

10 Tips to Help Military Children During the Holiday Season



1. Talk. Keep the lines of communication open.

The most important thing for children whose loved ones are deployed is for them to have someone talk with them. Give them as much information as is age appropriate. Try to answer questions they might ask and don't be afraid to say you don't know.

2. Review and Explore.

Find an atlas or globe to show older children what part of the world their loved one is going to. Consider using this time as an opportunity to discuss different cultures and holidays of different cultures.

3. Engage in activities to help them see the time pass.

While the children are out of school, do activities together that help them count the time period until their loved one returns. Take pictures and create a scrapbook to share.

4. Listen.

Children have feelings about deployment too and need to be heard. Let them know it's okay to be angry or scared. Validate what they are feeling and encourage them to keep sharing their feelings.

5. Help the child write.

Write a journal to get emotions on paper. Write letters to their loved one.

6. Find a family support group.

If you don't have one around, start one of your own. Getting children together who are going through a similar experience will allow them to feel less isolated.

7. Limit exposure to news reports of the war.

Expect questions from children who may see graphic news stories or hear of them from their peers.

8. Connect with available resources.

Pennsylvania's Mission Homefront website provides parents and educators with numerous resources to help children affected by deployment. Archived online trainings, free resources and links to other helpful agencies and organizations are available at: <http://homefront.center-school.org/>.

9. Reach Out to Others.

Lessen feelings of isolation during the holidays by reaching out to other families affected by deployment and by finding ways to serve others less fortunate. Helping children find ways to give to others also helps them feel less alone.

10. Have ongoing dialog between the child's parent or guardian and the child's school.

When the child returns to school, give an update to the teachers and administrators if there were any significant changes. Schools should be made aware that a child will be going through some unique challenges that accompany the deployment of a loved one.