

Helping Preteens Thrive Through Change



June 3, 2026

OneOp.org/learn/160136



Webinar Essentials



Visit the event page to download a copy of the webinar slides and any additional resources.



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.



This webinar has been approved to offer continuing education credit. Stay tuned for more information!



Email us if you need tech support or have questions.

Contact@OneOp.org

OneOp.org/learn/160136

About OneOp

Supporting your work so you can better support military families.



Who We Are

A DoW & Cooperative Extension partnership supporting professionals who serve military families.

Our Mission

Strengthening military family service providers through accessible, research-informed learning.

What We Offer

Free, online professional development through webinars, podcasts, courses, and more.



The views expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Department of War, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Government or OneOp. The mention of any entity or product is for informational purposes only.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Military Family Readiness Policy, U.S. Department of Defense under Award Number 2023-48770-41333.



LTC Elisha Dansby

CYS Programs Manager
US Army Reserve HQ
Family Programs



Brent Edwards

CYP Youth Programs
Coordinator
Navy Child & Youth
Programs

Today's Presenters

Learning Objectives

Webinar Overview

This webinar equips professionals to help students advocate for themselves, keep friendships across distance, and access extracurricular activities soon after a move

1

Apply two techniques to build self-advocacy skills in new school contexts

2

Identify two ways to maintain friendships during transitions

3

Develop a plan to connect preteens to extracurricular activities within 60 days of relocation

When Development Meets Transition



Identity

Who am I here?



Belonging

Where do I fit in?



Independence

How do I navigate this?

Deployments and relocations can intensify all three.

Effective transitions support security, connection, and confidence.

Poll

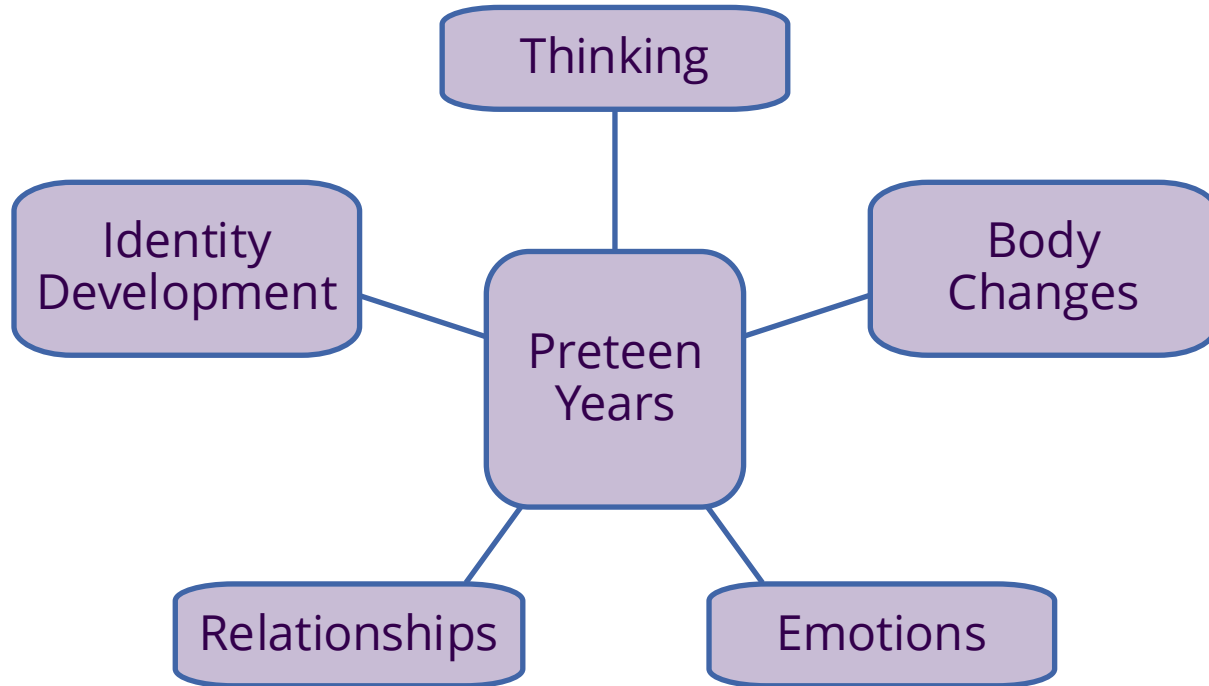
Which area do you think military-connected preteens struggle with most during transitions?

