



Supporting family and friends experiencing an absence



Do you have a family member or friend who is facing an absence? Do you know the family members or friends of those who are away? Are you looking for ways to support them?

Work-related absences, whether a deployment, Imposed Restriction (IR), or prolonged training, can be stressful for the person who is absent and their wider family and friends. Whether you are a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor, check out the following tips based on experiences from families who've been there.

Create a game plan:

If possible, and before the absence, set aside time to speak with your loved one about how they are feeling, as well as what could be helpful for them during or after the absence. During this conversation, ask if they have their Family Care Plan (FCP) Declaration (Form DND 2886) filled out and if they have set up any emergency plans.

Help map out their support system:

Discuss who else can help support your loved one during the absence, and what role each of you can play. For example, see if you need to be listed on their emergency plan as contact person.

Plan for communication:

If your family member or friend is the CAF member or Deployment Support Staff member, discuss how you can stay in touch with them, how often and explore what options are possible (video chat, messages, email, etc.). If your family member or friend is the one at home, see if they want to set up a regular time to chat or meet for a walk.

Share little and big moments:

Try to have conversations about big, small or mundane aspects and updates in your life when you connect with your loved one who is away for the absence. This can enable them to feel connected now and when they return.

If they are the person who stayed home, they may want to talk about how they are feeling about their family member or friend being away. The opposite is true too and they may not want to focus on the absence. Instead, you can talk about other things, explore new activities together, or be there for them any other way they need. It's best to be open to discuss whatever they want to focus on and not push the conversation.

Ask how you can help:

Ask how you can help support your loved one. Sometimes it's the small things that can be most helpful. For example, dropping off a cooked meal, sharing a special treat for their kids or pets, picking up their groceries, or helping with house maintenance.



If there are children:

Work-related absences can be particularly difficult for children. Offer to take them on an adventure, arrange an in-person hangout or video chat call, or perhaps watch the children for a night to give your loved one who stayed home a break. You can let them know they can reach out to Kids Help Phone (24/7) via text CAFKIDS to 686868 or simply text 686868 for children of Deployment Support staff.

Take care of yourself too:

Check-in with how you are feeling too. You may be worried about your loved one whether they are the one who is away or the person at home. If you would like to talk with someone, reach out to the Family Information Line (FIL) day or night (24/7). The FIL supports everyone in the wider military and Deployed Ops community.

Prepare to reconnect:

Reunions are exciting but can also bring stress. Recognize that it can take some time to readjust after the reunion, and that you may need to be patient with your family member or friend.

Be ready to listen and support:

Your family member or friend may want to discuss some of their experiences right away, or slowly over time. Ask your loved one what worked and didn't work for them during the absence. This way, you can reflect on any lessons learned for next time and share those lessons with other friends and families too. Remember, the FIL is available before, during and after the reunion.

Looking for additional support?

Check out the QR code at the bottom of this page for additional supports available to you.

