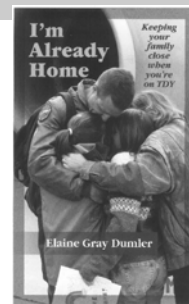


In Touch

Idea update for military families facing separations

Based on the book "I'm Already Home"

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February 2005



Contact Elaine to:

- Speak for your State Conferences.
- Participate in your Key Volunteer training.
- Tell you about sponsorship and donor programs.
- Ask about quantity book discounts.

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Message from Elaine Dumler

Welcome to the second issue of the *In Touch* newsletter aimed at bringing you ideas and information you may find useful before, during and after deployment. You'll notice that much of the information I'm sharing comes directly from you. So if you have an idea, information, or tidbit that you'd like me to print, please email it to me at Elaine@ImAlreadyHome.com. If you'd like to contribute an article, let me know that too. Understand that if you submit something, you give me permission to print it.

I'm privileged to be participating in many *state conferences, regional volunteer trainings, or pre-deployment briefings* to bring the message of staying connected in person. Here are some of the places I'm currently scheduled, so if you're there, you **MUST** say hello! If your state is having a training or conference and you'd like to see if I have the dates available, call or email me with the contact person I should talk to. Thanks for your constant contributions and I hope we meet sometime!

Kansas City 2/26 - 27

Kalamazoo, Michigan 4/17

Colorado Springs 6/21- 6/22

Denver 8/15

Columbus, Ohio 4/16

Gulfport, MS 4/23 - 4/24

Kentucky 8/13

Maine 8/27 - 8/28

Reunion: Prospect and Possibility by Linda Engelman - special guest writer

As you look to reunion you probably hope that life will soon return to normal. You have been told that weathering a lengthy, dangerous, deployment will change you, creating a new normal. But many of you have no previous experience on which to predict your responses. Therefore, with the anticipation can come some uneasiness.

Because knowledge eases anxieties and helps put things in perspective, I've been invited to provide some information about reunion and Post-traumatic Stress.

It is not only common for military members to experience Posttraumatic Stress, it is expected. A normal response to an abnormal situation, reunion is a time of readjustment, a time of transition - literally from one world to another for your military member.

For family members it is a time for reintegration, a time for opening the family boundaries to make room for the returning veteran. This is both exciting and stressful for everyone. So while I will focus specifically on the military
(continued on page 3)

Some things you might not be aware of...

From Susan:

Verizon offers a **10% discount** off all cell phone service if you have a deployed spouse! Here's what you need to take with you when applying:

- **Driver's license**
- **Military ID**
- **Copy of orders**

If the phone is, or will be, in your husband's name you will also need a power of attorney.

From James:

From the guidelines of the Security Directive 1544-01-10W from Airline security:

The following non-traveling individuals may be given a pass to access the sterile concourse via the security checkpoint—

"Military Passenger" - Family members may be given a pass :

1. To escort the military passenger to the gate
2. To meet a military passenger's inbound arrival at the gate.

Some ideas directly from you...

1. Make a large picture of the family and cut it into puzzle pieces. During deployment, mail him a piece every couple of weeks or so. Just prior to his return, mail him the final piece with a special message. At the reunion site, replace the piece he brings with the family to make the picture whole.
2. For reconnecting upon returning home: After about a month, the 2 of you need to get away for a weekend to a nice resort with your favorite activity (golf, shopping, etc) and reconnect on your own level without the kids.
3. One mom kept a copy of all the emails she and her son exchanged, with replies, printed them out and 3-hole punched them into a 3-ring binder. When her son returned he reread them and remembered all that he had done to help while over there.
4. Have each member of the family have just one special thing (something good that happened, an accomplishment, etc.) to tell the parent when he/she returns. The reason for only one is so that they don't get overwhelmed with everyone wanting to tell everything at once!

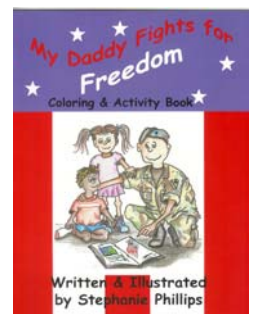
Poem for a Military Wife

I wear no uniforms, no blues, or army greens.
 But I am in the military in the ranks that are rarely seen.
 I have no rank upon my shoulders,
 salutes I do not give, but the military world is the place where I live.
 I am not in the chain of command, orders I do not get, but my husband
 does, this I can not forget.
 I am not the one who fires the weapon, who puts my life on the line, but
 my job is just as tough as I'm the one who is left behind.
 My husband is a patriot, a brave and pride filled man,
 and the call to serve his country not all understand.
 Behind the lines, I see the things needed to keep this country free.
 My husband makes the sacrifice, but so do our kids and me.
 I love the man I married, soldiering is his life, but I stand among the silent
 ranks known as the military wife.

- taken from the 617th, author unknown

(this poem was making the rounds in an email, and all efforts have been made to try to locate the author. If you know who wrote this, please email and let me know.)

My Daddy Fights for Freedom is a coloring and activity book designed for children. Even though it's titled "My Daddy Fights for Freedom" the activities and message are applicable for either parent. It's a manageable 18 pages of colorable drawings and activities for your young ones. Better yet, it's so reasonably priced at only \$5! That let's you get one for each child. The author, Stephanie Phillips, is the mother of three young children, and is married to a U.S. soldier preparing for deployment to Iraq. Her goal in writing this book is to give a positive yet realistic view of deployment.



Another New Resource...

Interactive book, softcover
 18 pages—provide your own crayons!
Only \$5.00

Available at www.ImAlreadyHome.com. Click on "Shopping Cart"

Reunion: Prospect and Possibility by Linda Engelman - special guest writer

member, know that the whole family can be at risk.

What are some common PTS responses?

Military members often report the following.

1. Feeling flat, apathetic and lethargic. Living under constant threat and with all the other irritants results in high levels of hormone (like adrenaline) production. Coming home, as adrenaline levels go down, the lack of stimulation can result in depression.
2. Feeling isolated and lonely. One young soldier said that in Iraq, if she had a problem or concern, there was always somebody to talk with. Now there isn't that constant availability.
3. Feeling guilty. "I should be in Iraq helping." Or "Why did I survive and my buddy die?"
4. Feeling on edge. Called the hyper-startle reflex, it takes a while to quit looking for an M16, to quit flinching at sudden sounds, to relax when noticing debris by the road, etc.
5. Feeling like they don't fit-in and experiencing grief over the losses, including missing their military family in Iraq. Families' report finding their military member staring out the window for long periods or going for car rides alone. Following such a dramatic and life-altering experience, it takes time to completely come home.
6. Additionally, common responses include:
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Preoccupation with the event
 - Anxiety, mood swings, headaches
 - Anger, fear, phobic avoidance
 - Loss of appetite and/or energy
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Self-medication, often with alcohol
 - Withdrawal from church or anger at God
 - Family discord, arguing, crying
 - Reoccurring dreams
 - Risk taking behavior

When should we think about talking with a professional?

While it is common for symptoms to appear

at any time, frequently they start 3-6 months after returning - when the honeymoon period is over.

Always consult a professional if symptoms don't diminish significantly within 30 days. And, always consult a professional if symptoms are dangerous or debilitating.

Finding a therapeutic listener can insure that this experience is integrated into the fabric of your life - rather than defining your whole life. Looking to the veterans of previous wars, we know that folks can live well, having long, fulfilling, productive lives. Doing the right things today can make ALL the difference!

How can I find a professional?

There are any number of ways to access help:

1. Call your Family Assistance Center or Family Program Office for a referral. Be sure and ask about the free counseling sessions available through One Source to veterans and their families.
2. Call your family physician.
3. Ask your military chaplain or civilian minister.
4. Go to your local Veterans Center.

If the first person you talk to isn't helpful, don't give up! Be persistent and try another. As in other traumatic times, it is not advisable to make major life-changing decisions for at least a year. In the end, this experience can strengthen you, and add depth and substance to your life. It is full of prospect and possibility!

Linda has been married to a National Guardsman for 34 years. Just completing a three-year term as the State Lead Volunteer, she is the lead instructor for the CISM sponsored Trained Crisis Responder course in North Dakota. Linda has presented many times at the national Family Program Workshop, Holding a master's degree in clinical counseling, she has 10 years college level experience in teaching and counseling. Available for public speaking on a variety of topics, Linda can be reached at 701-250-7207 or lenglema@bis.midco.net.

Help Wanted: I got this email and thought I'd send it out to you for your help. Email me and I'll pass along your ideas to "frantic". Elaine@ImAlreadyHome.com

"My brother will be turning 40 while in Iraq. I'm trying to come up with ways to get the family involved in a "celebration". They are all out of town, so can't have a party, take pictures and send. I'd like to do some type of care package, with a birthday "twist" (balloons, streamers, etc)...do you have any ideas for something special the extended family can do?" Signed "Frantic"

I received a copy of your book from two of my thoughtful coworkers. I could not believe the great ideas that your book provided. Once I began to read your book, I immediately stopped feeling so sorry for myself and got busy trying to preserve memories for our family."

- RP, military spouse

"God bless you for taking the time to meet such a pressing need! If your book had been available during the Vietnam era, perhaps we might not have been such a nation divided. At least families would have been aware of ways to stay more connected throughout the entire process which, as we both know, is possible even without email and cell phones."

- Sonia Mayrath, wife of Vietnam Veteran

"We are very grateful indeed for your deep generosity of time and spirit. We look forward to sharing your book with our families."

- SP, FRC volunteer

Call Elaine for...

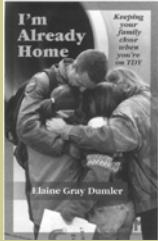
- Speaking engagements
- Sponsorship information
- Quantity book sales

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**We're on the web:
www.ImAlreadyHome.com**



**Just in case you were
wondering...**

*The Funniest Branch of the
Military is...the Army!*

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of their column titled "Humor in Uniform", Readers' Digest tallied the votes of 7,191 people who reviewed humor from all branches of service. Of all these votes, the Army prevailed!

Guess there really IS humor in uniform. But I'm sure you already knew that!



In Touch - Your ongoing support resource newsletter

"The military recruits soldiers...the family retains them"

Weekends are filling fast! Get Elaine booked for your State Volunteer Conference or training. Call 1-866-780-0460 toll free

Focus of issue #3 in April:
Spring Fever! - Let's get the kids involved

Just for FUN! Word search - *"Honey, I'm Home!"*

Find each word on the word list in the diagram. They can be forward, backward or diagonal. The first one is done for you. Have fun!

V	I	E	P	R	T	H	E	J	E	Y	D	R	E	P
B	A	C	T	S	E	M	T	N	E	E	S	E	L	R
J	J	L	U	A	O	U	I	W	V	R	S	A	B	E
D	O	J	E	T	C	L	N	L	O	U	Z	L	I	P
L	D	Y	I	N	P	I	O	I	P	R	T	I	X	A
A	D	O	F	I	T	V	N	P	O	I	G	S	E	R
X	N	P	C	U	N	I	O	U	M	N	N	T	L	E
S	G	S	X	I	L	R	N	E	M	C	I	I	F	Y
T	I	L	S	G	T	I	X	E	E	M	M	C	R	L
D	U	N	D	E	R	S	T	A	N	D	O	S	E	I
N	W	R	C	A	R	R	I	V	A	L	C	C	L	M
A	E	C	N	E	I	T	A	P	U	E	E	H	A	A
S	E	G	N	A	H	C	A	K	X	K	M	V	X	F
X	B	F	L	I	M	I	T	S	X	K	O	K	S	W
N	O	I	T	A	R	B	E	L	E	C	H	J	K	E

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| ADJUST | LIMITS |
| ARRIVAL | PATIENCE |
| CELEBRATION | PREPARE |
| CHANGE | REALISTIC |
| COMMUNICATE | RELAX |
| DISCIPLINE | REUNION |
| EMOTIONS | SUPPORT |
| FAMILY | TIME |
| FLEXIBLE | UNDERSTAND |
| GROWTH | VALENTINE |
| HOMECOMING | |
| INVOLVED | |
| JOYFUL | |

Veterans and Families is a national non-profit community service and support organization, founded and directed by Veterans, parents, grandparents, family members, employers, mental health professionals, academics and community leaders.

www.VeteransandFamilies.org