1. Belonging/social connection
2. Identity/self-confidence
3. Academic expectations
4. Independence/responsibility
5. Emotional regulation



Please respond using the poll pop-up feature.
If the poll does not appear for you , please leave your answer in the chat.

Many Changes at Once



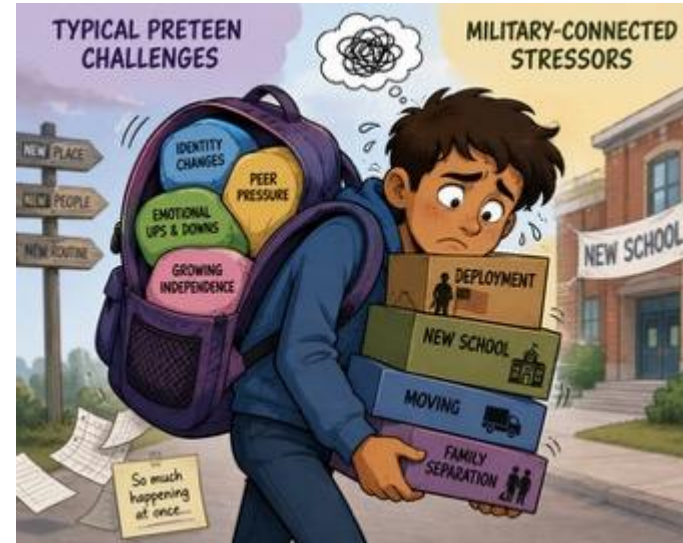
When Stressors Stack Up

Typical Preteen Challenges

- Identity changes
- Peer pressure
- Emotional ups and downs
- Growing independence

Military-Connected Stressors

- Deployment
- New Schools
- Moving
- Family Separation



Multiple transitions can increase stress, uncertainty, and emotional overload.

Meet Jordan

Jordan, age 11, recently moved during the school year.

He has stopped turning in assignments, spends lunch alone, and becomes irritated when teachers offer help.



Let's Chat!

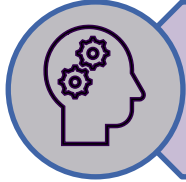


- What could be happening underneath the behavior?
- What would be one supportive response?

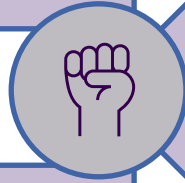


Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

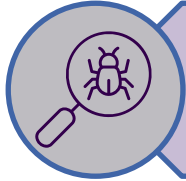
How Preteens Begin Thinking Differently



Thinking More Deeply
Why does this matter?



Wanting More Independence
Let me try.

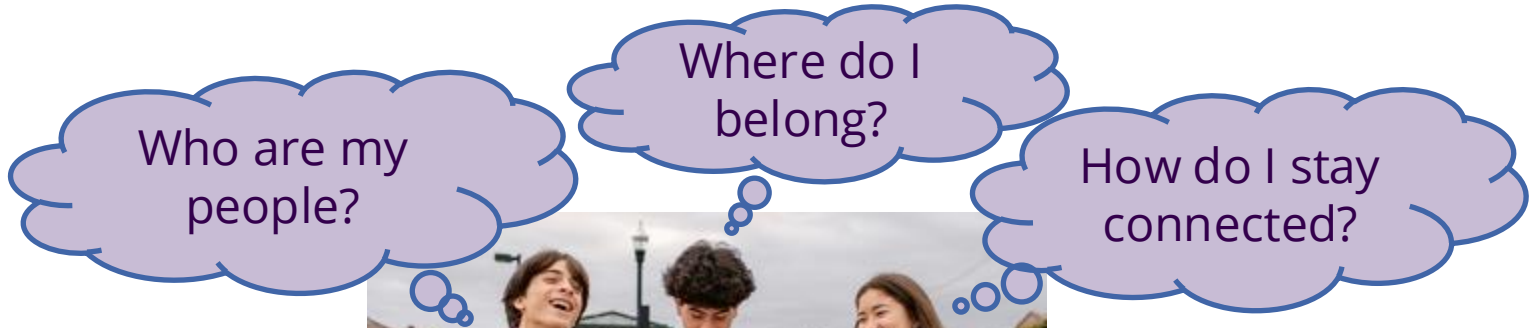


Discovering Interests
What am I passionate about?



