

# Coping During Deployment

A Handbook for Military  
Members & Their Families  
During Deployment



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# Table of Contents

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|          |  |       |
|----------|--|-------|
| <b>1</b> | Introduction   | p. 01 |
| <b>2</b> | Deployment Stress & the Emotional Cycle of Deployment          | p. 03 |
| <b>3</b> | Maintaining Mental Wellness During Deployment                  | p. 14 |
| <b>4</b> | Coping with your Partner's Absence & Maintaining Communication | p. 22 |
| <b>5</b> | Parenting & Supporting Children                                | p. 30 |
| <b>6</b> | How Can the PEI MFRC Help?                                     | p. 40 |
| <b>7</b> | Other Supports   | p. 52 |

# Introduction

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is designed to assist military personnel and their families navigate the challenges of deployments or prolonged absences. You will find helpful information on how to parent during deployment, maintain mental wellness, communicate effectively, and learn about how the PEI MFRC can support you through this process.

## What is Deployment?

A deployment is anytime a military member is away from home for an extended period of time due to an operational commitment.

Deployments are sometimes referred to as family separations or work-related absences. Examples of deployments include being away on a course, training exercises, imposed restrictions, or being away overseas, within Canada or the U.S.

When most people hear the word "deployment," they think of prolonged absences on operations overseas. However, some families experience longer but more infrequent absences, while others experience shorter, more frequent absences. All deployments, regardless of length and location, are demanding for military personnel and their families.

# Introduction

## What is a Military Family?

The PEI MFRC recognizes that military families are diverse and come in all sizes. A military family includes all Canadian Armed Forces' personnel, Regular and Reserve Force, and their spouses, children, parents, relatives, or people who the military member self-identifies as part of their family. Family members and persons of significance to Canadian Armed Forces personnel who pass away while serving remain part of the military family community in perpetuity.

## How Can My Family Access the PEI MFRC's Services?

When you arrive in PEI, please ensure that you complete our Family Intake Form so your family can access our services. If you are preparing for a deployment, you will also complete our Deployment Family Information Form so we can support your loved ones during your absence. To download a fillable PDF copy of these forms, visit [www.PeiMfrc.org](http://www.PeiMfrc.org) and select either "Family Intake Form" or "Deployment Family Information Form." If you need further assistance, please visit the MFRC or call (902) 892-8999.

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Deployment Stress

### Why Prepare for Deployment?

Deployments can cause physical and emotional stress for the military member and their family, most notably during the initial departure and reunion. There will also be a shift in family roles, responsibilities, and routines, especially if you have children. The best strategy to reduce deployment stress is preparation, and this cannot be overemphasized. Preparation means anticipating the changes and challenges and developing strategies to cope with each one. It is essential to consider all aspects of family life: psychological, spiritual, emotional, social, and physical health.

Regardless of the nature of deployment or absence that families encounter, several factors will affect deployment stress levels; factors related to the individual, separation, the type of deployment and other family factors.

### Individual Factors of the Military Member:

- Physical and mental health
- Ability to cope with stress and uncertainty
- Previous deployment experience
- Attitude toward the assignment
- Confidence in self and unit
- Sense of security in family relationships

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Separation Factors:

- Available preparation time
- Previous family separation experience
- Attitude of family toward assignment
- Important family events during separation
- Confidence in support available to family

## Deployment Factors:

- Nature of the mission, especially if ambiguous
- Length of the mission, especially if uncertain
- Communication (mail, phone, e-mail) ease or difficulty
- Geographical location (terrain, weather)
- Living and working conditions
- Confidence in unit training and leadership

## Other Family Factors:

- Age and number of children
- Family routines, and parental roles
- Childcare concerns
- Household income level
- Extended supports available to family



# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Families often experience a "cycle" of emotions during the deployment process. Understanding the different responses that may arise across the deployment cycle can assist you, your family and your friends to understand behaviour changes and emotional reactions. This model illustrates the various stages that you, your family and friends may progress through across the deployment.

The Emotional Cycle of deployment is based on experience and research with military families who have experienced a more traditional, long-term separation. Families find understanding and reassurance in this model and the suggested coping strategies, with the knowledge that many others share similar responses to this challenging experience.

Although there are timeframes listed, this will vary depending on the length of deployment, and families may spend more or less time in each stage. The model is designed to provide a general understanding, and not everyone will progress systematically through each phase. **This handbook will primarily address strategies to help families cope with stages 3, 4, and 5.** As you will see in the following diagram, family stress levels tend to be highest in stages 3 and 5.

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Pre-Deployment:

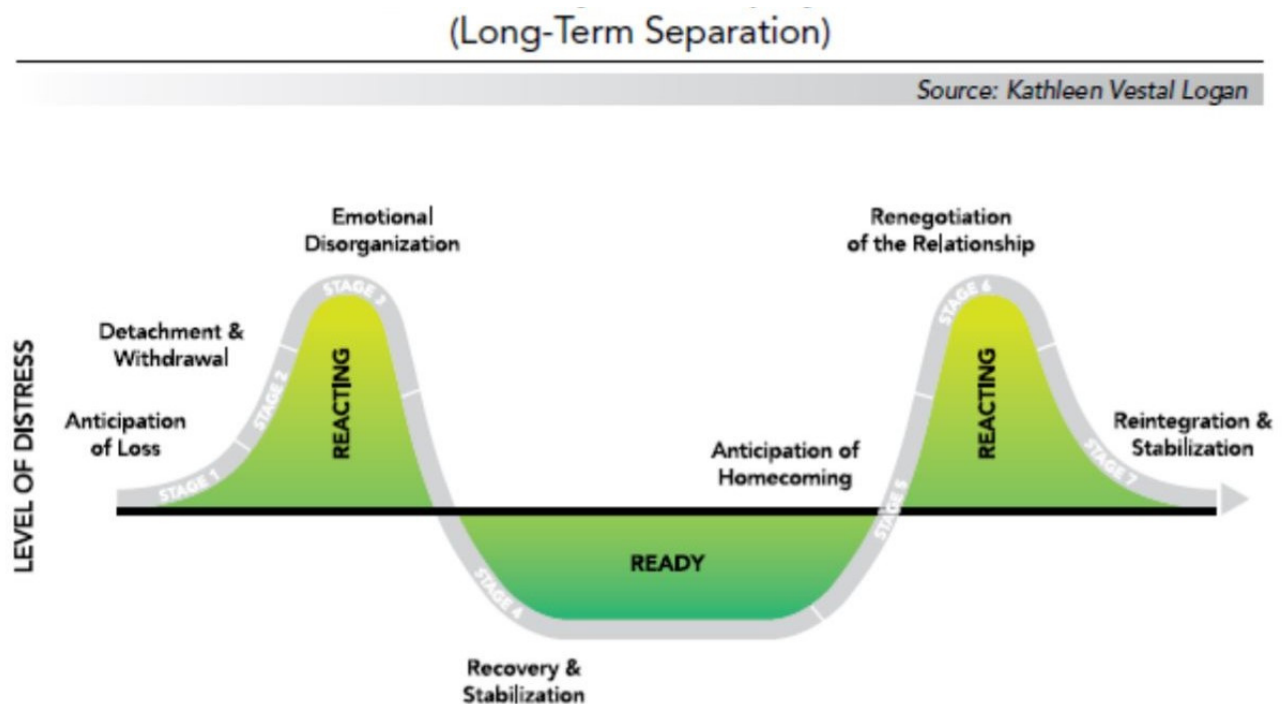
- 1.) Anticipation of Loss: 1–6 weeks before departure
- 2.) Detachment and Withdrawal: Last week before departure

## During Deployment:

- 3.) Anticipation of Loss: 1–6 weeks before departure
- 4.) Detachment and Withdrawal: Last week before departure

## Post Deployment:

- 6.) Renegotiation of Relationships: First 6 weeks home
- 7.) Reintegration and Stabilization: 6–12 weeks after returning home





# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Stage 3 – Emotional Disorganization

The first few days following departure may feel like a "honeymoon in reverse." You may feel a sense of freedom and release from the emotions of the pre-departure phase. What may follow is the realization that you are now separated for the duration of your deployment, which can bring about emotional reactions such as sadness, anxiety, guilt and loneliness. It's important to understand that these reactions are normal and remain optimistic during this stage.

### Common Reactions:

- Magical thinking
- Culpability and fear of infidelity
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Feelings of guilt, anger, numbness, depression, confusion, disorganization, indecision, loneliness, vulnerability, irritability, aimlessness

### Common Reactions For the Military Member:

- Culture shock
- Feeling relieved and ready to move on to new challenges
- A shift in focus from home life to operational life
- Fatigue

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## General Suggestions:

- Communicate — keep in touch about everyday events, and share your feelings to maintain the emotional bond.
- Reaffirm care and commitment.
- Date and number your letters so that your partner can read them in sequence.
- Try to end phone calls on a positive note — it may be a long wait before the next call.

