

# *Readiness and Deployment Support Training*

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Return and Reunion Homecoming Handbook  
for Spouses & Significant Others

Readiness at your Fingertips



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# Readiness and Deployment Support Training

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## Introduction

Homecoming is such an exciting time, because it offers a fresh start for Marines and for their families. It's important to remember that homecoming is a process. The process starts even before the unit returns, continues through the reunion celebration and may take weeks or months to return to your new normal, or post-deployment life.

## Planning

### ***What's the Plan?***

- Make plans for homecoming, but keep them simple and realistic — it is likely that you and your Marine will be more tired than you expect.
- If family is coming in from out of the area, ensure base access.
- Contact your Family Readiness Officer for assistance.
- Stay flexible because delays may occur.
- Plan for how you will spend your first day. Will there be a lot of people celebrating homecoming with you or do you prefer a quiet homecoming?

Your Marine will be traveling from another country and through several time zones. Many find it hard to sleep prior to homecoming. With all of the excitement and preparations, fatigue is a common homecoming reaction for everyone, including family and friends.

Many Marines say they experience culture shock at homecoming. They are surprised by the bright colors, the climate, and the smells. This shock and fatigue can make decision making hard for them. They likely will be pleased with a simple homecoming – a home-cooked meal, a hot shower, and being with you.

### ***Fun Things to Do***

If you have out-of-town guests or children, or are just looking for something to do during your Marine's liberty, contact Marine Corps Community Services, your installation Information Tickets & Tours (ITT) office, the unit Family Readiness Officer, or the local Chamber of Commerce to get ideas of inexpensive things to do such as:

- |                   |                     |           |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| • Concerts        | • Festivals         | • Museums |
| • Bowling         | • Dinner            | • Zoo     |
| • Parks           | • Botanical Gardens | • Beaches |
| • Historic Houses | • Picnic Areas      | • Movies  |

**My Reunion Plan**

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**My Marine's Plan**

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**The Kids' Plan**

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**Friends and Family Members' Plan**

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If you have the opportunity, discuss homecoming plans prior to their arrival so everyone's plans will coincide with one another. Homecoming plans need to be flexible in case the official return time, date or location changes. Be patient with circumstances.

Some questions you might want to ask your returning Marine as you plan for homecoming:

- How do you want to notify family and friends of the homecoming?
- What do you want to do while on leave?
- What does the family want to do on your leave time?
- Do you want to plan a get-together with friends and family?

## **Emotions**

Expect to experience a wide range of emotions. Homecoming is like a first date, your wedding day and your favorite holiday all rolled into one. What are some of your emotions?

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The days until homecoming seem to drag, but then you have so many things to get done – clean the house, the car, stock the refrigerator, make banners, get a haircut – sometimes it seems there are not enough hours in the day. This is all normal; remember to pace yourself and understand that things do not have to be perfect. Savor the anticipation and emotions.

## Re-establishing Your Relationship

There are seven areas that most couples renegotiate after the homecoming celebration fades. These are:

1. Expectations

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2. Power

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3. Language

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4. Routines

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5. Responsibilities

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6. Leisure

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7. Stress

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Which area(s) will be easy for you to renegotiate? Which might present challenges?

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## Changes

You may not notice the changes as much as your Marine will, since you have been experiencing them every day. As often as possible, send pictures and tell your Marine about the changes before homecoming.

Many changes occur over the course of a deployment. What are some of the ways your Marine may have changed?

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You have likely changed during deployment. How have you changed?

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How has your home and community changed while your Marine has been deployed?

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**Concerns**

***Intimacy***

You have likely been emotionally and intellectually intimate during deployment, perhaps more so than if you had physically been together. In addition to in-person communication, physical, intimate relationships resume at homecoming. For most couples, the closer you get to homecoming the more you start to imagine your first encounter. In our imaginations, the weather is beautiful, our children are well-behaved, conversation flows easily and intimate relations are magical. Realize that our imagination of how things will be when our Marine comes home may not be reality. This is OK and normal. The good news is that you will be back together again to work on restoring intimacy.

***Roadblocks to Restoring Intimacy***

What are some possible roadblocks to, or things that might get in the way of, re-establishing your physical relationship?

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What are some ways these potential barriers can be overcome?

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## **Finances**

Monthly income changes when your Marine returns. Pay that may not have been taxable while deployed is now taxed. Family Separation Allowance is discontinued. Hazardous duty or special pays may be discontinued. Expenses change.

There is usually a “spender” and a “saver” in most relationships. Whether you are a spender or a saver, you have been managing your money fairly autonomously during deployment. Now you will likely be making more joint decisions about how your money will be used.

It is common to want to come home and shop – even for the Marine you usually cannot drag into a store. It is also common for returning service members to want to buy expensive presents for their family as a way to relieve some of the guilt they feel for having been gone.

Within a few days of homecoming, it is recommended that you sit down with your partner to review and update your budget. Please refer to the Post-Deployment Budget Plan for considerations. If you do not have a budget, you can start with the Post-Deployment Budget Plan and then contact any of the following resources for assistance:

- Marine Corps Community Services – Personal Financial Management Specialist.
- Command Financial Specialist.
- Local credit union.
- Military OneSource financial specialist.
- Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society budget counselor.

## Employment Tips for Reservists

Returning to a civilian work environment can trigger numerous feelings (such as guilt, anger, doubt, frustration, fear, etc.). The majority of these feelings are common to all returning Reservists. Some Marines may have a relatively smooth transition; however, others may find the reintegration experience back into civilian employment somewhat difficult. The following tips are helpful for making the reintegration process a little easier for your Marine.

### **Have a positive attitude and set realistic expectations.**

Some changes may have been made at work in your Marine's absence. Encourage them to keep a positive outlook, and try to avoid any negative thinking about anything they might not agree with. It's also a good idea for your Marine to set realistic expectations for themselves and those around them. As a reminder, co-workers will not have experienced, or may not demonstrate the same level of teamwork or commitment your Marine has been used to.

