



Helping Children Deal with Deployment and War

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In this time of heightened alert due to the war in Iraq, our children are experiencing fear and anxiety. With news reports and talk about the war and terrorist threats, children have little experience to help them put it all in perspective. Here are some tips for helping children deal with deployment and war.

- Acknowledge children's worries and uncertainties about war, reassuring them that these feelings are normal.
- Keep the lines of communication open. Try to answer questions in simple and clear language. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." This promotes open dialogue. Explain that wars are very complicated and things happen that even adults struggle to understand.
- Be honest. False reassurance only increases insecurity and lack of trust. Children will discover the truth via news reports, other children and adults. Use a map or globe to illustrate how far away the war is. Explain that the police, servicemen, and many others are working hard to keep us safe here at home.
- Monitor television viewing and limit the amount of war coverage children see. Schedule shared time in front of a reliable national newscast. This provides a good opportunity for conversation about war. If age appropriate, discuss history to put the war and related politics in context.
- For children whose parents are deployed, there are special pressures such as uncertainty, separation, secrecy, and major lifestyle changes. If children are concerned about a parent serving overseas, avoid telling them not to worry. This discourages processing and sharing of feelings. Explain that many people are also concerned about Mom or Dad's safety and that he or she has practiced this job for a long time.