## For the Military Member:

- Write separate letters to your children periodically.
- Share as much information as you can about your daily life and work. Nothing is too mundane, and your family wants to hear about what you're doing!
- Remain positive and focus on the job you have been assigned.
- Prepare emotionally for significant events, such as Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries. Understand that you may be feeling isolated and discouraged, and therefore communication with your loved ones is critical

## For the Partner at Home:

- Maintain the healthy self-care practices you established before the departure.
- Participate in a support group, whether formal or informal.
- Help your children express their feelings and stay in touch with their absent parent.

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Stage 4 – Recovery & Stabilization

In time, you will adapt to your new environment and the demands of the deployment. If you are the partner remaining at home, you will also establish a new routine for yourself and your children. Settling into a routine is something that military members and their families are accustomed to, and you will notice a stabilization of emotions, but the challenges may remain both demanding and exhilarating.

### Common Reactions:

- Feelings of increased confidence, independence, competence, freedom, pride, isolation, anxiety, depression
- Stress and worry
- Acceptance that your partner is managing well
- Redistributing roles and settling into a new routine

### Common Reactions for the Military Member:

- Feeling a sense of job satisfaction
- Meeting the challenge and demands of the deployment and completing operational tasking
- Concern that your partner is coping so well at home that you are no longer needed

### General Suggestions:

- Enjoy new skills, freedom, and independence
- Utilize stress management techniques

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

- Celebrate signs of positive growth and skill development in self, partner, children (Ex: increased self confidence)
- Establish and maintain peer networks

## **For the Military Member:**

- Maintain regular contact with your family via calls/emails etc.
- Participate in formal defusing's/debriefings if involved in a critical incident
- Confide in trusted peers, chaplains, and support personnel
- Be aware of small team dynamics – use the strengths within the team to guide task outcomes
- Acknowledge the achievements of your loved ones at home
- Offer empathy and emotional support to your family but recognize limitations to the support you can provide from the operational environment

## **For the Partner at Home:**

- Share your feelings of pride and self-confidence, reassuring your partner that you still long for the separation to end
- Encourage and assist your children to keep the absent parent a vital part of the family
- Celebrate and inform your partner of family successes
- Be kind to yourself and accept that you cannot control everything
- Express empathy and share ideas for care packages with other spouses in support groups

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Stage 5 – Anticipation of Homecoming

Preparing for homecoming is filled with excitement and some apprehension. Both you and those at home will have hopes and expectations about the homecoming. These thoughts can be idealistic at times, so the reality of the situation needs to be placed into perspective. Emotionally preparing for going home allows you to think about the challenges and discuss plans with loved ones and friends.

### Common Reactions:

- Increased energy and activity
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Feelings of joy, excitement, anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, impatience

### General Suggestions:

- Share your feelings of apprehension as well as excitement and joy.
- Share your expectations and desires for the homecoming.
- Reassure your partner of your love and commitment.
- Include your children in planning for the family homecoming celebration.
- Plan to have some family time with the children before the “honeymoon.”

# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## For the Military Member:

- Relay only officially confirmed information about your return (date, time, location) to your family and ignore rumours.
- Participate in unit preparation for reunion briefing(s).
- Maintain focus on your work to ensure you complete in time.

## For the Partner at Home:

- Ignore rumours and wait patiently for an official date, time, and location information for your partner's return to avoid false expectations.
- Plan a special date night together when your partner returns.
- Participate in preparation for reunion activities (briefings, workshops) organized by the MFRC.
- Keep expectations about homecoming realistic.

## Remember

Times of stress can foster family growth and resilience. Resiliency develops when we overcome our hardships and bounce back stronger than before. The challenges of separation and reunion provide opportunities for your relationships: evaluate the changes that have occurred within and between partners, redefine roles, responsibilities, and move forward with all you have learned.

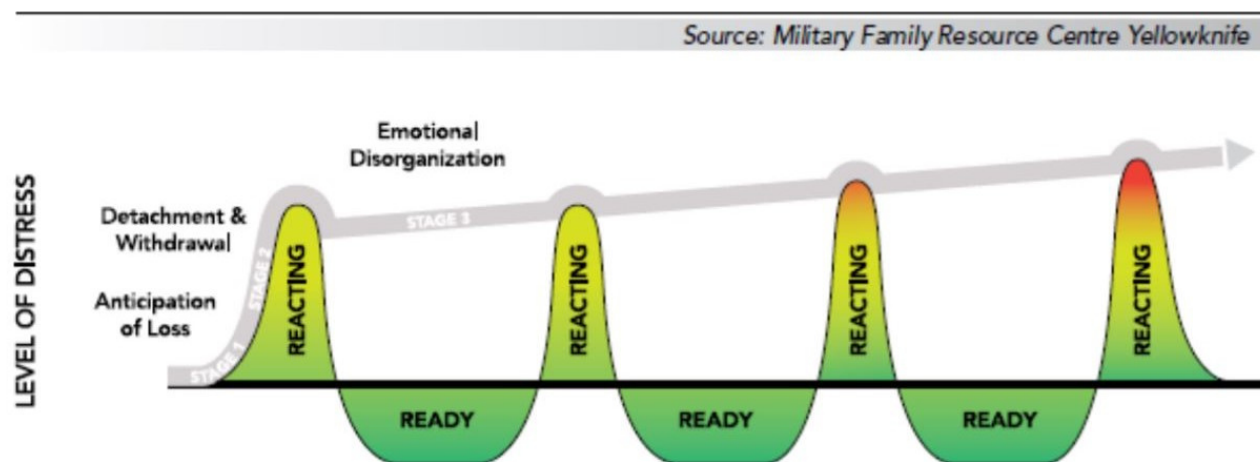


# Deployment Stress & The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

## Short-Term and Frequent Separations

Short-term deployments or absences that are more frequent and less predictable in nature can be just as disruptive and demanding on the family. Constant and continuous periods of separation and reunion may be more difficult to manage given the short period required to readjust from one absence to the next. Many families who experience frequent short-term separations and reunions experience an ongoing sense of emotional disorganization, testing their ability to act and react.

The challenge for families during these types of deployments is that they must constantly adjust and move through the stages at a much more rapid pace without the benefit of time to adjust emotionally. The general coping strategies provided in this handbook can help families deal with the absence of a loved one, regardless of the type of deployment.

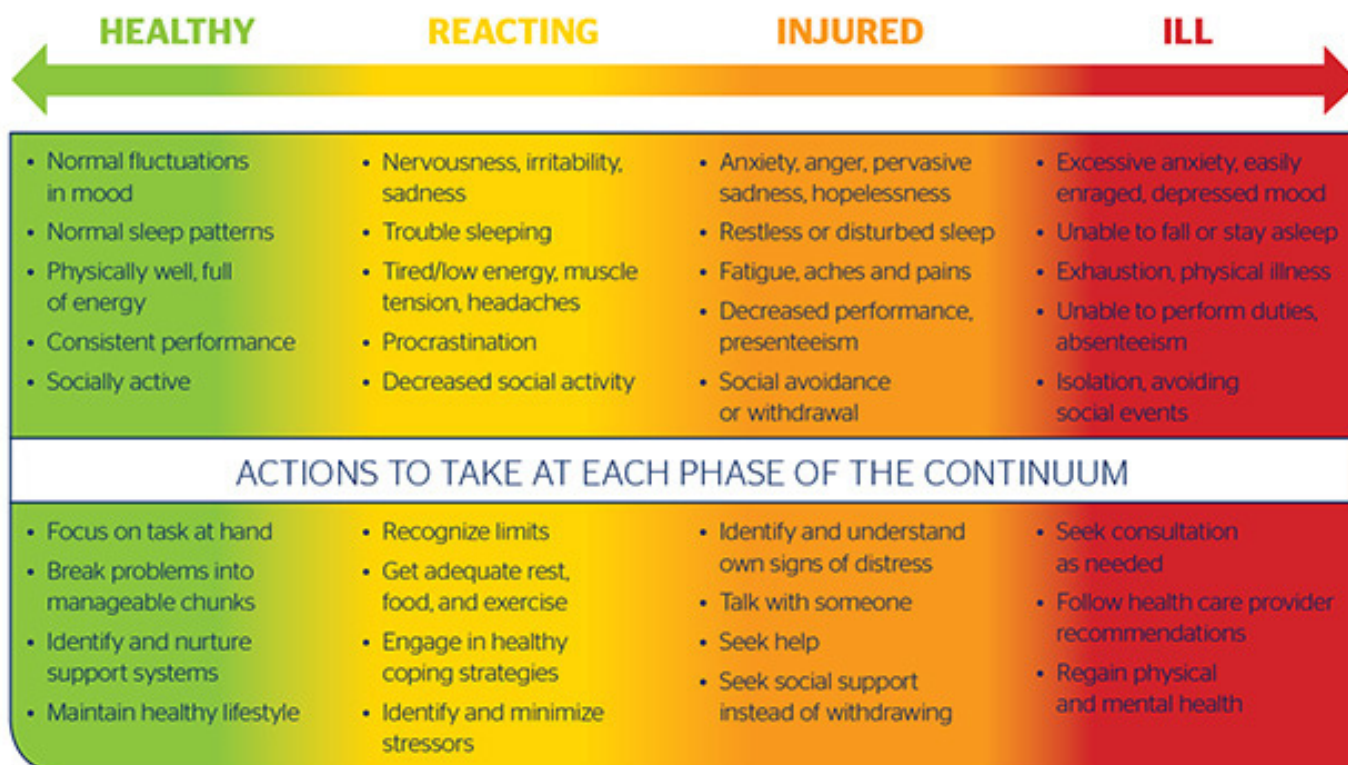


# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## The Mental Health Continuum

It is critical for military families to maintain their mental health during the pre-deployment phase. The mental health continuum model explains the spectrum of how well someone may be coping with life stressors. The left side represents mental wellness and strong coping strategies, while the right side represents mental illness and an inability to cope. Ideally, one would recognize when they are slipping into the "reacting" zone and implement the proper skills and support before becoming injured or ill.

## MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM MODEL





# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## Recognizing Signs of Stress

We all experience stress in our life; at our work, at home, when we play sports, etc. It is not necessarily a bad thing; we all need a certain amount of stress in our lives to motivate and increase performance. It is important to identify when stress is becoming problematic so you can take action. As previously discussed, military members and their families will likely experience intense emotional responses and high-stress levels before deployment. Therefore, It is imperative to recognize your individual signs of stress. Read through the list below and notice how your body and mind respond to stress.

### Physical:

- Nausea
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbances
- Digestion issues
- Excessive sweating
- Changes in appetite

### Behavioural:

- Social withdrawal/isolation
- Increased substance use
- Problems dealing with others
- Overreacting
- Increased risk-taking
- Increased spending
- Neglecting responsibilities

### Emotional:

- Fear
- Rapid changes in mood
- Low motivation
- Irritability/short temper
- Anger
- Sadness/apathy

### Thinking:

- Poor judgement
- Trouble concentrating
- Lowered self-esteem
- Memory problems
- Anxiety/worry
- Impaired decision-making skills

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## Stress Management Strategies:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Focus on eating a few servings of fruits and vegetables each day and limiting excess fast food.
- Exercise regularly and move your body each day. Do a form of exercise you enjoy and try to get outside whenever possible. Even a few minutes can make a difference!
- Get enough sleep. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours per night.
- Practice time management by prioritizing tasks, avoiding procrastination, and using your rest time for leisure, not work.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco intake.
- Talk to family, friends, and colleagues to vent or to help develop a solution to a problem.
- Keep a journal to write about your thoughts, feelings, and stress triggers.
- Use humour to ease tension. Watch a funny video or laugh with friends.
- Set aside personal time to yourself to partake in hobbies you enjoy.

## Relaxation Techniques

Regularly practicing relaxation techniques is very beneficial in helping you cope with the stress of day-to-day life. Relaxation techniques are not mysterious, and you do not need specialist qualifications to carry them out. Anyone can practice relaxation just about anywhere and at any time. The key to practicing relaxation techniques is that they can be self-administered and, with a little practice, most people find them easy to master.

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## Abdominal Breathing

The level of tension carried in your body is reflected in the way that you breathe. If you are tense, your breathing tends to be shallow, rapid and occurring high in the chest. If relaxed, your breathing tends to be fuller, deeper, and from your abdomen. It is difficult to be tense and to breathe from your abdomen at the same time.

- 1.) Take a moment to note how tense you are feeling, then place one hand on your abdomen just beneath your rib cage.
- 2.) Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into the 'bottom' of your lungs – send the air as low down as you can. If you are breathing from your abdomen, your hand should rise. Your chest should move only slightly.
- 3.) When you've taken a full breath, pause for a moment and then exhale slowly through your nose or mouth. Make sure you exhale fully. As you exhale, try to relax your body fully.
- 4.) Now do ten slow, full abdominal breaths. Keep your breathing slow and smooth. It may help to count to four on the inhale (1-2-3-4) and then again on the exhale.  
Remember to pause briefly at the end of each inhalation.

If you begin to feel light-headed during the exercise, stop for 15–20 seconds and then start again. With practice, you may be able to do several sets of ten full abdominal breaths. Five minutes of abdominal breathing can have a very beneficial relaxing effect.

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Progressive muscle relaxation (with tension) works on the theory that a muscle can be relaxed by first tensing it for a few seconds and then releasing it. Tensing and releasing various muscle groups throughout the body can produce a deep state of relaxation. The idea is to squeeze each muscle group hard (not straining, however) for about 10 seconds and then let it go suddenly. You then give yourself 15–20 seconds to relax, noticing the difference in the muscle relaxed, as opposed to when you tensed it, before going on to the next muscle group.

You can also practice progressive muscle relaxation without tensing and releasing the muscles. The idea is basically the same. You work your way progressively through the different muscle groups in your body, consciously relaxing each one as you go. The only difference is that you do not tense and release each muscle group. It may help to say to yourself something like “I am relaxing” or “Letting go” during each relaxation phase between muscle groups. Maintain a focus on your muscles during the exercise and stay keenly aware of your bodily sensations.

## **The following general guidelines apply:**

- Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable setting.
- Tense each muscle group for 7–10 seconds vigorously without straining, then release suddenly,
- Allow all other muscles in the body to relax and focus on one group at a time.

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

- If a muscle group feels particularly tense, you can tense and release it 2–3 times if necessary. Just make sure to rest for 20–30 seconds between each cycle.
- The entire sequence should take about 30 minutes to complete the first time. As you get better, you may find you can work through it quicker.

## Seeking Mental Health Assistance

There are times when we can't do it alone in regards to stress and stress management. Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness but rather a recognition that the situation is beyond our normal resources to cope. At the end of this handbook, you will find mental health and addictions services located in and around Charlottetown. The following list is not exhaustive but is indicative of circumstances suggesting that you may need to seek assistance with stress management:

- You are experiencing ongoing signs of stress.
- Ongoing sleep disturbances or nightmares.
- If you have no one with whom you can talk
- Your work and social relationships appear to be suffering
- You are having frequent accidents and difficulty concentrating
- You have noticed changes in your emotions or behaviours that are worrying you.
- You are having suicidal thoughts or urges to self-harm.

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## Mental Wellness Tips for Partners at Home:

- Make time for fun and do things you enjoy.
- Celebrate personal successes as well as the successes of your friends and family.
- Participate in deployment groups, sports, volunteer events, attend classes and stay busy. Focus on helping others as a way to deal with deployment loneliness.
- Initiate friendships; don't just wait for someone to approach you. Reach out to others in need, and others will reach out to you when needed.
- Say no to obligations you do not have the energy for and ask others for assistance when necessary.
- Seek mental health services if you feel like you or a family member needs professional help.

## Mental Wellness Tips for Deployed Members:

- **Allow adjustment time.** Give yourself time to adjust to the new environment. Take the time to observe and familiarize yourself with the routine and understand your role and responsibilities. Be willing to ask for assistance in settling in or have routines and responsibilities explained to you if they are not clear.
- **Accept reality:** Understand that there are some things you can influence and change — expend your efforts on these, NOT on the situations that you have no control over. Learn to be open-minded and flexible.

# Maintaining Mental Wellness

## Mental Wellness Tips for Deployed Members:

- **Mentally rehearse stressful situations.** Think through likely situations that are of concern to you. Think about your potential reactions and the options you have in dealing with the possibilities. Ask yourself: “What could be the worst thing that could happen?” Often, the answer is not as catastrophic as you initially believe. This ‘rehearsal’ helps you successfully deal with the situation when it arises. However, be careful not to ruminate excessively on stressful thoughts because this is counterproductive.
- **Change your thoughts.** Sometimes, how we perceive a situation determines how frustrating or stressful it is. By changing our assumptions, we can often decrease our stress levels.

## Try To:

- Maintain realistic expectations. Don't insist things operate the way they do back home or as they did on previous deployments.
- Maintain a positive attitude towards your work, peers, and environment.
- Aim to learn about the environment you are deployed in and the different cultures you work with. Understanding helps promote acceptance.
- Keep a journal. Remain cognizant of OPSEC – the intent of a journal is to detail thoughts and feelings, not operational information.

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## Importance of Communication

Good communication is the key to maintaining mental wellness in military relationships. Discussing roles and responsibilities across the period you are deployed provides clarification and assurance (both for yourself and your deployed partner). During the deployment period, bring forward any concerns or problems that arise for discussion, and your partner should do the same.

