Comprehensive Resilience Modules

Family Dimension

"Trust and Insecurity"

Trust and Insecurity

Overview

Maintaining trust with your family while you are deployed can relieve a great deal of stress and help you focus your attention on the mission.

You are probably already worried about what's going on at home while you are away. Adding mistrust to the list can take a tremendous amount of time and energy.

Your family will also appreciate the sense of trust that you are showing in them.

Feeling secure in your family relationships can help you build your resilience so that you have a stronger foundation from which to face the immense pressure of being deployed.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Principles

When you're feeling insecure, jealous, or distrustful of your partner, starting off your conversation in a harsh way can often lead to an escalation or a fight.

Start the conversation gently → **Don't make your partner get defensive** → **Let your partner know what you feel and what you need.**

Gentle Start-Up is:

- ❑ Talking about what you feel.
- ❑ Describing the situation to your partner in kind of a neutral way that doesn't get your partner defensive
- ❑ Talking about what you need

In A "Gentle Start-Up"

- ❑ **Don't store up feelings or suppress them, express them.**
- ❑ **Keep feelings specific to a particular situation, talk about how you feel in that situation.**
- ❑ **Describe your feelings instead of describing what your partner did wrong.**

De-escalate Conflict

- Begin by saying, "I'm really upset about something. I want to talk to you about it.
- In this way, you avoid blaming your partner. This can de-escalate the conflict

Describe the situation in neutral terms

- Explain the facts of what you are upset about.
- For example, say, "the garbage hasn't been taken out" or "there's a new dent in the car." Rather than saying, "you did this wrong."

Talk about what you need

- Talk about what you need, not what you don't need. For example, you can say "I need you to keep the house clean" rather than saying "Stop making a mess!"

Gentle Start-Up Techniques

This process can help you create a better working relationship even before problems begin by building trust with each other everyday.

Most of us become suspicious over a period of time, due to a series of events.

Gentle Start-Up

Successful couples actively try to avoid letting that happen.

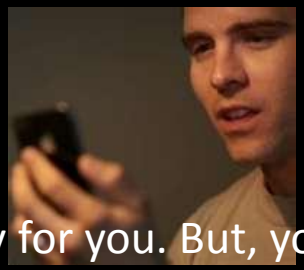
You should know what would trigger insecurity in your partner. You must have active communication

You don't have to wait until your spouse does something suspicious.

Supporting a Resilient and Ready Force

Principles Activity #1

- **Let's review this scenario to see how this couple deals with issues of insecurity, jealousy, and distrust, and see just how Gentle Start-Up works.**



Deployed Male: Hey, baby. What's up?

Female Spouse: Awe, you know I've been so lonely for you. But, you know, last night Kim called me up, and I went out with the girls to the club and we went out dancing and we just had the best time. I'm just not as lonely today.

Male: You better not have danced with any other guys.

Female: Well, well, well, no, we were just dancing as a group, you know? I mean there were other guys on the dance floor, but you know we weren't doing anything!

You have some choices of how you respond.

Take a minute to explore each of the responses.

Principles (Activity #1 Response)

- **Let's review this scenario to see how this couple deals with issues of insecurity, jealousy, and distrust, and see just how Gentle Start-Up works.**

Soldier Response 1 – **Bad Aggressive**

Deployed Male: I go outside the wire everyday looking everywhere for IEDs.
Now what do you do, sit at home? Go dancing at some club like some kind of tramp?

Female (Spouse): (frustrated, doesn't speak)

- ❑ Aggressive Response - This is a bad choice for a start-up to a conversation. This is what we call a "harsh start-up." The Soldier is making a nasty accusation about his wife. This is an aggressive response too, and it will make the wife feel defensive and lead to her turning around and attacking him back. She can't listen to his concerns if she feels attacked. Instead, the Soldier needs to use a "Gentle Start-Up" and state what he needs.

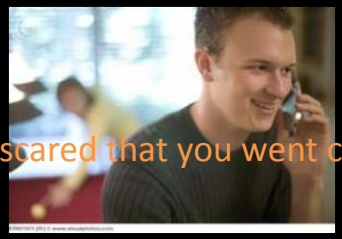
Soldier Response 2 – **Bad Withdrawn**

Deployed Male: I don't care what you do. (Slams phone down and hangs up.)