During this time of transition, it is equally important that spouses and significant others be supportive of their Marine. Frustration, doubt, and/or disappointment can set in for your Marine if reality does not measure up to their expectations. This reflection may lead your Marine to withdraw for quiet time and meditation. All family members should exercise patience and understanding with their Marine and with each other during this time.

### **Plan ahead what to say to co-workers.**

Before checking into work, it is best that your Marine consider what information they want to share. To avoid becoming angry or frustrated, encourage your Marine to work out a "script" ahead of time. Some things your Marine may want to consider discussing include: the culture, the climate, the terrain and the people they encountered during their overseas tour. Sensitive or uncomfortable issues can be addressed by gently informing co-workers of a desire not to discuss the operational aspects of the tour.

### **Avoid making any quick decisions.**

Some Marines may feel the urge to change jobs. It is best to first make a list of all the positive and negative factors relating to work. Include spouses and significant partners for input. When the list is complete, weigh the pros and cons prior to making any decisions. If you and your Marine decide it's in their best interest to leave their employment, he or she should not "knee jerk" and leave abruptly. Try to have another job waiting in the wings.

### **Approach a job change positively.**

If your Marine was employed full-time prior to their departure, their job is generally protected under law by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994. However, if they were not, there is the possibility that your Marine may need to seek new employment. This can be stressful but also positive, as it can be a change for good and will at least allow your Marine to reevaluate what he or she wishes to do with their future. Your Marine should try to find a job they can see themselves doing for several years. If they need to find employment right away, they should look into temporary work that will provide flexibility, while they consider their longer term job interests and opportunities.

### **Make your boss your “partner”.**

Most employment challenges can be avoided by being candid with an employer about obligations as a Reservist. Your Marine should take the time to share as many details as possible about their military training. Sharing details will make bosses aware of how military experience and training can make for a more capable civilian employee. Marines should keep their employer informed about **what** they do in the military, and **when** they do it. Take the time to recognize the sacrifice bosses and co-workers make when they demonstrate support.

One such way of showing appreciation for a supportive boss is by nominating them for a Patriot Award. This award is presented through Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR); a Department of Defense (DoD) organization. Both Marines and spouses can nominate an employer who has demonstrated support.

If you and your Marine apply these strategies and techniques, as well as many others discussed in this handbook, the employment readjustment process should go relatively smoothly. ***Remember to go slow, and focus on taking it one day at a time!***

## Success Strategies

Stress often accompanies change – even good change, like reuniting with your loved one. Stress affects you much more when you are physically vulnerable. How can you take better physical care of yourself?

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Get enough rest – you may need more than normal.
- Exercise regularly. This means working up a sweat for at least 30 minutes three times per week – five times per week is even better.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol, and excess caffeine.
- Use deep breathing and other relaxation techniques.

Taking care of yourself emotionally is equally important. There are several ways to do this, including rational thinking, problem solving, goal setting, managing your time and establishing support systems.

### ***Rational Thinking***

Using rational thinking and not letting your emotions interfere with your thought processes is easier said than done. However, there are several strategies you can try:

1. Reframing. Reframing is looking at a situation from a different perspective. There are questions that can help reframe situations:
  - How can I put this in a different perspective?
  - Are there any positives or benefits to this situation?
  - Is there anything I can learn from this?
  - Sometimes it's easier to reframe things for other people. So a helpful question would be, "What would I tell a friend in a similar situation?"
2. Talk "good" to yourself. Often we focus only on what we did wrong. It is important to recognize what you've done well. Remember your successes.
3. Maintain a sense of humor.
4. Ask yourself what really matters. If you figure out what matters most to you, what you value, then the little things that happen around you are easier to ignore or at least to manage.

## **Problem Solving**

Use problem-solving techniques to address any problems that you might be facing, especially those that feel overwhelming. This helps re-establish a sense of control over the small things, so you can tackle the larger issues in your life.

Try the following problem-solving technique:

- List the three most important problems immediately confronting you.
- Determine whether all three need to be resolved immediately.
- Sort the list in priority order.
- Tackle the first problem. List all of the possible ways this problem can be solved. Ask a friend or family to help you brainstorm if you are stuck.
- Choose the most practical option.
- Try your solution. If your first solution doesn't work. Try again.
- Do this with the remaining problems.

## **Goal Setting**

Stress-inducing situations can trigger the need for goal setting. The stressful event can be the catalyst for choosing a direction that serves you — and possibly those around you — more effectively. One of the most effective ways to successfully manage life's challenges is to establish personal goals. You may also have professional, family and relationship goals. Goals often relate, in some manner, to the challenge or stress you may be facing. For example, if your Marine is getting out of the Marine Corps after deployment, you might set specific job-hunting goals, saving more money, relocating, etc. If you want to work to improve your relationship with your Marine, you might set goals to spend more time together, go to counseling or work on communication skills.

To set goals that are realistic and obtainable:

- Make goals specific and measurable. For example, if your goal is to get more exercise, you might want to make it, "Exercise a minimum of three times a week for 30 minutes."
- Steps – list all the steps to achieve the goal.
- Barriers –list any barriers.
- Solutions – figure out possible solutions to overcome the barriers.
- Rewards (short-term and long-term) – Give yourself a reward at regular increments. Rewards should be something you consider a treat.

## **Time Management**

You have 24 hours in your day – no more and no less. This can be a stressor. Manage your time and you can often manage your stress.

Consider the following tips for managing your time:

- Don't be a perfectionist. Trying to be a perfect person sets you up for defeat. Nobody can be perfect. Set high but realistic standards.
- Learn to say no. Saying “no” frees up time for the things that are most important to you.
- Prioritize. Use a to-do list or several lists. Put the most important tasks at the top of your list.
- Build in flexibility. Allow time for the unexpected. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of your time.
- Consider your biological prime time. What time of the day do you work most efficiently? Schedule the tougher tasks when you are at your best.

