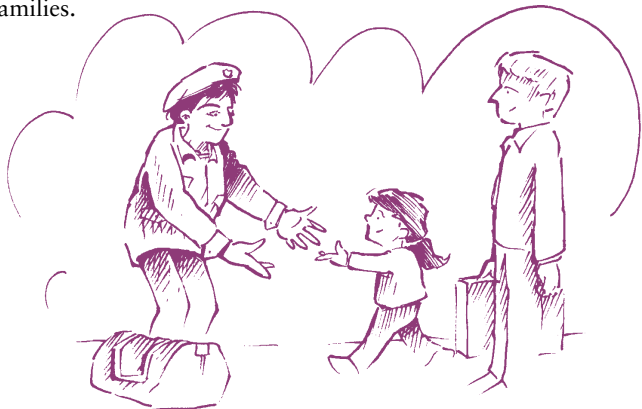
- the assignment of military personnel to unaccompanied tours of duty

Throughout their careers Canadian Forces personnel are required to serve away from their families for a variety of reasons for varying lengths of time. The term “deployment” usually brings to mind Peacekeeping, although military troops are “deployed” at other times as well — for operations and exercises, both domestic and abroad. While primarily prepared as a resource for families experiencing deployment related to United Nations peacekeeping and NATO duties, this information is valid for families coping with temporary separation whatever the reason.



# Deployment Stress

- the physical and emotional demands relating to a deployment. Both the separation and reunion aspects of a deployment place additional demands on families.



# Factors Contributing to Deployment Stress

## *Factors Related to the Individual:*

- personal health
- personal coping abilities
- previous deployment experience
- attitude toward the assignment
- confidence in self and unit
- sense of security in family relationships

## *Factors Related to the Separation:*

- available preparation time
- previous family separation experience
- attitude of family toward assignment
- important family events during separation
- confidence in support available to family

## *Factors Related to the Deployment:*

- nature of the mission, especially if ambiguous
- length of the mission, especially if uncertain
- communication (mail, phone, e-mail) ease or difficulty
- geographical location (terrain, weather)
- living and working conditions
- confidence in unit training and leadership

# The Emotional Cycle of Deployment\*

Phase	Stage	Time Frame
Pre-deployment	1 Anticipation of Loss departure	1–6 weeks before departure
	2 Detachment and Withdrawal	Last week before departure
During deployment	3 Emotional Disorganization	First 6 weeks of deployment
	4 Recovery and Stabilization	Variable duration <i>(between stages 3 and 5)</i>
	5 Anticipation of Homecoming	Last 6 weeks of deployment
Post-deployment	6 Renegotiation of Relationships	First 6 weeks home
	7 Reintegration and Stabilization	6–12 weeks

*\*adapted from the Emotional Cycle of Deployment by Kathleen Vestal Logan*

# Anticipation of Loss

## *Common Reactions*

- fluctuations in energy level and mood
- fantasizing
- feels of sadness, anger, excitement, restlessness, anxiety, tension, frustration, resentment, depression

## *General Suggestions*

- allow yourself to feel and express full range of emotional responses
- encourage all family members to share their feelings
- consider keeping a daily journal to reflect feelings
- reassure your partner of your love and commitment
- involve the whole family in preparing for the separation
- create opportunities for warm, lasting memories
- try to see the deployment as a challenging opportunity for growth
- remember that the deployment is not forever
- go through the checklist (pages 12, 13) with partner

## *For Spouse Departing*

- share honestly all you can about the deployment
- choose favourite family photos to take with you
- make list of important family occasions; take cards with you
- record audio or video tapes of you reading favourite children's stories
- participate in your unit's predeployment activities for self and family

## *For Spouse Staying*

- take photos of your spouse doing routine activities
- build a solid support network for yourself through your spouse's unit, community, the Family Resource Centre, etc.
- have concrete, written plans for an unexpected family crisis and/or emergency



# Detachment and Withdrawal

## *Common Reactions*

- reduced emotional and sexual intimacy
- feelings of despair, hopelessness, impatience, numbness



## *General Suggestions*

- accept your feelings as normal reactions to challenging circumstances, and not signs of rejection
- communicate as openly and honestly as possible
- be patient with yourself, your partner, your children

## *For Spouse Departing*

- complete your packing and preparation early so that the last day and evening can be family time
- accept your excitement about the assignment as natural and normal, without expecting your family to share your feeling

## *For Spouse Staying*

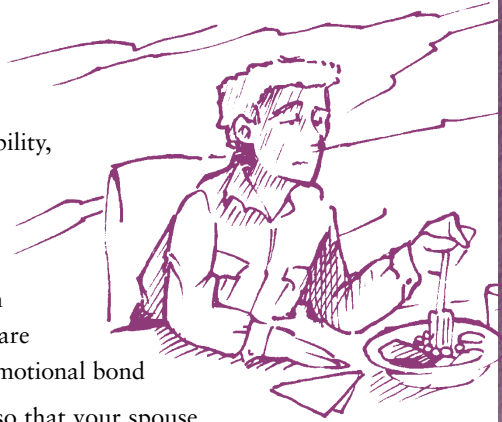
- try to take good care of yourself — nutrition, sleep, exercise, hobbies, social support
- ignore rumours, try to rely on official sources of information concerning the department and the assignment



