

Readiness and Deployment Support Training

REINTEGRATION:
STRONG MARINE COUPLES HANDBOOK



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Introduction

Reintegration can be one of the most challenging yet anticipated aspects of being a Marine Corps family. It is important to remember that reintegration is a process that typically takes four to six weeks to return to a new normal, or post-deployment, life.

The goal of this workbook is to assist you in assessing the progress of your readjustment and provide you with information that will help you build constructively and positively on your relationship with each other.

Reunion: How Are You Doing?

Both you and your Marine had separate and different experiences during the deployment, and your expectations of each other may have changed. These new expectations create challenges that may be stumbling blocks, or opportunities for growth. Take a few minutes and write down some of the challenges you may be experiencing during this time of reintegration.

Each of the challenges you identified above involves change. As you can see, you are facing many changes as a couple right now. Both of you have had varied experiences and have grown in different ways, and it is important that both partners adapt to these changes. Throughout this workbook, we will discuss various strategies that can help you deal with these challenges.

Reintegration and Stress

Marine couples deal with many different types of change throughout their lives, and readjusting to changes can lead to an increase in stress. Experiencing stress and its reactions can affect your ability to cope and adapt to the changes associated with post-deployment. Having an understanding of how stress may currently be affecting you and your partner can make reintegration a little easier and help strengthen your resiliency as a couple.

Common Post-Deployment Reactions in Marines

Many Marines returning from combat initially exhibit symptoms of post-deployment combat stress. Combat stress refers to specific symptoms that can occur following exposure to significant stressors related to combat and operational events. Shell shock, battle fatigue, and traumatic stress are all terms that have been used in the past to describe similar symptoms. Combat stress is generally viewed as a *normal* reaction to *abnormal* conditions. Combat stress can cause problems with thinking and emotions, changes in behaviors, and the worsening or development of physical issues.

Common reactions may include:

- Fear and anxiety
- Intrusive thoughts about the trauma
- Nightmares of the trauma
- Feeling jumpy and on guard
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling numb or detached
- Feeling angry, guilty, or ashamed
- Grief and depression
- Negative image of self and world
 - The world is dangerous
 - Seeing self as incompetent
 - Believing that people cannot be trusted

What are some other reactions you may have noticed that are not listed above?

Sleep problems include:

- Cannot fall asleep
- Awakenning very early
- Only fall asleep with TV on
- Afraid to fall asleep
- Sleeping too much
- Awakenning during night
- Nightmares
- Cannot sleep with partner
- Insomniac since deployment
- Falling asleep during the day

Certain triggers, or cues, experienced in everyday life may elicit the reactions above.

Various triggers include:

- Watching war news on the TV or Internet
- Seeing certain vehicles on the road (Humvee, Jeep, etc.)
- Hearing gunfire (video games, shooting range)
- Smelling oil or gas, gas stations
- Experiencing certain types of terrain (sand, mountains)
- Hearing Arabic
- Fireworks
- Hearing sirens
- Driving (various situations)
- Hearing helicopters
- Barbecues (smell of smoke)
- Experiencing certain types of weather (extreme heat/cold, wind)
- Walking along busy streets with tall buildings
- Dogs
- Seeing injured people

Have you noticed any additional triggers that were not listed above? Take a few minutes and write them down on the spaces below.

Levels of stress tolerance and resilience vary for each person. These later symptoms often resolve without professional care, and most Marines recover over time and do not develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health problems. Couples can increase their tolerance and resilience for stress when both the Marine and their loved

one have an awareness of the likelihood of stressful events or triggers, a plan for managing them as best as possible, and that both practice supportive, healthy lifestyle habits.

When problems persist and/or worsen though, further evaluation by a counselor is warranted.

Common Post-Deployment Reactions in Spouses and Significant Others

During reintegration, it is not uncommon for spouses and significant others to experience a myriad of emotions and feelings ranging from excitement to worry to exhaustion.

Additional stress reactions that some spouses and significant others may be experiencing are those that are commonly faced by caregivers. These include:

- Anger
- Exhaustion
- Sleeplessness
- Lack of concentration/
disorganization
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety/constant worry
- Irritability
- Health problems