## **Support System**

One of the most effective ways to take care of yourself emotionally is to cultivate a support system. This can be challenging for military families that move frequently, as in-person support is often necessary. You have made many friends during this deployment with spouses in your same shoes. Reach out to them as they can understand your situation best! With telephone and the Internet, you can always have emotional support as well. Supportive family and friends are important to have to talk with and share feelings and frustrations.

Sources of support include:

- Family Readiness Officer
- Friends
- Unit families
- Professional affiliations
- Neighbors
- Co-workers
- Clubs – (service organizations, hobby groups, sports teams, etc.)
- Your spouse

**Stress Check**

What techniques do you use to manage stress?

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**Sources of Help**

In addition to your informal support system, there are many individuals within your Marine's unit, and organizations you can turn to with questions and concerns. In fact, no Marine family member should ever feel alone. Please refer to the resource section for a complete list of helpful resources to include counseling support resources.

## Children's Reactions

Reunions are an exciting time, but they can be confusing for kids. They may be happy, worried, scared and excited. Families that imagine a perfect reunion may be disappointed if parents don't understand the reactions children often have at the end of an extended deployment. The table below provides a list of possible reactions your child may display and techniques the returning Marine can use as a parent to reconnect with the child. Remember, family teamwork is the key to a smooth homecoming.

Age	Reaction	Techniques
Infants and Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be shy and clingy.</li> <li>• May not recognize the returning parent.</li> <li>• May have temper tantrums.</li> <li>• Regresses with toilet training.</li> <li>• May not want to be touched by the returning parent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't force hugs or play.</li> <li>• Give them time to warm up; they'll be curious and seek out the returning parent.</li> <li>• Sit or kneel at their level.</li> <li>• Snuggle with your spouse; your child will soon be in the middle.</li> <li>• Respond to your baby's cries, and he/she will learn trust. You cannot "spoil" a baby by being responsive.</li> </ul>
Preschoolers: Ages 3 to 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May feel guilty for making Mom or Dad go away.</li> <li>• Will recognize returning parent but may need warm-up time.</li> <li>• May need "proof" that returning parent is real (poking, etc.).</li> <li>• May misbehave to get attention.</li> <li>• May be demanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to what they tell you.</li> <li>• Accept their feelings.</li> <li>• Talk about the new things they are interested in (books, games, TV, etc.).</li> <li>• Ask them to "wait" if they are using attention-getting techniques.</li> <li>• Play together (hide and seek, ball, etc.).</li> <li>• Reinforce your love for your child, even when you don't love their behavior.</li> </ul>

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<b>Age</b>	<b>Reaction</b>	<b>Techniques</b>
<p>School Age: Ages 5 to 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run to meet the returning parent.</li> <li>• Feel guilty they didn't behave good enough while the returning parent was away.</li> <li>• Dread parent's return, fearing they will be disciplined for all the wrongs committed during the deployment.</li> <li>• Talk nonstop to bring the returning parent up to date.</li> <li>• Boast about the returning parent and the military.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Praise them for what they've accomplished during the deployment.</li> <li>• Spend time reviewing schoolwork, pictures, family scrapbooks, etc.</li> <li>• Try not to criticize past negative behaviors – use positive reinforcement for behaviors you are trying to encourage.</li> <li>• Your child may want to show off the returning parent at school or to friends; agree to go if he/she asks.</li> </ul>
<p>Teenagers: Ages 12 to 18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibit excitement if parent/teen relationship was strong prior to deployment.</li> <li>• Feel shame for not living up to "standards."</li> <li>• Be concerned about rules and responsibilities changing.</li> <li>• Believe they are too old to meet the returning parent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen with undivided attention.</li> <li>• Have respect for their privacy and friends.</li> <li>• Encourage them to share what has happened in their personal life – be careful not to criticize.</li> <li>• Ask them for updates about current trends, music fashion, etc.</li> </ul>

## Homecoming Success Tips with Children

1. Ease back in to family life. Maintain rules and routines at least initially. Realize your child will likely go to the parent who did not deploy for permission and help.
2. Discipline means “to teach.” Approach discipline as a team with your child’s other parent. Don’t punish for behaviors that took place during the deployment. Don’t give in to your child’s demands because of guilt. Make the consequence fit the misbehavior to reinforce the behavior you are trying to teach.
3. Get your Marine involved with caretaking. Encourage him/her to change diapers, help a child get dressed or drive children to extracurricular activities. Encourage your Marine to play with his/her child; it is easier for children to carry out a conversation while they are engaged in an activity.
4. Use lots of positive communication. Tell children “thank you” for doing extra chores, doing well in school, cooperating during deployment. Give lots of hugs—including your teenagers!
5. Get help if you have concerns about your family’s adjustment. Talk with a guidance counselor at your child’s school. Contact your child’s pediatrician. Call your local Marine and Family Services Center, Chaplain or contact Military OneSource. For a complete list of children’s helpful resources, please refer to the resource section.

## Family Fun

Enjoy your time together as a family. Here are some simple, easy-to-do activities your whole family can enjoy:

### Infants

- Play “peek-a-boo.”
- Play “patty-cake.”
- Sing songs such as “Old MacDonald had a Farm” and make each animal noise.
- Do finger games and songs, such as “Itsy, Bitsy Spider.”

### Toddlers

- Give piggy-back rides.
- Go to the park.
- Play in the sand or mud.
- Crawl around on your hands and knees with your child.

## Preschoolers

- Play with molding clay.
- Finger paint.
- Go to a zoo or farm.
- Go to the installation “kiddie” pool.
- Make a tent with sheets or blankets and crawl inside with your child.
- Take your child to your local library for story hour.