# Emotional Disorganization

## *Common Reactions*

- magical thinking
- sleep and appetite disturbances
- feelings of relief, guilt, anger, numbness, depression, confusion, disorganization, indecision, loneliness, vulnerability, irritability, aimlessness



## *General Suggestions*

- communicate — keep in touch about everyday events, and share your feelings to maintain the emotional bond
- date and number your letters so that your spouse can read them in sequence
- try to end phone calls on a positive note — it may be a long wait before the next call

## *For Spouse Deployed*

- write separate letters to your children periodically
- share as much information as you can about your daily life and work

## *For Spouse at Home*

- maintain the healthy self-care practices you established before the departure
- participate in a support group, whether formal or informal
- help your children to express their feelings, and to stay in touch with their absent parent

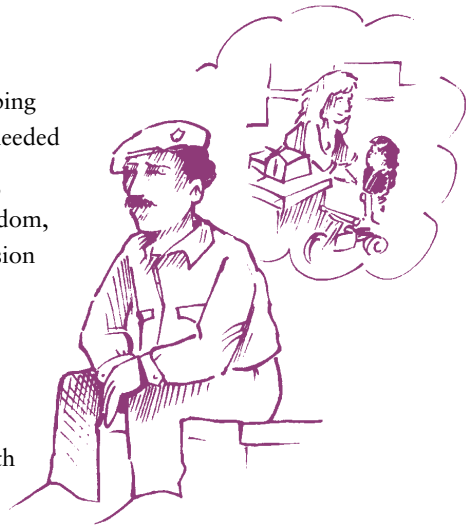
# Recovery and Stabilization

## *Common Reactions*

- concern that your partner is coping so well that you are no longer needed
- feelings of increased confidence, independence, competence, freedom, pride, isolation, anxiety, depression

## *General Suggestions*

- enjoy new skills, freedom, and independence
- celebrate signs of positive growth in self, partner, children
- offer empathy and support to family, friends, colleagues in need



## *For Spouse Deployed*

- maintain regular contact with family — mail (letters, tapes, e-mail, gifts), phone calls
- participate in formal defusings/debriefings if involved in a critical incident
- confide in trusted peers, chaplains

## *For Spouse at Home*

- share your feelings of pride and self-confidence, reassuring your partner that you still long for the separation to end
- encourage and assist your children to keep the absent parent a vital part of the family
- share ideas for care packages with other spouses in support groups

# Anticipation of Homecoming

## Common Reactions

- increased energy and activity
- sleep and appetite disturbances
- feelings of joy, excitement, anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, impatience

## General Suggestions

- share your feels of apprehension as well as excitement and joy
- share your expectations and desires for the homecoming
- reassure your partner of your love and commitment
- include your children in planning for the homecoming celebration
- plan to have some family time with the children before the “honeymoon”



## For Spouse Deployed

- relay only officially confirmed information about your return (date, time, location) to your family
- participate in unit preparation for reunion briefing(s)

## For Spouse at Home

- ignore rumours and try to wait patiently for official date, time, location information for your partner’s return
- participate in preparation for reunion activities (briefings, workshops) organized by the Family Resource Centre and/or Rear Party

# Renegotiation of Relationship

## *Common Reactions*

- difficulty reestablishing emotional and sexual intimacy
- feelings of excitement, disorganization, resentment, frustration
- grieving loss of freedom and independence

## *General Suggestions*

- communicate as openly and honestly as possible — accept your feelings as normal and not a threat to the relationship
- try to be patient with yourself and your partner
- renegotiate your roles and responsibilities — the workload can again be shared, but perhaps in a new way
- celebrate together the personal growth each has achieved during the separation
- continue to participate in support group/network
- seek professional counselling (social work, doctor, psychologist, padre) for continuing signs of Critical Incident Stress, or other concerns

