



Becoming a Self-Reliant and Resilient Family

A study guide for military members and others who face similar challenges

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First Presidency Message

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are pleased to provide this resource, *Becoming a Self-Reliant and Resilient Family*, to you and your family as you serve in the armed forces of your country.

This manual contains gospel-centered instructions to help you and your family respond to the challenges of military life. It includes principles for building a strong marriage, overcoming the trials of family separation and reintegration, and developing deeper faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

We express our sincere gratitude for the many sacrifices you and your family make as you serve in the armed forces. May the Lord bless and protect you in your righteous endeavors to keep His commandments and serve faithfully.

Sincerely,

The First Presidency

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Introduction

Course Objective

The purpose of this study guide and course is for you and your family to develop self-reliance and resilience, which will strengthen you, help you successfully endure the trials common to military life, and anchor you to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who Participates in This Course

This course is designed for military families and single service members, whether they are preparing for deployment or not. Other nonmilitary individuals and families in the ward or stake who face similar challenges may also benefit from this resource. As members' needs are discussed in ward council, priesthood and auxiliary leaders may recommend others to attend the classes.

How to Use This Study Guide

This study guide can be used either for personal study or for a class taught by a facilitator. If you are studying these lessons individually, be sure to record your thoughts and goals throughout each lesson. The lessons identify core principles that will enable individuals and families to become more self-reliant and resilient. Additional resources are listed at the beginning of each lesson, and you can use these resources for extended personal study.

Role of Facilitators

Military relations missionary couples have received training to serve as facilitators for this course. If a military relations couple is not assigned to an area, individuals who have had experiences with the military may be called to facilitate the classes.

For the Facilitator

- Prayerfully study the resources listed in each lesson.
- This course consists of eight 45-minute classes. Each class should not have more than 14 participants. *Note: There is more material in the outlines than you will be able to use in a 45-minute lesson.*

- If appropriate, consider sharing your own experiences as you teach the principles in these lessons.
- Obtain copies of this study guide (*Becoming a Self-Reliant and Resilient Family*) for the participants. Copies may be printed from [lds.org/callings/military-relations](https://www.lds.org/callings/military-relations). The manual can also be accessed on the Gospel Library app.
- The Wi-Fi connection in Church buildings is not always reliable. Download any videos you want to show, and copy them to a USB drive or a DVD. If you need help downloading videos, see “How to Show Videos without an Internet Connection” on [lds.org/media-library](https://www.lds.org/media-library).
- Explain that these lessons are not group therapy or clinical treatment sessions. Encourage participants to share their experiences, but remind them not to share matters that require ecclesiastical or professional assistance.



LESSON 1

How do I respond to challenges with resilience?

The purpose of this lesson is to help military members and their families develop the resilience they need to endure challenges.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

Thomas S. Monson, “[Meeting Life’s Challenges](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 68–71

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[Of Things That Matter Most](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 19–22

Russell M. Nelson, “[Face the Future with Faith](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 34–36

[Matthew 11:28–30](#)—Come unto Christ

[Hebrews 6:19](#); [Ether 12:4](#)—Hope as an anchor of the soul

[Doctrine and Covenants 90:24](#); [98:3](#); [122:7](#)—Experiences can work to our good

Bible Dictionary, “[Grace](#)”

Video:

Russell M. Nelson, “[Face the Future with Faith](#),” LDS.org

Learning outline

Reflect on your experiences in the military. As a service member or family member, what are some of the advantages and challenges of serving in the military? List some of these advantages and challenges in this workbook. (There may be some experiences that are both an advantage and a challenge.) After you have had a chance to reflect, share with your spouse or with a trusted friend your feelings about how life in the military has affected you and your family. The purpose of this discussion is to give you an opportunity to discuss your experiences with military life openly with others who have had similar experiences.

Advantages	Challenges



Read [Doctrine and Covenants 90:24](#) and [98:3](#).

How does the principle in these scriptures relate to your list of challenges and advantages? How can these scriptures give you and your family a different perspective on the challenges you may face while in the military?

Principle 1: Resilience can help you face your challenges with faith.

What is resilience? The word *resilience* can be applied to the behaviors that help people to respond well to stressful situations. Sometimes we assume that people who respond with resilience do not actually feel the stress of different situations. However, resilience is not insensitivity or indifference. In fact, one of

the most important factors in responding with resilience is learning to turn to others for support during difficult times. Resilience helps people become flexible and bounce back from setbacks. It helps them to be grateful for life's simple pleasures and have a strong faith that they can move forward with God's help, even as they face significant challenges.



We all experience blessings and challenges, and many of these experiences can work toward our good. Military families have always had to deal with separation from loved ones. However, since 2001, service members have experienced the impact of multiple, high-risk deployments to war zones. They have also faced emotional wars as well—battles against discouragement, disillusionment, distress, cynicism, and anger. Some experience moral

injuries as they try to reconcile their combat experiences with God's teachings. They struggle spiritually, "trying to accept a world of both good and evil, where pain and loss seem unconnected to faith and justice. . . . [Some say that] God can be found or lost in a foxhole, but rarely [do traumatic events] leave someone's faith untouched" (Eve Conant, "God, War and the Presidency," *Newsweek*, May 6, 2007, newsweek.com).

How has living a military life helped you develop resilience?

When have you successfully responded to a challenge? What was that experience like and what did you learn?

Principle 2: Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will help you develop resilience.



This life is a time for us to grow and learn. Rather than removing the challenges that help us grow, Heavenly Father gives us strength to overcome those challenges. In June 2012, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke at a devotional for service members. In his talk, he drew from Joseph Smith’s experiences at Liberty Jail to teach about how Heavenly Father sustains us during difficult times. Elder Holland said:

“My message today is that when you have no other choice, you can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in any situation you are in. . . . Indeed, let me say that even a little stronger: You can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in the most miserable experiences of your life—in the worst settings, while enduring the most painful injustices, when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition you have ever faced” (in Melissa Merrill, “Church Leaders Address Servicemen and Servicewomen in Military Devotional,” Ensign, Oct. 2012, 77).



Read [Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–9](#) and the [introduction to section 121](#).

What was the experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail? How did the Lord give him strength and comfort? How has the Lord comforted you and helped you to endure challenges?

Grace is one way we can receive help from Heavenly Father during difficult times. To understand more about grace, look up “[Grace](#)” in the Bible Dictionary (page 654) and read the second paragraph in the section. Also read the following statement from Brad Wilcox, a professor at Brigham Young University:

"Growth and development take time. Learning takes time. When we understand grace, we understand that God is long-suffering, that change is a process, and that repentance is a pattern in our lives. When we understand grace, we understand that the blessings of Christ's Atonement are continuous and His strength is perfect in our weakness (see [2 Corinthians 12:9](#)). When we understand grace, we can, as it says in the Doctrine and Covenants, 'continue in patience until [we] are perfected' ([Doctrine and Covenants 67:13](#)). . . .

"Elder Bruce C. Hafen has written, 'The Savior's gift of grace to us is not necessarily limited in time to "after" all we can do. We may receive his grace before, during and after the time when we expend our own efforts' (The Broken Heart [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989], 155). So grace is not a booster engine that kicks in once our fuel supply is exhausted. Rather, it is our constant energy source. It is not the light at the end of the tunnel but the light that moves us through the tunnel. Grace is not achieved somewhere down the road. It is received right here and right now. It is not a finishing touch; it is the Finisher's touch (see Hebrews 12:2)" (Brad Wilcox, "[His Grace Is Sufficient](#)" [Brigham Young University devotional, June 12, 2011], 5, [speeches.byu.edu](#)).

What experiences have you had where you have recognized the Savior's grace operating in your life?

How can you continue to invite and receive the blessings of the Savior's grace? What have your experiences taught you about relying on God for strength and comfort?

"[My deployment to Afghanistan] gave me the time and a place to really focus on me and my relationship with God, because I didn't have one before it. Almost nightly I got the urge to just go find a quiet corner out by the corner of the base. I found a lot of peace, being able to truly open my heart. . . . It was the first time in my life that I had ever had an experience with the still, small voice. Being in a combat zone, being in a war zone, the Spirit can be there if you let it be there."

—Andrew Blunt, U.S. Army
Special Forces Group (Airborne)

Principle 3: You can practice resilient behaviors in your everyday life.



Following are eight behaviors that will help you develop resilience if you practice them daily. Practicing them each day helps to make them an automatic response during times when you experience a greater degree of stress. Their daily use also lowers the baseline level of stress, which can help to reduce the impact of challenging situations. Make a plan to begin incorporating these eight behaviors into your lifestyle.

- **Cultivate humility and curiosity.** One of the fundamental resilient behaviors is being aware of yourself—your thoughts, feelings, and actions. This self-awareness is also an important part of developing humility. Realize that your negative reactions to your circumstances can sometimes create stressors in your relationships, and the more aware you are of your reactions, the more you will be able to temper them. Be open to and curious about the changes in your life, and look at them as opportunities for growth.
- **Seek balance.** You will become more resilient as you continue to learn how to balance the many demands on your time. Regulate your emotions, energy levels, and spiritual and physical needs, and rearrange things when you get out of balance. Set appropriate goals for your productivity, and learn to focus on what you need to accomplish each day rather than worrying about what has happened in the past or what may happen in the future. It may help to occasionally find a spot of nature nearby and take time to meditate. Realize that when your life gets out of balance, problems in your family could become magnified.
- **Have a grateful and optimistic heart.** Savor the chance to be grateful each day. It may help to make expressing gratitude part of your daily ritual, such as in a gratitude journal. During difficult situations, it may also help for you to create a list of things that you can control in your circumstances and things you cannot control. Build your faith that Heavenly Father will help you with those things that are out of your control. Understand that your setbacks are temporary and visualize a joyful future. Make the conscious choice to trust in God and His plan for you and your family. Live in thanksgiving daily (see [Alma 34:38](#)).
- **Build a personal stress-management plan.** Guard against rigid or overly simple ways of dealing with stress. You have many options for dealing with stress, and you will become more resilient as you learn to employ new and different ways to cope. Maintaining a healthy diet and getting exercise can

help you relieve stress. You may find that activities such as yoga, swimming, or hiking will help you relax and think more clearly during stressful situations. According to Larry A. Tucker, a professor of exercise science at Brigham Young University, “Regular exercise offers our minds and bodies a welcome release from the pressures of everyday life” (“[Move More, Stress Less!](#)” *Ensign*, Aug. 2004, 58).