## Early Elementary

- Ride bikes.
- Go for a hike.
- Go to the beach or pool.
- Go to an amusement park.
- Play a board game.
- Decorate the driveway with sidewalk chalk.

## Upper Elementary

- Play video games.
- Go camping or horseback riding.
- Wash the car or change the oil together.
- Toss the ball back and forth in the backyard or go to a professional, minor-league or even high school baseball, football or hockey game.
- Go to the movie theatre or go bowling.

## Teens

- Go “go-cart” riding.
- Go out for lunch together.
- Go to the gym together.
- Volunteer with a military or community organization.
- Go shopping.
- Visit colleges and/or universities.

## Adult Children

- Go to the movies together.
- Go to the spa or get a haircut together.
- Go through old photos.
- Put together a puzzle.
- Play cards.
- Assist with job hunting activities.

## Living with Combat Stress

### ***Returning from Hazardous Duty***

During deployment, your Marine may have been under the constant threat of danger, known people who were injured or may have lost comrades, participated in convoys or special operations, and cared for wounded comrades.

Your Marine will complete periodic Post-Deployment Health Assessments upon his/her return, but as a spouse or significant other, you are also likely to notice whether your Marine is having difficulty adjusting to a post-deployment lifestyle. As a matter of fact, you may be one of the first people to notice any changes in your Marines personality.

### ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder***

Most Marines begin to settle back into their post-deployment life within a few weeks. However, sometimes combat operational stress develops into a condition called *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD). In post-traumatic stress disorder:

- Traumatic events are re-experienced.
- Reminders of traumatic events are avoided.
- Marines report a feeling of being disconnected or distant from others.
- Symptoms must last for at least a month to be considered PTSD.

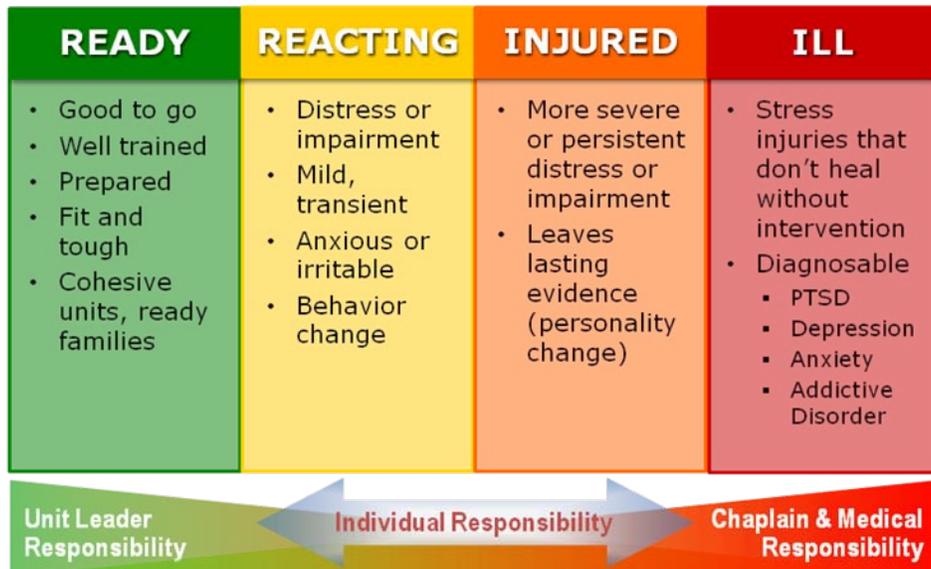
Not all combat operational stress symptoms add up to PTSD. It takes a certain set of stress injury symptoms, for a prolonged period of time, and severe enough to affect job performance and relationships, plus formal diagnosis by a qualified doctor, to be diagnosed as PTSD.

### ***Combat Operational Stress***

Combat operational stress is experienced by all Marines as a part of doing their jobs. It is normal. After all, uncomfortable living conditions, often confined to a base, hearing explosions and gunfire and having to be alert to danger for weeks or months at a time is stressful for anyone.

The Marine Corps views combat operational stress along a continuum. Each zone represents how a Marine functions with stress. It ranges from green (ready, or normal) to yellow (reacting) to orange (injured) and red (ill). Marines in the orange and red zones need medical evaluation and treatment to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families as quickly as possible.

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About 70 percent of Marines exposed to combat operational stress will fall in the yellow zone briefly, and then return to normal. However, about 20 percent will have residual symptoms in the orange zone, and 10 percent may develop persistent stress-related disorders, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, or substance abuse.

## Stress Injuries

Stress injuries occur when too much stress is placed on a part of the body. You've heard of runners with stress fractures, for example. When too much stress is placed on the mind, injury can occur. There are three types of stress injuries:

1. **Biological** injuries, which affect the way the brain handles information and emotions. As a result, a Marine seems moody, irritable, over-reactive, and impulsive, not the same Marine before he/she left on deployment.
2. **Psychological** changes, which include difficulty making sense of what is happening to them, grief, guilt, a lost sense of safety, and questioning of personal values and beliefs.
3. **Social** changes, which include feeling isolated and that nobody else understands, questioning of society's sense of right and wrong, loss of moral compass, and loss of social support systems.

If you see these signs and symptoms, it is important to know when to get professional help for stress injuries. If you see that the stress is affecting sleep, motivation, judgment and your Marine's ability to function socially or on the job, then additional outside help may be required to address the problem before it worsens.

## **Traumatic Brain Injury**

Another injury you may have heard about is *Traumatic Brain Injury* (TBI). It is more commonly known as a concussion. Concussions occur as a result of a blow or jolt to the head that momentarily disrupts the function of the brain. Of course, not all blows to the head result in TBI. TBI is usually caused by:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Assaults
- Falls
- Blasts

Severity may range from mild to severe. Mild TBI would occur with a brief change in mental status or consciousness. Severe TBI would occur after an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after an injury.