**Ignoring a problem will not make it go away.**

Deployment may be the first time that you find yourself solely responsible for raising the children, managing the family budget, and the general running of the household. Your partner's deployment can bring out a range of strong emotions, and some of them may seem in direct conflict with each other. You may miss your partner terribly, yet at the same time resent their freedom from family responsibilities. Your deploying partner will also be experiencing various emotions, and it may be a relief if you face these feelings and thoughts together. Even the most independent person is likely to experience a feeling of uncertainty.

## Ways to Keep in Touch:

- Establish realistic expectations around frequency of communications, knowing that:
  - Internet services can go down.
  - Mail services may experience delays.
  - Work requirements may mean missed phone calls.
  - Communications lockdowns may occur.



# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## Phone/Video Calls/Email

Agree on the frequency of phone calls and schedule them in advance. However, understand that regular access to cell phones may not always be an option for some deployed CAF members, especially during the first few days of deployment or during operational commitments.

- Even when the military member has access to a phone, the connection may be unstable, and calls could end abruptly.
- Keep your partner at home safe by avoiding military movements, port calls, and classified information.
- Be aware that emails sent over non-secure systems can be intercepted.
- Sometimes email systems go down. Keep this in mind and try not to react if you do not hear from your family member right away.
- Consider using an internet instant messaging service, such as WhatsApp, if you do not have an international phone plan.

## Social Media Safety

- Keep personal information to yourself. Do not post your full name, address, phone number or financial information online.
- Limit who can view your profile or postings. Change your settings from “Everyone” to “Only Friends.” Check these settings routinely.
- Update your status and video stories with caution. Do not tell others you are away for a weekend trip or are home alone.
- Review social media safety with your children.

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## Communication Tips During Deployment:

- Set expectations for how often you will talk or email each other how and when.
- Be Realistic. Understand that when your CAF member is deployed, they may not have regular access to cellphones or email. Gaps between emails or phone calls may mean your partner is working long hours.
- Keep a list. Share daily events in your life. Consider keeping a notepad with interesting things that happen – a funny story about a neighbor, a hello from a family member, an accomplishment at work – and share these during your next call or email.
- Allow yourself to feel and express all emotional responses.
- Schedule a "date night." Consider setting a time each week to connect via video or phone call and share a meal or watch a favourite show together. **Whether or not this is feasible will depend on the nature of the deployment.** For example, this may be more achievable if your partner is away on a training course rather than deployed in the field.

## Tips for Maintaining an Emotional Bond During Deployment: Deployed Partner

- Hide love notes and "I'm missing you" messages throughout the house where your partner will find them.
- Send meaningful letters and postcards.
- Arrange gifts for special occasions you may miss.
- Create an "I love you" message with leaves, sand, snow, etc., take a picture and send it home.

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## Partner/Parent at Home

- Change your computer's screen saver to a favourite family/couple picture.
- Send a thoughtful parcel for a special occasion.
- Send weekly pictures or post pictures online.
- Hide love notes in luggage.
- Send a video message letting them know how much they are missed and loved.
- Create an online journal.

## Children

- Send drawings or homework for mom or dad to see and display.
- Send the parent off with a favourite toy to keep them company.
- Make an "I love you" sign.
- Send a decorated parcel or package.
- Make a story book.
- Send a video of a soccer game or other activity.
- Create a website in honour of the deployed parent.

## Empathetic Communication:

Demonstrating empathy is a cornerstone of healthy communication. Empathetic communication allows the other person's ideas and feelings to be heard and validated. Empathetic communication means **understanding the other person's perspective and emotions without passing judgment**. This takes practice, but it becomes easier with time and will improve how you communicate in all relationships.

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

There are several techniques you can use to practice empathetic communication with your partner:

- **Active Listening:** Listen to understand what the other person is saying rather than thinking about your response. Show your partner you are listening by using subtle non-verbal and verbal cues, such as nodding your head and saying "uh-huh" or "I see." Avoid interrupting and wait for your turn to speak.
- **Open body language:** Maintain eye contact, keep an upright posture, unfold your arms, and slightly mirror the other person's positioning and movements.
- **Paraphrasing:** Rephrase what your partner has said to show them you are listening and you understood what they said. Ex: "It sounds like adjusting to a new routine has been frustrating for you." When someone hears a restatement of what they just said, they feel heard and are encouraged to expand on what they were saying.
- **Thank them for sharing:** Affirm your partner when they open up about emotionally difficult topics or start hard conversations. Ex: "I know that takes a lot of courage for you to talk about" or "Thank you for confiding in me."
- **Open-questions:** Questions that invite discussion usually begin with "what," "how," or "why." Asking questions that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" is a good way to understand your partner's perspective and draw out details. Ex: "What do you think about talking on the phone twice per week while you are away?"

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## **Problem-Solving**

Work towards resolving any problems or family conflicts before departure so that they don't develop into bigger problems that are harder to solve while you're away. Problems are seldom as bad as they appear once you have discussed them. Often the hardest part is sitting down and facing them. Agree to discuss a hot topic with a cool and clear head. Schedule a time that you can set aside for a conversation. Seek professional advice (e.g. from a financial advisor, a teacher, or other professional) if you are worried or are having difficulty reaching an agreement about an area of concern.

## **Steps to Effective Problem-Solving:**

- Realize that some problems can't be solved but may be managed.
- Clearly and specifically, 'Define the Problem.' What is the problem, and who does it affect?
- Determine what you would like to occur.
- Generate possible and realistic solutions.
- Evaluate options and decide on the best solution(s) – look at the benefits and disadvantages for yourself and others.
- Choose a solution – make sure that your solution is realistic and headed towards your goal.
- Develop a flexible plan of action and contingency plans.
- Put your plan into action.
- Monitor your progress and evaluate the results of the solution(s).

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

## **Assertive Communication**

Assertive communication will help you manage conflict and solve problems in your relationship. Practicing assertive communication means that you clearly state your opinions, feelings, and wants without violating the rights of others. The underlying assumption is, 'You and I may have our differences, but we are equally entitled to express ourselves to one another. The major advantages include active participation in making important decisions, getting what you want without alienating others, the emotional and intellectual satisfaction of respectfully exchanging feelings and ideas, and high self-esteem.

## **Assertive messages are characterised by the use of the three F's: facts, feelings, and fair requests:**

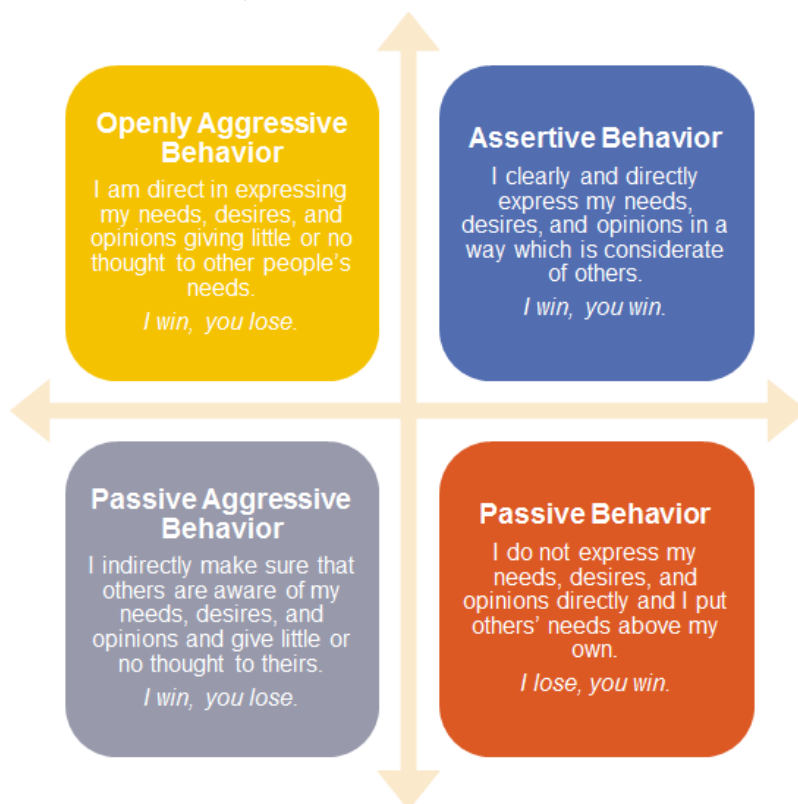
- **Facts** – The first component of an assertive statement is an objective description of what you observe. It presents the facts, as you perceive them, without making judgments, trying to place blame, or guessing at the intentions of the other person. For example: "I notice that the sink is full of the dirty dishes from last night's dinner."
- **Feelings** – The second component acknowledges your honest reaction and personal feelings using 'I' statements. It lets the other person become aware that their behaviour has affected you. It is important to state this in a way that avoids making the other person feel defensive. For example: "When I come home from work and find dirty dishes in the sink, I feel frustrated."

