



## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

### GETTING READY FOR AN ABSENCE AS A COUPLE

If you're preparing for an absence, whether a deployment, training, or Imposed Restriction, it can be a stressful time. We understand that you both want to set your relationship up for success, keep it strong during the absence, and be prepared for the reunion. Based on experiences from military couples, here are some tips to support you.

#### SET ASIDE TIME AS A COUPLE:

Before the absence, talk about expectations and how you can meet those needs for each other. Couples that set clear expectations ahead of time are more likely to cope better during their time apart.

#### CREATE A FINANCIAL PLAN:

Together, think through any expected and potential costs that could arise. Connect with [SISIP](#) for free financial advice. Consider any additional risk pay that may come with a deployment and decide together what to do with it. For the partner at home, know how to log into financial accounts, manage any investments, and pay bills (including interest on credit cards or a line of credit). Together review your [Power of Attorney and Will](#) and ensure they are current.

#### MAP OUT YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM:

Ensure your [Family Care Plan](#) is up-to-date, and reach out to friends and family to let them know that the absence is coming up and see how they can support you both. Find out what supports are available to you through your Base/Wing or local [Military Family Resource Centre \(MFRC\)](#). Even if you have faced an absence before, it's still helpful to learn where supports are in case new things come up.

#### MAKE COMMUNICATION A PRIORITY:

Discuss how you plan to stay in touch and how often, and explore what options are possible (Skype, FaceTime, email, etc.). You can even prepare letters for each other that you can read during the absence.

#### SHARE LITTLE AND BIG MOMENTS:

When you do connect, discuss big, small or mundane aspects and updates in your life to help you stay connected during the absence and feel more connected when you see each other. It's important to share the good, but also any struggles, this way there aren't any big or negative surprises when you reconnect.



## FOR THE PARTNER AT HOME, CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF:

An absence, and especially a deployment, can be a unique combination of stress; you may be worried about your partner, parenting children who may be anxious, and maintaining normalcy in your household. Try to make time for yourself to de-stress during the absence. Try to be easy on yourself, especially when you face a setback or have a tough day. These days may not be easy, but know they will pass.

## SEEK SUPPORT:

Seeking help when you need it does not mean you are not doing a good job, rather it makes you human. Social workers through the MFRC or CAF, Chaplains, or [Family Information Line](#) are all tools at your disposal. Reach out to them.

## HAVE KIDS AT HOME?

- **Keep people in the loop:** If the school or daycare pickup routine is changing make sure to let the teacher or staff know. If you can, hire a babysitter for extra support or an evening off.
- **Check in with your children:** Absences can be hard for kids, try to discuss their feelings as a family and let them know they can reach out 24/7 to [Kids Help Phone](#) via text CAFKIDS686868.
- **Try to keep up family rituals:** Kids find familiarity reassuring, so for example if you always have a pizza night on the weekends, try to keep it up. Try to stick to usual bedtimes for kids too, especially as this can provide you with some kid-free time in the evening.
- **Discover new activities:** You might want to try a new activity as a family too, like watching a new series during the absence or registering for a new activity through [PSP recreation](#).
- **Reach out to your MFRC:** They may have virtual or in-person programs to facilitate connection and bonding amongst kids that are in the same situation.

Hear more tips from a #RealMilitaryCouple, watch: [The Saules Tip 4](#)

