

The last word a military family wants to hear is 'deployment' because it could mean several months before one of the parents is back home. But, you can be a parent from thousands of miles away if you need to. Here's a way how.

Things You'll Need

- Patience
- Creativity
- Communication
- Love
- Compassion

How to help small children through deployment

* Step 1

If your children are toddlers or infants and you have to be gone on a military deployment, you can still be part of their lives. You need to communicate with the parent at home. Make sure you are aware of doctor's appointments, school dates and any other events in your children's lives. You can communicate on these things in any manner available. For example, email, telephone or regular mail.

- Be creative. If you don't have access to e-mail, then take still pictures and send them home
- Draw pictures for your children and send them home. It's always important your child has something they can hold that reminds them of the deployed parent
- If you can't make videos, then leave messages on voice mail the parent at home can replay for the child. Hearing the deployed parent's voice can make a big difference

* Step 2

Video tape yourself speaking to your child and send it home. It's the same as you speaking to them through the television or computer. If you don't have the capability to this, then ask around. Someone in your unit will probably have the means to do this and will help you out.

* Step 3

Before you deploy, record yourself reading a book to your child. That way when story time comes around each day the parent at home can play the video. This can be the child's Mum or Dad time.

* Step 4

It's important your child sees your face and hears your voice. Whether this is videos made before you leave or sent home whilst you are gone. If they remain familiar with you, then they will likely recognise you when you get home.

* Step 5

If your children are old enough to speak then tell them Mum or Dad had to go away for a while. Show them pictures of the deployed parent and tell them that Mum/Dad loves and misses them.

* Step 6

Have something to give your child that is from the deployed parent. That way they can have a piece of them with them at all times. For example, have a stuffed animal that they can carry around that is 'from daddy'. This is a piece of the missing parent that they can hold.

* Step 7

As sad as it is, always prepare for the worst. Write your children a letter or however you want to communicate with them, to tell them how you feel, in the case you don't come home. Make it something they can keep for the rest of their lives. Also, pick up something small for them they can always have. For example, if you have a little girl, buy a small locket and put in a picture of the two of you together. This is something she can have into adulthood and always have something that her parent gave her.

* Step 8

Understand when you do come home, even with all the communication in the world, it may take a while for your child to warm up to you. Children need to feel comfortable, so don't rush the situation. Let your child come to you.



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