# Coping During Your Partner's Absence

- **Fair Request** — The last and most important part of the assertive statement is making a fair request. This is basically saying what you want. The request must be specific and realistically achievable. Make one request at a time aiming at achieving a behavioural change as opposed to a change in attitudes, values, or feelings. For example: "Would you wash the dishes directly after every meal."

## Now, putting it all together:

"You spend a lot of time at work, and even bring more work home with you to do on the weekends. **(Facts)** I feel lonely and miss our intimate times together. **(Feelings)** I would like to make a date with you for a quiet, romantic dinner this weekend." **(Fair request).**



# Parenting & Supporting Children

30

## Parenting While Your Partner is Deployed

During the separation, children need extra support and attention. Perhaps the most important step to minimize adverse effects on children is to **keep the absent parent part of the family's emotional life**. Don't be afraid to talk about the separation or the missing parent with the kids — it can sometimes make the absence more keenly felt, but it tends to make the reunion stage go much more smoothly.

Deployment is a highly stressful process for children. Younger children may not understand why one of their parents must leave, and older kids may struggle to take on additional household responsibilities. Children may also have trouble expressing the broad range of emotions they feel before, during, and post-deployment. However, there are several strategies you can use to support your kids while your partner is deployed.

### Tips for the Parent at Home:

- Provide a healthy diet. You may not feel like cooking if your partner is deployed, but home-cooked meals and family dinners may be just what your child needs. Base meals and snacks on the five main food groups.
- Maintain a consistent routine, rules, and discipline. Keeping family rituals and traditions provides some stability for military children.
- Remind children of day-to-day events that will not change. Ex: School will continue, their house will not change etc.



# Parenting & Supporting Children

31

- Keep your children involved in their favourite extracurricular activities – piano lessons, soccer teams, etc.
- Involve the deployed parent in daily life. Ex: if your bedtime ritual includes storytime, video record your partner reading your children's favourite stories before they deploy. Play the video during your family storytime.
- Organize special activities just for the children
- Write up a schedule of the deployment, with help from the children if possible. This will make it easier for them to visualize the parent's return.
- Talk about the absent parent with them as much as they want. Help children put their feelings into words and do not trivialize their feelings.
- Take note of any new behaviours that concern you.
- Provide quality care from another family member or trained childcare professional when you are unable.
- Model positive self-esteem through respect and encouragement.
- Regularly review the daily workload and share out chores.
- Be fair and realistic. Consider the age and abilities of each family member when sharing out chores.
- Choose your battles. Make certain tasks a priority while dropping others. Cut yourself some slack: you can't do everything!



# Parenting & Supporting Children

It is also important for the parent remaining at home to balance the demands of caring for the children with their own needs. A strong support network is essential in providing assistance and occasionally giving the parent a break. Maintaining contact with the deployed member and incorporating the deployment into your daily routine will help children cope with the separation and enhance the reunion process.

Children's reactions will vary according to their personalities, ages and coping skills. Remember, you are the expert on your child. As a parent, you will know what is normal behaviour for your child and will be the best one to notice when things are not right. Below is a list of common feelings and behavioural changes children may experience and how to best support them based on their age.

## **Infants/Toddlers (0 to 2 years old)**

When there are changes in the environment, the tendency to seek security is natural. Infants need to be surrounded by familiar people, objects, and secure routines.

### **What to Expect:**

- Changes in eating and sleeping patterns.
- May want to be held more.
- May seem "fussier."
- May temporarily regress in walking or toilet training.
- May become clingy or whiny.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

- May cry for no apparent reason.
- Fear that their parent will not return.
- May exhibit no reaction at all.

## **How to Support Infants/Toddlers During Deployment:**

- Have your partner record video/taped stories.
- Show them pictures of the deployed parent.
- Provide extra hugs and cuddles and give them attention.
- Maintain routine.
- Reassure that the absence is temporary.

## **Pre-Schoolers (2 to 5 years old)**

Preschool children are beginning to exert their independence but still are self-centered and dependent upon parents when feeling insecure. They are curious, have an active imagination and may worry about being left behind or separated from their parents.

## **What to Expect:**

- Clinging to family or a favourite toy.
- Unexplained crying.
- Easily angered or frustrated.
- Nightmares or sleep difficulties.
- Fearful of new people or places.
- Regression in toilet habits or other areas of development.
- Fear that their parent will not return.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

## How to Support Pre-Schoolers:

- Have your partner record video/taped stories before leaving.
- Create a photo album or a picture book of the deployed parent and child doing things together.
- Maintain routine.
- Answer any questions they have.
- Reassure that the absence is temporary.
- Give them more affection and attention, especially during the beginning of deployment.

## School-Age Children (5 to 12 years old)

School-age children have a world outside of the family. Their lives focus on school and peers. They usually are concerned most about fitting in with peers and schoolwork and wonder how a move will affect the everyday routines of their lives.

## What to Expect:

- Change in school performance.
- Increase in complaints of physical ailments.
- Irritable and moody, frightened or angry.
- May internalize emotions.
- Defying authority.
- Sadness, difficulty comforting themselves.

## How to Support School-Age Children:

- Have a family discussion before deployment. Consider inviting teachers, family or neighbors in the communication process.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

35

- Answer any questions they have.
- Communicate regularly with the deployed parent via phone, email or letters.
- Reassure that safety/drills/training keeps the military member prepared for deployment.
- Recognize and affirm their emotions.

## **Preteens and Teens (13 to 19 years old)**

Preteens and teenagers are most concerned with working out their own identity and fitting in with their peers.

### **What to Expect:**

- Physical and/or verbal anger, aggressiveness or passivity.
- Change in school performance, their appearance or behaviour.
- Mood swings/depression, including loss of interest in friends and activities.
- Distant may spend more time out of the house.
- Feeling of being responsible for the family.
- Feeling of being a burden.

### **How to Support Preteens/Teens:**

- Communicate regularly and check in with how your teen is feeling.
- Don't expect your teen to take on all of the deployed parent's household responsibilities, and keep expectations reasonable.
- Maintain the same rules, curfews and discipline.
- Be honest with your own emotions.
- Give them the right to express anger appropriately.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

## **Children and the Media**

Families should monitor the amount of information on a conflict or major disaster that their children consume. In particular, media that is associated with their parent's deployment, such as on T.V and social media. Continued exposure can be detrimental to a child's well-being, even more so if they cannot differentiate what their parent is doing or where they are from what is displayed in the media. For very young children, someone in uniform will be seen as 'mom' or 'dad' regardless of who that individual is.

While some reports are purely to educate and provide information, others are designed to sensationalize world events with the primary goal of maximizing viewers. It is important to know what is going on, but it is also okay to turn off the television for a break from the constant exposure. Put a limit on the amount of media coverage watched or read by children and talk with your children about the media coverage and how it affects them.

## **Parenting Tips for the Deployed Parent:**

- Expect and prepare for behavioural changes. Talk with your partner, family, kids' teachers and other important people in your life about what to expect and how to handle it.
- Communicate as much as possible. Talk as much as you can through letters, phone calls, video chats or online games. Leave a recorded message, or book, for your child to listen to as often as they want.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

37

- Send pictures and postcards home whenever possible.
- Involve both partners in parenting decisions. When you talk to your children and family members, discuss the events and activities that are going on in their lives.
- Stay involved with their school. Some schools send out emails for homework assignments and report cards; ask to be included on this distribution list.
- Take pictures of yourself with something your child has sent with you or to you (for example, a small stuffed animal).

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## **Overall, Children Who Cope Well With Separation Often Have:**

- A strong relationship with their parent(s).
- A good sense of self-worth or self-confidence.
- An understanding of the parent's job and why they need to go on deployment.
- Dependable communication between deployed parent and family.
- An adult who will listen and talk to them.

## **Family-Friendly Activities to Try**

The following list will give you activity ideas to do with your children during the deployment period.

**Paper Chain Countdown:** Make a paper chain with the number of links corresponding to the number of days remaining of the parent's deployment. The child can remove a chain each day.

# Parenting & Supporting Children

38

**Jellybean Jar:** Fill up a candy jar containing the number of candies corresponding with the remaining days of the parent's deployment.

**Family Communication Night:** Pick one night of the week to have a phone call, make a video, audio recording, or write a letter to the deployed parent

**Stress Box:** Make a stress box to use during hard times that contains funny ideas for the family to do together. Ex: Do a picnic in your living room. Put on your bathing suit to take a bath and pretend you are at the beach. Eat dinner starting with dessert. Wear your shirt inside out. Changing up the routine and being creative with activities will help boost everyone's mood.

