Helpful so your baby and toddler understands what the deployed parent is doing now and focuses less on what may happen in the future, which can cause some anxiety.

Deployment is a challenging time for families, especially for those with anxious children or children with special needs. Typical reactions to deployment for your baby and toddler may be more frequent crying, or trouble falling and staying asleep. There are some specific things you can do to help your baby and toddler cope during this stressful time. Keeping photos or videos of the deployed parent in the home gives children both visual and auditory information about the deployed parent and may help your baby and toddler become more familiar with the deployed parent. Ask the deployed parent to send home photographs of where he or she works and sleeps. You can use these photos to show your child what the deployed parent is doing. This will keep your baby and toddler connected to the deployed parent. Talking about the deployed parent in the present tense is very helpful so your baby and toddler understands what the deployed parent is doing now and focuses less on what may happen in the future, which can cause some anxiety.

Using Social Stories to Help Your Child Understand Deployment

Social Stories are a tool for teaching social skills to children with autism and related disabilities. Though your child may be too young to read or write his or her own social story, social stories can be helpful when talking about the deployment when your baby and toddler is older. Social Stories provide your child with accurate information about situations that he or she may find confusing. The story, in this case a parent’s deployment, is described in detail and focuses on important social cues. The goal of Social Stories is to increase your child’s understanding and make him or her feel more comfortable in certain situations. Social Stories are short, straight-forward descriptions of social situations, detailing what your child might expect during a situation. This newsletter contains a sample social story about deployment to use with your baby and toddler.

Your Baby & Toddler:

— May experience anxiety when separated from his or her primary caregiver
— May be able to help with household tasks, like putting toys in a box. This can help your baby and toddler feel like they are in control
— Is starting to understand simple commands

Parent Tips:

— Remember to take care of yourself so that you are better able to take care of your baby and toddler. Consider asking a family member to babysit or hire a babysitter to make sure you get some quality alone time to relax.
— Try writing your own social story to use with your baby and toddler. Even if they do not understand it now, it may help your child when he or she is older.
Your baby and toddler may seem agitated, fussy, and may be withdrawing from family members or peers. These are common reactions to a parent or caregiver’s deployment. If these symptoms continue for more than three to four weeks, your baby and toddler may need some extra support to cope with deployment. Your family doctor or daycare provider may have suggestions for how to help your baby and toddler cope during this stressful time. If you notice extreme agitation, incessant crying, new visual or auditory problems, get help right away. You can find referrals specifically for families experiencing deployment at the following websites:

MilitaryHOMEFRONT website: www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/ismart/MHF-MI/ (Click on “Exceptional Family Member Program/Special Needs” under the “Program or Service” drop-down menu)

The Specialized Training of Military Parents (STOMP) website: www.stompproject.org to sign up for their list serv.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ADAPT is looking for Minnesota Military Families to participate in their project! If you live in Minnesota, are a parent of a 5-12 year old, and you or your spouse have 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. For more information, you can call us at 612-624-4830 or e-mail us at adapt@umn.edu.

“Like” us on Facebook!
Follow us on Twitter @adaptmn

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Upcoming Topics Vol 6:
Rest and Recovery

• Planning for R&R
• What to expect during R&R
Sample Social Story

A Social Story is usually a first-person, present-tense story used to provide your child with as much information about a social situation as possible, so he or she is better prepared to face, and act appropriately in, that situation.

There are three types of sentences used to present this information in a Social Story:

- **Descriptive sentences** objectively address the “wh” questions: where the situation takes place, who is involved, what they are doing, and why they may be doing it.

- **Perspective sentences** give a peek into the minds of those involved in the story; they provide details about the emotions and thoughts of others.

**Deployment**

Sometimes Mommy/Daddy goes away for the military.

Mommy/Daddy is helping other people.

I miss Mommy/Daddy when he/she goes away.

Sometimes I feel sad when Mommy/Daddy goes away for the military.

It is okay to be sad.

Sometimes Mommy/Daddy is sad when he/she goes away for the military.

I like to write letters and draw pictures and send them to Mommy/Daddy.

For more examples of Social Stories you can use with your child, check out:

http://kidscandream.webs.com/page12.htm