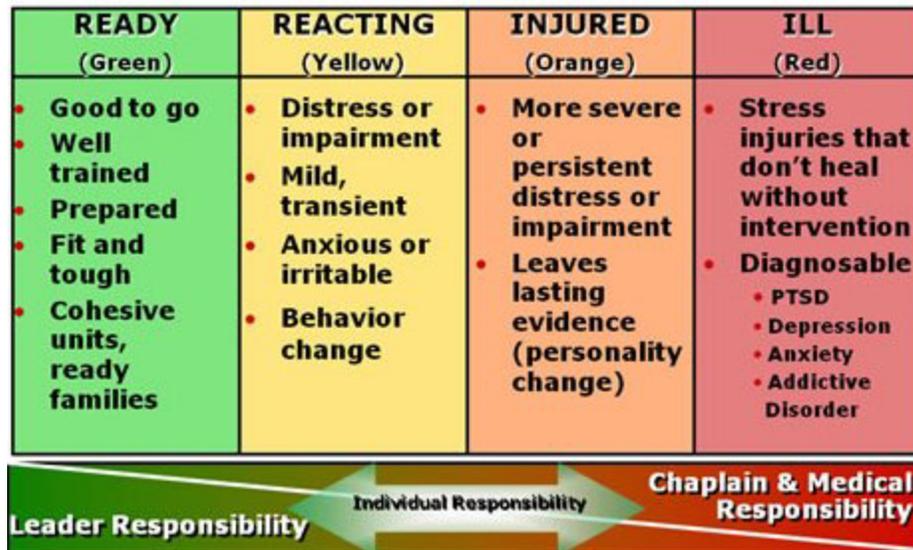
Caregiver stress is often a result of partners who have sacrificed their own personal needs to support their Marines and other family members. Stress can lead to emotional, mental, and/or physical complications. It is imperative that spouses and significant others continue taking care of their own health and well-being (emotionally, physically, and socially).

Watch out for the signs and symptoms of stress that your body may be sending, (i.e., chronic headaches or body aches, irritability or anger, frustration, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, etc.).

Have you noticed any signs or symptoms of stress in yourself lately? Take a few minutes and write them down on the spaces below.

The Stress Continuum

The stress continuum was developed by the USMC/Navy Medicine Combat Operational Stress Control (COSC) team to assist Marines and their families cope with stress in a more proactive and effective manner. The model itself serves as a tool to identify stress-related behaviors in individuals and families, and manage levels of stress by pinpointing areas where assistance is needed. The stress continuum uses a common language of four color-coded zones.



The Green Zone – (Ready) good to go

Couples in the Green zone the following behaviors:

- Communication is good.
- Intimacy is satisfying and enjoyable.
- There is mutual support, affection, and respect for each other.
- Conflicts are resolved effectively and in a healthy manner.
- Roles and responsibilities are being renegotiated.
- There is a working financial plan — bills are paid, couples are sticking to a budget.

Yellow Zone – (Reacting) needs work

As a couple, you may be in the Yellow zone if you observe these behaviors:

- Have trouble communicating.
- May feel uncomfortable being together.
- Intimacy is difficult or rare.
- Occasional fights and disagreements occur.
- One or both partners may be somewhat uncooperative.
- There is a vague financial plan — conflict occurs with each other over spending, bills are past due, there is a presence of “uncomfortable” debt.

Note: The goal in this stage is to identify those mild signs of distress you may be having during this adjustment period and take steps to reduce the stress and return to the Green zone, where couples are “good to go” and “in control.”

Orange Zone – (Injured) needs help

Behaviors that are recognized by couples in this stage include:

- Poor communication.
- Emotional coldness and no intimacy.
- Defensiveness.
- Frequent fighting.
- Criticism and/or contempt for each other.
- There is financial trouble — disagreements occur over spending, no savings, collection notices, and presence of a large debt load.

Note: Orange zone symptoms can be extreme and severe, and can cause significant damage to Marines, spouses, and significant others if left unchecked. Marine couples can benefit greatly by getting professional assistance (like couples counseling, financial counseling, etc.) to help them return to the Green zone.

Red Zone – (Ill) appears to be broken

The Red zone is the most serious of all four zones. This zone represents stress injuries in Marines that persist for more than 60 days, get worse, or come back after temporary relief, and significantly affect the couple’s ability to reintegrate successfully. (Only a small number of individuals will fall into this zone). The signs and symptoms in the Red zone are severe indicators of psychological stress that require professional help for returning to a healthy condition. Stress injuries in this zone include:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Anxiety disorders
- Major depression
- Substance abuse or dependence

Couples in this zone may experience the following behaviors:

- Suspiciousness and questioning
- Partner abuse and/or child abuse
- Taking power back through physical violence
- Withdrawal from each other

Note: The quicker an individual is returned to the Green zone with professional assistance, the less harm will come to the individual and the family. This is why it is so important to address operational stress *early* and *often*.

Stress Management Strategies

To help couples get back to the Green zone and remain “good to go,” it is important that both partners learn to identify the symptoms when they are under stress and commit to practicing day-to-day strategies to cope with the various challenges that are a part of reconnecting as a couple.

Various strategies include:

- Be aware of heightened stress levels.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.
- Communicate often — do not keep emotions inside.
- Interact with positive, upbeat people.
- Keep a positive attitude.
- Use relaxation techniques.
- Identify what you can and cannot control.
- Eat a balanced/nutritious diet.
- Avoid the use of alcohol, drugs, and excess caffeine.
- Practice being a team as a couple.
- Laugh often.
- Practice your spiritual beliefs.
- Rely on social support systems (friends, family, co-workers, chaplain/pastor, etc.).

Which of the stress management strategies listed above do you practice daily?

Reintegration Complications: “Red Flags”

Most of the challenges you and your partner currently face are normal and will resolve over time. However, there are some individuals and couples who will experience more trouble readjusting than others and may need professional help to get them through this difficult time. It is important to be on the lookout for the following “red flag” issues that, when experienced by either you or your partner, warrant closer attention and immediate action.

- A high level of substance abuse that affects daily life.
- Severe depression or thoughts of suicide or homicide.
- Reckless behavior (reckless driving, reckless handling of a weapon, etc.).
- Violence or aggression against children, partners or others.
- Severe or prolonged changes in sleep and appetite.

These red flags indicate that an individual’s behavior may be spiraling out of control and warrants immediate professional assistance. If you have identified any of these red flags, do not hesitate to get help. Resources and sources of support are listed at the end of this workbook.

Note: Individuals are strongly encouraged to call 911 if they feel at any time that their partner has become self-destructive or violent and is a danger to themselves or others.

Areas that Complicate Communication

During reintegration, it is common to have trouble communicating. Differences in expectations, roles and responsibilities, finances, changes that have occurred in each other, as well as your experiences while apart, can all create feelings and emotions that make it difficult to listen and talk to each other.

Expectations

We set expectations for everything in life, even during times of reintegration. Couples often have different expectations for each other. Unmet expectations can be a barrier to communication and often lead to feelings of disappointment, frustration and, in severe cases, anger.

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What are some expectations you have about your partner right now? Take a few minutes and write them down on the spaces below:

Are you experiencing frustration, annoyance, or anger at your partner or yourself because these needs are not being met?

Yes No

If you are experiencing frustration, annoyance, or anger at yourself or your partner, take the time to re-examine your expectations. What are your expectations regarding chores, roles, money, support from your partner, parenting, your own performance, etc.? Next, discuss your expectations with each other. What may seem obvious or normal to you may surprise your partner and vice versa.

Consider the following tips for maintaining good communication when sharing your expectations.

Communicate about your needs and expectations.

Remember that expectations should be realistic.

“I expect that my partner and I might have disagreements from time to time,” instead of “Everything should be perfect, why are we not getting along?”

Be open to compromise.

Keep in mind that you may not see eye to eye on everything. This is OK. However, to keep the lines of communication open, be willing to negotiate and compromise on the things you want from each other. ***Compromise involves coming up with “win-win” solutions where each partner benefits.***

Avoid demanding that your partner change to meet your expectations.

Work on accepting the differences between what you believe to be “ideal” and what your partner is capable of giving you. ***Focus on and embrace the positive traits your partner brings to the relationship.***

Try to see things from your partner's point of view.

This does not mean that you must agree with each other all the time. It means being able to understand and respect each other's differences, points of view, and separate needs.

Re-examine your expectations often.

Expectations should be re-examined and revised as changes in your relationship and life occur. Deployments, relocation, promotions, having a baby, returning from combat, etc., are examples of situations that require Marines and their loved ones to re-examine their expectations of themselves, their partner, and their relationship. Revisiting what works at different stages in life keeps both partners happy, helps you adjust to change, and allows your relationship to grow with you.

Be sure to discuss new expectations with your partner, and ensure they are reasonable and realistic.

Renegotiating Roles and Responsibilities

It is not uncommon for Marine couples to have difficulty “re-sorting” their roles and responsibilities after deployment. It may be difficult for some loved ones to **give** some responsibilities back, and some Marines may find it difficult to **take** some back.

One recommended strategy for sorting out responsibilities fairly is to make a list of all the responsibilities and allow each partner to choose the ones they do not mind doing or prefer to do themselves. You may find that what one partner dislikes, the other enjoys or is able to tolerate.

This outline can be used as a tool to help you re-establish areas of responsibility at home.

Daily Responsibilities

Who Completes

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Weekly Responsibilities

Who Completes

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Once the responsibilities have been renegotiated, consider these tips to increase communication and avoid conflict.

Be willing to shift responsibilities around.

