



Dear Teacher,

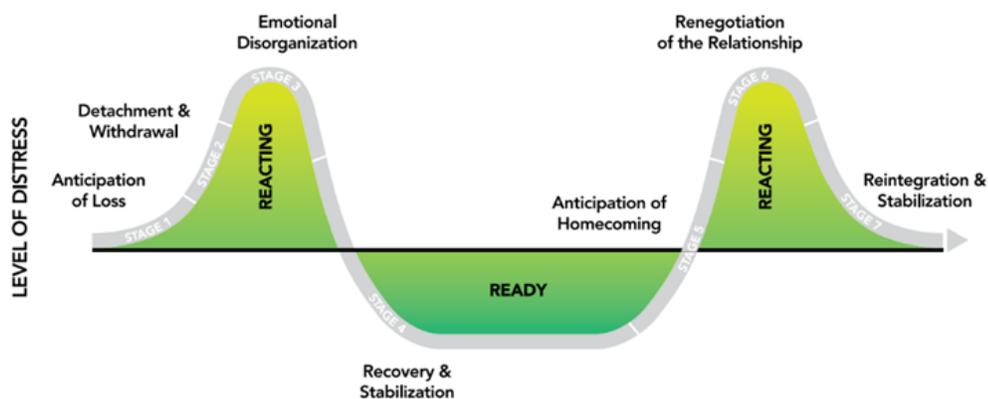
You have a student in your class who is a part of a military family and has a parent who is or will soon be deployed. This will take the parent away from the family on service with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) outside of Canada, for an extended period of time.

Let us tell you a little bit about military families in the Greater Toronto Area. The CAF has a strong presence throughout the GTA. Within Toronto and the surrounding regions of Durham, York and Peel, there are approximately 800 full time serving CAF members and 3,000 CAF members serving on a part time basis. These CAF members have families who work and attend school in your community.

Families are a major source of support and strength that are integral to the Defence Team's success. However, CAF families also face many challenges and unique circumstance such as relocations, frequent separations, overseas deployments and stress associated with high-risk operations. Given the dispersed nature of military families throughout the GTA, children of military families may not have the support of other military kids or "kids like me" in their neighbourhood. This can lead to feelings of isolation.

There are approximately 90,000 children of CAF members in Canada today. On average, military members spend 25% of their time away from home. Deployment impacts all members of military families. Stressors affecting a child can include absence of support from the deployed parent, concerns about the safety of the deployed parent, and lack of knowledge or understanding about what is happening to the deployed parent.

Below is an example of the typical emotional cycle of deployment. A child's experience is unique and may differ slightly. Some phases along the cycle are associated with elevated levels of stress, while others are characterized by a leveling out or return to typical stress levels.



Source: Military Family Resource Centre Yellowknife

Stage 1 – Anticipation of Loss: This stage occurs 4 to 6 weeks prior to the parent’s deployment. Characterized by increased feelings of stress, reality of the upcoming change “sinking in” as the family begins to prepare for the parent’s departure. Children may feel more emotional during this stage.

Stage 2 – Detachment and Withdrawal: In many ways, this is the most difficult stage. In preparation for the absence, children may withdraw and struggle with communication.

Stage 3 – Emotional Disorganization: For up to 6 weeks following the departure, family routines may feel disrupted and new patterns have yet to be established. It is common for children to feel overwhelmed during this stage as they adjust to new routines.

Stage 4 – Recovery and Stabilization: This stage occurs as the family settles into a routine without the military member. This stage usually occurs around 6 weeks following the parent’s departure. Stress levels may decrease during this stage as the child returns to familiar routines or becomes comfortable with new routines.

Stage 5 – Anticipation of Homecoming: Approximately 6 weeks prior to the reunion, children may begin to anticipate the homecoming. During this stage children may experience a wide range of emotions and stress levels can begin to rise again.

Stage 6 – Renegotiation of Relationships: During this stage, although physically together, family members they may struggle to reconnect emotionally. Families are typically focused on reestablishing and redefining their relationships.

Stage 7 – Reintegration and Stabilization: For many families, it can take a few months for the entire family to readjust and establish new routines following the military member’s return. When this occurs, stress levels typically lower to a healthy state.

How might this affect a child in your class?

- Emotional Dysregulation: Fluctuating stress levels may be expressed by increased frustration, lower patience, quick to anger. The child may have difficulty expressing that they miss their parent.
- With the changes at home, school relationships can offer valuable support. A child may feel socially insecure, present as more sensitive to rejection, needing help navigating friendships and complex social situations.

What can you do to help?

- Check in frequently, be flexible and patient with the child and help to moderate and de-escalate conflicts that may arise.

- Offer support in social situations, during group activities suggest or assign partners to alleviate fear of rejection. Suggest extracurricular activities that may further engage the child in support networks.
- Maintain open, clear and regular communication with the at home parent regarding the child's day to day activities.
- Be mindful of activities surrounding Remembrance Day. Education around Remembrance Day is truly important. Please be aware of what and how you teach the lessons as they will impact military children differently than civilian students.

In a qualitative study, Canadian military-connected children and youth identified parent deployment as the most or one of the most stressful experiences they have had. For most children, their self-reported well-being dropped from an 8 or 9 on a 10-point scale for regular days to a 4 or 5 when the parent was deployed.

Your role as an educator and trusted adult will make an enormous difference during this period. If possible, please collaborate with your fellow educators and the at-home parent to form a support system for the student.

Thank you for your important work as Teachers!

If you have questions about supporting military kids please contact the Toronto Military Family Resource Centre.

info@torontomfrc.ca

416-633-6200, Dial 1, then extension 6344311

Encouraged Resources:

[Guide to working with Military Kids](#)

<https://cfmws.ca/support-services/families/children-youth/guide-to-working-with-military-connected-children-and-youth>

[Free Downloadable Books for Military Kids](#)

Please consider incorporating these into your classroom library.

<https://cfmws.ca/support-services/families/children-youth/storybooks-for-military-children>