



Talking About Hard Things

The Importance of
Strong Communication
in Military Families

Military life, while honorable and respected, comes with challenges for the whole family. From training to deployment, families are separated repeatedly. It can be a struggle to stay connected. Military members may also face physical injuries and mental health issues including trauma and suicide risk. Children may experience feelings of abandonment due to constant moving or separation from the parent. Spouses may experience an increase in responsibilities. The whole family system is impacted. Working on communication when there are periods of separation or great challenges is vital. Families must work at building strong communication to stay united.

Tips for improving communication while having difficult conversations:

- Be aware of the common challenges military families might go through. Talk about them.
- Avoid repressing feelings. Recognize and express emotions. Don't bottle them up.
- Anticipate the potential for abandonment issues and talk to children about them often.
- Listen carefully to all family members. Work to understand what each person thinks and how they feel.
- Validate one another's' emotions and establish a plan to ease fears.
- Keep communication open with the entire family. Let others know what to expect as much as possible.
- Set specific times to discuss uncomfortable things. Be selective while choosing a place and time to share.
- Share the right amount of information based on the situation.
- Be aware of tendencies to avoid uncomfortable topics like physical intimacy, finances, and unresolved fights.
- Respond with body language like nodding and good eye contact, to demonstrate attention to your partner.
- Repeat back what you heard the other person say and seek clarification, if needed.
- Keep a sense of humor about difficult situations.
- Talk openly about what is on your mind and important to you.
- Don't respond with judgment about rights or wrongs.
- Don't respond about how the other person should feel or give advice.

It can be tough to talk about difficult things with your family. The USPS EAP can provide information and resources to help you and your loved ones learn to improve communication when facing challenging times. Reach out today to learn more or visit EAP4YOU.com.