This is especially important if you find that something is not working out, (workload, physical demands, etc.). Be careful not to assume that your partner knows it is not working out. Communicate what you need without being demanding. Additionally, shifting tasks around once in a while can help you appreciate what the other partner is doing.

Do not criticize.

Allow your spouse to accomplish a task in his/her own way. If your partner took on a task that you particularly did not like doing, it is never wise to criticize the way they carried it out.

Note: If you find that you are often frustrated at how your partner completes tasks around the house, take a look at your own expectations. Are they too high or unrealistic? If the completion of certain tasks is extremely important to you, you may want to consider taking on those tasks yourself to avoid criticizing your partner.

Whenever possible, do tasks together.

Not only will things get done quicker, but it also builds closeness in your relationship by spending time together and accomplishing them as a team.

Finances

Now that your Marine is back from deployment, you can avoid misunderstandings and arguments by having regular discussions about your finances. Regular “money talks” will enhance your feelings of partnership and can help to keep you on track with savings, investments, and plans for the future.

There are four simple strategies that can help you maintain an atmosphere of open communication, cooperation and teamwork when managing your finances.

Share your different attitudes about money.

What you like, what you don’t like. Make the discussion more personal by discussing your feelings about spending, saving, and any future dreams.

Discuss and plan long-term joint financial goals.

These goals would be things such as a new home, having a baby, lowering debt, etc. Discuss your goals, and then outline specific action steps you need to take to reach them. Your action steps should include saving money and creating a timeline for how long you think it will take. Break the steps into smaller increments and assign responsibility (which of you will complete it).

When you begin setting financial goals, it is important to be specific. For example, it is not enough to say, “I want to have enough to retire comfortably.” A more appropriate goal would be something like, “I want to save \$300,000 by the time I’m 65.” The more specific you are, the easier it will be to come up with a plan to achieve your goal. It is also important to be realistic. Remember, the point is to come up with goals that are achievable, not to create an impossible task that will just discourage you. It may be helpful to divide your financial plans into short-term, medium-term and long-term goals:

- **Short-term goals** should take no more than about one year to achieve. For example, you may want to pay off the \$2,000 balance on your credit card or cut your household spending by \$100 a month.
- **Medium-term goals** should be achievable within one to five years. A typical example would be planning to save \$20,000 over five years to make a down payment on a house.
- **Long-term goals** will take more than five years to reach. These include saving for your retirement or for a child’s education.

Discuss how your plan is going on a weekly basis.

Weekly money meetings are also a good time to discuss bills that need to be paid, changes in income or expenses, and what you need to do to accommodate those changes. (i.e., partner seeks employment, increase savings, etc.).

Keep talking

It is important to keep communicating to each other about your finances, no matter whether your current situation is going well or going poorly. The more frequently you discuss your finances, the less difficult the discussions will be and the more likely you will be able to make good financial choices as a couple.

Note: If you have not sat down with each other to review and update your budget, it is highly recommended as soon as possible. If you do not have a budget, you can contact any of these resources for help:

- Personal Financial Management (PFM) Specialist
- Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) budget counselor
- Local credit union
- Command Financial Specialist (CFS)
- Military OneSource financial specialist

Use Problem Solving to Resolve Conflict

Conflict between couples can occur for various reasons after a deployment. The fact that conflict exists is not necessarily a bad thing, as conflict can often create communication. It can also help in recognizing problems that may go unnoticed. However, conflict is beneficial only when it is resolved in a healthy manner that leads to personal growth and the growth of your relationship.

One of the best methods for resolving conflict after deployments is problem solving! Effective problem solving helps you avoid “gridlock” (where both partners refuse to give and take). It also forces you to step back and take a moment to think, consider your options, and then make a careful decision together as a couple.

Five Steps to Problem Solving

Step 1: Identify the problem

The first step is identifying the problem that both of you want to solve. Communicating it jointly ensures that you both have an understanding of what the problem is. Assess what is not working and needs to be changed.

Note: Sometimes couples will have a different perception of what the problem is. At this point, it may be helpful to discuss your expectations of what you believe needs to be achieved. This will help you understand what the other person sees as the problem. At the very least, you will now identify more than one problem that needs to be resolved.

Step 2: Brainstorm possible solutions

The second step involves brainstorming possible solutions together. This means generating as many creative ideas as possible to solve the problem. When brainstorming, it is critical to not pass judgment on each other's ideas. Treat each idea as worthy of consideration.

For example: In solving the problem of not spending enough time together, some possible solutions might be:

- Schedule a date night once a week.
- Go for walks or jogs together.
- Volunteer together.

Step 3: Choose a solution

Step 3 involves choosing a solution. First, weigh the pros and cons of all solutions on your list. What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks? Which solution has the best payoff? Which approach is the most realistic to accomplish for now, in terms of time, resources, and money?

Note: If you end up with no solutions that work, repeat the brainstorming step to create more potential solutions.

Step 4: Implement the solution

The next step is to develop a plan and put the solution into action. Divide your plan into specific steps, detailing specifics on how it is to be accomplished (what, when, how, who, etc.). For example, if volunteering together was selected as a solution to the problem noted in Step 1, details would include: *what type of volunteer work, what day, what time, how long.*

Step 5: Evaluate and modify, if required

After trying out your solution, evaluate your progress and decide whether the solution worked. Did you meet your goal? If you did not, ask yourself: Was the plan realistic? Should the plan be changed?

Note: This is a critical part in the process, as couples often forget to evaluate the results of their decision as a step toward improving the outcome. If the solution you originally chose did not meet your goals and solve the problem, go back to your original list of solutions and select the next-best option. You may also want to consider going back to Step 2 to brainstorm new solutions and continue through the process again.

Exercise: Problem Solving

Use the problem solving process to find a solution to a problem you and your partner are currently experiencing. As a recommendation, consider going back to the list of challenges you identified at the beginning of the workbook. As a couple, select one challenge and try working it through the problem solving steps.

Step 1: Identify the problem

The problem my partner and I are currently having is:

Step 2: Brainstorm possible solutions

Solutions my partner and I brainstormed together are:

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Step 3: Choose a solution

Weigh the pros and cons. What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks? Which solution is the most realistic in terms of time, resources and money?

Solution:

Benefits:

Drawbacks:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

The solution my partner and I chose is: _____

Step 4: Implement the solution

Our plan of action to implement the solution is:

What is to be accomplished? _____

Who will accomplish it?
(If more than one task, assign
responsibility for each task.) _____

When will it be done? _____

For how long? (Set deadline
date, if applicable.) _____

What resources will we need
to utilize? _____

Step 5: Evaluate and modify if required

Did you meet your goal? Yes No

If not, was the plan realistic? Should the plan be changed? If the solution you originally chose did not meet your goal and solve the problem, go back to your original list of solutions and select the next-best option. You may also want to consider going back to Step 2 to brainstorm new solutions and continue through the process again.

If you met your goal, congratulations! Try using the Five Steps to Problem Solving for another issue that you and your partner are not seeing eye-to-eye on.

Staying Strong: Three Important Principles

There are three important principles that can help Marines and their partners stay positive and get through post-deployment challenges in the months ahead. They are:

- Show appreciation for each other.
- Get reacquainted often.
- Evaluate your life balance.

These principles can be put into action today and should be practiced regularly to build resiliency in the relationship.

Show Appreciation for Each Other

Reintegration has its unavoidable stresses and strains. To keep things in balance and build resiliency as a couple, partners need to show appreciation for each other on a regular basis. Showing appreciation for each other is motivating and demonstrates that you value the strengths your partner brings to the relationship.

Exercise: “I Appreciate...”

From the list below, circle three items that you think are characteristics of your partner. If there are more than three, still circle just three. (Circle another three if you choose to do this exercise again.) If you are having difficulty coming up with three characteristics, consider adding your own descriptions to the list. If you still cannot come up with three, don't worry. One is better than none!

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sensitive | 9. Sexy | 17. Cheerful | 24. Organized |
| 2. Loving | 10. Decisive | 18. Elegant | 25. Vulnerable |
| 3. Brave | 11. Imaginative | 19. Gracious | 26. Supportive |
| 4. Intelligent | 12. Affectionate | 20. Playful | 27. Dependable |
| 5. Thoughtful | 13. Gentle | 21. Caring | 28. Beautiful |
| 6. Generous | 14. Tenacious | 22. A great friend | 29. Understanding |
| 7. Loyal | 15. Protective | 23. Thrifty | 30. Spontaneous |
| 8. Honest | 16. Resourceful | | |

For each characteristic you circled, briefly think of an actual incident that illustrates this characteristic of your partner. Write your responses below.

Characteristic

Incident

1.

2.

Characteristic

Incident

3.

Now share your list with your partner. Let him or her know what it is about these traits that you value so highly. When you acknowledge and openly discuss the positive aspects about your partner, your bond is strengthened. This makes it easier to address any problem areas you might be having and make some positive changes.

Get Reacquainted Often

Getting reacquainted involves spending time together and getting to know each other better on a deeper level — emotionally, intimately, intellectually, and spiritually. The act of getting reacquainted allows you to discover things you never knew about your partner, and possibly about yourself as well.