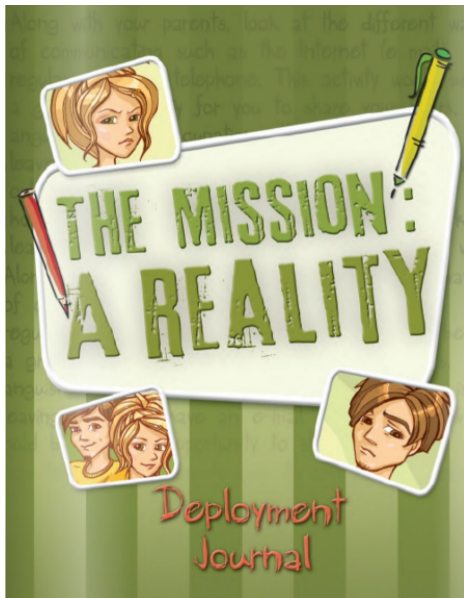
**Create a Video:** Record a video of your child doing an activity they love and send it to the deployed parent. For example, this could be a musical performance or play, a video of a sporting game, reading a poem, or just filming everyday activities around the house.

**Deployment Memory Box:** Decorate a special box for things to share when the deployed parent gets back. Include special drawings, report cards, certificates, crafts, etc. It can also be used to help you all reconnect when they come home by spending time together as a family going through your box and talking about the significance of each item.



# Parenting & Supporting Children

**Deployment Journal:** Encourage your children to keep a deployment journal where they can record their thoughts and feelings during their parent's absence. They can also include important events or activities that they want to share with their parent when they get back. Journaling has positive effects on mental health, and this activity can be beneficial for older kids and teens. You can create your own notebook, or check out templates online, such as this one from the Bagotville MFRC. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/fullscreen/58601179/mission-expression-ang>



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## PEI MFRC Services

The PEI MFRC offers many services and programs to support military members and their families during all phases of deployment. The best way to stay informed about our current events is to **follow our website, Facebook page, and subscribe to our newsletter**. Our services include:

- **Helpful resources** on military lifestyle topics.
- **An on-staff registered social worker** who can provide counselling on individual, couple, and family challenges related to the military lifestyle.
- **Social opportunities** for military families.
- **Information briefings** to military organizations, community groups, and family members.
- **Satellite offices** in Summerside, Cardigan, and Alberton.
- **Volunteer opportunities** to support the PEI military community.
- **Respite and emergency childcare services** for family members of a service member who is deployed or on extended training.
- **Monthly coffee time** where staff, military members, families, and volunteers can socialize.
- **Assistance and referrals** for military spouses looking to gain skills and/or employment.
- **Mental health** and stress management resources.
- **Training for military units** on communicating with military families.
- **Virtual programming** for PEI's military families.

# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## **Deployment Services Coordinator**

Our Deployment Services Coordinator provides outreach, information, support, and assistance to military families experiencing separations over 24 hours due to CAF operational requirements (e.g. Courses, training, taskings, IR postings, and overseas deployments.) We help families prepare for deployment, to stay busy during deployment, and provide support throughout the reunion process. For more information, contact our Deployment Services Coordinator at Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org or call (902) 892-8999

## **Services May Include:**

- Support for immediate and extended family
- Warm line calls
- Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) Program
- Respite child care
- Social support and gatherings
- Free Morale Mail program
- Emergency support

## **Warm Line Calls**

Warm Line Calls are telephone outreach calls provided by PEI MFRC staff to the family members of deployed military members. It is a way for us to stay connected, provide information on upcoming events, activities or services, and check in to see how you are coping. It is also a way for us to provide you with referrals to other areas within the PEI MFRC to support you the best way we can.

# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## **Deployment Dinner and Chat**

Open to parents, spouses, and loved ones of a CAF member away on a training or deployment. This is a great opportunity to meet other parents/families and learn more about the MFRC. Most importantly, we want you to have social support while your loved one is away. Sometimes we even host our dinners potluck style! Pre-registration is required, and these dinners are free to attend. Contact [Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org](mailto:Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org) or follow our Facebook page to find out when we are hosting our next Deployment Dinner and Chat!

## **Newsletter and Social Media**

For information on social events, satellite hours, and our monthly coffee time, subscribe to our newsletter by visiting this link: <https://mailchi.mp/be028943c224/pei-mfrc-newsletter> or calling the MFRC at (902) 892-8999. You can also follow the PEI MFRC on Facebook and Twitter to stay informed about our current events.

## **Information Briefings**

Our staff is available to talk to military family members about

- The MFRC and our services.
- Ways to support the troops
- Communicating with military families
- Communicating with CF members about supporting their families
- Local initiatives hosted by the MFRC.
- The military in PEI.

# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## Road to Mental Readiness Program (R2MR)

R2MR is a program we offer to all families who may, who are, and have experienced a deployment. The program helps to build resiliency in military families to better cope with separations due to deployments, training courses, or IR postings. The GMFRC offers this program which mirrors the training our CAF members receive when they prepare for deployments.

### **R2MR will help you by providing the following:**

- Recognize and understand the different phases of deployment and what you can expect during each phase.
- Identify some challenges you may encounter before, during, and after a deployment.
- Learn about the Mental Health Continuum.
- Give you new tips, tricks, and tools to manage stressors that may arise.
- Talk about how to support children through a deployment.
- Provide information about additional resources available.
- Remind you to also have FUN!

You can download the R2MR App from the Google Play Store or Apple Store to browse at your leisure and to see what some of the topics are! If you want more information on R2MR, please contact [Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org](mailto:Tammy@Pei-Mfrc.org) or call (902) 892-8999.



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

44

## Morale Mail

Morale mail is a Department of National Defense program providing free one-way mail service to deployed soldiers from their families and friends. Sending a package to your loved one overseas is a great way to keep in touch, show you care for your loved one, and satisfy your need to “do something” to show your support to the deployed member. Bring your parcel to the PEI MFRC, and we can help get it wrapped up and addressed, including the Canada Post mailing label that must be affixed. Make sure to have a list of contents and the approximate value of the items included. We have all the wrapping and labelling supplies available for you!

**Please remember that the items are not trackable, and delivery timelines are not guaranteed.** Morale Mail schedule will depend on operational tempo. Please contact us at (902) 892-8999 or [Info@Pei-Mfrc.org](mailto:Info@Pei-Mfrc.org) to find out how often morale is being sent from the MFRC. **It may take up to six weeks for parcels mailed overseas to reach their destination.** Please review the link below for Morale Mail Guidelines.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/contact-us/write-troops/instructions-for-mailing-overseas.html>



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## **Emergency Child Care**

You may access our Emergency Child Care Service if your spouse is deployed, either on course or overseas, and your regular caregiver is unavailable. Our Emergency Child Care is there to offer assistance in highly stressful situations. We can also help you fill out an Emergency Child Care Plan.

Our Emergency Child Care Service is designed to help Canadian Forces families on a short-term basis to bridge the gap between having no child care provider and having a regular child care provider. Please understand that there are limitations to the Emergency Child Care services that we can provide.

## **What Circumstances Constitute an Emergency?**

- A Canadian Forces member is away on duty, and their spouse/caregiver is unavailable due to illness or family emergency.
- A Canadian Forces member is required to report for duty on short notice, and the spouse/caregiver is unavailable.
- The caregiver is a single parent or both parents are Canadian Forces members, and duty requirements are such that the regular childcare provider is unavailable.
- A child is ill, and the parent cannot access their usual child care arrangement when the Canadian Forces member's presence at work is critical to the military operation.
- Other circumstances not covered above, but where emergency child care is deemed necessary.

# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## Respite Child Care

Respite childcare supports families of deployed members and relieve some of the stressors of parenting alone during a deployment. If a situation arises that is not considered an emergency but child care is essential for the family's continued health and well-being, a period of respite may be available for military families.

For more information on our child care services, contact (902) 892-8999 or [Info@PEI-MFRC.org](mailto:Info@PEI-MFRC.org)

**Emergency Cell Phone:** (902) 314-9860

## Social Events and Programs

It is important to stay connected to a community of peers while your military member is deployed. One of the main ways we support military families in PEI is by offering an outlet for fun, family time. We host various family events throughout the year, such as a holiday party in December, summer BBQs, and bowling nights. Here at the MFRC, we realize that you often face challenging times, and we want to provide a way for your military family to connect with others in similar situations. Plus, we like to laugh and have fun, too!





# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

47

## Child and Youth Drop-In Socials

It is also critical for your child to keep busy during a deployment to minimize social isolation, sadness, and separation anxiety. We regularly offer drop-in socials for youth aged 8+. These events allow kids to connect with other military youth, play games, do crafts, and enjoy time with one another. Drop-in socials are free to attend, but we ask that parents register their children by emailing [Registration@Pei-Mfrc.org](mailto:Registration@Pei-Mfrc.org) or by calling the office at (902) 892-8999. Follow our Facebook page or newsletter to find out when we are hosting our next youth drop-in social!

## Parent and Child Drop-In Socials

We also host drop-in socials for parents/caregivers and their children! Children can have fun playing and learning together while parents can chat and socialize with their peers. These events, are free and pre-registration is not required.

