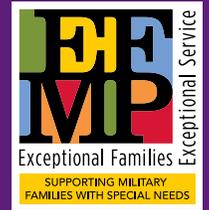


Managing Family Life With Adult-Onset Chronic Disability



Chronic illness refers to a long-lasting or recurring disease or disorder affecting a person physically, mentally or emotionally. When it substantially limits a person's ability to do everyday activities, such as working, learning or performing self-care, a chronic illness is then considered a chronic disability.

Effects of chronic disability on the family

A chronic disability can affect families in many ways. Feelings of power, respect and confidence can give way to feelings of dependence, self-pity and uncertainty.

Families can learn to adapt to the new situation by:

- Learning as much as possible about the disability and how it impacts the family and the individual
- Talking openly about needs, frustrations, successes and accomplishments
- Establishing mutually satisfactory roles and responsibilities
- Using effective listening skills and clearly expressing thoughts and wishes
- Thinking positively when facing challenges
- Exploring the use of assistive devices, as appropriate, including ramps, access bars or extension tools, to both increase independence in the person with the chronic disability and decrease that person's dependence on caregivers

Additional help

Licensed counselors or therapists can help families adjust to a disability by providing techniques for effective communication.

Disability coaches work as advisors to both patients and caregivers. They teach methods of dealing with specific disabilities, navigating resources and setting realistic goals.

Support groups offer camaraderie and opportunities to learn from the experience of others in similar situations.

Contact your installation's Exceptional Family Member Program family support provider for more information on existing support groups and other resources.



<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/special-needs>

Exceptional Family Member Program support is available for military families with special needs.

For more information, please contact your installation EFMP office or visit

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/special-needs>, an official Department of Defense website.