- **Learn to compromise.** Pick your battles, and learn to be flexible with things and situations. Do not always insist that things go your way. We experience unhealthy stress when we mix up our priorities. Keep your standards, but be willing to adjust your expectations and recognize when you’re fighting for a preference that is less important than keeping peace in your family relationships.
- **Play to your strengths.** Recognize that you have been given unique spiritual gifts from Heavenly Father. He expects you to use these gifts to bless your family and others. If you do not know your spiritual gifts, take time to pray, study your patriarchal blessing, and write in your journal. Develop the attitude that you can accomplish hard tasks, and have faith that you can apply your strengths to great benefit during challenging times. Take steps to develop your gifts and strengths further.
- **Seek and give help when needed.** Stay close to those who can help you get through hard times. Do not be afraid to call upon friends, extended family members, and Church members (such as your home teachers, visiting teachers, bishop, and Relief Society president) to help you. Be willing to extend empathy and help to others when they are experiencing difficult times. Develop a pattern of giving and receiving.
- **Act instead of being acted upon.** Don’t let challenges stop you from living. You may need to move forward slowly, but be willing to take action, make important decisions, and initiate the changes you would like to see in your life.

Reflect on any experiences you have had or any blessings you have received by practicing these resilient behaviors. What examples have you seen of others who respond effectively to their challenges?



Watch the video “[Face the Future with Faith.](#)”

What did you learn about hope and optimism from President Russell M. Nelson’s teachings?

"Military life can be very hard. Sometimes in our Church culture, while we acknowledge that everyone has trials, there is also this false assumption that if you are righteous enough you will be able to handle anything with ease and peace. What does that mean if you are trying your best to live the gospel and you are struggling anyway? What military families need to hear is . . . that struggle is normal. . . . Every military family deals with [similar] issues."

—Ida Ewing, wife of Geoffrey Ewing, U.S. Air Force

Decide to act

What resilient behavior do you feel impressed to strengthen by practicing this week?

What scripture or quote could help strengthen you as you practice?

With whom would you like to share your experience daily as you learn?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 1

1. Resilient behaviors help people to respond well to stressful situations.
2. Heavenly Father gives us strength and comfort through His grace, which helps us to overcome challenges.
3. The following key behaviors will help you become more resilient:
 - a. Cultivate humility and curiosity.
 - b. Seek balance.
 - c. Have a grateful and optimistic heart.
 - d. Build a personal stress-management plan.
 - e. Learn to compromise.
 - f. Play to your strengths.
 - g. Seek and give help when needed.
 - h. Act instead of being acted upon.

[illegible]



Photo from military district meeting with President Russell M. Nelson, Okinawa, Japan

LESSON 2

How do I become spiritually self-reliant?

The purpose of this lesson is to help you recognize the value of becoming spiritually self-reliant.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

David A. Bednar, “[Converted unto the Lord](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 106–9

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[The Power of a Personal Testimony](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 37–39

M. Russell Ballard, “[Becoming Self-Reliant—Spiritually and Physically](#),” *Ensign*, Mar. 2009, 50–55

[Ephesians 6:10–18](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 27:15–18](#)—The armor of God

[Mormon 9:27](#)—Come unto Christ

[Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28](#)—Agents unto ourselves

[Doctrine and Covenants 130:18–19](#)—Diligence and obedience

Videos:

“[Dare to Stand Alone](#),” *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

“[Good Things to Come](#),” *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

Learning outline

Each of us has weaknesses and strengths (see [Ether 12:27](#)). The Lord can use both to help us learn to rely on Him, but only if we strive to obey His will. President N. Eldon Tanner said the following in the April 1979 general conference:

"It is important that we make up our minds early in life as to what we will do and what we will not do. Long before the moment of temptation comes we should have determined that we will resist that cigarette, that drink of whiskey, that act of immorality, or anything that will keep us from enjoying the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord.

"We all have different weaknesses and temptations, and we should examine our lives to find out what those weaknesses are and where we should put on extra armor so we can do what is right and not submit to temptation" ("[Put On the Whole Armor of God](#)," Ensign, May 1979, 45).

Think of some of your weaknesses and strengths. What can you do to follow President Tanner's counsel? What have your weaknesses and strengths taught you about relying on God for help?

Principle 1: The armor of God will help you overcome temptation.



Read [Ephesians 6:10–18](#) and [Doctrine and Covenants 27:15–18](#).



Just as soldiers prepare for battle with physical armor, we need to prepare for spiritual battle with spiritual armor. The armor of God is a metaphor for righteous, consistent choices and attitudes that help you overcome temptation and remain spiritually safe. Identify the different parts of the armor of God, and then think about your own armor. What areas could you

strengthen? For example, do you rely on the promptings and guidance of the Holy Ghost—the sword of the Spirit—each day?

Read the following quotation from Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“[Satan] seeks to find any chink in the armor of each person. He knows our weaknesses and knows how to exploit them if we allow him to do so. We can defend ourselves against his attacks and deceptions only by understanding the commandments and by fortifying ourselves each day through praying, studying the scriptures, and following the counsel of the Lord’s anointed” (“The Priesthood of God,” Ensign, Nov. 1988, 35).

According to Elder Wirthlin, what choices will help you strengthen your armor? How have you seen these choices strengthen you in the past? Record an experience in the space below.

As a member of the military, you will inevitably experience times of separation from family members. You may even be in a situation where you are the only member of the Church in your area.



Watch the video “[Dare to Stand Alone.](#)”

Record an experience where you have obeyed the commandments, even when you had to do so alone. Why did you choose to keep the commandments in that situation?

Principle 2: Spiritual self-reliance will help you to endure your challenges.



Putting on the full armor of God is a form of spiritual self-reliance. Consider the difference between spiritual dependence and spiritual self-reliance. In what ways are you currently spiritually dependent? In what ways are you currently self-reliant? List some of the attributes of a person who is spiritually self-reliant.

Attributes of Someone Who Is Spiritually Self-Reliant

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used the following statement from the *Church Handbook of Instructions* to teach about self-reliance:

“The Savior has commanded the Church and its members to be self-reliant and independent. . . .

“To become self-reliant, a person must work. Work is physical, mental, or spiritual effort. It is a basic source of happiness, self-worth, and prosperity. Through work, people accomplish many good things in their lives.

“. . . As people become self-reliant, they are better prepared to endure adversities . . . [and] better able to care for others in need [Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders (1998), 257]” (“[Becoming Self-Reliant—Spiritually and Physically](#),” Ensign, Mar. 2009, 50).

Consider how spiritual health, the armor of God, and spiritual self-reliance are connected. Make a list of things you could do differently in your life to increase or develop your spiritual self-reliance.

“One idea to help us be resilient is to change our perspective. I can easily fall into the trap of a ‘woe is me’ attitude and become overwhelmed or stressed with the demands of life and motherhood. When we serve others, we see that we are not the only ones with struggles.”

—Andrea Helms, wife of
Thomas S. Helms, U.S. Army

Elder Ballard said, “From my experience, I believe that a few simple but very important principles can help prepare us to become more self-reliant” (“[Becoming Self-Reliant](#),” 52). The following steps to self-reliance have been adapted from Elder Ballard’s March 2009 *Ensign* article, “Becoming Self-Reliant—Spiritually and Physically.” Consider your own experiences as you read these steps.

- **Find answers through the Spirit first.** In this age of information, we can often turn first to the Internet or other sources to find truth. However, we need to keep in mind that the Internet doesn’t have a truth filter. We have access to the source of all light and truth—our Heavenly Father.

We can increase in our confidence that we will receive inspiration from Heavenly Father when we recognize that we are His children and that He loves us. Regardless of our circumstances, desperate as we may be, we are entitled to the Light of Christ (see [Moroni 7:16](#)). Heavenly Father has promised us that we can find, through fervent prayer and study and the companionship of the Spirit, the answers that we most need in life, including what we must do to become more self-reliant.

Consider those experiences in your life when you have recognized and followed the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Take time to remember the blessings you received from those choices and think of ways you can continue to invite the Spirit into your life.

- **Examine your life and the needs of others.** In order to become more self-reliant, you need to honestly examine your life. Do you live according to the eternal truths and doctrines of the restored gospel? What have you done to become spiritually self-reliant?

You also should examine the needs of others and how you can help to meet those needs. When you learn to step outside yourself, you learn that you are not the only one with challenges. Consider whether you are in a position to help someone else become spiritually self-reliant. If you feel overstretched in your service to others, think of ways to replenish your strength.

- **Choose between good and evil.** When you choose to do right, your options continue to expand. When you choose to do wrong, your options slowly constrict. Benjamin Franklin said:

"[War] was exhausting. It was terribly hard. It really was like the Wild West. It was riots and detainees burning tents and refusing to cooperate and escape attempts. I can't imagine having to go through that experience without my faith. I can't imagine leaving a pregnant wife and three small children without my faith in God to pull us through that."

—Tim Clayson,
National Guard (USA)

(From April 2015 general
conference special broadcast,
"Faith on the Front Lines,"
ksl.com/?sid=34085590.)

"Since the foundation of all happiness is thinking rightly, and since correct action is dependent on correct opinion, we cannot be too careful in choosing the value system we allow to govern our thoughts and actions.

"And to know that God governs in the affairs of men, that he hears and answers prayers, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, is indeed, a powerful regulator of human conduct" (Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue, ed. George L. Rogers [1996], 89–90; quoted in M. Russell Ballard, "Becoming Self-Reliant," 54).

- **Be deliberate in your decisions.** Use common sense when you need to make important decisions. Common sense looks different to different people, but it always includes being able to listen to and heed the promptings of the Spirit. Don't make hasty decisions in the moment that you may regret later, especially when you're facing pressure from others to break the commandments. Be patient and keep your standards.
- **Continually seek the Lord's guidance.** Developing self-reliance is a continuing cycle of progression. As you learn to find answers through the Spirit and continue to seek the Lord's guidance, Heavenly Father promises that He will enlighten you and make His will known to you, "yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man" (D&C 76:10). "Our Father in Heaven expects us to study it out first and then pray for guidance as we seek answers to questions and concerns in our personal lives. We have our Heavenly Father's assurance that He will hear and answer our prayers. The answer may come through the voice and wisdom of trusted friends and family, the scriptures, and the words of prophets" (Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Waiting on the Road to Damascus," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 75).