The best way to get reacquainted should be through activities that allow both of you to talk about things that matter the most to you. Your dreams, goals, personal likes/dislikes, childhood experiences, what you find to be romantic, what places you want to visit, etc.

Consider things you did together before deployment but have not gotten around to doing yet. Are there fun things you want to start doing together again? Walks on the beach? Weekly trips to a coffee shop? Intimate dinners? Date nights?

Write down a list of activities that you want to start doing again, or new interests that you and your partner might like doing together.

Share this list with your partner. Discuss which activities you both like and can enjoy doing together. Be sure to put these activities into practice regularly to help you reconnect and build intimacy as a couple.

Evaluate Your Life Balance

One of the greatest challenges for many Marine couples is finding a balance where equal time is devoted to themselves, their relationship, family, and the various activities of military life. Maintaining a balanced life greatly affects your ability to foster a positive relationship at home and remain strong as a Marine couple. Additionally, it can help you to create a positive environment at work.

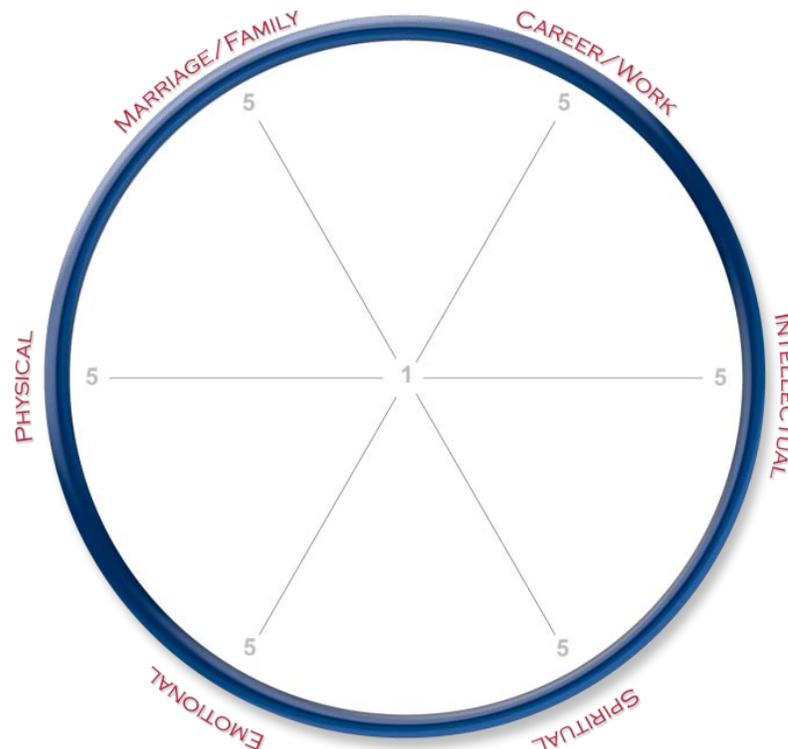
Finding life balance simply means devoting equal time to each of its components. There are six critical areas in life that make up this balance.

- Marriage/Family
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Career/Work
- Physical
- Spiritual

Measuring each of these areas can be done through the use of a “Balance Wheel.”

Exercise: Have You Checked Your Balance Wheel Today?

The Balance Wheel is a powerful tool because it gives you a vivid, visual representation of the way your life currently is. It helps you consider each area of your life, and assess what is off balance. In turn, it helps you identify specific areas that need more attention. It is called a “wheel” because each area of your life is mapped on a circle, like the spoke of a wheel.



Frequently measure where you stand in each of the six areas so adjustments can be made and a “balanced life” achieved.

Rate your satisfaction and success in the six critical areas of life. The center point (1) represents **great dissatisfaction** and the outer end (5) represents **great satisfaction**. For each area, place a dot on the line between 1 and 5, depending on your satisfaction level.

Marriage/Family

- Are you putting in an effort to keep your relationship strong?
- If you are married, are you delivering in marriage what you promised in courtship?
- If you are a parent, are you spending time doing activities with your children?
- Do you develop creative ways during deployments to keep communication going with your partner and/or family members?
- Are you doing a fairly good job of readjusting to each other as a couple?

Emotional

- Are you truly happy?
- Do you have trouble getting up each morning to face another day of your life?
- Where is your anger and frustration threshold? How short is your fuse?
- Is anger getting you into trouble or affecting your relationship at home or at work?
- Do you feel like you are doing a fairly good job of managing stress in your life or do you feel stressed out”?

Career/Work

- How would you rate yourself in your career/work?
- Are you satisfied with what you have achieved, your responsibilities, the respect you receive?
- Do you enjoy doing it? Are you fairly good at it?