Female (Spouse): (Female looks shocked)

- ❑ Withdrawn Response – This is a bad response to the spouse's story, because by hanging up, the Soldier is withdrawing from his wife. The result is that she has no idea what he feels. She only knows that now there is emotional distance between them, and she has no way to repair things without knowing what he's feeling. Again, a Gentle Start-Up would be helpful, so that the Soldier states his feelings and what he needs to hear from his partner.

Principles (Activity #1 Response)



Soldier Response 3 – **Positive**

Deployed Male: Baby, I'm just scared that you went clubbing'. I need to know that you isn't cheating' on me.

Female Spouse : (no response)

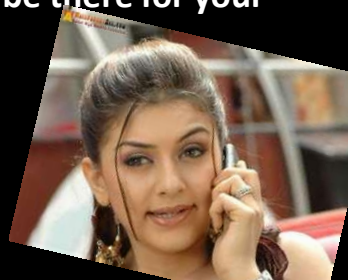
- Positive Response - **This response was a great example of a "Gentle Start-Up" as a reply to the wife's story.**

The Soldier naturally has feelings of jealously, insecurity, and mistrust, but he's not turning his feelings into a fight.

Let's review "Gentle Start-Up" and see what the Soldier did.

- Part one to "Gentle Start-Up" is saying how you feel. The Soldier is saying to his wife, "I'm scared." He told her how her actions made him feel. It takes more strength to say what you feel than to hide it. Say it, don't hide it.
- Part two to "Gentle Start- Up is describing the situation in neutral, non-blaming terms. He stays specific to the facts of the situation and in neutral, non-blaming terms by saying that ,"you went clubbing.' " There are no accusations mixed in here. Just the facts.
- Part three of Gentle Start-Up is saying what you need. The Soldier said, "I need to know you are not cheating' on me." It takes courage to say what you think.

In the Gentle Start-Up, the Soldier told his wife how he felt. He described the situation in a neutral way, without blame, and he told his wife what he needed. He didn't withdraw or blame or become aggressive. When feeling jealous or insecure, "Gentle Start-Up" can be a very helpful skill to use since it gives your partner a chance to be there for your needs.



Principles (Activity #2)

Trust can be a fragile thing, and is demonstrated in your actions.

In this activity, read the situation and determine if it is aggressive, withdrawn or positive.

Male Character (Deployed Soldier): What's new at home lately?

Female Character (Wife): I had coffee with Jim yesterday. He's about to deploy soon and he's a really nice guy. You'd like him.

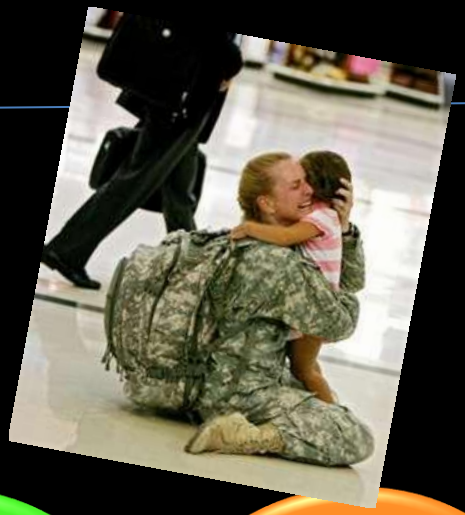
- ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE #1: Male Character (Deployed Soldier): What are you going to do on your next date, have sex with him? You disgust me!
- ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE #2:

Male Character (Deployed Soldier): Oh really? Well, I've got to go now. (hangs up the phone)

- ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE #3:

Male Character (Deployed Soldier): That makes me really nervous, you seeing' this Jim by yourself. Can you tell me that nothing bad is going on?

Take Away



Feeling mistrust and insecure about your family when deployed, you are not alone. Research shows it is one of the most common family issues that Soldiers face.

You can improve the way you deal with this issue by using the Gentle Start-Up Method to communicate with your family.

State how you feel.

Describe the situation without blaming anyone.

State what you need.

Maintaining trust with your family while deployed can relieve a great deal of stress, and help you focus your attention on the mission.

Feeling secure in your family relationships can help you build your resilience, you have a stronger foundation to face the immense pressure of being deployed.

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