



Teen Connection

Experience

Leadership Goals:

Youth will gain knowledge about the factors affecting teens during the deployment of a family member and make decisions about how he/she could provide support and act as a positive factor.

Head- Learn about external and internal factors affecting teens during the deployment of a family member

Heart- Build empathy through experiencing a “moment” of life during a military deployment

Hands- Choose one way to support a community member experiencing the deployment of a family member or other challenging time

Learner Objectives:

Youth will:

- Learn what factors may impact a young person experiencing the deployment of a family member.
- Experience a snapshot of military deployment through role play.
- Develop a list of ways to support community members and friends during a military deployment.

Lesson Plan:

1. Revisit the idea of military deployment and the three major parts; pre-deployment, deployment, and post deployment that families experience. Look over the brainstorm list (from the lesson: *Teen Connection Listen and Support*) participants created (or develop one now) of things that would change if an important adult in their life was gone for 6-18 months.
2. Watch *Teen Connection* sections **13:04-14:09, 26:45-28:42, 30:25-31:39, 33:28-35:41** Follow up with discussion questions including: When would you miss a parent most if he/she were gone for 6-18 months? Which part of deployment do you think would be the most difficult, pre, during, or post-why? What might change at home that would affect a young person in the household?
3. Tell participants they are now going to have a chance to experience first-hand what a deployment might be like. Form groups to participate in the scenarios. Explain that each scenario has characters that play a role in the deployment of a family member. Instruct participants to take a role and be prepared to interact with their group as that individual according to the information provided. Participants should also be observing other members of their scenario. Explain to groups there will be a large group discussion for feedback following the scenarios.
4. Following the scenarios, ask participants to share:
 - What was it like being the service member? What did you feel?



- What was it like being the child? What did you feel?
 - What was it like being the spouse or grandparent? What did you feel?
 - What was it like being the community member? What did you feel?
 - As you observed others in the group throughout the scenario, what things did you notice?
 - How did the reaction of individuals impact others?
5. Explain that the last time we discussed deployment we talked about how an individual or a family experiences it, but didn't talk about all the everyday things that play a part in how an individual or family experiences deployment. Point out that each of us is impacted by external and internal factors. Ask participants to share what external and internal factors are. (i.e. external: something the individual doesn't have a great deal of control over, something that comes into his or her life internal: something the individual does have some control over, something that he or she determines)
 6. Form groups of 3-5. Pass out the internal and external factors activity. Ask participants to place factors in the zone they feel is appropriate. Allow 5-10 minutes. Ask participants to share where they place items, compare and contrast as a large group. Ask participants if the factor is positive, negative, or both. Discuss how factors can play an important role and which may be positive, negative, or both for an individual.
 7. Remind participants we previously discussed healthy friendship habits to support friends experiencing a deployment. Talk with participants about how they can be a supportive external factor for individuals in their communities experiencing the deployment of a family member (some items may be similar to healthy friendship habits discussed previously). Brainstorm and write responses on a large sheet. (i.e. offer a ride to an event, offer to babysit for free, listen and don't judge, acknowledge the changes and sacrifices a friend is experiencing/making, etc.)
 8. Ask participants to choose one way they believe they could be a supportive external factor and put it into practice over the next few weeks if/when the opportunity arises. Ask if there are any questions. Thank participants for their contributions.

Learner Reflections & Application:

As a large group, in small groups, pair sharing, or as a journaling or drawing exercise, ask learners (choose questions based on group and experience):

- What did you notice?
- What surprised you?
- Tell me about your favorite part of this activity.
- How did you feel?
- What was the easiest? Most challenging?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- So what does this have to do with real life?
- What similar experiences have you had to this one?
- What skill or knowledge did you learn? How?



- How is this skill important to you?
- What advice would you give to someone else about this life skill?
- How can you build on what you learned?
- How can you use these skills in different situations?