Record any experiences you have had with these steps to spiritual self-reliance.

How has spiritual self-reliance helped you through everyday challenges?

How can you help others in your family to develop spiritual self-reliance?

How can the Lord speak to you as you read the scriptures and review your patriarchal blessing?



Watch the video “[Good Things to Come](#).”

What did you learn about hope and enduring challenges from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland?

Decide to act

What changes will you make today as a result of what you have learned?

How can you share the benefits of spiritual self-reliance with others you know?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 2

1. The armor of God is a metaphor for righteous, consistent choices and attitudes that help you overcome temptation and remain spiritually safe.
2. There are some basic principles that you can follow to develop spiritual self-reliance:
 - a. Find answers through the Spirit first.
 - b. Examine your life and the needs of others.
 - c. Choose between good and evil.
 - d. Be deliberate in your decisions.
 - e. Continually seek the Lord's guidance.

[illegible]



LESSON 3

How can my spouse and I build a strong marriage?

The purpose of this lesson is to give couples the tools they need to develop a strong relationship that will continue during times of challenge and separation.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

[“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,”](#) *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129

Russell M. Nelson, [“Nurturing Marriage,”](#) *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 36–38

Sheri L. Dew, [“It Is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone,”](#) *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 12–14

Valerie M. Hudson and Richard B. Miller, [“Equal Partnership in Marriage,”](#) *Ensign*, Apr. 2013, 18–23

Linda K. Burton, [“We’ll Ascend Together,”](#) *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 29–32

[Mosiah 18:8, 21](#)—Carry one another’s burdens

[Ephesians 5:28–29, 33](#)—Love your spouse

[James 3](#)—Kind communication

Videos:

[“How Do I Love Thee?”](#) LDS.org

[“Watch Your Step,”](#) *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

[“Expressions of Love,”](#) *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

[“Saving Your Marriage,”](#) *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

Additional Internet Resources:

[“Keeping Your Guard/Reserve Marriage Strong,”](#) [military.com](#)

[“Maintaining a Strong Relationship through Deployments and Separations,”](#)
[MilitaryOneSource.mil](#)

[“Tips for Married Couples Dealing with Deployment,”](#) [TwoOfUs.org](#)

Learning outline

Read the following quotation from President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

*“Marriage brings greater possibilities for happiness than does any other human relationship. Yet some married couples fall short of their full potential. They let their romance become rusty, take each other for granted, allow other interests or clouds of neglect to obscure the vision of what their marriage really could be. Marriages would be happier if nurtured more carefully” (“[Nurturing Marriage](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 36).*

Principle 1: Successful marriages require careful nurturing.

The following four steps can help you strengthen your relationship with your spouse and build a successful marriage.

1. Make Jesus Christ your first priority, then your spouse.
2. Practice good communication and conflict resolution.
3. Nurture your respect for and friendship with your spouse.
4. Develop healthy coping mechanisms for times of loneliness.

Make Jesus Christ your first priority, then your spouse.



Read the following from the proclamation on the family: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other. . . . In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners” (“[The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

The family proclamation describes the marriage relationship as sacred. What blessings have come to you in your marriage?

What are some things that distract you from building a stronger relationship with your spouse and children?

How does focusing on Christ strengthen your marriage?



Watch the video “[How Do I Love Thee?](#)”

What do you learn from this video about different ways to show love to your spouse? How does showing love to your spouse show that your marriage is a high priority?



Read [Mosiah 18:8, 21](#).

What does this scripture teach about how we should care for one another? What are you doing in your relationship with your spouse to follow Alma’s counsel?

Practice Good Communication and Conflict Resolution

Read the following quotation from President Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Good communication includes taking time to plan together. Couples need private time to observe, to talk, and really listen to each other. They need to cooperate—helping each other as equal partners. They need to nurture their spiritual as well as physical intimacy. They should strive to elevate and motivate each other. Marital unity is sustained when goals are mutually understood. Good communication is also enhanced by prayer. To pray with specific mention of a spouse’s good deed (or need) nurtures a marriage” (“[Nurturing Marriage](#),” Ensign or Liahona, May 2006, 37–38).

How can you increase and improve the quality of positive communication within your relationship?

What are ways you can include couple and family prayer during times of separation?

You may want to consider why communication in marriage is sometimes difficult. Some difficulties in communication arise from the specific needs of individual personalities; some difficulties arise from spouses being accustomed to different cultures. You may want to read the following quotation from Sheri L. Dew, formerly a member of the Relief Society General Presidency, to understand why these differences are important:

"Our Father knew exactly what He was doing when He created us. He made us enough alike to love each other, but enough different that we would need to unite our strengths and stewardships to create a whole. . . . Thus, no marriage . . . is likely to reach its full potential until husbands and wives . . . work together in unity of purpose, respecting and relying upon each other's strengths" ("It Is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone," Ensign, Nov. 2001, 13).

Discuss how to hold a family council. This council could include your children, or it could be an exclusive council between you and your spouse. The following guidelines may be helpful as you carry out your family council (for more ideas, see Nichole Eck, "[Family Councils for Couples](#)," *Ensign*, Jan. 2015, 24–27).

Family Council Guidelines

1. **Start with prayer.** Remember to express gratitude for your spouse and family.
2. **Decide together.** If you don't agree, then you haven't reached a final decision. With the Lord's help, you can reach a consensus that will keep you unified.
3. **Evaluate yourself.** Use the council to improve yourself and set goals.
4. **Talk about the hard topics.** Discuss issues of forgiveness and repentance or financial burdens. Focus your energy on solutions.
5. **Keep it positive.** Celebrate your spouse's positive qualities.
6. **Persevere.** Don't give up if your first family council is awkward or difficult. It takes time to build positive habits.
7. **Conclude with prayer.**

How can holding family councils help you to stay committed to each other?

Read the following quotations from members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and consider how their teachings relate to communication in your marriage.

Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote:

“True love of man for woman always includes love of God from whom all good things issue” (Evidences and Reconciliations, arr. G. Homer Durham, 3 vols. in 1 [1960], 297).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught:

“In the teachings of men—without Christ at the center—there will soon be a slackening sense of service to others.

“. . . Men do not usually love a neighbor simply because he is there; some discover that he exists only after they become persuaded that God exists” (Of One Heart: The Glory of the City of Enoch [1975], 15).

What can you learn from these statements about showing love to your spouse?

How can you keep the Savior at the center of your home and relationships?



Read [James 3:13–18](#).

What principles about communication are taught in this scripture? How have you used these principles in your relationship with your spouse, and how have you been blessed by them?

Nurture your respect for and friendship with your spouse.



Read [Ephesians 5:28–29, 33](#).

How does this scripture apply to your relationship with your spouse? What does this scripture teach about unity in marriage? How can respect and friendship help you to achieve that unity?

What can you do to nurture your respect for and friendship with your spouse?



Watch the video “[Expressions of Love](#)” and record your thoughts about how showing love in different ways can help spouses build respect and friendship.

Develop healthy coping mechanisms for times of loneliness.



Loneliness is a feeling of emptiness or isolation that occurs when you want to connect with others but are unable to for various reasons. Military duties often lead to separation between spouses, and these periods of separation can create feelings of loneliness within your marriage. It's good to remember that spouses may feel lonely even when they are physically together and in a healthy marriage. You can keep a good perspective on your feelings of loneliness if you learn to develop healthy coping mechanisms for when you feel lonely or discouraged.

Read the following quotation from President Gordon B. Hinckley:

"I believe that for most of us the best medicine for loneliness is work, service in behalf of others. I do not minimize your problems, but I do not hesitate to say that there are many others whose problems are more serious than are yours. Reach out to serve them, to help them, to encourage them. There are so many boys and girls who fail in school for want of a little personal attention and encouragement. There are so many elderly people who live in misery and loneliness and fear for whom a simple conversation would bring a measure of hope and happiness" ("Women of the Church," Ensign, Nov. 1996, 68).

What is the difference between being alone and feeling lonely?

What can happen when we allow ourselves to dwell on our sad, discouraged, or lonely feelings?

List some healthy and unhealthy ways to cope with negative emotions, such as loneliness.

Healthy	Unhealthy
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
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Your list of healthy coping mechanisms could include service, meditation, physical exercise, creative projects, learning new skills, and social interaction. You could also refer back to the steps to develop resilience that you learned in lesson 1. Many of the healthy coping mechanisms are similar to the steps to developing resilience.

Your list of unhealthy coping mechanisms for loneliness may include using drugs or alcohol, persistent negativity or criticism in your communication, overeating or undereating, turning away from the gospel, using pornography, and social withdrawal and isolation. Using pornography is an especially destructive behavior for both men and women and should be avoided. You may experience peer pressure to view or read pornographic material, but that is never an acceptable way to cope and can lead to serious problems in your marriage and in your other relationships. If you are struggling with pornography, speak to your priesthood leader about how to obtain help.



Watch the video “[Watch Your Step](#).”

What did you learn about how to respond to the temptation to view or read pornography?

The website [OvercomingPornography.org](#) is an excellent resource both for those who struggle with pornography and for the family members who are affected by their choices. It also includes family home evening lessons that you could use to teach your children about how to respond when they come across pornography.

Together with your spouse, develop a plan to deal with times of loneliness. Identify any unhealthy coping mechanisms that you currently use and begin trying out some healthy coping mechanisms to find a few that work for you.

“We need to have already practiced and strengthened our traits of being committed, dependable, dedicated, faithful, and steadfast before we experience the trials that come during the family separation. When David was standing in front of Goliath, he didn’t say, ‘Let me see if I can figure out how this slingshot works.’ He had already used it to kill a bear and a lion, and he was strong and ready to slay Goliath.”

