

Taking Time to Enjoy Your Family During the Holidays and Across Distances

Podcast Transcript

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When you think about the holiday season, do you picture loud family gatherings with big groups of people exchanging gifts, debating upcoming Super Bowl picks and stuffing themselves with too many holiday goodies? No matter what we imagine, for many families in the military, holidays can look much different. Military families are often far away from their extended families and perhaps even one another.

Even if the holidays usually mean mom's homemade ham or tree decorating with your younger siblings, you can still find ways to make special holiday connections when you are miles apart. Consider the following ideas:

- **Use a video chat program** to see your family members open presents or your dad carve a turkey. Pledge to upload pictures and thoughtful messages to social media sites.
- **Do something together** that doesn't require you to be in the same room. Watch the same holiday movie, begin reading the same book or start a fantasy sports pool — anything that gets you communicating in a different way.
- **Include your deployed service member** in your holiday traditions. Send pictures of the holiday show at your child's school or send a scrapbook with pictures and messages from family members he or she would normally see.

If you and your family exchange gifts over the holiday season, try to think of ways to erase the miles between you. Yes, it's easy to fall back on gift cards and random items on display at the mall, but personal gifts can be even more special for families who are spread apart. Here are some suggestions:

- **Send a special holiday recipe or homemade food** that reminds everyone of the holidays. Include a note about what the recipe reminds you of.
- **Record a book.** A deployed parent or grandparents who are far away can record a child's favorite book using their voices to make it extra special.
- **Create something personalized** like a family photo book, an ornament or another craft with special meaning.

When things aren't how you imagined they'd be, it's easy to let stress get you down. Be mindful of the joy you do have in your life and consider the following tips:

- **Turn your holiday season into something different.** Connect with your [Morale, Welfare and Recreation](#) program to see what they have to offer.
- **Look for opportunities to be with friends** or to surround yourself with other people experiencing the same challenges. Get together with friends for a potluck to replace the big family gathering you may be missing this year.
- **Consider reaching out to one of the many resources available to you** through Military OneSource including [Health and Wellness Coaching](#) and [confidential non-medical counseling](#).

Being mindful of the relationships that matter in your life — whether you are under the same roof or thousands of miles apart — can make your holiday season a special one.

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