Scenario 1: *during this scenario, group is meeting to discuss the upcoming change

S1 National Guard Soldier:

- Will be deployed within the next month to Afghanistan
- Single parent with one child (13 years old)
- Profession-police officer for 8 years-special skills on the force
- Has been in the Guard for 10 years
- Active in child's sports and school

S1 Child:

- 8th grader
- Active in sports and average student
- Close to parent

S1 Employer:

- Close family friend as well as Chief of Police
- Concerned about loss of talent on the force
- Third mobilized member from the police force

S1 Parent of Guard Soldier:

- Resides in the next state, about 200 miles away
- Is concerned about his/her child and the mobilization
- Must plan to assume the role of caretaker/parent
- Has major health issues that partially restrict his/her activities

Scenario 2: *during this scenario reservist and group are Skyping

S2 Reservist:

- Married
- Twin teenagers (16)
- 3rd month of deployment in Afghanistan
- Civilian profession- chemistry teacher & basketball coach
- Army profession-civil affairs (helping build schools in country)
- Active and respected in community volunteer groups
- 10 years in the Army Reserve



S2 Twin 1:

- 16 years old
- Plays basketball, A student, involved in volunteer and community groups
- Handling parents deployment through focusing more on school, organizing drives for school supplies for schools parent is setting up overseas, helping out at home

S2 Twin 2:

- 16 years old
- Plays basketball, average student, plays in concert and jazz band
- Handling parents deployment by isolating him/herself, grades are dropping, missing band and basketball practices, arguing with parent at home

S2 Spouse:

- Overwhelmed
- Working to balance the differing responses of the twins
- Hard to be the only one in the community with this experience-feeling isolated

S2 School Counselor:

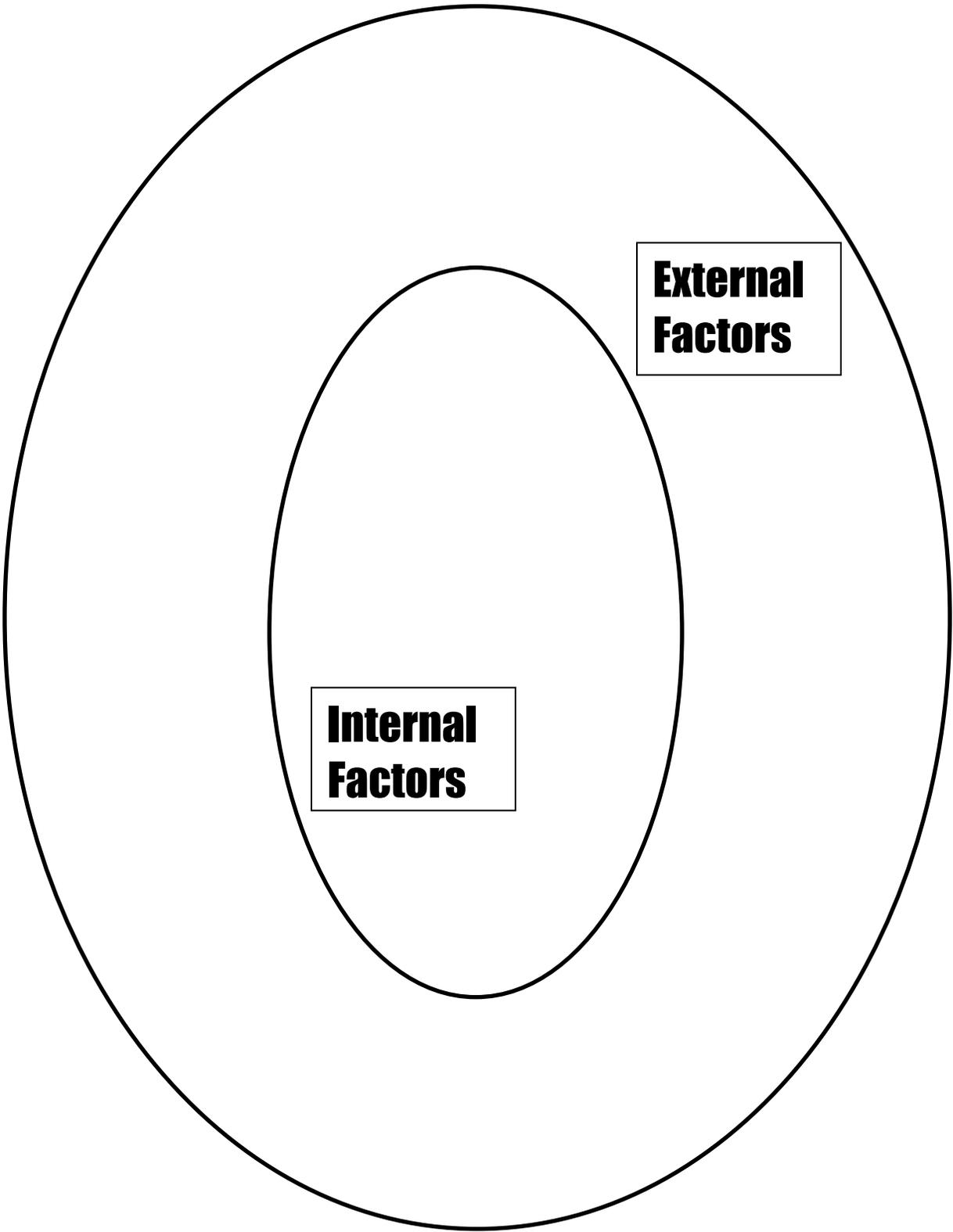
- Counselor has recognized changes in behaviors of both twins, concerned for each: one taking on so much, the other isolating
- Knows of one other family experiencing deployment



