



Reintegration Adjustment among Deployed Parents and their Children

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Central Questions?

- ▶ How does reintegration affect soldiers & their families, particularly children?
- ▶ How do AOD & trauma exposure affect children?
- ▶ How can we best support military personnel & their families to help prevent AOD and trauma exposure among children?



Deployment & Central Issues

- ▶ Deployment
 - ▶ For Soldiers
 - ▶ For Spouses/Partners
 - ▶ For Children



Returning Home

- ▶ I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.
- ▶ As a Soldier...
 - ▶ I represent *Authority*
 - ▶ My Brothers and Sisters in arms are my *Family*
 - ▶ I am *Proud*
- ▶ Many make the transition smoothly, reintegrating into prior and new roles, but all will feel **OVERWHELMED**.
- ▶ Some will make poor choices.



Challenges for Healthy Reintegration

- ▶ For the soldiers
 - ▶ How do you keep identity and meaning when you take off the uniform?
 - ▶ Reacquainting with families—need to take that time
 - ▶ “From War to Work”
 - ▶ Adjusting to & Finding employment
 - ▶ Frustration, guilt, depression and anger
 - ▶ “I just need to relax or escape” = Increase in drinking; Self-medication



Barriers for Healthy Reintegration

- ▶ For the families
 - ▶ “Acknowledge my success.”
 - ▶ Negotiate roles.
 - ▶ Changes in relationship & family dynamics
 - ▶ Effects on parent practices



Risk & Resilience

- ▶ Resilience:
 - ▶ RINGS Study: Knowing your family is being cared for and has resources prior to deployment → healthier reintegration upon return
- ▶ Risks:
 - ▶ The greatest risk is a Soldier without purpose.
 - ▶ Frustration, depression → drinking & self-medication
 - ▶ Injuries → Increased prescription drug use

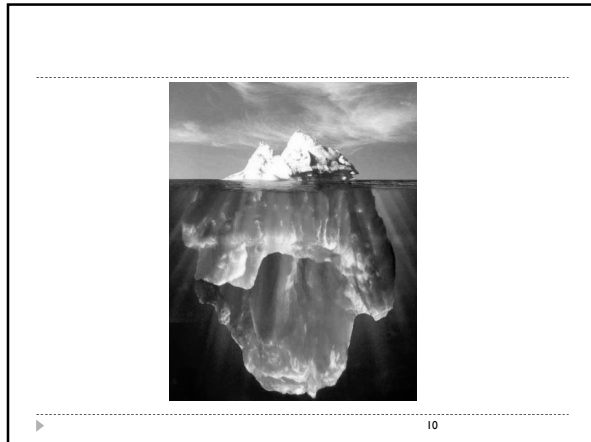


What happens with our children?

- ▶ Anger
- ▶ Excessive need to be close
- ▶ Fear of desertion
- ▶ Grow up too quickly



Children & Traumatic Stress



Trauma Principle #2

It is the child's experience of the event, not the event itself, that is traumatizing

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Trauma Principle #4

The behavioral & emotional adaptations that trauma exposed children make to survive are brilliant, creative solutions, and are personally costly.

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Trauma Principle #5

**Since trauma = chaos,
Structure = healing**



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Trauma Principle #6

**If you don't ask, they won't
tell**



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Complexity of Traumatic Stress

- ▶ Physical and emotional responses to threatening events
- ▶ Since traumatic stress = the *response* to events that injure or threaten self or others, we must look at the types of reactions that take place **during** and **after** the event
- ▶ Traumatic experiences involve complex sensory, physical, emotional, & cognitive experiences (sequentially or simultaneously)



Trauma & Youth

- ▶ Trauma occurs with other adverse events
 - ▶ Secondary Traumas
- ▶ Disrupts social system of care
 - ▶ Hits children's source of protection
- ▶ Recovery occurs within the family, social, and cultural contexts
 - Gewirtz, Forgatch, & Wieling, 2009

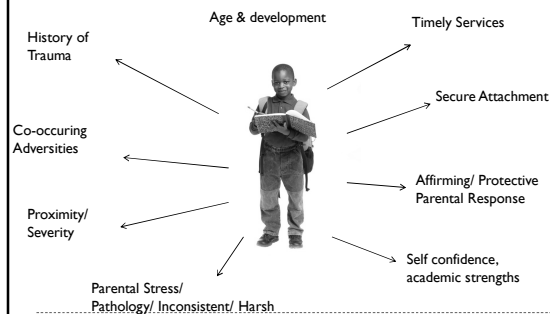


Types of Trauma

- ▶ Exposure to Traumas
 - ▶ Acute
 - ▶ Chronic
 - ▶ Complex
- ▶ Direct
 - ▶ Witnessing
 - ▶ Secondary
- ▶ Loss & Ambiguous Loss



Predictors of Adjustment



“Mandy”



Common Reactions to Trauma



Trauma Exposure Effects

- ▶ Children with trauma exposure typically have impairments in many areas of development and functioning:
 - ▶ Attachment
 - ▶ Biology
 - ▶ Mood Regulation
 - ▶ Dissociation
 - ▶ Behavior control
 - ▶ Cognition
 - ▶ Self-concept



Trauma Exposure Effects – cont'd

- ▶ Attachment – Traumatized children feel that the world is uncertain and unpredictable. They can become socially isolated, and have difficulty relating to and empathizing with others.
- ▶ Biology – Children exposed to trauma may be hypersensitive to physical contact and display insensitivity to pain. They may exhibit unexplained physical symptoms and increased medical problems.

