

COMING TOGETHER AROUND MILITARY FAMILIES:®

SUPPORTING OUR BABIES AND TODDLERS

STAYING CONNECTED

“We can be together—
even while we’re apart.”



There **are** ways to keep a baby
or toddler connected to a parent
who is deployed.

Developed by



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STAYING CONNECTED

Babies and toddlers do feel a loss when their parents are deployed.

It is important that young children stay connected to the absent parent throughout the separation.

Tips for Staying Connected:

- Prior to leaving, the active duty parent can audio- or videotape herself telling stories or reading her child's favorite books.
- Prior to leaving, the active duty parent can have pictures taken of himself with his baby or toddler carrying out daily, comforting routines (reading books, giving baths, tucking into bed, etc.). These pictures can be kept within easy reach of family members, including the child. The remaining parent can also make an album of these photos so the child can bring it to other settings, like child care, where he may need a little reassurance.
- The caregiver can, on a regular basis, sit down with the baby or toddler and share memories of the absent parent through photo albums or scrapbooks.
- The deployed parent

can send letters, artwork, or other special items to her young child. The remaining parent can, in turn, add these items to the scrapbook.

- The deployed parent and child can participate in "shared" activities. For example, the deployed parent can draw a picture and send it to his child. His child can color it in, have a photo taken of herself holding the shared art, and send the photo back to the deployed parent.
- The deployed parent can leave a shirt that has his scent on it with his child.
- The remaining caregiver can offer a young child ongoing reassurance about how much the deployed parent loves and thinks about him. For example, the remaining parent might say, "Your mommy loves you so much. She thinks about you all the time and would love to be here with you if she could."
- The remaining caregiver can keep images and memories of the deployed parent vivid by keeping that parent a part of daily routines. For example, while eating yogurt with her baby, the remaining caregiver can say, "Your daddy loves to eat yogurt, too. Banana is his favorite, too!"