## Monthly Coffee Social

Join us for coffee, cookies, and great conversation! Free to attend and open to all military members, Veterans, RCMP, and families.



**MONTHLY COFFEE  
SOCIAL FOR  
MILITARY MEMBERS,  
VETERANS, RCMP, +  
FAMILIES!**



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## **Mental Health Services & Counselling:**

Your mental health needs to be a top priority throughout all stages of deployment. The PEI MRC offers short-term intervention and crisis counselling to military families. We provide confidential support for any topic you need to discuss, and we assure complete discretion. We can connect you to the resources you need through referrals to community and military support agencies. To access our counselling services, email Mary-Jane@Pei-Mfrc.org or call the Centre at (902) 892-8999.

## **Our social worker can offer:**

- Marriage/couple/family counselling.
- Depression/anxiety disorder treatment and recovery.
- Adjustment to life transitions (e.g. relocations or deployments).
- Self-esteem and communication skills for successful relationships.
- Childhood anxieties, behavioral, and attentional difficulties.
- Blended families, divorce/separation, support for children.



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

## Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is a social worker who supports military families by advocating on their behalf and helping them navigate community resources. **Our FLO can help your family prepare for deployment by providing mental health support.**

You can also request a referral to a social worker in the community through the CAF Members Assistance Program at 1-800-268-7708. To contact our FLO, email [Mary-Jane@PEI-MFRC.org](mailto:Mary-Jane@PEI-MFRC.org) or call the MFRC at (902) 892-8999.

## Our Family Liaison Officer Can Provide the Following Services:

- Confidential, short-term counselling.
- Crisis support.
- Assistance for families with an ill or injured CAF member.
- Follow-up and ongoing support.
- Personal growth and wellness activities.
- Self-help and peer support groups.
- Referrals to community resources.
- Help families to navigate through relevant programs and services.
- Assistance in developing positive coping strategies using a strengths-based approach.
- Help families access emergency housing.
- Advocate on behalf of families.

# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

50

## Employment Services

Looking for employment as a military spouse or family member can be challenging. In partnership with PEI Career Development Services (CDS), the PEI MFRC can help you find employment.

**CDS is a confidential, free and welcoming space where you can:**

- Search for a new job & prepare for job interviews.
- Get help with your resumé and cover letter.
- Learn about different careers & the local labour market.
- Explore training & funding opportunities.
- Discover your skills and abilities.
- Request career counselling.
- Access free internet, computers, printers, and photocopiers for job searching.

For more information or to request services, visit the CDS website at [www.CdsPei.ca](http://www.CdsPei.ca) or contact one of their offices.

**Charlottetown Office:** 160 Belvedere Avenue, (902) 626-2014 or [Chtown@CdsPei.ca](mailto:Chtown@CdsPei.ca)

**Summerside Office:** 674 Water St. E. (902) 436-0706 or [Sside@CdsPei.ca](mailto:Sside@CdsPei.ca)



# How Can the PEI MFRC Help?

51

## **Second Language Training & Rosetta Stone**

We strive to provide second language training (SLT) to military dependents and give them opportunities to learn either of Canada's official languages. To do so, the PEI MFRC has Rosetta Stone licenses available to CAF family members. Rosetta Stone's simple and intuitive approach allows participants to learn a new language using a method that combines listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Learning a new language is a great hobby to try while your military member is deployed, and you can do it online!. For more information, contact the MFRC at (902) 892-8999 or [Info@Pei-Mfrc.org](mailto:Info@Pei-Mfrc.org)

## **Virtual Programming and PEI MFRC YouTube Channel**

We connect Canadian Forces families in Prince Edward Island with those around the globe through virtual programming and video resources. You can access information on topics relevant to military families from the comfort of your home. Topics may include:

- Supporting children through deployments
- Scholarships
- Budgeting
- Military discounts
- Online job networking
- Other financial, social, and employment-related topics



To learn more, visit our website at [WWW.PEIMFRC.ca](http://WWW.PEIMFRC.ca) or subscribe to our YouTube Channel called "PEI CAFConnection."

## CAF Supports

The Canadian Armed Forces offers many services to assist military personnel and their family experiencing deployments.

### Family Information Line

The Family Information Line is a bilingual service offering support, information, referrals, reassurance, and crisis management to the Canadian Armed Forces community, including families (immediate and extended), military members, veterans, and the extended military community. You will connect with empathetic, experienced professionals who are well versed in the CAF community and the programs, services, and general information you may need. Counsellors can also connect you to helpful local and national resources. Family Information Line counsellors are available 24/7. **Call 1-800-866-4546.**



The graphic is a vertical rectangular poster with a dark blue background. At the top center is the 'Family Info Line' logo, which includes a red maple leaf, a white signal tower icon, and the text 'Family Info Line' in white and red. To the right of the logo is a red circle with '24/7' in white. Below the logo is the phone number '1-800-866-4546' in white. Underneath the number are three white icons: a telephone handset, an envelope, and a video camera. Below these icons is the text 'ANY TIME FOR ANY REASON' in white, all caps. This is followed by the text 'Connect with the Family Information Line to access personalized support' in a smaller white font. Below that is the text 'INFORMATION • REFERRAL • EMOTIONAL SUPPORT' in white, all caps. Further down is the email address 'FIL@CAFconnection.ca' in white, followed by 'Virtual sessions (contact us to book a time)' and 'International 00-800-771-17722' in white. At the bottom left is a red maple leaf graphic. At the bottom center is the 'Morale & Welfare Services' logo, which features a red maple leaf and the text 'Morale & Welfare SERVICES' and 'SERVICES Bien-être et moral FC'.

## **Strongest Families Institute**

The Strongest Families Institute helps military families through the challenges associated with military life, such as deployments and postings. They offer support in the comfort and privacy of your home (online and telephone coaching) at convenient times. Strongest Families offers programs for depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, and bedwetting. Contact the MFRC Mental Health Team, who can refer you to the Strongest Families Institute. Call (780) 973-4011 ext.6300.

## **Crisis Text Service for Kids of CAF Families**

The Crisis Text Line powered by Kids Help Phone is confidential and available day or night. Children, youth and young adults from military families can access free mental health and well-being support by texting the keyword **CAFKIDS at 686868** for service in English. Kids from military families might need help with feelings associated with:

- Relocating
- Changing schools and leaving friends behind
- Moving to a new home
- Separation when their parents are deployed

## **Support our Troops Grants and Services**

Support our Troops meets the needs and special challenges faced by members of the CAF community as a result of military service. This includes providing financial assistance to promote family resiliency and supporting members who may have an illness or injury through various grants and programs. For more information, visit [www.SupportOurTroops.ca](http://www.SupportOurTroops.ca)

## **Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program**

The Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program (CFMAP) is a 24/7 toll-free telephone advisory and referral service for all CAF personnel and their families. The program provides short-term, confidential, external counselling for those in need. CFMAP can assist with a wide range of individual or family issues, including:

- Marital and family
- Interpersonal relations
- Personal and emotional
- Stress and burn-out
- Work-related
- Harassment and sexual assault
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Finance
- Parenting

Contact the CFMAP by calling 1-800-268-7708 or by visiting the website <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/programs/member-assistance.html>

## **Military Chaplains and Padre**

Military chaplains provide non-denominational pastoral care and counselling and contribute significantly to the spiritual and mental health of military members and their families. Chaplains are available to support members in need 24/7 and provide free guidance and advice. Please contact the MFRC or call 1-866-502-2203 to learn how to speak with a chaplain.



## **Operational Stress Injury Social Support (OSISS)**

Unfortunately, military members who are deployed may develop an occupational stress injury. Being with someone who has an operational stress injury can be difficult. Family members may feel guilt or frustration because they cannot help with physical or mental health concerns or their use of alcohol or drugs. They may end up neglecting their own needs and feel very alone.

An OSISS Group can offer support, hope and acceptance from someone who has first-hand experience in such a situation. Call 1-800-883-6094 to learn more about OSISS or visit their website [www.osiss.ca](http://www.osiss.ca)

## **SISIP Financial Services**

With SISIP Financial Services, military members and their families are assured that from posting to posting, their files will follow them in a seamless process, with no new registrations and minimal paperwork required. SISIP offices at major bases/wings/units across Canada ensure a standardized process and optimal service delivery of the following programs, products and services:

- Financial Counselling
- Term Life Insurance Plans
- Financial Planning
- Canadian Forces Group Retirement Savings Plan



To learn more about SISIP Financial or find a representative in your area, please visit their website at <https://www.sisip.com/en/>

## **Military Family Doctor Network**

In partnership with Calian Health. This program aims to improve access to quality health care for dependents of serving CAF members by expediting the process of obtaining a physician and reducing the number of military spouses and children without a family physician. A representative from Calian's team will contact you to review your requirements and work with you to help you find a family physician. Physician availability will vary by location, and it may take 2–3 weeks for a representative to contact you.