Symptoms of a concussion are mostly internal and may include:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Excessive fatigue
- Concentration/memory problems
- Irritability
- Sleep problems
- Balance problems
- Ringing in the ears
- Vision change

If your Marine complains about any of these symptoms, encourage him/her to seek medical assistance. The good news is that 85 percent of service members who experience TBI have no lasting symptoms within one year.

## **Behavioral Health Plan**

Behavioral health specialists will work with Marines to create plans of action to include safety, treatment, and resiliency. Upon your Marine's return, he or she is given a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA).

Medical assessments and/or follow-ups are scheduled as face-to-face health assessments with a trained health care provider during in-theater medical out-processing or within 30 days after returning home or processing station. The purpose of this screening is to review each service member's current health, mental health or psychosocial issues commonly associated with deployments, special medications taken during the deployment, possible deployment-related occupational/environmental exposures, and to discuss deployment-related health concerns.

Positive responses require the use of supplemental assessment tools such as safety, treatment, and resiliency plans and/or referrals for medical consultation. The provider will document concerns and referral needs and discuss resources available to help resolve any post-deployment issues.

## Available Options

### Ways to Help Your Marine

No one wants to stand by while someone they love suffers. Some ways to support your Marine during homecoming include:

- Be loving and caring.
- Express/do not hide your needs to protect your loved one.
- Anticipate that communication may be harder.
- Listen without judging.
- Be patient.
- Do not force your Marine to talk about war experience, but be open to it.
- Encourage your Marine to seek assistance if needed.

It's important to help your Marine understand that a stress injury is an *injury*. Stress injuries:

- Deserve to be fixed like any physical injury.
- Were incurred in dedicated service and your Marine deserves to feel better.
- Are treatable.

## Stigma

Marines are trained warriors, at times there is a stigma attached with seeking help for combat stress related injuries often referred to as hazardous duty injuries.

Possible reasons why our Marines may not want to seek help:

- Feeling as though any psychological issues within themselves or others are a sign of weakness.
- Expressing an emotional reaction may be confronted with, "suck it up" or "get over it."
- Fear that emotional reactions or getting help will negatively affect their careers.
- Fear of their commander having complete access to their mental health records.
- Feel that they have a command climate that discourages getting help.

We have to remind our Marines and remember that seeking help shows strength because it is vital that our Marines and our families are healthy in every way, retaining our family readiness status.

## **Take Care of Yourself**

It can be hard to live with someone suffering from a combat stress injury. Here are some suggestions from professionals:

- Seek help, even if your Marine will not. Don't keep everything to yourself.
- Expect that it will take time for your Marine's injury to heal.
- This injury is not your fault or your Marine's fault. Don't blame yourself or your spouse for past decisions and actions leading to the present situation.
- Realize that your Marine cannot just decide to get well.
- Realize that your Marine's distance or irritability is not your fault.
- Remember that your Marine is suffering.
- Don't tolerate abusive behavior.
- Don't turn to addictive substances or behaviors yourself.
- Don't keep hoping things will get better - if they are getting worse, get help!
- Practice stress-management techniques.

## **Suicide Prevention**

A small percentage of Marines will struggle greatly after deployment. If you think your Marine might consider harming themselves, ask them. It won't cause them to commit suicide. If they cannot say unequivocally that they are not contemplating harming themselves, contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800) 273-TALK (8255) immediately!

## Renegotiation of Roles

Renegotiating roles is a balance of roles between you and your Marine. Both people will need to make adjustments to successfully reintegrate as a family.

When renegotiating roles, it is important to:

- Allow everyone in the family time to adjust.
- Make changes gradually, to include household duties, budgeting, and parenting roles.
- Move forward at a realistic pace, creating “Honey-Do” lists with a few items at a time.
- Support each other in parenting roles.
- View changes in each other, such as acquiring new skills and gaining independence positively.
- Show appreciation and need for each other.

When renegotiating roles it is important to also be patient, flexible and openly communicate. Remember to resist the urge to have a complete change to who is doing what around the house (or with family). This is often referred to the “change of command at the doorstep.”

### **Patience**

It is important to remember that when you are on the “homecoming high” everything is great. This adrenaline rush lessens with time, and many individuals report a homecoming let-down. The end of this “honeymoon” may come at different times for different people. Do not be dismayed. This is normal, and it indicates that you are reintegrating as a couple.

After the “homecoming high” is over, it is time to start working on the renegotiation of roles. Remember to be patient and take things slowly. It is difficult at times to remain patient because spouses may be looking to be relieved of duties upon immediate return of their Marine. Remember, change is stressful whether good or bad. Be patient and don’t lose sight of the goal of reintegration.

### **Flexibility**

Flexibility is just as important as patience when it comes to successful reintegration to include the renegotiation of roles. Flexibility is being able to change or be changed according to circumstances.

Ways to maintain flexibility include:

- Being realistic when making plans.
- Thinking outside the box.
- Having a positive attitude.
- Evaluating and re-arranging priorities.
- Choosing your battles.
- Meeting in the middle.
- Being open to new ways of doing things.

Also, allowing time for the unexpected is important in maintaining flexibility. Time management experts often suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of your time.

## **Communication**

You've been communicating via e-mail, telephone and letters. At homecoming, you renew in-person communication. Marine-to-Marine communication is very different than communication with family and friends. Back slapping, loud voices, telling someone what to do or being told what to do is normal in their work environment. For months now, this may be the only way your Marine has communicated. Also, your Marine has been accustomed to operating in the military "need-to-know" mode. He or she may need to re-learn the importance of sharing information, and communicating with you as a loved one and not a fellow Marine.

While you and your Marine may be excited to now communicate in-person again, initial conversations may feel awkward. This is normal for everyone. Use basic communication techniques such as:

- Ask open-ended questions, which are those that begin with the words "how," "what" or "why."
- Say encouraging statements such as, "Tell me more." or "Help me understand."
- Use encouraging gestures such as nodding your head, smiling, making eye contact."