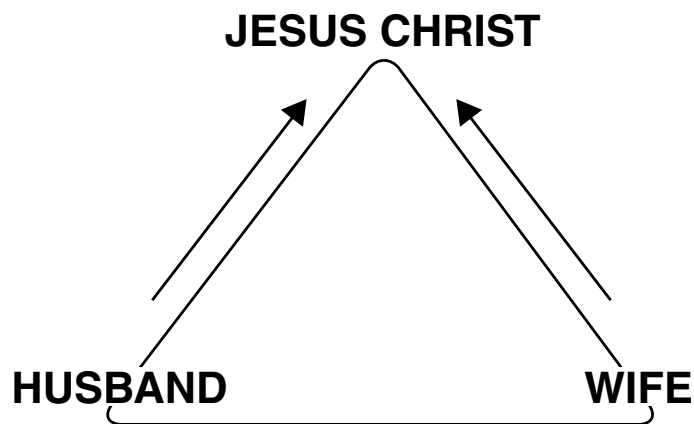
—Andrea Helms, wife of
Thomas S. Helms, U.S. Army

Principle 2: Your marriage will become stronger when you draw close to the Savior.



President Spencer W. Kimball said, “If [each spouse] is forever seeking the interests, comforts, and happiness of the other, the love . . . will grow” (“[Marriage and Divorce](#)” [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 7, 1976], 6, [speeches.byu.edu](#)). Consider whether you are willing to put the interest of your marriage and spouse first.

Look at the illustration of the triangle that shows a couple as the base points on the triangle. The Savior Jesus Christ is the apex of the triangle. As the couple moves closer to the Savior, the distance between them grows smaller.



What does this illustration teach you about how your relationship with the Savior affects your relationship with your spouse? How have you seen this to be true in your own life?

Decide to act

What is one thing you and your spouse can do to strengthen your relationship?

What activities can you do to nurture your friendship with your spouse?

What things do you want to discuss in your family council this week?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 3

1. Successful marriages require careful nurturing. Here are four ways that you and your spouse can build a strong marriage:
 - a. Make Jesus Christ your first priority, then your spouse.
 - b. Practice good communication and conflict resolution.
 - c. Nurture your respect for and friendship with your spouse.
 - d. Develop healthy coping mechanisms for times of loneliness.
2. As you draw closer to the Savior, you will also draw closer to your spouse.

[illegible]



LESSON 4

What behaviors will help my children increase in resilience?

The purpose of this lesson is to give you the tools you need to help your children increase in resilience and in their ability to adapt to change.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

Thomas S. Monson, “[Finding Joy in the Journey](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 84–88

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[The Power of a Personal Testimony](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 37–39

Lyle J. Burrup, “[Raising Resilient Children](#),” *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 12–15

Cheryl A. Esplin, “[Teaching Our Children to Understand](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 10–12

“10 Tips for Building Your Family’s Resilience,” MilitaryOneSource.mil

[Proverbs 22:6](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 68:25–31](#)—Responsibilities of parents

[Doctrine and Covenants 1:25–28](#)—Chastening helps us improve

Videos:

“[Strengthened in the Lord](#),” LDS.org

[“Parenting: Touching the Hearts of Our Youth,”](#) *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

[“Anchoring Children in the Scriptures,”](#) LDS.org

Learning outline

Consider the role that change plays in our lives and relationships. President Thomas S. Monson said:

“Throughout our lives, we must deal with change. Some changes are welcome; some are not. There are changes in our lives which are sudden, such as the unexpected passing of a loved one, an unforeseen illness, the loss of a possession we treasure. But most of the changes take place subtly and slowly” ([“Finding Joy in the Journey,”](#) Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2008, 84).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“There is nothing so unchanging, so inevitable as change itself. The things we see, touch, and feel are always changing. Relationships between friends, husband and wife, father and son, brother and sister are all dynamic, changing relationships. There is a constant that allows us to use change for our own good, and that constant is the revealed eternal truths [from] our Heavenly Father” ([“Progress through Change,”](#) Ensign, Nov. 1979, 61).

What are some of the experiences you have had with change? What made some changes difficult?

What are some of the blessings you have received from change?

Take a few minutes to think about how your children have dealt with the changes they have experienced. List some of the successes you have had in helping your children deal with change.

What differences in adaptability have you noticed among your children of different ages?

Principle 1: Helping your children develop testimonies of the gospel will help them become more resilient.

 Read [Proverbs 22:6](#) and [Doctrine and Covenants 93:40](#).



What did you learn about your responsibility as a parent from these scriptures?



Watch the video “[Strengthened in the Lord](#).”

Think about your responsibilities as a parent. What can you do each day to help strengthen your children?

As your children learn to trust and rely on Heavenly Father, they will be able to adapt to change. A testimony of a loving and watchful Heavenly Father will help them learn who they can become and be optimistic about their future and trust that He will help them overcome challenges. In order for this to happen, your children will need to understand the gospel and the plan of salvation. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency has given us some steps for how to gain a testimony of the gospel (see “[The Power of a Personal Testimony](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 37–39).

1. Desire to believe (see [Alma 32:27](#)).
2. Search the scriptures (see [Alma 32:28](#)).
3. Do the will of God and keep the commandments (see [John 7:16–17](#)).
4. Ponder, fast, and pray (see [Moroni 10:3–4](#)).

Sister Cheryl A. Esplin of the Primary General Presidency also taught about how to help our children understand gospel truths:

“Sometimes the most powerful way to teach our children to understand a doctrine is to teach in the context of what they are experiencing right at that moment. These moments are spontaneous and unplanned and happen in the normal flow of family life. They come and go quickly, so we need to be alert and recognize a teaching moment when our children come to us with a question or worry, when they have problems getting along with siblings or friends, when they need to control their anger, when they make a mistake, or when they need to make a decision” (“[Teaching Our Children to Understand](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 11).

When have you been able to apply gospel principles to a child's specific circumstances? What did you learn from this experience?

"Each kid has taken turns with emotional expression and distress. Their individual anxieties and the way they express them are valid and important. It's like seeing a little smoke here and there and trying to tend to each one before it turns into a flame. It has been an intense two months since James left our home. [This experience has] stretched me beyond my ability, and there are certain times when I know distinctly that I have left the realm of my own power and have tapped into merciful, heavenly strength and endurance."

—Martha Willis, wife of James E. Willis, U.S. Army

Principle 2: Resilient children have the capacity to adapt to change.



Because opposition is a necessary part of the plan of salvation, your children will need to learn how to deal with challenges, difficulties, setbacks, and even tragedies. Practicing resilient behaviors with your children will give them the tools they need to cope with these challenges. Lyle J. Burrup of LDS Family Services wrote the following about helping children develop resilience:

"We know two things about adversity and resilience: First, there is 'an opposition in all things' (2 Nephi 2:11). Second, obtaining anything of worth often requires great sacrifice.

"As children become resilient, they understand and accept these two facts. They see life as challenging and ever changing, but they believe they can cope with those challenges and changes. They view mistakes and weaknesses as opportunities to learn, and they accept that losing may precede winning.

"As children develop resilience, they believe they can influence and even control outcomes in their lives through effort, imagination, knowledge, and skill. With this attitude, they focus on what they can do rather than on what is outside their control.

"Another mark of resilience is to see great purpose and meaning in life and people. A sense of purpose will help our children avoid giving up, in spite of setbacks and pressure to do so. If our children are becoming more resilient, they will develop deep values that guide them: charity, virtue, integrity, honesty, work ethic, and faith in God. They will involve

"I still think it's a lot harder sitting at home and wondering and not knowing. I think those who sacrifice the most are children and spouses who don't know day to day whether we're safe or whether we're not. Every father, every mother, every husband, every child who has waved good-bye to their service member is a hero."

—Gerald White, *Army National Guard* (USA)

(From Mandy Morgan, "Military Families Fight to Stay Connected, Even on Father's Day," *Deseret News*, June 10, 2015, national.deseretnews.com.)

themselves in what is happening around them and opt for commitment to values rather than feel alienated and avoid struggle" (Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," Ensign, Mar. 2013, 13–14).

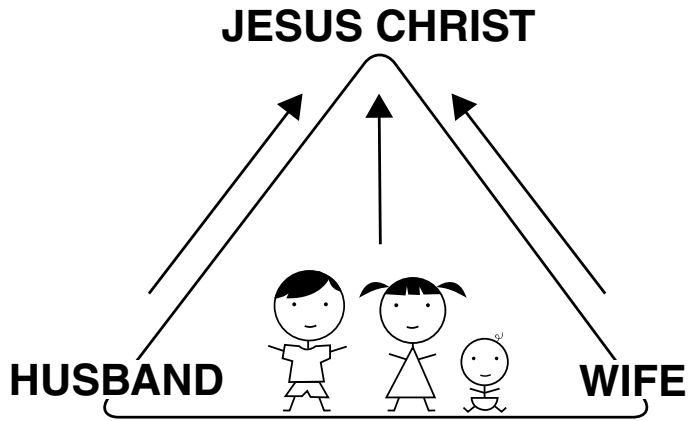
How can you teach your children these skills? What successes have you had?

What different methods have you used for children of various ages?

Have confidence that your children can increase in and develop resilient behaviors. Following are some ideas for how you can teach your children.

- "Pray to understand your children's strengths and how to help them with their weaknesses. Pray to visualize who they are and who they can become.
- "Be patient and realize that children need time to develop resilience.
- "Strive to understand that mistakes and failures are opportunities to learn.
- "Allow natural, logical consequences to serve as the disciplinarian.
- "Respect children's decisions, even if their poor choices lead to lost privileges.
- "Refrain from berating children for breaking the rules.
- "Do not discourage effort by criticizing harshly.
- "Rather than praising accomplishment, encourage and praise effort" (Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," 15).
- Praise your children more than you correct them. "Praise them for even their smallest achievements" (Ezra Taft Benson, "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 107).

Review the triangle diagram from the previous lesson. Add your children to the bottom line of the triangle. Always remember that as you help your family draw closer to the Savior, you will also help each other draw closer together as a family.



 Watch the video “[Parenting: Touching the Hearts of Our Youth.](#)”

How can you improve the way you interact with your children?

Decide to act

What two principles do you want to practice this week that will improve how you interact with your children?

What activity can you do with your children to help them develop resilience?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 4

1. Opposition and change are necessary in the plan of salvation. Help your children see themselves as part of the plan.
2. Children will be able to adapt to change when they have an understanding of the gospel and practice resilient behaviors.
3. Parents can teach their children the gospel by applying it to their children's current experiences.
4. Parents can teach their children resilient behaviors by practicing those behaviors themselves and by helping their children see challenges as opportunities.
5. As your family draws closer to the Savior, you will also draw closer to one another.

[illegible]



LESSON 5

How can we prepare as a family for times of separation?