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Trauma Exposure Effects – cont'd

- ▶ Mood regulation – Trauma exposed children can have difficulty regulating their emotions as well as difficulty knowing and describing their feelings and internal states.
- ▶ Dissociation – detachment or depersonalization, as if they are “observing” something happening to them that is unreal.
- ▶ Behavioral Control – poor impulse control, self-destructive behavior, and aggression towards others.

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Trauma Exposure Effects – cont'd

- ▶ Cognition – Traumatized children can have problems focusing on and completing tasks, or planning for and anticipating future events. Some exhibit learning difficulties and problems with language development.
- ▶ Self-concept – these children often suffer from disturbed body image, low self-esteem, shame, and guilt.

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Short-Term/ Intermediate

- ▶ Dysregulation
 - ▶ Eating, Sleeping, Moodiness
- ▶ Regression
- ▶ Attention & Concentration
- ▶ Withdrawal/ Avoidance
- ▶ Partial memory loss
- ▶ Fearfulness/ Nightmares
- ▶ Flashbacks
- ▶ Guilt, Shame
- ▶ Behaviors Problems
 - ▶ Aggression; Turning passive into active
- ▶ Relationships
- ▶ Traumatic Play

▶

Excessive Risk Taking



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Common Reactions

- ▶ Trauma related "time skew"
 - ☐ Mis-sequencing trauma related events when recalling the memory
- ▶ Omen formation
 - ☐ Belief that there were warning signs that predicted the trauma.
 - ☐ → Hypervigilence or belief that if they are alert enough, they will recognize warning signs and avoid future traumas

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Caregivers

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Common Caregiver Responses

- Fear of separation/ over protection
- Lack of knowledge on how to support & discipline (i.e., positive parenting practices)
- Preoccupation; urges to reject child's needs
- Abusive Impulses towards the child
- Emotional withdrawal and depression
- Feelings of incompetence/helplessness
- Feeling like a bad parent

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Long Term Effects:
Chronic Developmental Adaptations

- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ PTSD
- ▶ Personality
- ▶ Substance abuse
- ▶ Perpetration of violence

▶



How Can We Help?

Children of Families at Risk/Needing Help

- ▶ What can be done to support children of families who are at risk or need help?
 - ▶ Create awareness in regard to the needs of military youth
 - ▶ Listen
 - ▶ Engage parents
 - ▶ Assessments & Referrals
 - ▶ Don't let the Servicemember be a victim.
 - ▶ Parenting programs (e.g., ADAPT)

Remember the 3 Keys:

1. Increase Sense of Safety
2. Help Manage overwhelming Emotions (Regulation)
3. Engagement in developmentally appropriate activities

Building Relationships and Connecting Communities

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon is a comprehensive program that unites communities for the purpose of connecting Servicemembers and military families with support, training, services, and resources.

- Informed Community Members
- Synchronized and Coordinated Efforts
- Sustainable Networks
- Builds Stronger Communities



Yellow Ribbon Networks

- ▶ Purpose:
 - ▶ Honor, Support, Engage and Respect
- ▶ Be informed about on-going needs
- ▶ Be visible
- ▶ Be proactive
 - ▶ Fast Action Support Teams
 - ▶ Crisis Care Teams
 - ▶ Crisis Response Teams



Example: MN
No military base, but people who care...



Community Based Resources

Wellness Providers

- VA Hospitals
- Community Clinics
- Vet Centers
- Medical Professionals
- Behavioral Health
- State Dept of Health
- Chemical Dependency Treatment Centers
- AA Groups
- Fitness Centers

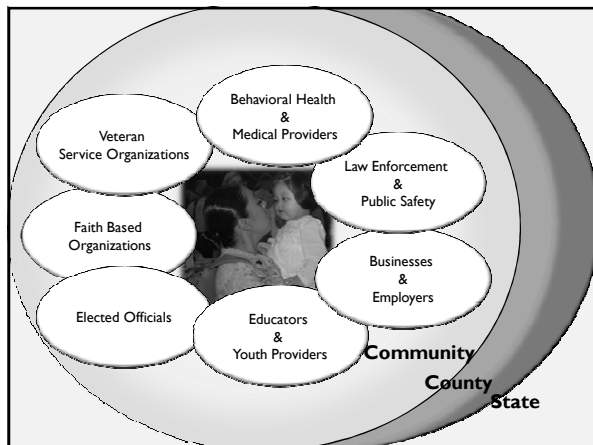
Agencies & Organizations

- Social Services
- Veteran Service Officers
- Law Enforcement
- Chamber of Commerce
- Emergency Response
- Service Organizations
- School Boards
- Youth Organizations
- Faith Based Organizations
- Nongovernmental Service Organizations
- Education

Services

- Emergency Medical
- Auto Care
- Home Maintenance
- Child Care
- College Career Centers
- Networking Organizations
- CPAs/Financial Advisors
- Attorneys
- Barbers and Hair Stylists
- House Cleaners
- Landscapers
- Human Resource Professionals





Thank You!