A hug and telling your Marine that you love them is usually much appreciated. Also, don't be afraid of silence. Allow your Marine the opportunity to talk if they want or to enjoy being together with you in silence.

## **Talking About War**

Your Marine may not want to talk about their war-time deployment when they return. War is often a difficult experience with many victims, and deployment experiences may be hard to talk about. In time, your Marine may want to talk

about some of their experiences if others are willing to listen patiently and not judge. If your Marine is not ready to talk about his or her experiences during deployment, don't push. They may never feel comfortable talking with you about their experiences. Rather than pushing, offer alternative strategies, such as talking with peers, a chaplain or a medical professional.

However, if your service member wants to talk, don't stop them from doing so. As you listen, try not to make statements that may be perceived as judgmental, such as "What you had to do was awful," or "You shouldn't have had to do that." No one likes to be told what they should or shouldn't have done. Instead, offer assistance, an open ear, and suggestions.

Try not to use clichés or easy answers when your Marine is talking about war experiences. For example, try not to say things like, "Now that you're back, you can put it behind you." Instead, let them know that you feel for what they went through, you love them, and you're there for them whenever they need anything.

## **Future Deployments**

Congratulations! You have successfully managed one of the most challenging aspects of the military lifestyle, which is deployment.

What accomplishments did you achieve during deployment that you are most proud of?

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What are some things you did to prepare for deployment that worked exceptionally well?

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## *Readiness and Deployment Support Training*

What would you have done differently to manage your time better?

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How would you have prepared the children prior to deployment?

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What you have done differently to prepare yourself?

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What could be improved upon for your next deployment?

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**Your family's sacrifices in support of our country are inspiring.  
Thank you for your service.**

## Resources

The resource section of this handbook is designed to provide resources to complement and assist with post-deployment matters. The Information & Resources lists included are general helpful websites and resources, children's helpful websites and resources, and counseling support resources. Additional resources may be obtained from your Family Readiness Officer and the installation Information & Referral Specialist.

### **Helpful Websites, Resources, and Counseling Support Resources**

#### **Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA)**

[www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org)

The Armed Services YMCA offers programs for youth development, family strengthening, and health and well-being programs. Programs vary by location, but typically include:

- Spouses morning/night/day out
- Holiday dinners and dances
- Craft groups
- Parenting workshops

#### **American Red Cross**

[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Primary service is emergency communications and verifications to enable commanding officers to make informed decisions about granting emergency leave. Additionally, ARC provides emergency financial assistance for families who are not near a Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society office.

#### **Combat Operational Stress Control (COSC)**

[www.usmc-mccs.org/cosc](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/cosc)

The Marine Corps COSC program coordinates all planning, training for, and implementation of policies and programs to prevent, identify, and manage combat and operational stress. The goals of COSC are to maintain force readiness and preserve the mental health of Marines and their family members. COSC programs are developed in partnership with the Marine Expeditionary Forces with three target audiences in mind: Marine leaders, Marines and Sailors, and families.

## **Defense Centers for Excellence**

[www.dcoe.health.mil](http://www.dcoe.health.mil)

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) assesses, validates, oversees and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Defense Department meets the needs of the nation's military communities, warriors and families. Outreach and additional information and support can be obtained at: (866) 966-1020.

## **Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)**

[www.dod.mil/dfas](http://www.dod.mil/dfas)

DFAS ensures that service members are paid. MyPay is a useful feature of the DFAS website, allowing service members (and their families, if they have a pin number) to get real-time information about their pay accounts, start and stop allotments, sign up for the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), change their withholdings and much more.

## **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides resources for service members who have honorably served in the U.S. armed forces. For service members leaving active duty, the VA may be their primary source of physical and mental health treatment for injuries that occurred during military service.

A booklet is published every year outlining programs and benefits and is available from the VA website. Programs include health care, including treatment for post-traumatic stress and brain injuries.

## **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)**

[www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org)

Employer Support of the Guard and the Reserve (ESGR), is a Department of Defense (DoD) organization. ESGR was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment. ESGR develops and promotes employer support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and service members.

## **Family Readiness Officer (FRO)**

The Family Readiness Officer (FRO) is the face of the commander's vision and the hub of communication for the Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program (UPFRP). The FRO provides direct coordination for the Unit, Personnel and Family Readiness Program between the commander, the Marines, the families, and all the available resources and organizations, both on and off Marine Corps installations.

## **Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS)**

[www.usmc-mccs.org/cosc/focus.cfm?sid=ml&smid=9](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/cosc/focus.cfm?sid=ml&smid=9)

Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS) is a resiliency-building program designed for military families and children facing the challenges of multiple deployment stress and combat operational stress injuries during wartime. It is an eight-week brief intervention that addresses difficulties that families may have when facing the challenges of multiple deployments and parental combat-related psychological and physical health problems. Please visit [www.focusproject.org](http://www.focusproject.org) for availability on Marine Corps Installations.

## **Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP)**

[militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://militaryhomefront.dod.mil)

The Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) was established to support military families who do not live near a military installation. Most JFSAP teams are located at state National Guard headquarters. This is the place to come for the most accurate and up-to-date information about Department of Defense programs serving troops and their families to include everything from adoption assistance to casualty assistance, child services, deployment, continuing education, relocation, personal financial management and more!

## **Legal Services**

Free attorney assistance is available at local Base Legal Service Offices for service members and family members with military ID cards. Services available may include adoption advice, domestic relations, immigration and naturalization, Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, powers of attorney, wills, and notary service. Please visit your installation website for information on your local legal office.

## Marine Corp Community Services (MCCS)

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

Marine Corps Community Services offers services and activities for military, civilian, and family members in the following three areas: Marine and Family Services Division, Semper Fit, and the Single Marine Program.

