

USAREUR
POST TIMES
 FREEDOM EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
 AN ARMY FORWARD
 ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!

ISSUE FOUR

UNIT MINISTRY TEAM

OEF/OIF

POST TIMES is a series of eight newsletters designed to address issues, problems, and concerns facing soldier families that have returned from deployment. Unlike REUNION TIMES, this series will focus on issues that may be common in post-redeployment. In other words, once reunion has happened and things seem “back to normal”, soldier families still have work to do to keep their families strong.

We have examined the values of LEGACY and DETERMINATION. And in the coming issues we will examine the values of STABILITY, HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, IDEALS, and PASSION.

This fourth newsletter focuses on our...

re-sil-ience (re ZIL yens) *n.* 1. the power or ability to return to the original form or position after being bent, compressed, or stretched. 2. ability to recover from illness, adversity, or the like. 3. toughness, durability

HOW DO YOU MEASURE RESILIENCE?

WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE MORE RESILIENT THAN OTHERS?

HOW CAN I INCREASE MY RESILIENCE?

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NEXT ISSUE: STABILITY



BACK TO NORMAL

One of the greatest challenges after deployments is getting back to “normal”. The problem is that the *status quo*, or what is normal, may not have been good.

Does anyone remember when black and white TV was normal, or homes and cars without air conditioning, or “perking” a pot of coffee? At one time, these were normal, expected, and routine. Who would want to return to those days when we have today we have COLOR television, COOL conditions, and CAPPUCCINO makers at home?

As families adjust to one another after long separations, that is a perfect time to examine what returning to normal is for them. It was Ronald Reagan who once said, “Status quo... you know, that is Latin for the ‘mess we’re in.’”

It is entirely possible, and often beneficial, to establish a **new** normal that is an improvement for everyone. Think about it! Sometimes the good ol’ days were not so good. The hard part is having the willingness and moral courage to face the mistakes made in the past and taking positive steps to improve. That is NOT easy.

Begin by doing an inventory of healthy and unhealthy patterns from the past. Plan a strategy of change as a family. You might be surprised that it is not as hard as you thought.

Some common questions I have been asked...

Q: Since my spouse returned from deployment, it seems like our family is broken. And it never used to be this way. Why can't we get back to the way things used to be?

A: Every significant life event, including deployments, can have long-lasting effects. This applies to spouses and children, too. Someone who has been in intense, life-threatening, or dangerous situations often suffers emotional scarring. If that is the case, professional help may be required. To ignore symptoms of stress is not the solution. Healing and recovery are possible but may require expert help.

Q: I am concerned about my spouse's commitment to our marriage. I wonder if there has been unfaithfulness. Maybe we don't love each other any more. What should I do?

A: Marriage relationships are very dynamic. Generally, husbands and wives grow closer over the years, providing they do regular maintenance in their marriage. If you review your marriage vows, the wording of the ceremony is full of ACTION words. Promises to *'love, honor, cherish, support, take care of, nurture, forsake all others,'* etc. This reminds us of how much positive and productive work it takes to make a marriage. Nowhere do we find promises to... *'ignore, ridicule, cease communication, take advantage of, cheat on, or tolerate... as long as we both shall live.'* Those words are not there. You see, marriage vows are promises one makes to act and behave a certain way that is positive and productive and harmonious. If trust is an issue, seek marital counseling. Don't allow marriage atrophy to rob you of the joy intended for marriage.

Q: I can't get my husband in for counseling, or even to work on our issues. What can I do?

A: Try logic. Often, there is reluctance to seek help because it is admitting failure or need. Men do not do this readily. If I had a toothache, I would not try to drill and fill my own tooth. Nor would I ask my buddies to do it, nor my unit 1SG. I would go to the dentist. Why? The dentist is a trained, educated, experienced professional. Chaplains, social workers, and counselors are trained, educated, experienced professionals in relationships. Friends, co-workers, other family members may be supportive but may not have the expertise. Sounds logical.

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It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires great strength to decide what to do. - Chow Ching



Bouncing Back

As I get older, I find that recovery is much slower when I get sick or injured. I don't "bounce back" quite like I used to. I guess I have to accept that fact of aging.

Unfortunately for many, attitudes also tend to harden as we get older. We get more set in our ways, less flexible, and unyielding. Someone once said, "As go the arteries, so go the attitudes."

Resilience in attitudes is a healthy trait and a positive thing. It indicates positive self-esteem and willingness to adapt. Some people I know seem unfazed by difficult and challenging events. Others I know have little or no flexibility and stubbornly resist change.

An excellent parable is told in the story, "Who Moved My Cheese." The author is really writing about resilience in the face of changing circumstances. Written for business-type leaders, the book leaves the reader wondering whether they have the ability to bounce back, regroup, and move ahead when faced with adversity.

Since change is constant and nothing ever seems to stay the same, adapting is one option. The other is to remain unmoved, unchanged, and inflexible.

For information about POST TIMES & REUNION TIMES contact Chaplain Eric Erkkinen at eric.erkkinen@us.army.mil