Physical

- Are you taking care of your body? Exercising it regularly?
- Have you seen a doctor for a physical check-up lately?
- What have you been putting into your body recently? Quantity and quality food?
- Alcohol? Nicotine? Excessive Caffeine?
- What is the status of your health? Are you satisfied with your weight?

Intellectual

- Are you still learning? Do you seek new ideas?
- Develop new interests?
- Have you taken a class recently? Read any good books lately?
- How mentally and intellectually stimulated are you?

Spiritual

- Do you have a sense of inner peace?
- Are you comfortable with your place in the universe?
- Do you find quiet time to relax and reflect on personal goals?

Assessment: What Shape Is Your Balance Wheel In?

Once you have finished rating your satisfaction level in each of the six areas, connect the dots around the balance wheel. Now that you know the “shape” of your life in each of these areas, you can take steps to smooth out the rough spots. Do you have an area or two that is much weaker than the others? If so, these are the areas you might think about devoting additional time, effort, and attention to develop it to your satisfaction.

Once you have assessed what areas you need to work on, the next step is transforming that knowledge into a positive program of action. Make a list of action steps you can take to enhance the area(s) in the direction you want to go. For example, if you wanted to improve the physical area of your life, some action steps might be:

- Start eating a nutritious diet.
- Exercise at the installation gym (consult with a trainer).
- Get plenty of rest, etc.

Note: When identifying the area(s) you need to work on, it is important to be as specific as possible. For instance, if you identify that you need to work on your relationship with your partner, what *part* of the relationship needs work? Communication? Spending time with each other? Intimacy? The more specific you are, the more appropriate steps can be taken and the better the results will be.

Don't forget: The goal is not to focus attention on keeping a perfect shape in your Balance Wheel but rather to *frequently measure* where you stand in each of these areas so that adjustments can be made and a “balanced life” achieved.

Resources

This section provides information on resources and support services that are available to Marine couples to assist them with post-deployment and reintegration matters.

Family Readiness Officer (FRO)

The Family Readiness Officer (FRO) is the face of the Commander's vision and the hub of communication for the Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program (UPFRP). The FRO provides direct coordination for the UPFRP between the Commander, the Marines, the families, and all the available resources and organizations, both on and off DoD installations.

Chaplains

www.anchordesk.navy.mil/HTM/ChaplainRoster.htm

Chaplains play a vital role in helping their fellow Marines and family members during crucial moments in their lives. They are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide spiritual guidance and help sort through issues or concerns. All conversations are confidential.

Chaplain's Religious Enrichment Development Operations (CREDO)

<http://www.usmc-mccs.org/credo/>

CREDO retreats are offered to enable Marines, their families, and other authorized personnel to develop personal and spiritual resources and grow toward increased functional ability, religious maturity, and accepting responsibility. CREDO is funded through Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) and is offered at no cost to the participants. Contact MCFTB for information on scheduled CREDO retreats.

Defense Centers for Excellence

www.dcoe.health.mil

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) assesses, validates, oversees, and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs for psychological health and traumatic brain injury to ensure the Defense Department meets the needs of the nation's military communities, warriors, and families. Outreach and additional information and support can be obtained at the Outreach Center for the Defense Centers of Excellence: (866) 966-1020.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

www.va.gov

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides resources for service members who have honorably served in the U.S. armed forces. For service members leaving active duty, the VA may be their primary source of physical and mental health treatment for injuries that occurred during military service.

A booklet is published every year outlining programs and benefits and is available from the VA website. Some of the programs include:

- Health care, including treatment for post-traumatic stress and brain injuries
- Education
- Life insurance
- Job placement assistance
- Home loans

DSTRESS

www.dstressline.com

DSTRESS Line is an anonymous and confidential 24/7 Marine-friendly counseling and referral service that provides professional and anonymous counseling for Marines (active, Reserve, or veteran) and family members when they may need it the most during difficult times of transition.

Marines and loved ones can call (877) 476-7734 to talk, or check the DSTRESS website for location availability and/or to chat live. Marines and or family members in areas where the DSTRESS Line is not available may continue to rely upon other national call centers already in operation:

- Defense Centers of Excellence Outreach Center: (866) 966-1020.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255.

Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS)

www.focusproject.org

Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS) is a resiliency-building program designed for military families and children facing the challenges of multiple deployment stress and combat operational stress injuries during wartime. It is an eight-week intervention brief that addresses the difficulties families may have when facing the challenges of multiple deployments and parental combat-related psychological and physical health problems. Visit <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/cosc/focus.cfm?sid=ml&smid=9> for availability on Marine Corps installations.