### **You can access the program in one of the following ways:**

- Fill out the online form and email it to MFDN@Calian.com.
- Print out the online form and fax it to 1-888-511-0219.
- Call Calian's team at 1-877-633-7722 Ext. 550.

## **Military Spousal Employment Network**

The MSEN is free to join for military spouses. You'll get access to a list of dedicated national employers who are ready to provide you with equal employment opportunities and be able connect with these employers directly. You'll also be able to search the national employers' job openings through the MSEN job bank. The MSEN also offers virtual and in-person career fairs in multiple locations across Canada. Visit [www.https://msen.vfairs.com](http://www.https://msen.vfairs.com)



## Community Resources

Below you will find a list of community and government resources and supports located in Charlottetown and Summerside.

### Mental Health and Addictions

**Mental Health and Addictions 24/7 Line:** Calls answered by a mental health professional. 1-833-553-6983

**24/7 Crisis Intervention Island Helpline:** 1-800-218-2885

**Mobile Mental Health Response Service:** 1-833-553-6983 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Provides in-person care when situations require more than phone-based support.

**Mental Health and Addictions Patient Navigator:**

MHAPatientNavigator@ihis.org

**PEI Gambling Support Line:** 1-855-255-4255

**Smoker's Helpline:** 1-877-513-5333

**Community Mental Health Intake:** Referrals to mental health programs for all ages.

- Charlottetown – McGill Community Mental Health, 55 McGill Ave. 902-368-4911
- Summerside – Prince County Hospital, 65 Roy Boates Ave. 902-888-8180

**Richmond Centre Metal Health Walk-In Clinic:**

(Tuesday & Thursday 10am–6pm & Friday 12pm–4pm)

1 Rochford St. Charlottetown 902–368–4430

**McGill Centre Mental Health Walk-In Clinic:**

(16+, Saturdays & Sundays 1pm–5pm) 55 McGill Ave.

Charlottetown 902–368–4911

**Prince County Hospital Mental Health Walk-In Clinic:**

(Monday & Wednesday 9am–5pm) Summerside 902–888–8180

**Student Well-Being Teams for Youth:** 902–368–5868 or

SWT@gov.pe.ca

**PEI Health Addiction Services:** (Withdrawal management, opioid treatment program, and referrals to other addictions programs)

- Charlottetown – Provincial Addictions Treatment Facility, 2814 Rte. 215, Mount Herbert 902–368–4120 or 1–888–299–8399
- Summerside – Prince County Hospital 902–888–8380

**Addiction and Substance Use Walk-in/Call-in Clinics:**

Immediate 45 to 60 minute session with a counsellor without requiring an appointment.

- **Charlottetown Provincial Addiction Treatment Facility:** 902–368–4120, Wednesday 9am–12pm & Thursday 1pm–4pm.
- **Summerside:** 902–888–8180, Tuesday 1 pm–4pm & Thursday 9am–12pm.

# Other Supports

**Alcoholics Anonymous Charlottetown:** 902-892-210

**Al-Anon:** 1-888-425-2666

**Narcotics Anonymous:** For meeting information visit [www.Carna.ca](http://www.Carna.ca) or call 1-800-205-8402

**Sexaholics Anonymous:** 902-812-5563

**Smart Recovery PEI:** 902-330-4357

**Open Door Outreach for Women:** 2-30 Brackley Point Rd  
Charlottetown 902-628-6826 or [Office@OpenDoorPei.ca](mailto:Office@OpenDoorPei.ca)

**Native Council of PEI:** 6 FJ McAulay Court, Charlottetown  
902-892-5314 or [Admin@NcPei.com](mailto:Admin@NcPei.com)

**Canadian Mental Health Association Charlottetown:** 178  
Fitzroy St. 902-566-3034 or [Division@CMHA.pe.ca](mailto:Division@CMHA.pe.ca)

**Family Service PEI Community Counselling:**

- Charlottetown: 155 Belvedere Ave. Suite 6, 902-892-2441
- Summerside: 902-436-9171

**Bridge the GAPP:** An online resource designed to support mental wellness. <https://pei.bridgethegapp.ca/>

**Wellness Together:** [www.WellnessTogether.ca](http://www.WellnessTogether.ca) Free, virtual mental health and substance use support available 24/7 for all people in Canada.

## Medical Services

**811 Telehealth:** Non-emergency health information 24/7 from a registered nurse. Dial 711 (TTY) if you have a hearing impairment.

### Virtual Health Care Information:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/virtual-health-care-for-islanders-without-a-primary-care-provider>  
1-833-710-1456 or HealthPEIMaple@ihis.org

**PEI Patient Registry List:** For residents seeking a family physician. 1-855-563-2101 or

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/patient-registry-program>

**PEI Health Card Information:** 902-838-0900 or

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/pei-health-card>

**Patient Navigator:** Assistance with navigating PEI's health services. 1-844-882-3141 or PatientNavigator@gov.pe.ca

### Public Health Nursing:

- Charlottetown – Sherwood Business Centre, 161 St. Peters Rd. 902-368-4530
- Summerside – 205 Linden Ave. 902-888-8160

**Pap Screening Appointments:** 1-888-561-2233

**Breast Cancer Screening Appointments:** 1-888-592-9888

**Downtown Walk-in Clinic:** Boardwalk Professional Centre, 220 Water St. Charlottetown 902-367-4444

**Sherwood Walk-in Clinic:** Sherwood Medical Centre, 15 Brackley Point Rd. Charlottetown 902-628-8900

**Stratford Walk-in Clinic:** Stratford Medical Centre, 13 Stratford Rd. Charlottetown 902-892-2111

**Central Street Walk-in Clinic:** 434 Central St. Summerside 902-724-3210

**Sexual Health Clinic:** Prince County Hospital, Summerside 1-844-365-8258 or WomensWellnessProgram@ihis.org

## **Child Care, Youth, and Family Services**

**PEI Child Care Registry:** <https://peichildcareregistry.com/>

### **Boys and Girls Club:**

- Charlottetown: 35 St. Peters Rd. 902-892-2223
- Summerside: 364 Notre Dame St. 902-436-9403 or BGCSummerside@gmail.com

**CHANCES (Caring, Helping, And Nurturing Children Every Step):** 77 Upper Prince St. Charlottetown 902-892-8744 or Chances@ChancesFamily.ca

**Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre:** 158 St Peters Rd.  
Charlottetown 902-892-0928 or Mfrc.Pei.Aibn.com

**Family Place: 75 Central St. Summerside:** 902-436-1348 or  
FamilyPlace@Eastlink.ca

## **Violence Prevention & Support**

### **PEI Family Violence Prevention Services:**

- Charlottetown Office – 902-894-3354, ext. 221 or Admin@FVPS.ca
- Summerside Outreach Coordinator – LeeAnne@FVPS.ca or 902-888-3310
- Men's Services – Charlottetown & Summerside: Tim@FVPS.ca or 902-626-5585

**Anderson House Shelter – Charlottetown:** 902-892-0960  
(Emergencies)

**PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre:** Offices in Charlottetown and Summerside: 902-566-1864 or Admin@Peirsac.org

**National Sexual Assault Support Line (24/7):** 1-877-392-7583

### **Victim Services:**

- Charlottetown: 902-368-4582
- Summerside: 902-888-8218



This handbook was written and compiled using information from other MFRCs in Canada, including Halifax, Montreal, Esquimalt, London, and Bagotville. Please check out other MFRCs for additional resources that will be helpful during your military journey! The complete list of sources that were consulted is as follows:

- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/Greenwood/Adults/Deployment-Support/Deployment-FAQs.aspx>
- [https://www.halifaxmfrfc.ca/assets/docs/CAN\\_preparing\\_for\\_deployment\\_stress.pdf](https://www.halifaxmfrfc.ca/assets/docs/CAN_preparing_for_deployment_stress.pdf)
- [https://www.halifaxmfrfc.ca/assets/docs/HR\\_MFRC\\_MILITARY\\_101\\_Guide\\_16.pdf](https://www.halifaxmfrfc.ca/assets/docs/HR_MFRC_MILITARY_101_Guide_16.pdf)
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/a15aba23-3563-4252-901a-ebb2f844185a/Deployment.aspx>
- <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/fullscreen/58546131/how-to-better-cope-with-a-prolonged-absence-a-guide-for-families>
- <https://esquimaltmfrfc.com/wp-content/uploads/Military101-web.pdf>
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/266fc799-dcc1-4efd-b6fa-763dd385c546/Family-Information-Booklet.pdf.aspx>
- [https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/20b2f162-0828-4a8a-af68-968fe386993a/CF\\_Deployment\\_Guide\\_e.pdf.aspx](https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/20b2f162-0828-4a8a-af68-968fe386993a/CF_Deployment_Guide_e.pdf.aspx)
- <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5d8caf66-d97f-4f59-b444-e0aa98404501/A-Family-Guide-E.aspx>

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