Forming Identity
Who am I becoming?

Navigating Friendships & Social Worlds



Peer relationships
matter more

Social awareness
increases

Friendships become
more complex

Digital connections
expand

Learning to Navigate Emotions

<p>Emotions Feel Bigger</p> <p><i>Why do I feel this way?</i></p>	<p>Stress Increases</p> <p><i>School – Peers - Expectations</i></p>
<p>Independence Grows</p> <p><i>I want more control.</i></p>	<p>Relationships Matter More</p> <p><i>Connection and belonging become important</i></p>

Changing Bodies, Changing Awareness

Physical Changes

- Rapid growth
- Puberty begins
- Increased self-awareness

Relationship Awareness

- Interest in relationships
- Stronger peer influence
- Social media shapes perceptions

Preteens may become especially sensitive to appearance, belonging, and peer acceptance.

What Support Matters Most?



Connection

Helping preteens
feel seen and
included



Stability

Creating
predictable routines
and support



Confidence

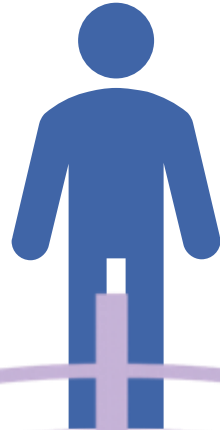
Building self-
advocacy and
belonging

Small supports can make unfamiliar environments feel safer.

Helping Preteens Stay Connected

Maintain Old Connections

- Video chats, gaming, texting
- Shared online activities
- Letters & postcards



Build New Connections

- Clubs & extracurriculars
- Peer introductions
- Structured social opportunities

Connection creates belonging during transitions.