The purpose of this lesson is to give you and your family members the tools you need to prepare for times of separation.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

M. Russell Ballard, “[What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 41–44

“[Armor of Battle, Armor of God](#),” *Ensign*, June 2008, 24–28

Karen Sandberg Woodson, “[Staying Connected](#),” *Ensign*, Dec. 2014, 52–55

“[Supporting Military Families](#),” LDS.org

“Family Readiness: Essential to Mission Readiness—Unit Deployment Guide for Families,” [marineparents.com](#)

Video:

“[At the Movies](#),” LDS.org

Learning outline

Read the following statement from a woman whose husband was deployed:

“From modern-day prophets as well as in our training and work as behavioral health professionals, both my husband and I understood that families need to spend time together to strengthen their relationships. Our primary concern with military service was that frequent Temporary Duty (TDYs, or work assignments involving traveling), extended deployments, and other obligations would require my husband to be away from our family—anywhere from a few days to more than a year at a time. Still, we felt a strong desire to serve our country and trusted that God would teach us through our trials. Almost six years later, I am grateful for how the Spirit has taught us to keep our family, and especially our marriage, connected” (Karen Sandberg Woodson, “[Staying Connected](#),” Ensign, Dec. 2014, 52–53).

What are some ideas for how to keep your family connected emotionally and spiritually, even when you’re separated physically? If you are the deployed family member, what do you anticipate experiencing during these times of separation?

Principle 1: Staying connected will help your family endure separation successfully.

You want to thrive as a family even during times of separation, but how do you ensure success? Establishing realistic expectations is an important part of this process. List realistic and unrealistic expectations for staying connected during this time, such as how often you will be able to communicate and what information you will or will not be able to share.

Realistic

Unrealistic

Read the following statement from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and ponder the blessings you can receive from staying connected as a family:

“Crisis or transition of any kind reminds us of what matters most. In the routine of life, we often take our families—our parents and children and siblings—for granted. But in times of danger and need and change, there is no question that what we care about most is our families! . . .

“In the Church, our belief in the overriding importance of families is rooted in restored doctrine. We know of the sanctity of families in both directions of our eternal existence. We know that before this life we lived with our Heavenly Father as part of His family, and we know that family relationships can endure beyond death. . . .

“Our family-centered perspective should make Latter-day Saints strive to be the best parents in the world. It should give us enormous respect for our children, who truly are our spiritual siblings, and it should cause us to devote whatever time is necessary to strengthen our families. Indeed, nothing is more critically connected to happiness—both our own and that of our children—than how well we love and support one another within the family” (“[What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest](#),” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2005, 41, 42).

Before deployment, you will need to meet many demands and the amount of quality time that you can spend together as a family will probably be limited. What are some simple ways you can strengthen your family relationships?

“Set personal goals for yourself. Goals could include finishing a set of scriptures, becoming more physically fit, [or] becoming more proficient at a skill. Setting personal goals helps you to utilize your separation for something positive and can be a fun topic to communicate about, as well as something exciting to share when you reunite with your family.”

—Sean Boyd, U.S. Navy



Watch the video “[At the Movies.](#)”

What did you learn from this video about how to show love for each other during busy or stressful times?

What are some activities that you can plan in order to bring your family closer together before, during, and after deployment?



Principle 2: Planning ahead helps ease the stress of separation.

“One of the main factors distinguishing a military family from other families in the Church is the frequent and sometimes prolonged periods of family separation associated with military duty. Spouses who remain at home with the children face challenges similar

to those of single parents” (“[Supporting Military Families](#),” LDS.org, 2).

What are some of the stressors and opportunities for growth that come from periods of separation? List some of the blessings that could come from separation.

If you are the spouse remaining at home, realize that periods of separation can be stressful because you will need to shoulder the bulk of the responsibilities of home maintenance and child care, and you will not always know where your spouse is or what situation he or she is in. You may find out more information by watching the news, but doing so may also increase your anxiety for your spouse. Anxiety in these types of situations is normal, but be careful not to

dwell on fearful feelings. If you mentally prepare for these circumstances, you will be better equipped to handle them.

If you are the service member, you will receive intense training to help you prepare for your military assignment. While you're deployed, you will likely feel some amount of emotional distance from your family back home. These feelings are normal, and you need to remain focused on your mission in order to be successful and safe. But you should still take time to reconnect emotionally and spiritually. Spouses should be as understanding as possible about each other's difficulties.

You may not be facing deployment currently, but you will likely face times of separation from your family members in the future. Begin to prepare now so that you can know what to expect. Discuss as a family what you can do to prepare for deployments. Your discussion could include physical, spiritual, and emotional preparation. If your military unit requires pre-deployment financial and legal paperwork, make sure you gather your personal documents together soon so that you can have them ready.

The following checklist contains a few ideas for how you can prepare for deployment.

Pre-deployment Checklist

- ☐ Attend pre-deployment meetings and collect and complete important documents. (For example, make sure you have copies of wills, power of attorney, and so forth. For more information, see "Update These 6 Legal Documents before You Deploy," [MilitaryOneSource.mil.](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/))
- ☐ Find out if there is an LDS group leader in your unit or aboard your ship or if LDS services will be available at your deployed site.
- ☐ Renew your temple recommend.
- ☐ Obtain a priesthood blessing and make sure your family members receive priesthood blessings.
- ☐ Dedicate your home so that the Spirit can always be present.
- ☐ Purchase a sufficient number of garments to last the duration of your deployment.
- ☐ Obtain Church magazines or download copies of the magazines on the Gospel Library app.
- ☐ Discuss with your bishop your family's need for caring and sensitive home teachers and visiting teachers.
- ☐ Collect the contact information for your home and visiting teachers.
- ☐ Discuss how to handle finances during deployment. (For example, you will need to determine who pays the bills.)

"Before I went to Afghanistan, [my wife and I] each bought a new set of scriptures, and we decided that [reading them] was something we could do together over the time of my deployment."

—Andrew Blunt, U.S. Army
Special Forces Group (Airborne)

(From April 2015 general
conference special broadcast,
"Faith on the Front Lines,"
[ksl.com/?sid=34085590.](https://www.ksl.com/?sid=34085590))

For additional information, see "[Supporting Military Families](https://www.lds.org/supporting-military-families)" on LDS.org.



Planning ahead for your deployment will help to reduce the stress of actual deployment. What are some obstacles to planning ahead, and why would it sometimes feel difficult?

Decide to act

What steps will you take this week to prepare for deployment or times of family separation?

What important documents (wills, insurance policies, and so on) should you store in a secure place?

What things can you do to stay connected as a family during deployments?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 5

1. Separation will create different burdens for the two spouses, but both can work to be understanding of the other's needs.
2. Families can cope better with times of separation when they establish realistic expectations for one another and when they create a plan for how to stay spiritually and emotionally connected.
3. Spiritual, emotional, and physical preparation will help you ease the stress of separation. Make sure you have all your legal documents gathered together.



Notes

Lined area for notes, consisting of 25 horizontal lines.



LESSON 6

What is the emotional cycle of separation, and how will it affect me and my family?

The purpose of this lesson is to help military families understand and cope with the emotional cycle experienced during times of separation.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

M. Russell Ballard, “[Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children](#),” *Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 59–61

David S. Baxter, “[Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 37–39

Shawn Evans, “[Helping Children Feel Safe](#),” *Ensign*, Feb. 2011, 14–17

“Family Readiness: Essential to Mission Readiness—Unit Deployment Guide for Families,” marineparents.com

“[Supporting Military Families](#),” LDS.org

[Mosiah 18:8–9](#)—Bearing one another’s burdens

Videos:

“[Wrong Roads](#),” *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

“Tanya Parke: [Faith, Trust, and Some Pixie Dust](#),” lds.org/callings/military-relations/military-devotionals

Learning outline

Read the following statement, written by U. S. marine Jonathan Kehr, who was deployed four times:

"Prior to my four deployments to the Middle East as a marine, my family and I dealt with a great deal of emotions. Of course there were mandatory classes given to all the marines prior to deployments that discussed the stress on families prior to deployments. Knowing I was going to face stress did not alleviate my underlying anxiety. . . .

"Individually, I was affected physically and emotionally. Physically, I didn't sleep well or exercise because the workdays could easily be 18 hours, and the rest of the day was spent agonizing over the remaining problems that needed attention. Emotionally, the weight of the world seemed to be on my shoulders at work because of my responsibilities and the uncertainty of the immediate future. I felt out of control with my life because our pre-deployment combat training usually took place far from home. I had a minimum amount of time at home in the months leading up to my deployments. Although my family was loving and strong, I often felt alone, even when we were together. I had to steel my mind, and I almost closed my heart to my family as I tried to cope with these emotions. I prayed and studied my scriptures daily, I received priesthood blessings, and I know those brought me peace and understanding and strengthened my resolve. Looking back, I know my trust and faith was in the Lord. I knew it was my duty to serve in the Middle East, and I served for a greater purpose than for myself."

Reflect on similar experiences that you have had, or imagine how you might feel in this situation. How can you avoid getting stuck in negative emotions during situations like this? What can you do to prepare for these circumstances?

Principle 1: The emotional cycle of deployment is natural and normal.



It is natural and normal for you to experience a wide range of emotions while you are preparing for and experiencing deployment. People who undergo these types of separations almost always feel anxiety for the safety of their spouse and loved ones. Spouses who remain at home worry for the safety of the spouse who is deployed. Spouses who are deployed worry for the safety and well-being of the family back

home. You may feel numb, confused, or overwhelmed. You may even feel sorry for yourself.

How does normalizing your feelings help you cope? What can you do in situations where you feel emotionally overwhelmed?

Elder David S. Baxter of the Seventy taught the following to single parents, and his teachings can also apply to spouses in situations of military deployment:

"I testify that as you do your very best in the most difficult of human challenges, heaven will smile upon you. Truly you are not alone. Let the redemptive, loving power of Jesus Christ brighten your life now and fill you with the hope of eternal promise. Take courage. Have faith and hope. Consider the present with fortitude and look to the future with confidence" ("Faith, Fortitude, Fulfillment: A Message to Single Parents," Ensign or Liahona, May 2012, 39).

In the following video, Sister Tanya Parke shares how she was able to cope with her fears when she learned her husband was being deployed to war. As you watch this video, consider what you would do in a similar situation.