# Reintegration and Stabilization

## *Common Reactions*

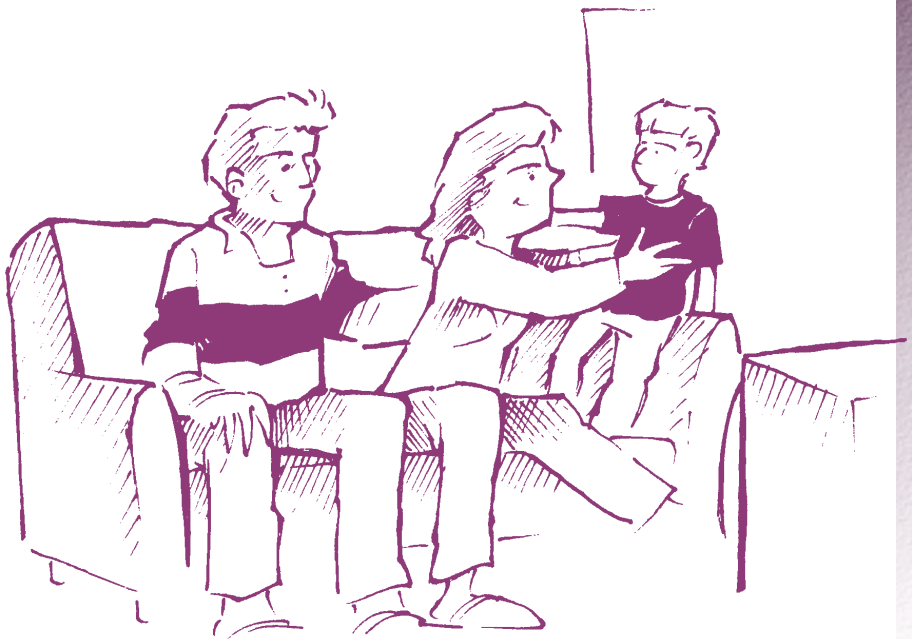
- feelings of intimacy, closeness, confidence in relationship(s)

## *General Suggestions*

- relax and enjoy yourself and your family
- begin preparation and planning for the next deployment

## *Remember*

The challenges of separation and reunion provide opportunities for your relationships — a time to evaluate the changes that have occurred within and between partners; to redefine roles, responsibilities, and synthesize all the changes into a renewed, rejuvenated relationship.



# Pre-Deployment Checklist

The following checklist is included to assist you in preparing for the unexpected as well as the routine aspects of daily life during the deployment. The transition from team to solo can be facilitated by recording all pertinent information for each of the items on the checklist, such as due dates, locations, policy or account numbers, etc. Additional, more detailed checklists are also available through the Rear Party and/or Family Resource Centre. Feeling adequately prepared will help to limit unnecessary sources of deployment stress.

## *Legal Issues*

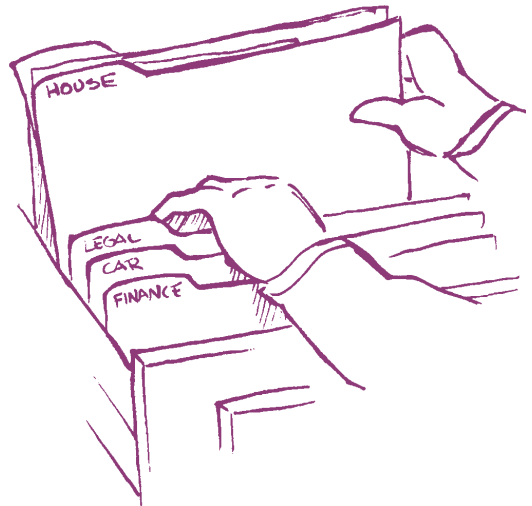
- Will
- Power of attorney
- Power of guardian
- Life insurance

## *Financial Issues*

- Budget
- Accounts
- Investments
- Allotments
- Income tax

## *Health Issues*

- Insurance
- Dental plan
- Medical records
- Phone numbers
- Emergency plan



## *Homes Issues*

- Mortgage/rent
- Insurance
- Utilities
- Security
- Maintenance

## *Car Issues*

- Registration
- Insurance
- Driver's licence
- Maintenance



## *Travel Issues*

- Passport
- Visa
- Leave pass
- Immunization

## *Information/Support\**

- Rear party/sponsor/unit contact
- Military family resource centre
- Chaplain
- Social worker
- Parents/in-laws
- Emergency contact for children

*\*Names, addresses, and phone numbers recorded*

# Resources

## *More Information and/or Support is Available from:*

- Military Family Resource Centre
- Unit Rear Party
- Social Work Officer
- Chaplain
- Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program 1-800-268-7708
- Mission Information Line for families of Canadian Peacekeepers  
1-800-886-4546 (1-800-UNMILIN)

## *For Specific Child-Related Concerns:*

(All the above, plus)

- local school (teacher, psychologist, guidance counsellor)
- local Mental Health Unit
- local pediatric facilities (hospital, clinic)
- local child and family services agency
- local library

# Pamphlets In This Series

A-MD-007-144/JD-001 Stress and You

A-MD-007-144/JD-002 Le stress et vous

A-MD-007-144/JD-004 Preparing for Critical Incident Stress/  
Se préparer au stress provoqué par un incident critique

A-MD-007-144/JD-005 Preparing for Deployment Stress/  
Un déploiement moins stressant

A-MD-007-144/JD-006 Preparing for Reunion Stress/  
Retrouvailles moins stressantes