Creating Stability During Change

Ask for Support

- Trusted adults & peers



Maintain Routines

- Predictability creates security



Healthy Coping Strategies

- Movement
Music
Creativity



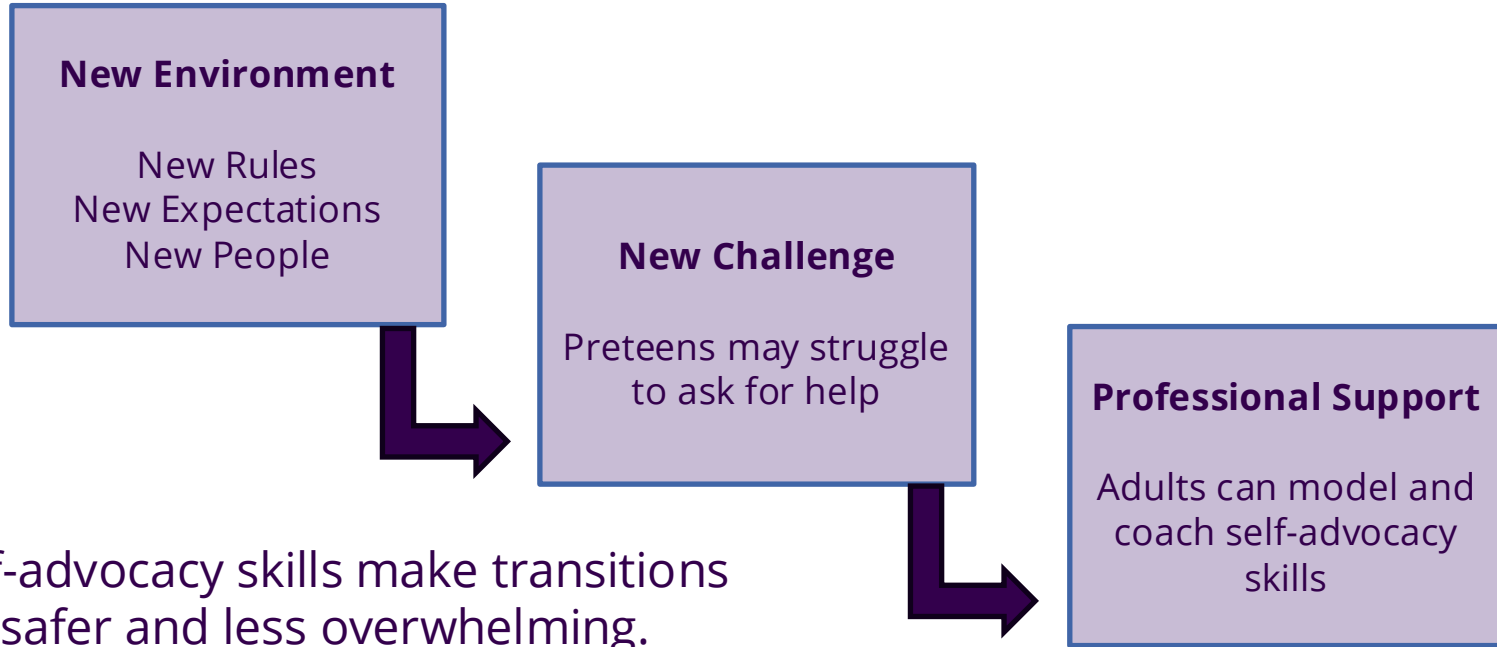
Positive Self-Talk

- Encourage confidence & resilience



Small routines and supportive relationships can reduce transition stress.

Speaking Up in New Environments



Self-advocacy skills make transitions
safer and less overwhelming.

Meet Gabby



Gabby understands the material academically.

However, she won't ask questions in class because she is afraid of looking different or "new."

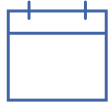
Let's Chat!

- What barrier to self-advocacy do you notice?
- How could an adult scaffold support without taking over?



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

Self-Advocacy in Action



Stay Organized

- Calendars
- Routines
- One step at a time



Process Emotions

- Journaling
- Reflections
- Self-awareness



Get Involved

- Clubs
- Teams
- Activities



Manage Stress

- Breathing
- Movement
- Relaxation

Coaching Self-Advocacy Skills

SHARE Model

Helping students practice asking for support

Choice Mapping

Helping students think through decisions and next steps

Professionals can model, coach, and rehearse these skills proactively.

SHARE: Practicing Self-Advocacy

Script It

- Sentence starters & planning
- 

Practice It

- Role-play real situations
- 

Reflect & Adjust

- Explore what worked best

Choice Mapping: Navigating Decisions

Explore Options

What could I do?

Make A Plan

What's my first step?

Identify the Challenge

What's the problem?

Reflect

How did it go?

Think Through Options

What might happen next?

Follow Through

Let's do this!





The full video can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeY4lfj6Bbc>

Supporting Preteens Through Transitions

Create Predictability

- Clear routines & expectations

1

Support Learning

- Identify gaps & provide support

2

Strengthen Connections

- Support old and new relationships

3

Stay Consistently Present

- Check-ins, encouragement, reassurance

4

Building Confidence During Transitions

Focus on Strengths

- Help preteens recognize what they do well

Reframe Challenges

- Support hopeful and flexible thinking

Build Problem-Solving Skills

- Encourage decision-making and persistence

Encourage Involvement

- Activities create belonging and confidence

Transitions may increase the need for reassurance, structure, and support.

Support Starts with Trust

01

Intervene Early

Address concerns with care and support

03

Protect Dignity

Avoid embarrassment or public criticism

05

Stay Present

Consistency and availability matter

Know Their Stage

Adjust conversations to their level and needs

02

Listen with Respect

Validate thoughts, feelings, and experiences

04

Trust and emotional safety strengthen resilience during transitions.

Meet Titus

Titus tells his afterschool club sponsor that he hates his new school and wants to go home.

The club sponsor responds:
“You’ll adjust eventually.”



Let's Chat!



- What message might Titus hear?
- How could the adult respond differently?