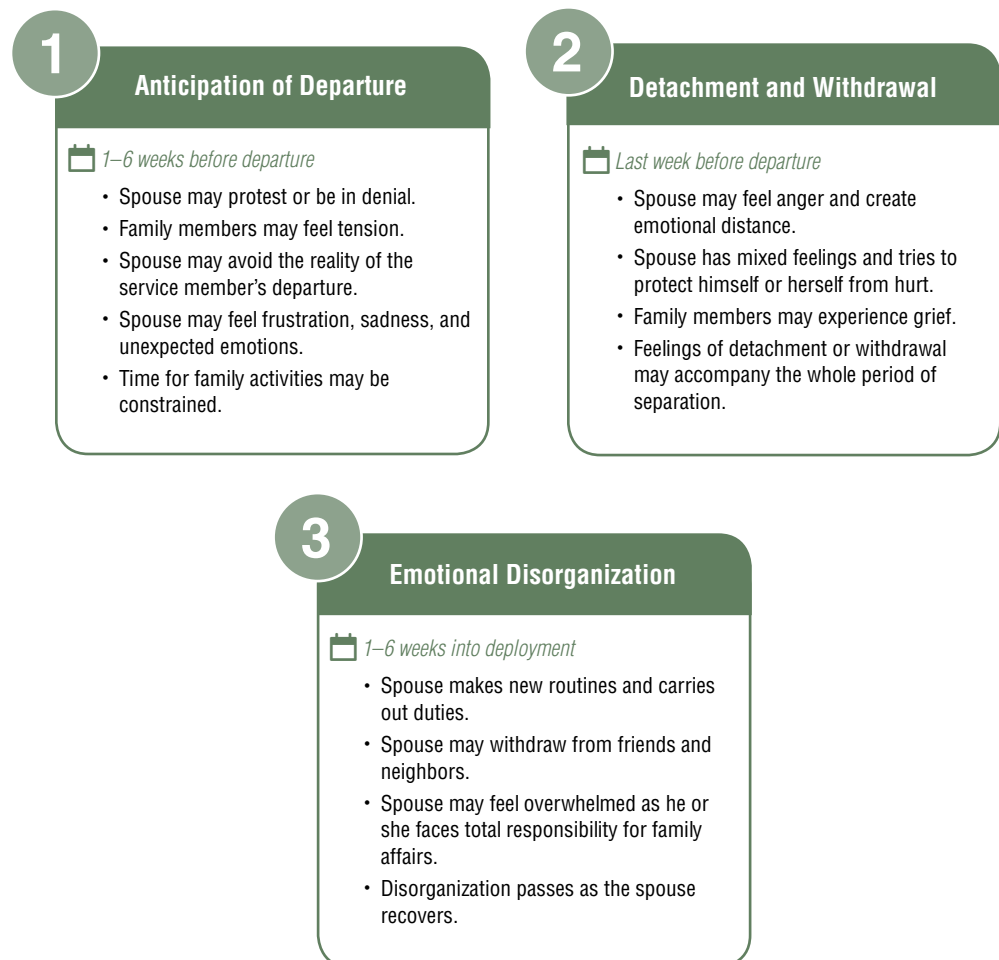
Watch the video "Tanya Parke: [Faith, Trust, and Some Pixie Dust.](#)"

What are your fears and challenges concerning family separation? How can the Savior and others help you?

The following are common emotions that occur during the different stages of deployment. As you read, consider ideas you may have for dealing with these emotions. Remember that coping with emotions does not mean suppressing them. It often means relying on an established support network. You can begin building this network as you communicate with others who have had or are experiencing similar situations in their lives. It's important to understand that progression through these emotional cycles is not a neat or tidy process. Actually, it's unlikely that any individual would progress through these emotions in order and on time. Both adults and children may skip some phases entirely, but when you recognize these signs and behaviors, you can use it as a cue to initiate loving dialogue with your family members.

You can find the full emotional cycle of deployment at the end of this manual.

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF DEPLOYMENT (ECOD)



What can you do if you need support or help during any of these experiences?

"The pre-deployment time was awkward. [I felt a] combination of loving him and wanting to squeeze every bit of time with him and appreciate spending time with him. And sometimes I just wanted him to go because it hurts—it hurts knowing he's leaving."

—Martha Willis, wife of James E. Willis, U.S. Army

What experiences have you had that may be similar to this?

What did you learn from these experiences about turning to others and your Savior for help?

Principle 2: Children also experience a cycle of emotions during times of separation, and they need your help to understand it.



Read the following statements about the emotions that children experience in these situations and what you can do to help them:

"We live in an age in which difficult issues—such as divorce, illness, death, accidents, natural disasters, warfare, job loss—threaten the sense of security in the home. However, there are many things parents can do to help children

"Sometimes just knowing that my Savior knows, has felt, and understands what I'm feeling gives me the peace I need."

—Cyndi Hinson, wife of Keller Hinson, Army National Guard (USA)

feel a sense of stability, security, and safety in spite of these disrupting influences" (Shawn Evans, "Helping Children Feel Safe," Ensign, Feb. 2011, 14).

"During periods of family separation, children may have feelings of abandonment, loss of love, and resentment. Deployed members must communicate frequently with each child, not just with their spouse. Showing pictures of the deployed member while sharing messages from him or her can help young children stay connected. Also, doing activities with other ward members can be very helpful, especially if the families have children of similar ages. The more love that can be shared with the children, the better they will handle the separation" ("Supporting Military Families," LDS.org, 3).

To help children cope with deployment and other situations where they may face separation from a parent, you must first be able to identify their reactions and understand how to help them adjust.

To view resources for children, see SesameStreetForMilitaryFamilies.org.

The following are typical behaviors or emotions that children may exhibit during times of separation. As you read these lists, think of your experiences with your own children, and add other behaviors you have observed in them. Discuss what you learn with your spouse.

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF DEPLOYMENT (for children)

Birth to 6 years old	7–10 years old	11–18 years old
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restlessness or changes in sleep patterns• Anxiety• Disruption in daily routines• Regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change in school behavior• Angry or disruptive outbursts• Trouble eating• Increased worrying• Neediness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression• Low self-esteem• Decreased participation in activities or hobbies• Impulsive or inappropriate behaviors

What have you done, or what could you do, to help your children during times of separation?

If you're the service member being deployed, what can you do to remain connected to your children and help them adjust to the situation?

The following statement can serve as a set of guidelines for spouses who remain at home:

"It is important for the parent at home to maintain the family's structure and routines. Lax discipline or supervision can lead to undesirable behavior patterns and habits. In spite of a parent's best efforts, sometimes children and youth exhibit unusual behavior while a parent is away from home for extended periods of time. These behavior problems can be manifested in such ways as being disruptive, withdrawing, developing nervous tics, crying, being continually depressed, or seeming to reject love and kindness. Seeking assistance from youth leaders and teachers can be a great resource to the family during this critical time to help prevent youth from seeking unhealthy associations outside the home" ("Supporting Military Families," LDS.org, 3–4).

You will need help and support when it comes to teaching your children. Make a list of people in your area who could help you or be friends to your children during times of separation. Set goals to contact these people and begin building a relationship of giving and receiving now.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"How do we bring . . . peace into the lives of children who are growing up in trying, troubling times? . . . The best and most meaningful resources are found within the home where faithful, devoted parents and supportive brothers and sisters love one another and teach one another of their divine nature" ("Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children," Ensign, Apr. 1994, 60).

The following statement may also help you as you strive to bring a measure of peace to your children, whether in the home or from a distance:

"As you act with faith in Heavenly Father and His Son, you will receive blessings of comfort and support. Children will receive an added measure of comfort and stability as you and they live by the words of the prophets and continue the practices that bring peace into the home, such as family and personal prayer, scripture study, and temple worship" (Shawn Evans, "Helping Children Feel Safe," Ensign, Feb. 2011, 17).

"Be active in the Church. Do your home teaching and always take advantage of opportunities to exercise your priesthood. Pray often, both privately and with your family. Prioritize reading the scriptures, and always strive to be temple worthy. These things will help build your testimony and keep your perspective set on eternal things when you're faced with temporal pressures and challenges."

—Sean Boyd, U.S. Navy



Watch the video “[Wrong Roads](#).”

In this video, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explains why we should continue to trust in God even when things don’t seem to go right. How have you been blessed by continuing to trust in God?

Decide to act

Read Elder M. Russell Ballard’s article “[Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children](#)” (*Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 59–61), and identify two principles you can implement that will bless you and your family.

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 6

1. Your feelings during times of separation are part of a natural and normal process that eventually leads to more stable emotions.
2. There are common emotions associated with deployment, but each person responds differently. Some people may experience only a few of the emotional phases.
3. Children also experience an emotional cycle during times of separation, and their responses vary with age.
4. Developing a support network in your area will help you and your children cope with deployment.
5. The greatest peace you can receive in your home will come through an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[illegible]



LESSON 7

How can we prepare to be reunited as a family?

The purpose of this lesson is to help military families understand how times of separation can change them and how they can prepare to be reunited.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

Karen Sandberg Woodson, “[Staying Connected](#),” *Ensign*, Dec. 2014, 52–55

Claigh H. Jensen, “[About Trauma](#),” *Ensign*, Feb. 2008, 49

“[Supporting Military Families](#),” LDS.org

“Family Readiness: Essential to Mission Readiness—Unit Deployment Guide for Families,” [marineparents.com](#)

[Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8](#)—Enduring trials

[Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46](#)—Priesthood and the powers of heaven

Videos:

“[You’re Never Alone](#),” *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

“[I’m a Mormon, Optimist, and Wounded Soldier](#),” LDS.org

“[Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled](#),” in “Instructions to Priesthood Leaders,” [lds.org/callings/military-relations/organization-leader-responsibilities](#)

“[I’m a Mormon and Wife of a Fallen Soldier](#),” LDS.org

[“Sitting on the Bench: Thoughts on Suicide Prevention,” LDS.org](#)

[“Life after War and Overcoming Post-Traumatic Stress,”](#)

[AddictionRecovery.lds.org/videos](#)

Learning outline

“When we were both striving to live close to the Spirit, my husband and I found that we were able to feel spiritually connected to each other as well. I would pray and even fast to keep feeling close to my husband, to help us both feel comforted while apart, and to be able to reconnect quickly and comfortably when we were together again” (Karen Sandberg Woodson, “[Staying Connected](#),” Ensign, Dec. 2014, 54–55).