TELEVISION	FRIENDS	RUMORS OR MYTHS	BEING IGNORED BY OTHERS
INTERNET	IMPORTANT ADULTS INTERACTING ON A DAILY BASIS	NEWSPAPERS OR MAGAZINES	BEING LEFT OUT
ALCOHOL OR DRUGS	GROUP OF OTHERS EXPERIENCING SIMILAR THINGS	BEING INCLUDED IN ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS	BEHAVIOR CHANGES



Loneliness	Feeling of PRIDE	Anxiousness	Taking on new ROLES OR RESPONSIBILITIES
Shock	Anger	Not PARTICIPATING in extra-CURRICULAR activities	PARTICIPATING in activities that are not typical
Having to BABYSIT SIBLINGS	Sadness	Worry	Adapting to changing SITUATIONS



**External
Factors**

**Internal
Factors**



Teen Connection

Listen and Support

Leadership Goals Youth will gain knowledge about military deployment, its affect on teens, and ways to support those experiencing the deployment of a family member.

Head- Learn about military deployment and healthy friendships

Heart- Develop an understanding for circumstances different from their own

Hands- Create cards of support for military teens and challenge themselves to use healthy friendship habits

Learner Objectives

Youth will:

- Learn what factors may impact a young person experiencing the deployment of a family member.
- Create cards/letters for Hero Packs.
- Discuss healthy friendship habits
- Develop a Friend-ly Reminder

Lesson Plan

9. Tell participants you will be discussing military deployment. Invite participants to share their definition of deployment. Following a number of responses, share a simple definition such as, the mobilization of individuals or groups to participate in a job.
10. Point out the five stages to deployment: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, and post-deployment. Watch the video *Teen Connection* sections **0-1:28, 3:02-5:32, 21:40-26:44** follow up with discussion including: What things did you hear that surprised you? What things do you think you would feel or experience if you were in a similar situation? Brainstorm (and record on a large sheet) a list of things that would change if a parent was gone for 6-18 months.
11. Form groups of 3-5. Hand groups supplies including card/letter making supplies. Reinforce with participants that while we often recognize the service member for the contributions and sacrifices they are making, we don't often recognize the family members of the service member for the contributions and sacrifices they are making and the many changes they are dealing with. Explain that today we have the opportunity to make cards/letters for Hero Packs. Show the backpack and explain that each backpack contains a letter thanking the young person receiving it for their part in supporting their service member. Provide letter examples to each group. Allow 10-15 minutes for letter writing and card decorating.
12. Revisit the major phases, pre-deployment, deployment, and post deployment: ask participants: if you or a friend were experiencing these phases, what could you do to be a good friend or cope positively? Watch the video *Teen Connection* 19:35-20:57, 21:08-21:39, 39:59-41:26, 45:00-52:25



