



Parenting with Physical Challenges

Combat injury happens to the whole family. Injuries can be both “visible” and “invisible.” Visible injuries cause observable physical problems, while invisible injuries produce behavioral changes in the injured service member that can disrupt family relationships. The signature injuries of the current wars, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are examples of “invisible” injuries. Often, both visible and invisible injuries are present in the same person.

Here are some things to consider.

- Where is your family in the Injury Recovery Journey?
 - A typical military family’s NORMAL adjustment starts with the shock of finding out about the injury through the subsequent hospitalizations, outpatient rehabilitation, and return home. Then over time new routines and relationships develop around the changed behavior and needs of the service member.
- How have your children reacted to the injury?
 - Age and development will determine how your children react to the injury. It is important to recognize when your children’s behavior could be a reaction to changes in routine and relationships that are created by having a combat injured parent.
- Promote Communication: Acknowledge and Describe the Situation to Each Other and Your Children
 - Understand how the injury is affecting family relationships. In talking with professionals, try to learn as much as you can about the injury. Read about the injury.
 - Have repeated conversations with your children about the injury, making sure that what you say is appropriate to your children’s age and maturity level.
 - Encourage everyone to describe their feelings as they occur.
- Develop hope by reaching out to people and resources outside of the family.
 - Learn to communicate with family, friends, co-workers, community and professional providers about your family’s unique struggle with the service member’s injury and behavior.
- Develop hope by setting realistic and manageable goals.