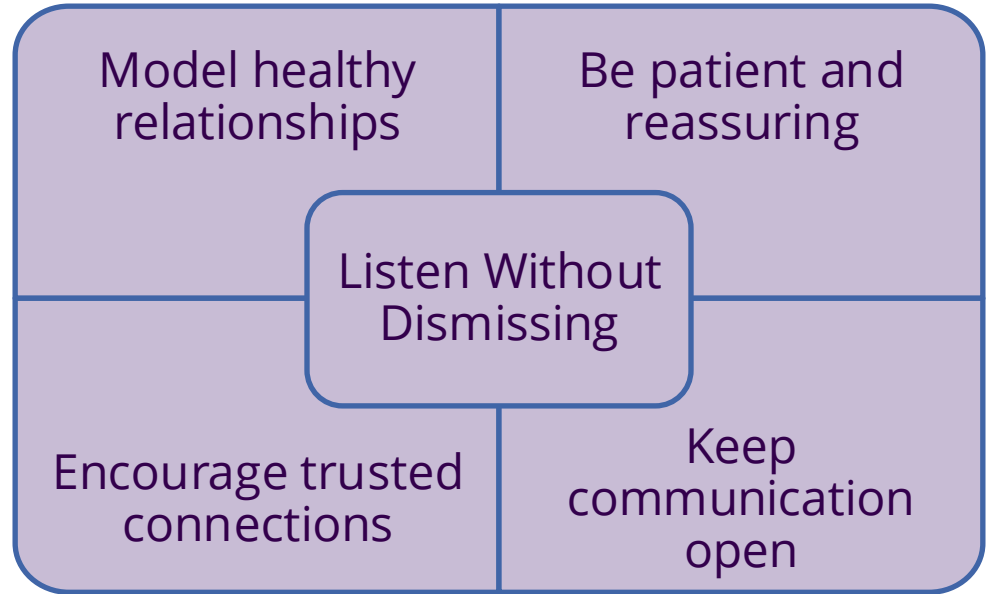


Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

Supportive Relationships Matter



Feeling heard and supported helps preteens navigate transitions more successfully.



Helping Preteens Connect After a Move

Weeks 1 - 2

Explore Interests

- Identify activities
- Meet support staff
- Learn local options



Weeks 3 - 4

Try New Connections

- Attend trial activities
- Meet peers in structured settings



Days 30 - 60

Build Belonging

- Commit to one activity
- Establish routines
- Encourage participation goals



Let's Chat!

What is one concrete thing a school, youth program, or caregiver could do within the first 30 days to help a preteen feel connected?



Select ***'Everyone'*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

Resources That Build Connection & Belonging

4-H Military Partnership

- Leadership & life skills

Anchored4Life

- Peer support through transitions

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

- Connection & belonging

Military Child Education Coalition

- Resources for school and family transitions

Tutor.com

- Academic support anytime

Connection Creates Stability

Preteens are not just adjusting to new schools. They are rebuilding belonging, identity, and confidence.

Consistent support
matters

Communication builds
trust

Patience and empathy
strengthen resilience

Sometimes the most powerful support is simply helping a preteen feel seen, safe, and connected.

Let's Chat!

What is one insight from today that changed how you think about supporting preteens through transitions?



Select ***Everyone*** from the drop-down menu when commenting in the chat pod.

**Any
Questions?**

Contact Info

- Brent Edwards
brent.a.edwards5.naf@us.navy.mil
- LTC Elisha Dansby
elisha.m.dansby.mil@army.mil





Launching Teens for Life After High School

July 9, 2026

Upcoming Webinar: Register Now

Teen years are a key time to prepare for adulthood while balancing continued support and guidance. For military families, frequent moves and changing roles can complicate this transition. This session shares practical strategies to support postsecondary planning, employment, independent living, and military-specific transition needs.

 OneOp.org/learn/160132

Claim Continuing Education Credits



Continuing Education

Approved for **1.5** CE credits from the following organizations:

- National Council on Family Relations
- MiRegistry/Michigan Education Association
- Center for Leadership and Learning
- University of Texas at Austin, Steve Hicks School of Social Work
- Certificate of Attendance
- And more!



Evaluation

Complete the evaluation and post-test on the event page

CONTINUING EDUCATION



Your input helps shape stronger, more effective webinars

Become a Powerful Provider Via OneOp

- Access a wide range of free, expert-developed resources to build your professional skills
- Follow us on social media to stay engaged with the latest insights
- Join our emailing list to hear about upcoming CE opportunities



Discover the OneOp Podcast

- Conversations with experts who support military families
- Practical insights to strengthen connection and collaboration



Practicing
Connection

Read Our Newsletter

Sign up for our newsletter to get new episodes and updates delivered to your inbox

Find Us On LinkedIn

Join us on LinkedIn to connect with other professionals who support military families

Resources at the Ready

Timely support for those who serve military families

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Deployment & Family Separation
- Mental Health & Resilience
- Financial Disruptions
- Parenting & Child Behavior
- Community Support

A Dedicated Hub for Providers



A curated collection of webinars and expert content built for the moment and designed for impact