Family Advocacy Program (FAP)

www.usmc-mccs.org

Family Advocacy Program (FAP) personal and family counselors are available at your installation Family Advocacy Program office to help you and your family cope with the challenges of marriage, parenting, deployment, reunion, and reintegration. These challenges can affect your emotional health, relationships, family life, and military readiness. Counseling services are available at no charge, they are easy to use, and they are just a phone call away.

Marines and eligible family members, including children, may each receive up to eight sessions with a family counselor per incident, per calendar year. If the situation mandates it, the sessions can be extended past eight.

Through a network of licensed counselors, you can receive guidance on topics including:

- Relationships and marital issues
- Parent and teen communication
- Life changes
- Separation
- Family conflicts
- Grief and loss
- Parenting
- Divorce
- Stress

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC)

Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) is funded by the Department of Defense (DoD). The MFLC program provides licensed counseling specialists to individual units which are remotely located and unable to access local services.

It has also expanded to augment on-base counseling services through MCFTB which provide short-term, situational, problem-solving counseling services and psycho-education to service members and their families. MFLC do not keep records of counseling services, and are confidential.

Services are provided to individuals, couples, families, and groups on issues such as stress, anger, relationships, parenting, conflict resolution, deployment, separation, and more.

Military OneSource

www.militaryonesource.com

Military OneSource is a 24/7, real-time information and referral service, funded by the DoD. All services are provided at no cost and are available to active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their immediate family members, regardless of activation status.

Military OneSource is a “virtual extension of existing installation service.” Besides helping with referrals, Military OneSource maintains a library of more than 3,000 free educational materials such as CDs, DVDs, and booklets on a wide range of topics. They also offer interpretation and translation services in more than 140 languages for legal documents. Through Military OneSource, you can access up to 12 in-person or telephone non-medical counseling sessions per issue with a licensed counselor. They also offer financial counseling at no charge.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, confidential, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Calls will be routed to the nearest crisis center near the caller. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has a network of more than 150 crisis centers nationwide. Outreach and additional support can be obtained at (800) 273-TALK (8255).

Personal Financial Management Program (PFM)

The program provides personal financial education, training, counseling, information, and referrals. Contact your local Marine and Family Services office for more information on their workshops, or to see a financial counselor.

Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)

<http://www.usmc-mccs.org/prep/>

PREP is a relationship enhancement program, in which couples learn to effectively communicate, work together as a team to solve problems, manage conflict without damaging closeness, and preserve and enhance commitment and friendship. It is designed for premarital and married couples, whether distressed or not. PREP is not therapy; it is an educational and practical application opportunity to learn what works in a relationship.

Contact MCFTB for information on scheduled PREP workshops.

Semper Fit & Recreation

Semper Fit and Recreation programs are devoted to the mental and physical well being of Marines and families. In aggregate, these programs provide warriors, families, and commanders with knowledge, skills, and tools from which health, resiliency, and optimal performance can emerge.

Semper Fit and Recreation strategic priorities:

- Contribute to the Combat Readiness of Marines through Functional/Combat Conditioning.
- High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) program's primary purpose is to enhance operational fitness levels and optimized combat readiness and resiliency. It is comprised of Power/Strength, Speed/Agility, and most importantly INJURY PREVENTION. We are converting underutilized spaces such as racquetball courts, bowling centers, basketball courts into HITT Centers. HITT can also be conducted outdoors (unit PT).
- Growing resiliency through recreation & sports programs (social component).
- Ensure quality MWR support for deployed Marines world-wide.

Objectives for Semper Fit and Recreation:

- Promote healthy lifestyles & active living – contributing to prevention.
- Teach Basic Skills that lead to lifetime pursuits.
- Many Marines lack exposure and basic skills to a variety of sports and recreation that may lead to lifetime pursuits and enjoyment. Semper Fit can promote active living, entertainment, basic skills development, and community connection of our junior Marines and families.
- Provide opportunities that allow Marines & families to connect to their community.
- Provide customer/unit driven programs & services.
- Promote inclusive practices.
- Increase non-facility based programming
- Amplify family programming

TRICARE and Mental Health and Behavior Resources

www.tricare.mil

TRICARE is the health care program serving uniformed service members, retirees and their families worldwide. TRICARE can be especially helpful for Marines and families who are having difficulty reuniting due to complications from combat stress or other mental-health-related issues. TRICARE covers mental/behavioral health care that is medically or psychologically necessary. There are many different types of outpatient and inpatient mental/behavioral health care, and the coverage varies by the type of care.

Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/>

The Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline was founded by the VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to ensure veterans in emotional crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. To operate the hotline, the VA partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Veterans can call the Lifeline number, (800) 273-TALK (8255), and press "1" to be routed to the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline.