

SOLDIER'S HEART

By Kate Dahlstedt

CHILDREN OF MILITARY FAMILIES COMMON ISSUES

Single parent family – have the same concerns as any, but with the added concerns about the missing parent. The caretaking parent is overwhelmed by the deployment as well.

Some children have two parents deployed at the same time – have to be cared for by other family or friends – their whole lives are in upheaval.

Children and teens can't express feelings – don't know what they are feeling or why. They often express somatically- headaches, stomachaches, sleep and eating problems, difficulty concentrating. Their schoolwork often suffers.

Military children move 3 times as often as their peers. Most of their friends are not from military families. Military children often withdraw, feel isolated and rejected by peers. They can be sad, melancholy, nervous, anxious, fearful, and phobic during deployment.

INTERVENTIONS

Consistency – keep as normal a routine as possible. So much is unknown, so a structure they can rely on is very important.

Control– So much is out of their control. Give them as many choices as possible – what to eat, what to wear, etc.

Safety – create an atmosphere that feels safe and relaxing. Reassure the child often. Answer questions to reduce the unknowns. Don't make false promises.

Exercise – reduces stress and increases feelings of well being

Music and the creative arts – allow for expression of emotion without words.