## Marine and Family Programs Division

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

The Marine and Family Services Division is designed to assist the individual Marine through centralized information and referral services, relocation services, and prevention and intervention programs. The division's purpose is to assist in having information and human services readily accessible and responsible to individual and family needs. Persons must possess of a valid military ID card, and each person enrolled in DEERS to use these services. Services include:

- Family Readiness Officer (FRO)
- Information and Referral (I&R)
- Relocation Assistance Program (RAP)
- Personal and Professional Readiness (to include Family Member Employment Assistance Program)
- Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
- Family Advocacy Program (to include New Parent Support Program)
- Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB)
- Personal Financial Management (PFM)
- Volunteer Program
- Prevention and Intervention Services
- Children, Youth & Teen Program
- School Liaison Program

## Military OneSource

[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

Military OneSource is a 24/7, real-time information and referral service, funded by the Department of Defense. All services are provided at no cost and are available to active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their immediate family members, regardless of activation status.

Military OneSource is a “virtual extension of existing installation service.” Besides helping with referrals, Military OneSource maintains a library of more than 3,000 free educational materials such as CDs, DVDs, and booklets on a wide range of topics. They also offer interpretation and translation services for legal documents in more than 140 languages. Through Military OneSource, you can access up to 12 in-person or telephone non-medical counseling sessions per issue with a licensed counselor. They also offer financial counseling at no charge.

## **Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS)**

[www.nmcrs.org](http://www.nmcrs.org)

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) is a volunteer-based not-for-profit private 501(c) (3) organization sponsored by the Department of the Navy. No financial assistance is received from the Department of the Navy to conduct the society's programs. The society provides interest-free loans or grants to help with emergency needs such as:

- Food, rent, mortgage and utilities
- Essential vehicle repairs
- Emergency transportation
- Funeral expenses
- Patients' share of medical and or dental bills
- Disaster relief assistance
- Child care expenses
- Pay problems or delays
- Unforeseen family emergencies

Financial assistance is provided based on need. All loans are interest free and normally repaid by allotment. In some instances, if repayment would cause a hardship, assistance may be provided as a grant. Loans are made to the service member. During deployments, in the absence of the service member, an eligible family member may seek assistance with a valid power of attorney or a pre-authorization form placed on file at the NMCRS Office prior to deployment. If neither is available, the service member will be contacted to provide authorization and to agree to repayment terms.

The Navy Marine Corps Relief Society also provides layettes to service members or family members who are expecting or have had a new baby when they participate in the Budget for Baby class or an individual budgeting session. Each layette contains a handmade blanket or sweater set, crib sheets, onesies, hooded towel, bibs, socks, receiving blanket, and burp cloths, which are worth over \$100. Layettes are "Baby's First Seabag." They are provided to all Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel. For those families living in remote locations, a layette can be provided upon your request from a NMCRS Office.

## **Personal Financial Management Program (PFM)**

The Personal Financial Management Program (PFM) provides personal financial education, training, counseling, information, and referrals to Marines and families. Contact your local Marine and Family Services office for more information on their workshops, or to see a financial counselor.

## **Command Financial Specialists**

To assist service members and their families in planning and controlling their financial future, the Department of Defense provides financial information, training, and counseling through the Personal Financial Management Program and through other programs and services.

## Semper Fit

[www.usmc-mccs.org/healthpromotions](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/healthpromotions)

Semper Fit is the Marine Corps' health promotion and recreation program. It includes fitness and wellness programs:

- Recreation opportunities
- Special events
- Intramural program
- Youth sports
- Information, tickets and tours
- Aquatics
- Physical fitness

## Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA)

[www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org)

Congress provided protection for all members of the uniformed services (including non-career National Guard and Reserve members) in October 1994, with passage of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA). The Department of Labor enforces USERRA and processes all formal complaints of violations of the law. Major sections of the law include:

- Placing a five-year limit (with some exceptions) on the cumulative length of time a person may serve in the military and remain eligible for re-employment rights with the pre-service employer.
- Requiring individuals to give written or verbal notice to their employer prior to departure for military service.
- Providing for the continuation of employer-provided health insurance (at the service member's request) for an 18-month period, with payment of up to 102 percent of the full premium by the service member.
- Requiring that an employee's military service not be considered a break in employment for pension benefit purposes, and providing that the person's military service must be considered service with an employer for vesting and benefit accrual purposes.
- Entitling service member returning from military service to prompt reinstatement of employment with accrued seniority, status, and rate of pay as if continuously employed.

## United Service Organizations (USO)

[www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)

The USO's mission is to support service members and their families. There are 130 centers worldwide whose programs and services include:

- Emergency assistance: USO centers offer housing and financial information, along with support for military members and their families, especially during emergencies. USO operates many airport locations open to military members and families.

- Support groups: With troops deployed all over the world, USO centers have established local support groups where family members of deployed service members can gather to provide support and encouragement for one another.
- New spouse orientation: Moving to a new area is often a difficult transition. Many USO centers offer orientation programs, which help new residents acclimate to the culture and community.

### Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP)

[www.yellowribbon.mil/](http://www.yellowribbon.mil/)

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a DoD-wide effort to help National Guard and Reserve service members and their families connect with local resources before, during, and after deployments, and especially during the reintegration phase that occurs months after service members return home. Reservists and their families can attend Yellow Ribbon events where they can access information on health care, education and training opportunities, financial, and legal benefits. The DoD works in conjunction with Federal partners, including the Small Business Administration and the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, to provide up-to-date and relevant information. This program offers service members and their families coping and communication skills, and also an opportunity to reunite with comrades and create support systems that can help sustain them.

### Chaplains

[www.chaplaincare.navy.mil](http://www.chaplaincare.navy.mil)

Chaplains play a vital role in helping Marines and family members during crucial moments in their lives. They are confidential and available 24/7 to provide spiritual guidance and help sort through a variety of issues or concerns.

