Military families are recognized as examples of resilience. What is resilience? This term refers to people who are faced with stressful situations and find strength in themselves, their families, and their communities to overcome challenges. Resilience isn’t something individuals are born with, but something that can be learned over time when individuals successfully adapt to challenging circumstances. The deployment cycle offers many opportunities to build resilience, for both parents and children.

How can parents build resilience? The first step is recognizing the unique personal strengths that members of the family bring to the table. Building specific skills can be helpful, too. For example, Steve is normally the one to handle family finances, but at the beginning of his deployment, Maggie decides to take a class on budgeting. She gains new skills and confidence by learning to successfully manage the finances while Steve is gone. Making connections can also build resilience. One mom decided to invite members of the community over to dinner once a week to fill the empty space at the table while her husband was deployed. The family met congressional representatives, teachers, and illustrators, and learned from others who had faced their own challenges.

Another strategy for developing resilience is to remember the meaning and purpose behind military service. Sometimes talking to a neighbor or friend helps parents to vocalize what it means to be part of serving the country or understand how much community members appreciate the sacrifices military families make.

In 2010, Joy Britt gave a beautiful example of resilience as she shared her feelings about being a military child. “I appreciate soldiers and what they do for us, as Americans. We all pay a price, especially the kids that don’t understand what’s going on. I made it through with a lot of love from family, and I am stronger for that experience.” How can parents encourage this type of positive attitude and resilience in their young children?

- Recognizing strengths in children helps build confidence. Ask yourself, do I notice what my child does well or do I tend to focus on their mistakes? Aiming for a 10 to 1 ratio of positive comments to negative comments can help foster competence.
- Having someone to play with at this age makes all the difference. Giving young children opportunities to talk and play with grandparents and friends. Join your little ones in their imaginary adventures, and let them take charge of playtime.
- Sometimes children just want to have a good time and forget about all the worries. Try playing in the sprinkler, blowing bubbles in the bath, making a snowman, or playing kickball. Having fun together as a family builds resilience.

**Your Preschool Child:**
- Relies on routines to feel secure and confident
- Is interested in nature, science, animals, time, and how things work
- Is learning about common shapes and primary colors
- Wants to be more independent and do things without help

**Parent Tips:**
- Allow your child simple choices (i.e., between two outfits to wear in the morning or two different snacks)
- Recognize that fantasy play is a way that preschool children solve their problems
- Actively seek the best in your child so she can see the best in herself.
- Model the importance of connecting in the community, for example by arranging playdates.
ADAPT is recruiting for the last wave of the project. You can help us better understand reintegration in military families and have a say in future resources and services provided to reintegrating military families!

If you live in Minnesota, are a parent of a 5-12 year old, and have been deployed (or your spouse/partner has been deployed) since 2001, we want to hear from you!

To learn more about the ADAPT project, go to [www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt). If you know someone who might be interested, you can earn a $20 gift card for referring a family that joins the study.

For more information, you can call us at **612-624-4830** or e-mail us at **adapt@umn.edu**.

“Like” us on Facebook!

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Upcoming Topics Volume 16
Ambiguous Loss and Resilience

Resources

Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg’s Seven Cs
http://www.fosteringresilience.com/7cs.php

Dr. Paula Rauch discusses Challenges vs. Trauma
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J169rx_Z-9M

Dinner with the Smileys (one military family finds a way to connect with community)

by Kenneth Ginsburg

Raising Our Children to be Resilient
by Linda Goldman

Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment
By Martin Seligman