

# Deployment Reminders

## What are Deployment Reminders?

Following high stress situations or significant losses related to deployment, family members may react strongly to things that remind them of their traumatic experience or loss. These reminders, or triggers, can be anything that the person associates with the trauma or loss (a sound, a smell, a picture, even a certain time of day) and can result in sudden shifts in mood and behavior. For example:

- » Tom, a 27 year old service member who recently returned from a combat zone, becomes irritable and nervous on hot dry days that serve as a reminder of being deployed in a desert environment
- » Melissa, who was deployed for 11 months experiences anxiety each time she goes to the mall or any uncontrolled crowd situation
- » An 8 year old boy whose mother's last deployment lasted several months, becomes clingy and cries each morning when he sees his mother dressed in uniform to go to work

## Recognize When It Happens

Loss reminders can happen in situations where a loved one is no longer part of daily routines, for example at the dinner table, during activities usually done together, and on special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays. Children, adolescents, and adults can also be reminded by everyday changes in their lives, including, changes in caretakers, disruptions in family roles and routines, increased family responsibilities, lost opportunities (for example, sports, outings, and other activities), and the loss of a sense of protection and security. Reactions to reminders may be sudden and may be perceived by others as occurring for “no apparent reason.” Some reactions in children may include

**SADNESS      ANGER      ANXIETY      IRRITABILITY      TANTRUMMING**

Trauma reminders can cause your body to react without warning, which can increase stress. People who have experienced high levels of trauma or simply wear and tear of operational deployments may show any of the following signs:

**DEPRESSED MOOD      ANGER OUTBURSTS      SLEEP PROBLEMS      POOR CONCENTRATION**  
**EMOTIONAL NUMBING      AVOIDANCE OF OTHERS      NERVOUSNESS/WORRY**

## Identify Your Reminders

Identifying active reminders and managing reactions is often helpful for service members and their families. Even for those who have not had a “traumatic” experience, a range of cues or triggers may be linked to distressing or sad memories that can be evoked throughout the day. It can be helpful to identify

**PLACES      SITUATIONS      DATES      PEOPLE      STRESS LEVELS**

In addition to identifying your reminders, it may be helpful to write down your reactions and thoughts that followed, as well as responses that help.