### DSTRESS Line

DSTRESS Line is an anonymous and confidential, 24/7, Marine-friendly counseling and referral service. DSTRESS Line supports all Marines (active duty, Reserve, or veteran), family members, and loved ones. Please check the DSTRESS website for location availability at [www.dstressline.com](http://www.dstressline.com) or by calling 877-476-7734.

Marines and or Family members in areas where DSTRESS line is not available may continue to rely upon other national call centers already in operation:

- Defense Centers of Excellence Outreach Center: (866) 966-1020.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255.

## Family Advocacy Program (FAP)

[www.usmc-mccs.org](http://www.usmc-mccs.org)

Marine and Family Services: Counseling and Advocacy (FAP) personal and family counselors are available at your installation Family Advocacy Program Office to help you and your family cope with the challenges of marriage, parenting, deployment, reunion and reintegration. These challenges can affect your emotional health, relationships, family life, and military readiness — and we are here to help. Counseling services are available at no charge, they are easy to use, and they are just a phone call away.

You and eligible family members, including children, may each receive up to eight sessions with a family counselor per incident, per calendar year. If the situation mandates it, the sessions can be extended past eight.

Licensed counselors can provide guidance on a range of topics including:

- Relationships and marital issues
- Stress
- Parent and teen communication
- Separation
- Life changes
- Family conflicts
- Parenting
- Divorce
- Grief and loss

When you schedule an appointment with a counselor, expect them to help you:

- Review the problem
- Identify key target issues
- Gain insight into solutions
- Set clear, understandable and realistic goals
- Develop a specific plan to obtain your goals, which may include:
  - Developing interpersonal communication skills
  - Learning stress-management techniques
  - Improving relationship skills
  - Working through the bereavement process

## Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC)

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) are funded by the Department of Defense. The MFLC program provides licensed counseling specialists to individual units who are remotely located and unable to access local services.

It has also expanded to augment on-base counseling services through FAP to provide short-term, situational, problem-solving counseling services and psycho-education to service members and their families. MFLC do not keep records of counseling services, and are confidential. Services are provided to individuals, couples, families, and groups on issues such as stress, anger, relationships, parenting, conflict resolution, deployment, separation, and more.

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, confidential, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Calls will be routed to the nearest crisis center near the caller. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has a network of more than 150 crisis centers nationwide. Outreach and additional support can be obtained at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

### **Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline**

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/>

The Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline was founded by The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to ensure veterans in emotional crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. To operate the Veterans Hotline, the VA partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Veterans can call the Lifeline number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and press "1" to be routed to the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline.

# Readiness and Deployment Support Training

## Post-Deployment Spending Plan

Monthly Income	Monthly Deductions
_____ Base Pay	_____ ALLOTMENT (For/ends? _____)
_____ Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)	_____ ALLOTMENT (For/ends? _____)
_____ Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS)	_____ ALLOTMENT (For/ends? _____)
_____ Taxable Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)	_____ Meal Collection Deduction
_____ Other (tax exempt/allowance e.g. COLA/FSSA)	_____ Uniform Services Thrift Savings Plan
_____ Service Member's Other Earnings (less taxes)	_____ Montgomery GI Bill
_____ Spouses Earnings (less taxes)	_____ FITW Filing
<b>_____ Total Monthly Income</b>	_____ FICA (Social Security)
<i>Note: Pay entitlements are taxable. Allowance entitlements are nontaxable.</i>	_____ FICA (Medicare)
	_____ State Income Tax
	_____ AFRH (Armed Forces Retirement Home)
	_____ TRICARE Dental Plan (TDP)
	<b>_____ Total Monthly Deductions</b>

### Monthly Expenses

<b>Household</b> _____ Mortgage/rent _____ Taxes/fees _____ Maintenance/repairs _____ Homeowners association  <b>Food</b> _____ Groceries _____ Lunches (school and work) _____ Vending machines _____ Dining out  <b>Vehicles</b> _____ Loan/s _____ Gasoline _____ Maintenance/repairs _____ Vehicle property taxes _____ Registration  <b>Insurance</b> _____ Life _____ Homeowners _____ Vehicle _____ Renters	<b>Utilities</b> _____ Cell Phone/phone _____ Cards/pagers _____ Electricity _____ Internet services _____ Natural gas/propane _____ Water/garbage/sewer _____ Cable/satellite TV  <b>Child Care</b> _____ Day care _____ Sitters _____ Before & After School Care  <b>Education</b> _____ Tuition _____ Fees _____ Child's school fees _____ Books  <b>Contributions</b> _____ Religious _____ Club dues _____ DVD/video games/CDs	<b>Leisure</b> _____ Gym memberships _____ Books/magazines _____ Computer products (software/hardware) _____ Lessons _____ Toys and games _____ Travel/lodging _____ Athletic events/sporting goods _____ Concerts _____ Alcohol _____ Tobacco _____ Movies _____ Movie rentals  <b>Personal Expenses</b> _____ Clothing _____ Hair care _____ Nail care _____ Eye care _____ Laundry _____ Dry cleaning _____ Seasonal clothes	<b>Gifts</b> _____ Birthdays _____ Anniversary _____ Holidays  <b>Pet Care</b> _____ Veterinary _____ Flea/tick/heartworm _____ Boarding _____ Training _____ Food _____ Toys  <b>Savings</b> _____ IRAs _____ TSP _____ Investments _____ Emergency fund _____ Pension plan _____ 401(k)  <b>Other</b> _____ Toiletries  <b>_____ Total Monthly Expenses</b>
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+ \_\_\_\_\_ **Monthly Income**  
 - \_\_\_\_\_ **Monthly Deductions**  
 - \_\_\_\_\_ **Monthly Expenses**  
 = \_\_\_\_\_ **Monthly Balance**