Principle 1: Times of separation can increase your capacity and make you stronger.



The time that you are separated from your spouse can help you increase in your capacity to endure trials. The separation will be an impetus for change, and it may be helpful to keep this in mind as you prepare to be reunited as a family. Both you and your spouse will have endured substantial pressures, and those pressures may have led to significant changes. Many of those changes will be for the better—you may have increased in your capacity to face

challenges or you may have a greater appreciation and gratitude for life and family. As you turn to the Lord, your time apart can help you become stronger and you can prepare to continue building your family when you are reunited.

What changes do you want to make during your time apart? List two or three personal growth opportunities that you want to achieve.


Eventually, the emotions you feel at the beginning of deployment will stabilize into a more manageable range of emotions. Your thinking will shift into a more independent mindset, and you will have increased focus on your responsibilities. This is an indication that you are adapting to your

circumstances, and it is a good sign. These changes are a normal part of the emotional cycle of deployment.

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment (ECOD)

4

Recovery and Stabilization

 Variable; about 3–5 weeks into deployment

- Spouse gets into a routine.
- Spouse's confidence increases.
- Spouse subconsciously moves from "we" to "I" and from "our" to "my."
- Feelings of independence and freedom increase.
- Pride in the ability to cope begins to develop.

"It has been hard; I have no one to tag team. Some things can be done only by me, and sometimes there isn't enough of me left. I wanted to go to bed one night before the kids' bedtime, but I still had to make dinner, have family scripture study, put the kids to bed, [and] prepare for the seminary lesson for the next morning, and I still was not sure when I should shower."

—Martha Willis, wife of James E. Willis, U.S. Army

However, times of separation can also lead to harmful changes. You can avoid this pitfall when you hold fast to the gospel principles and to your covenants. Since contact with your spouse will be limited, you may not feel as accountable to him or her for what you do or how you spend your time. But you are always accountable to your spouse and to God to keep your covenants.

What can you do to remain accountable to your spouse and to God for your choices? How will you continue to rely on your Savior during deployment?

What are the challenges to living righteously for the spouse who is deployed and for the spouse who stays behind?



Read [Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8](#).

How does this scripture apply to you during those times when you are separated from your family members? What does it mean to endure well?

The following statements describe ways each spouse can stay connected and grow spiritually during times of separation. The first contains suggestions for the spouse who remains at home, and the second contains suggestions for the spouse who is deployed. Read these statements and consider how you can grow stronger and stay close to your family while you are separated:

“I . . . found peace as I read the scriptures and modern-day revelation seeking for help on how to endure trials and maintain an eternal perspective—marriage is forever, and this time apart is only temporary! Moreover, I was able to develop spiritually in new ways, as I had to rely on the Lord more while not being able to rely on my husband as much as I might otherwise have done” (Karen Sandberg Woodson, “[Staying Connected](#),” Ensign, Dec. 2014, 54–55).

“Although not physically present, the deployed member can help in preparing family home evening lessons, holding family councils, studying the scriptures, and participating in family prayers through e-mail, telephone, and other forms of communication. Sharing journal entries is another good way to stay close while physically separated. When a deployed service member has maintained regular communication while away, families experience fewer problems upon his or her return” (“[Supporting Military Families](#),” LDS.org).

Make a plan to use the separation from family members as a time to grow stronger. What can you do to remain connected to your family?



Watch the video “[You’re Never Alone](#),” in which Elaine S. Dalton, former Young Women General President, shares how running a marathon taught her about the strength we receive from God to endure trials.

What principles identified by Sister Dalton can you apply to your life? Sister Dalton points out that there will always be obstacles and challenges, no matter how much we have prepared. What kinds of obstacles do you anticipate with deployment?

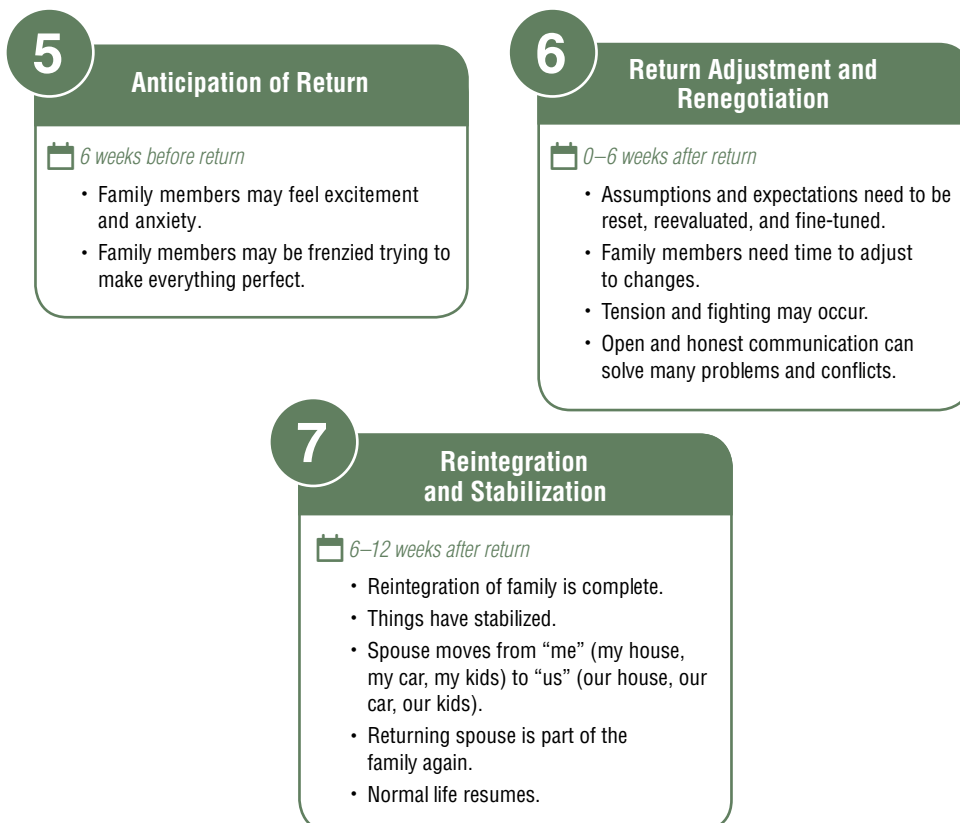
“Being away from home has always been harder for us than coming back home. There’s certainly the potential for [an] awkward transition time, but we typically settle into each other’s presence well. It’s important to never attempt to downplay or make competing comparisons with the trials your spouse experienced while you were away. It can be very hurtful and cause resentment if you invalidate your spouse’s challenges simply because you were the deployed person.”

—Sean Boyd, U.S. Navy

Principle 2: Preparation can help create a smooth transition from separation to reunion.

Understand that there is an emotional cycle of reunion, just as there is an emotional cycle of separation. Read the following information about the different stages of return and reunion.

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment (ECOD)





Read [Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–46](#).

How does this scripture apply to the adjustment period after your family is reunited? What virtues listed in this scripture would you like to apply more effectively in your own life?

Following are some tips that may help you during this transition period:

- Take it slow—don't try to make up for lost time.
- Realize that things will be difficult.
- Talk to each other about both the hard and joyful experiences.
- Take time to learn about each other again.
- Recognize your spouse may have changed and learn to appreciate those changes.
- Be prepared: reality will likely be different from what you imagined.
- Communicate openly with your spouse and family.
- Plan family activities.
- Reassure your children and set aside time for each of them.
- Plan time with extended family.
- Refrain from taking control.
- Have daily family prayer and scripture study and weekly family home evening.

Principle 3: Traumatic events can lead to remarkable growth.

"For most service members, reintegration with families occurs without major problems. However, some have serious reactions to their war experiences that can continue after they return home. Statistically, 30 percent of returning war veterans will have ongoing reactions to their traumatic war experiences. Untreated, these difficulties can progress into a condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder" ("[Supporting Military Families](#)," LDS.org).



If you have been deployed and are experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), have confidence that with the Lord’s help and the help of your family—and the help of a professional counselor, if needed—you can soon experience post-traumatic growth (PTG).

Post-traumatic growth is the ability to experience positive changes in your life as a result of struggling

with a serious life event or crisis. Many people who experience trauma are able to return to normal life, but they may need time to adjust first. People who experience this growth manifest some of the following positive changes:

1. Relating to others in more positive ways. For example, your appreciation for your family relationships may increase.
2. Becoming open to new possibilities—being willing to change and try new experiences.
3. Realizing and coming to understand your own personal strengths. For example, your confidence that you can handle difficult situations is increased.
4. Increased spiritual growth and coming to a stronger faith in God.
5. Enhanced appreciation of and sensitivity to the importance and value of your life.

Keep in mind that your growth following traumatic events does not mean that you will avoid the negative effects of your experiences altogether. Allow yourself time to heal, and lean on your Savior and family during this time. Your healing also does not mean that you have to accept your trauma as a good experience. Although these experiences can bring about positive changes in you, that good is a manifestation of God’s grace and miracles, not a statement on whether these experiences were inherently “good.” Remember that it is normal to want to avoid these types of experiences. However, we cannot always control what happens to us, so we must learn to employ resilient behaviors and receive healing. (See Claigh H. Jensen, “[About Trauma](#),” *Ensign*, Feb. 2008, 49.)

List two or three ways you want to become better and grow personally from your experiences.

“[My husband] had things he needed to work through. He was willing to go to counseling to get help with some of that.

“He was jumpy—even going to the elementary school for a program, he would get very nervous and look around when the chairs were moving.

“We had to look out for him. We had to be aware because we were in our normal world, and he was trying to do what we normally do and had to take time to get back into being a family man. We still needed to keep to the program of [family home evening], scriptures, prayer—communicating when things got hard and praying for each other in specific things.”

—Felila Montoya,
wife of James Montoya,
Army National Guard (USA)

What are some obstacles to growth, and where can you get the support you need to heal?

Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy gave some valuable counsel to those who are on their way to healing from trauma:

“If you find that your best efforts to put these images out of your mind are not working, rely more heavily on the Lord through prayer, fasting, temple attendance. Thereby you can achieve the peace that you and your family deserve. Getting involved in community, Church, family, or personal service projects can go a long way in putting those uncomfortable parts of our past behind us” (in “[Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled](#)” [video], [lds.org/callings/military-relations](https://www.lds.org/callings/military-relations)).



