



## Getting ready for an absence as a couple



Preparing for a work-related absence can be a stressful time. We understand that you want to set your relationship up for success before the absence, keep it strong during the time apart, and be prepared for the reunion. Whether you are facing a short- or long-term absence, here are some tips to support you.

### Set aside time as a couple:

Before the absence, talk about your expectations and how you can both meet each other's needs. Couples that set clear expectations ahead of time are more likely to cope better during their time apart.

### Create a financial plan:

- Set up time to talk to your partner about expected and potential costs that could arise.
- Connect with SISIP for free financial advice or seek support from a civilian financial advisor.
- Consider any additional pay that may come with a deployment and decide as a couple what to do with it.
- For the partner at home, make sure you know how to log into financial accounts, manage any investments, and pay bills (including interest on credit cards or a line of credit).
- As a couple, review your Power of Attorney and Will and ensure they are current.

### Map out your support system:

- Ensure your Family Care Plan (FCP) Declaration (Form DND 2886) is up-to-date and create an emergency family plan.
- Make sure to reach out to friends and family to let them know that the absence is coming up and see how they can support you both.
- Find out what support is available to you through your Base/Wing, local Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), Military Family Service (MFS) provider, or through your deployed family member's employer, such as Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS). Even if you have faced an absence before, it's always a good idea to keep up to date with current support and resources.

## Make communication a priority:

Discuss how you plan to stay in touch and how often and explore what options are possible (video chat, messaging, email, etc.). You can even prepare letters for each other that you can read during the absence.

## Share little and big moments:

When you do connect, discuss big, small or mundane aspects and updates in your life to help you stay connected during the absence and feel more connected when you see each other. What may seem insignificant to you may feel important to your partner. Sharing these experiences helps prevent any surprises upon reunion.

## For the partner at home, check in with yourself:

An absence, and especially a deployment, can be a unique combination of stress. You may be worried about your partner, possibly parenting children who may be anxious, and maintaining normalcy in your household. Try to make time for yourself to de-stress during the absence and be easy on yourself, especially when you face a setback or have a tough day. Know that any bad day you may experience will pass.

## Seek support:

Seeking help when you need it does not mean you are not doing a good job, it means you are human. Social workers through the MFRC, MFS, or CAF, Chaplains, or Family Information Line (FIL) are all tools at your disposal. For Deployment Support Staff and their families, you can reach out to FIL, the Virtual MFRC and access Dialogue.

### Have kids at home?

- **Keep people in the loop:** If the school or daycare pickup routine is changing, make sure to let the teacher or staff know. If you can, hire a babysitter for extra support or an evening off.
- **Check in with your children:** Absences can be hard for kids too. Create space to discuss their feelings as a family and let them know they can reach out to Kids Help Phone (24/7) via text CAFKIDS to 686868 or simply text 686868 for children of Deployment Support Staff.
- **Maintain family rituals:** Kids find familiarity reassuring. For example, if you always have a pizza night on the weekends, do your best to continue doing it. If your kids have usual bedtimes, make sure to stick to them, especially since this can provide you with some kid-free time in the evening.
- **Discover new activities:** You might want to explore a new activity as a family too, like watching a new series or registering for a new activity through PSP or a local recreation department.
- **Reach out to your MFRC, MFS provider, or other programs recommended by your support team:** They may have virtual or in-person programs to facilitate connection and bonding amongst kids that are in the same situation.

