Bonding and Attachment Before Deployment

Bonding and attachment refer to the close emotional ties that babies have with their parents and guardians. Every baby bonds with his or her parents and guardians differently. Bonding and attachment are important for your baby because they are part of the foundation that he or she will use to develop future relationships with friends and other adults. Time spent with the service member prior to deployment will be very important to your baby. Quality time to your baby really means time spent talking to them, doing physical play or feeding. Remember to take photographs of your time together. Photographs are very helpful for this age group since they won’t be able to remember events on their own. Display these images around your home—this is a nice way to keep memories alive for your baby during deployment. The service member can tell a story that goes along with the photograph so that while he or she is away, the story can be retold to your baby. Building a strong bond with the non-deployed parent during deployment will help your baby bond more easily bond with you upon return.

Your Baby & Toddler:
- Is beginning to make sounds, learn words, and understand what people are saying
- Is learning about emotions from adults around him/her that will lay a foundation for future coping.
- Is starting to imitate siblings, peers, parents, and other adults
- Temper tantrums are common.

Parent Tips:
- In addition to the non-deployed parent continuing to establish close bonds with your baby—give your baby the chance to learn to trust others as well (like an uncle or an aunt). When the deployed service member returns—they will be more likely to bond quickly if they have learned to trust more than just the non-deployed parent.
- Photographs placed around the house and items like a teddy bear or a blanket will help your baby maintain a bond with the deployed service member.

Bonding and Attachment During Deployment

Every baby has different needs and responds to separation in different ways. It will be important for the non-deployed parent to remain available and loving toward your baby. Non-deployed parents, guardians, and adults can also help keep the baby’s bond to the deployed service member strong by placing photos around the house, doing online video-chats, and telling stories about the deployed parent. Babies will respond well to a special item from Mom or Dad—like a bear, blanket, or toy that will help maintain the bond and attachment to the service member during deployment. Some service members may record their voice in a book, a toy, or on a CD that can be played during deployment. Place some perfume or cologne on the items so they will smell like the deployed service member.
Saying Goodbye

Your baby or toddler will not understand what is happening during your good-byes. There may be some starts and stops along the way—with trainings and other pre-deployment preparations. The individual needs of the soldier and the individual needs of your baby will be different during good-byes. They will respond like they do on most days with no recognition of the significance of the event. Your baby will respond to others’ reactions in the moment as well. It might be a good idea to allow your baby/toddler to say goodbye at home—not to make too big of a deal about it. Ask a relative or babysitter to care for your baby so that you can tend to the needs of yourself, the service member and older siblings. Your baby/toddler will respond the best if routines are kept in-tact and adults are available and consistent throughout the good-bye process.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ADAPT is beginning to recruit military families for our newest project.

We want to talk to Minnesota National Guard and Reserve families who have been through deployment and have at least one child between the ages of 5-12 years of age.

Participants will be reimbursed for their time and will be part of cutting-edge research on supportive parenting programs for military families.

E-mail adapt@umn.edu or call 612-624-4830 for more information

Contact Information:
Dept. of Family Social Science
University of Minnesota
Rm. 290 McNH
1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
ADAPT@umn.edu
612-624-4830

Upcoming Topics Vol 3:
CO-PARENTING FROM AFAR: STAYING CONNECTED
• Communication—too much / too little?
• Keeping the soldier present in the home
• Maintaining connections/bonds from afar

http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt