



# Talking about Your Deployment

### **Remember that talking about difficult issues tends to help.**

You may be tempted to not raise sensitive or emotional issues at home. Children know when something is wrong, however. When you bring up the issue, you are sending a powerful message that as a family you can get through any difficult situation.

### **Invite your child's questions.**

Find ways to be open to talking about your deployment, regarding both your own experiences as appropriate and your child's experiences while you were gone. You may think, "They never ask so they're OK." Pay attention to the indirect messages you are sending them – if you never mention your deployment, your children may be taking their cue from you.

### **Consider ahead of time the topics you can and cannot discuss.**

Think through the areas of your deployment you are comfortable discussing or not. Practice a kind way of saying, "I understand you are curious, but I don't want to talk about that now."

### **Be prepared for tough questions and feelings.**

Remember your child's questions are their way of trying to make sense of your absence and return. Older children will have many intense feelings about your absence and how things might change with your return.

### **Look beneath the surface of your child's questions and feelings.**

If your teenager is angry, hang onto your patience and invite him to tell you about the really hard parts of your absence. Many questions are really a child's way of wanting to be reassured that they are safe and OK.

### **Have a plan about talking with your child about any tough topic.**

Sometimes questions will just come up out of the blue, but you may also want to set aside a special time to talk with your child about a difficult topic. Focus on hearing what your child thinks and feels about the situation, not on explaining or justifying your viewpoint.