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 the 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 congress 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.

strength to overcome

In 2010, Joy Britt gave a beautiful example of resilience as she shared her feelings about being a military child. She talked about connecting with other children whose parents were soldiers: “There was a connection and we all felt sorry but supportive of each other. I also started to understand a little more of what Mom does and why she is always on the phone, doing emailing, or traveling. As much as I needed her, I realized her troops needed her too. So it was okay to share Mom.” How can parents encourage this type of positive attitude and resilience in their teens?

- Recognizing strengths in children helps build confidence. Ask yourself, do I notice what my teen 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 talk to can make all the difference. Some teens may want to protect their parents from burdens, and may prefer talking to someone outside the family. Providing several options for your teen is key. This could be someone in a formal setting like a counselor or youth mentor at church or it could be friends they feel close to.
- In focus groups, teens indicated that sometimes, they just want to have a good time and forget about all the worries. Having fun together as a family builds resilience.

encouraging resilience in youth

Your Pre-Teen/Teen:

- Exploring his or her identity through clothing, music, friends, and hobbies
- Beginning to question and challenge authority
- May be self-conscious of his or her appearance
- Starting to think seriously about their future and career
- Much more aware of the social and political climate

Parent Tips:

- Communicate your confidence in your teens’ ability to make her own decisions
- Allow your teen to make safe mistakes so he can learn from their own experience.
- Actively seek the best in your child so she can see the best in herself.
- Model the importance of connecting in the community.
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

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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Ambiguous Loss and Resilience

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