



When a Parent Comes Home Changed

Supporting Young Children Whose Military Parent Has Been Injured

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Today's Presenter



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ZERO TO THREE

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Translating What We Know Into What We Do

EARLY EXPERIENCES MATTER



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We are a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains and supports professionals, policy makers and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

We train professionals and build networks of leaders
 We influence policies and practice
 We raise public understanding of early childhood issues

All our work is:

- Grounded in research and experience
- Multi-disciplinary
- Culturally responsive

When a Parent Comes Home Changed

Today we will discuss:

- Visible and Invisible Injuries
- Impact of Parental Injury on Young Children
- Strategies for Supporting Children Affected by Parental Injury
- Resources



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Homecoming as a Period of Reintegration

- Many Service members first report mental health needs and concerns about interpersonal conflicts 3 to 6 months after homecoming
- Returning Service member may be learning their role as "parent" for the first time



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Injury

The parent is changed in some way or another

- Temporary or permanent/acute change
- Changes in functioning and/or appearance
- Short- and/or long-term implications



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Advances in body armor and trauma medicine, quick stabilization and evacuation from battlefield to war zone hospitals, and state of the art treatment in theater mean many severely injured Service members who wouldn't have survived in earlier wars are living today.

SGT Thomas Davall

2010 TO 111612 (2010)

Adding to the complexity

Is the parent hospitalized?

Who is caring for the child if at-home parent must leave?

Where does the child or family stay during hospitalization?

What does the child experience in the hospital setting?



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The child's perception of the injury



How did the child find out about the injury?

- What was she told about the injury?
- What kind of words were used to describe the injury?

How does she experience the injury and what does it mean for her?

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The Invisible Injuries of War

"Even for the most experienced and competent parents, deployment and reunification can *throw family members off balance*, interfering with their sense of emotional equilibrium."

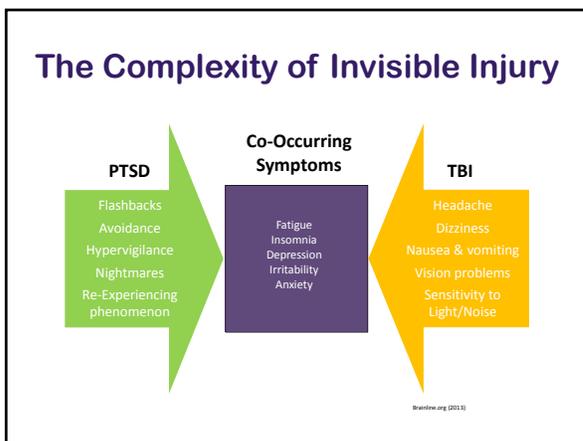


Williams and Rowe, p. 13 (2007)

Yancy

Traumatic Brain Injury

- TBI is an injury to the brain caused by a strike, a jolt, or a penetration of the head by an object that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013
- Over 1.7 million Americans suffer from TBI annually
- Approximately 19% of service members returning from combat deployment reported they had suffered a probably TBI, although may be greater than 22% with some injuries not recognized until later in the diagnosis and treatment process. Blasare, Saathoff-Webb, Perera, Wadsworth, and Dombro (2012)



Impact on Young Children



Parental emotional distress of both at-home and injured parent create a challenging caregiving environment for children that is linked to poor child outcomes (Beardslee & Wheelock, 1994) and developmental regression (Cozza & Guimond, 2011).

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As cited in Blacore, Saeffhoff Wells, Perera, Washworth, & Dentone

How Children Show They're Stressed

- Protest
- Sadness and emotional withdrawal
 - Withdrawal, lethargy
 - "Short sadness span"
- Intensification of normal developmental anxieties
- Anger
- Regressions in developmental functioning
- New fears



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Lukerman-Compton, Van Horn, & Spier (2003)

7 Gifts All Young Children Need

1. Support
2. Security
3. Predictability
4. Focus
5. Encouragement
6. Expansion
7. Nurturance



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Lilly (2007)

You as the Helper



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A Strong Relationship with the Family

When you support the family, you are supporting the child.

Ask questions and wonder with the family:

- What is their take on their situation?
- What is every day life like for each family member?
- Who else is caring for the child, especially if the wounded parent needs caregiving?
- What are they doing well that they are proud of?
- How can you support each other in supporting the child?

Sometimes, the most important thing you can do is be "with" a child.

Some things we cannot change, we can only offer our understanding, our listening ear, our comfort.



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10 Ways to Calm an Anxious Child

1. Respond as quickly as possible to child's signs of distress by approaching the child and showing interest in their feelings
2. "Listen" to what the child is saying with words AND actions.
3. Take the child's feelings, especially fear and anger, seriously.
4. Make time to respond to the child as an individual.
5. Relax—be as low key as possible when helping a child calm down.
6. Restate what the child is saying back to the child.
7. Provide appropriate outlets for strong emotions.
8. Do not personalize it.
9. Comfort the child with extra hugs, if they can tolerate it, or special soothing activity.
10. Be there for the child. Nothing is more reassuring than your presence and care.

Cohen & Watthai (2003)

Helping Buffer Young Children from Stress

Support, routines, control, and connection

ZERO TO THREE, 2009



Kim Street Studios

Keeping Young Children Safe

- Anger and aggression are common combat stress reactions. The injured service member's use of alcohol and/or drugs to cope can make a situation worse and possibly unsafe for family members.
- Encourage families to identify and post contact information for people who they can turn to for help.
- If a child's crying or other behavior is too much for a parent to take, encourage them to place that child in a safe place such as her crib, and call someone to come and assist.
- Know where to refer a concerned parent who may need a safety plan within YOUR community.

ZERO TO THREE (2009)

Materials & Resources

Resources developed specifically to address the needs of young children who have an injured parent may be found at www.zerotothree.org



Resources for Service Members & Families

Military OneSource:
www.militaryonesource.mil/

Department of Veteran Affairs:
www.1.va.gov/health/

Wounded Warrior Project:
www.woundedwarriorproject.org/

VA Caregiver Support:
www.caregiver.va.gov/

Contact Us

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Our next webinar...

Tuesday
Aug. 20

2:00-3:00 EDT

**Welcoming a Military Family
with a Child Who Has Special Needs**

<https://learn.extension.org/events/1134>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Multi-media resources

- Military Families Near & Far (Sesame Street): Changes: "The New Normal" - many tools and resources for families and caregivers
<https://www.familiesnearandfar.org/resources/changes/>

Visible Injuries:

- Preparing a Child to See an Injured Service Member for the First Time
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/wounded-warrior?content_id=269394
- Talking with a Child about a Parent's Severe Injury
http://www.militaryonesource.mil/wounded-warrior?content_id=270769

Invisible Injuries:

- Resource list – PTSD/TBI and military families
http://create.extension.org/sites/default/files/Invisible_Injuries_Resource_List.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Military Families Learning Network – Child Care Page:

Find links to articles and social media channels
blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies/child-care/

To ask questions about the presentation and to continue the discussion, **please join our private group on LinkedIn:** <http://linkd.in/w75WTz>

If you have specific questions about the Military Families Learning Network: Child Care project, **contact Kathy** at kreschke@uga.edu

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Connect with all of the MFLN resources:

www.eXtension.org/militaryfamilies facebook.com/militaryfamilies
blogs.extension.org/militaryfamilies twitter.com/MilFamLN

bit.ly/MFLNwebinars

Sign up for the Military Families Learning Network email list:
<http://bit.ly/MFLNlist>

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