Read [Doctrine and Covenants 98:1–3](#).

What is the key principle you can take from the Lord’s counsel to the Prophet Joseph Smith?



Watch “[I’m a Mormon, Optimist, and Wounded Soldier](#).”

How can your experiences help define you rather than destroy you?

How is God involved in the details of your life?

Decide to act

Create a plan for what you want to accomplish during the time you are separated from your family members.

Who can you turn to in times of difficulty during your deployment and after you are reunited as a family?

What can you do to support others in similar situations?

What can you do to overcome feelings of loneliness?

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 7

1. Times of separation can make you stronger individually and as a family.
2. There is an emotional cycle of reunion as well as separation. Being aware of these emotions can help prepare you for a smooth transition.
3. Some returning soldiers may experience PTSD, but with help and support, they can turn their traumatic experiences into positive growth.



Notes

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LESSON 8

How can faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement help me?

The purpose of this lesson is to help you build resilience and spiritual strength by learning to rely on Jesus Christ and His Atonement at all times.

Resources

Following is a list of resources that you can use to study this topic.

Neil L. Andersen, “[Spiritual Whirlwinds](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 18–21

David A. Bednar, “[Strength beyond Our Own](#),” *New Era*, Mar. 2015, 2–5

Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “[The Gift of Grace](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 107–10

Linda K. Burton, “[Is Faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ Written in Our Hearts?](#)” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 111–15

Dallin H. Oaks, “[Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 61–64

[Matthew 11:28–30](#)—The Savior will give rest to our souls

[John 14:18](#)—Jesus Christ will comfort us

[Alma 7:11–12](#)—Christ suffered for our pains and sicknesses

[Doctrine and Covenants 84:88](#)—Angels will bear us up

Videos:

“[Lifting Burdens](#),” *Mormon Messages*, LDS.org

“[A Secure Anchor](#),” LDS.org

Learning outline

Take a minute to think of some of the challenges you have experienced in your life. Then read the following statement from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love” (*“Trust in the Lord,”* Ensign, Nov. 1995, 17).

The Lord wants you to learn how to use the adversity in your life to grow stronger and receive joy. One of the blessings we can receive from our challenges is learning to rely more on the Savior—we can come to know Him, trust Him, understand His teachings, feel His Spirit in our hearts, and follow Him throughout our lives.

Read the following statement from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“Our Savior experienced and suffered the fulness of all mortal challenges ‘according to the flesh’ so He could know ‘according to the flesh’ how to ‘succor [which means to give relief or aid to] his people according to their infirmities.’ He therefore knows our struggles, our heartaches, our temptations, and our suffering, for He willingly experienced them all as an essential part of His Atonement. And because of this, His Atonement empowers Him to succor us—to give us the strength to bear it all” (*“Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,”* Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2015, 61).

Principle 1: Turning to the Savior as you face trials will bring comfort and peace to your soul.



On the eve of His Crucifixion, the Savior made this promise to His Apostles: “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” ([John 14:18](#)). Christ promised us that in Him we might have peace. “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#)).

You have likely experienced trials and challenges as a result of your military service or the service of a family member. How have you felt comfort and peace amid these challenges? Share an experience when you have turned to the Lord to help you through your difficulties.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"[God] made your spirit strong and capable of being resilient to the whirlwinds of life. The whirlwinds . . . can increase your spiritual strength, preparing you for the years ahead" ("Spiritual Whirlwinds," Ensign or Liahona, May 2014, 18).

Elder Andersen also taught that if we learn to rely on our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we will have "safety in the whirlwind" ("[Spiritual Whirlwinds](#)," 19).

How have you prepared for whirlwinds that might enter your life? How can you help your family members prepare for adversity?

Even when we have done our best to prepare and to put our trust in the Lord, we may still struggle to endure our challenges well. But we can have hope that the Savior, through His Atonement, will give us strength beyond our natural capacity.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"The Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distresses that so frequently beset us.

"There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, 'No one understands. No one knows.' No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did.

And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying upon only our own power” (“[Strength beyond Our Own](#),” New Era, Mar. 2015, 5).

Sister Linda K. Burton taught:

“Perhaps if we regularly remind ourselves that our loving Heavenly Father is just that, a loving Heavenly Father, we can view our mortal challenges as an opportunity to draw near to Him and for Him to draw near to us” (“[Two Great Commandments](#)” [address given at BYU Women’s Conference, Apr. 29, 2016]).

When we turn to the Lord completely, we receive of His rest (see [Matthew 11:28–30](#)). His help and His strength can make our burdens light.

How have you recognized the strength of the Lord operating in your life? What can you do to access the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement during your challenges?

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“Our Savior’s Atonement does more than assure us of immortality by a universal resurrection and give us the opportunity to be cleansed from sin by repentance and baptism. His Atonement also provides the opportunity to call upon Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality. He knows of our anguish, and He is there for us (“[Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ](#),” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2015, 64).

How has the Savior been there for you during your trials? What blessings did you receive?

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“Whatever our current direction or distance to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, we can choose to turn toward Them and draw closer to Them. They will help us” (“That I Might Draw All Men unto Me,” Ensign or Liahona, May 2016, 41).

What can you do to draw closer to Heavenly Father and the Savior?

“We all receive tender mercies from the Lord and have received help from angels. The key is to recognize [these blessings] and to appreciate them. I know that I have received many tender mercies from the Lord. They have strengthened me and have helped me to be more resilient through my trials and the times when Tom is away from us.”

—Andrea Helms, wife of
Thomas S. Helms, U.S. Army

Principle 2: God is mindful of the challenges we are facing, and often He answers our plea for help by inspiring others to reach out to us in our hour of need.



The Lord can give us comfort in a variety of ways—sometimes through the Holy Ghost, sometimes through others who reach out to us in our time of need. Read [Doctrine and Covenants 84:88](#) and the following statement from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“When we speak of those who are instruments in the hand of God, we are reminded that not all angels are from the other side of the veil.

Some of them we walk with and talk with—here, now, every day” (“The Ministry of Angels,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2011, 30).

Who are the people who can help you through difficult times? How have you received answers to prayers through the actions and service of others?

As we draw nearer to God, we begin to recognize His tender mercies through the acts of kindness we receive from others. Read [Doctrine and Covenants 81:5](#), and then read the following statement from President Spencer W. Kimball:

“God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another person that he meets our needs” (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball [2006], 82).

When has God met your needs through other people?

How has the service of others helped you to draw nearer to God?

Elder Holland also reminds us that insofar as we pray for help, we should “try to be a little more angelic ourselves—with a kind word, a strong arm, a declaration of faith” (“[The Ministry of Angels](#),” 31). How has God inspired you to reach out to other military families as they struggle with challenges? How has your service given you comfort?

Principle 3: You can have faith that your Heavenly Father and the Savior love you, even though you experience adversity.



Watch the first six minutes of Elder Holland’s talk “[Where Justice, Love, and Mercy Meet](#)” from the April 2015 general conference. What does the story of the two brothers teach you about the Savior’s love for you? How have you seen that love in your life?

The greatest manifestation of Heavenly Father’s love for His children is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency said:

“I marvel to think that the Son of God would condescend to save us, as imperfect, impure, mistake-prone, and ungrateful as we often are. I have tried to understand the Savior’s Atonement with my finite mind, and the only explanation I can come up with is this: God loves us deeply, perfectly, and everlastingly. I cannot even begin to estimate ‘the breadth, and length, and depth, and height . . . [of] the love of Christ’ [[Ephesians 3:18–19](#)]” (“[The Gift of Grace](#),” Ensign or Liahona, May 2015, 107).



How can gratitude for the Savior’s sacrifice change your attitude about your challenges? What can you do to show your gratitude and love for the Savior?

President Henry B. Eyring taught the following about how to endure severe trials:

“Just as you are marked as a target by the enemy of righteousness, you have been protected and watched over by your Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. They know you. They know all of the forces and individuals around you. They know what is ahead of you. And so They know which of the choices you make, which of the desires you decide to satisfy, and which of the circumstances around you will make the most difference in keeping you walking in the light. I testify that by the Spirit of Christ and by the Holy Ghost, you may walk confidently in whatever difficulties will come. Because you are so valuable, some of your trials may be severe. You need never be discouraged or afraid. The way through difficulties has

always been prepared for you, and you will find it if you exercise faith”
(*“Walk in the Light,”* Ensign or Liahona, May 2008, 125).



Think of the ways you have shown faith during your trials, and think of ways you can build your faith in the Savior’s love for you. Then watch the video *“Lifting Burdens.”*

How can you rely more on Jesus Christ and His Atonement in your everyday life?

President Thomas S. Monson has promised that we will never be alone:

“As we seek our Heavenly Father through fervent, sincere prayer and earnest, dedicated scripture study, our testimonies will become strong and deeply rooted. We will know of God’s love for us. We will understand that we do not ever walk alone. I promise you that you will one day stand aside and look at your difficult times, and you will realize that He was always there beside you. . . .

“I leave with you my blessing. I leave with you my gratitude for all the good you do and for the lives you lead” (*“We Never Walk Alone,”* Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2013, 124).

Decide to act

What do you learn about the Atonement from studying the scripture passages in the Topical Guide under “Jesus Christ, Atonement through”?

What friends or family members do you know who are experiencing a difficult trial in their life, and what can you do to reach out to them?

Share your testimony of the Savior and how He has lifted your burdens and given you strength to weather the storms of life. What impressions came to you as you shared your testimony?

When facing trials, what can you do that will enable you to “act for [yourself] and not to be acted upon”? (see [2 Nephi 2:26](#)).

End of the week

What did you learn from this experience?

Summary of Key Points from Lesson 8

1. The Savior will not leave you alone during your trials. He will comfort and guide you.
2. You can receive strength beyond your natural capacity through Jesus Christ and His Atonement.
3. Remember that trials do not mean that Heavenly Father has forgotten you. The Father and the Savior love you with a perfect love.

[illegible]

THE EMOTIONAL CYCLE OF DEPLOYMENT (ECOD)

See "Family Readiness: Essential to Mission Readiness—Unit Deployment Guide for Families," marineparents.com/usmc/downloads/family-readiness-guide.pdf, 14–15.