13. Discuss the things *Teen Connection* panel members mentioned as ideas or ways their friends could support them. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of healthy/positive friendship practices. Distribute pens, paper, and envelopes to each participant. Tell participants they are going to create a Friend-ly Reminder for themselves. Each participant should write a letter to him/herself noting how he/she wants to be a good friend and support each of their friends, particularly anyone going through a challenging time like the deployment of a family member. Participants should address the envelope (provide an example on a large flipchart of white board). Let participants know when you plan to mail these letters (approximately 1-2 months after the event is ideal). Allow 7-12 minutes for participants to complete their letters. Encourage thoughtful participation.

Learner Reflections & Application:

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- What did you notice?
- What surprised you?
- Tell me about your favorite part of this activity.
- How did you feel?
- What was the easiest? Most challenging?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- So what does this have to do with real life?
- What similar experiences have you had to this one?
- What skill or knowledge did you learn? How?
- How is this skill important to you?
- What advice would you give to someone else about this life skill?
- How can you build on what you learned?
- How can you use these skills in different situations?



Hero Pack Letter Writing

These letters are placed in backpacks that are given out to children experiencing a deployment in their family. A deployment is when a service member is asked to travel away from their home for a long period of time in order to do their job as a service member. This can be a difficult time for a young person. These notes are included in a backpack of fun items to show the young person support.

DO:

- Keep your note brief and supportive
- Put some thought into what you are writing, the recipient will greatly appreciate it!
- Draw a picture or add a sticker
- Use a half or whole sheet of paper or note card
- Sign the letter with your full name, first name, or your friend, etc.

DON'T:

- Include any religious sayings or information
- Make judgments about the military or war
- Give your personal information



Examples:

Hello,

I want you to know I am thinking of you as you are experiencing what could be a difficult time. I imagine it would be hard to have your family member away for a long time. Just know that I appreciate the challenges you are experiencing and hope that you will be strong. Know that there are people out there supporting you!

Chris

Hi!

I hope you enjoy your Hero Pack. There are lots of neat things inside to enjoy. You are a Hero for your family and I wish you all the best. While this time may be difficult your contributions to your family will make a great difference! Thank you and know that I am thinking of you!

Your friend

Hello friend,

My aunt is in the army and she has been deployed twice. I know it can be difficult, but I also know that it is important to support her and my other family members. I am sending my support to you in this letter, thank you for your support of your family. It's pretty amazing that your family member is serving the country and making a difference and you are too! Thank you.

Johnny Jones



Teen Connection

Discuss It

Leadership Goals

Youth will learn about military deployment and its affect on teens as well as ways they can be understanding and supportive

Head- Learn about military deployment

Heart- Develop an understanding of the impact they can have on a situation, positive or negative

Learner Objectives

Youth will:

- Learn what the experience of having a family member deployed is like through a teen's perspective.

Lesson Plan

1. Watch the Teen Connection video stopping at the various times below to engage in discussion questions provided.

7:23-These teens are very similar to you, what things did you hear about their experiences that surprised you? If you were in a similar situation, with a parent gone for 6-18 months, what things might you feel or experience? Are there things that you say or do that might impact a teen with a parent in the military without you knowing/realizing it?

12:58- Changes happen for all of us, as a teen there are changes happening in almost each aspect of your life. If you had a parent gone what things might change in your household? How might things change in similar or different ways when anticipating the deployment, during the deployment, or after the deployment?

21:30- When you and your friends are struggling with something or having a hard time how do you support one another? What things do you appreciate when you're challenged by a situation?

26:50- Often time teens with a parent deployed feel isolate, like they are the only one and no one understands. Is there a time you've felt isolated? What did you do to cope with that situation? How can you help others not feel isolated?

37:10- With all the changes at home during a deployment, how can a teens life change? –How might participation in activities or opportunities might be different? As a friend, what could you do to be accepting or flexible of these type of changes?

48:55- How could you get involved in supporting kids and teens with a parent in the military?

56:06-Teens are extremely engaged in media and social settings. What impact might media or social settings have on teens with a parent in the military?



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