



## HEALTHYRELATIONSHIPS

### **SUPPORTING CAF MEMBERS AND FAMILIES FACING AN ABSENCE**

Do you have a friend who is CAF Member or is part of a military family and facing an absence? Are you looking for ways to support them? Absences, whether a deployment, Imposed Restriction, or prolonged training, can be stressful for the CAF Member and their wider family. Whether you are a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor, check out the following tips based on experiences from the military community.

#### **CREATE A GAME PLAN:**

If possible, before the absence set aside time to speak with your friend about how they are feeling, as well as what could be helpful for them during or after the absence.

#### **HELP MAP OUT THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEM:**

Discuss who else can help support your friend during the absence, and what role each of you can play. For example, discuss their [Family Care Plan](#) and see if you need to be listed.

#### **PLAN FOR COMMUNICATION:**

If your friend is the CAF Member, discuss how you can stay in touch with them, explore what options are possible (Zoom, FaceTime, email, etc.), and how often they'd like to be in touch. If your friend is the one at home, see if they want to set up a regular time to chat or meet for a walk.

#### **SHARE LITTLE AND BIG MOMENTS:**

If your friend is the CAF Member, when you do connect with them, try to have conversations about big, small or mundane aspects and updates in your life. This can enable them to feel connected now and when they return. If your friend is the one at home, they may want to talk about how they are feeling, or they may not want to focus on the absence and instead talk about other things. Try to be open to discuss whatever they want to focus on, and not push the conversation.

#### **ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

If your friend is the one at home, ask how you can help support them. Sometimes it's the small things that can be most helpful, for example dropping off a cooked meal, a special treat for the kids, groceries, or helping with house maintenance. Absences can be hard for kids, let them know they can reach out 24/7 to [Kids Help Phone](#) via text CAFKIDS686868.



### **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TOO:**

Check-in with how you are feeling as well, as you may be worried about your friend whether they are the CAF Member or the one at home. If you would like to talk with someone, reach out to the [Family Information Line](#). The Family Information Line supports anyone in the wider military community.

### **PREPARE TO RECONNECT:**

Reunions are exciting but can also bring stress and be particularly challenging for children. Talk to your friend to see how you can help, perhaps watching the kids for a night, or arranging a video call. Also recognize that it can take some time to readjust after the reunion, so try to be patient with them, whether they are the CAF Member or the partner at home.

### **BE READY TO LISTEN AND SUPPORT:**

If your friend is the CAF Member, they may want to discuss some of their experiences right away, or slowly over time. If your friend was the one at home, they may also want to share about their experiences during the absence or reunion. If you need any support or have any concerns, reach out to the [Family Information Line](#). Ask your friend what worked and didn't work for them during the absence. This way, you can reflect on any lessons learned for next time and share those lessons with other friends and families too.

**Looking for additional support? Reach out to your local [Military Family Resource Centre \(MFRC\)](#).**

