



IMAGINE STEPPING INTO YOUR CHILD'S WORLD AND SEEING THINGS FROM HIS OR HER POINT OF VIEW.

[www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil)



# Handling children's reactions to war

During times of military conflict or war, children can become scared or upset by news reports. One of your most important jobs as a parent is to watch how your children handle this information while helping them deal with any fears. Here are some ways you can help children manage their feelings and deal with their concerns.

Limit your children's exposure to the conflict and talk to them about what they see and hear.

- Help your children sort out what they see and hear in news reports about danger. These reports often stress the most negative aspects of military actions.
- Let your children know it is okay to talk about these issues with you.
- Comfort your children and try to stay calm. Children tend to pick up on your fears and worries.

Reassure your children.

- When children see or hear something scary or troubling, they often worry about their own safety. Reassure your children about their safety, even when you can't make the situation better.
- Reassure and comfort your children with extra attention, hugs, and comfort items, especially when they have nightmares or trouble sleeping.

Get professional help if you have concerns.

- Stress can cause your children to show their feelings through certain behaviors (wetting the bed, withdrawing, throwing tantrums, etc.). If these behaviors continue, seek help from the Family Centers in your installation, other agencies, or your pediatrician.

## Helping Children Understand Their Fears

CHILDREN NEED THESE THINGS FROM PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

WHEN THEY HAVE FEARS:

### Support

"EVERYONE HAS FEARS AND IT IS OKAY THAT YOU HAVE THEM."

### Comfort

"I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY YOU ARE FEARFUL AND UPSET ABOUT YOUR DAD BEING DEPLOYED."

### Room to feel

"MAYBE YOU NEED A FEW MINUTES TO CRY AND THEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT YOUR FEARS FOR YOUR MOM'S SAFETY."

### Talk

"LET'S TALK ABOUT WHY YOU ARE AFRAID OF YOUR DAD LEAVING."

### Chances to learn

"MAYBE WE CAN THINK OF WAYS TO HELP YOU BE LESS FEARFUL NEXT TIME YOUR PARENTS ARE DEPLOYED."

## Children's Understanding of Military Conflicts

For preschoolers, images of military conflict can mean something big and powerful, like witches and monsters. This can lead to confusion about the realities of war. As a result, they need frequent reminders that their family and home are safe.

For school-aged children, watching news reports can also lead to confusion over what is real and unreal. You can help by reminding them that war is real and not like videogames or make believe on TV.