

7C'S OF RESILIENCE FOR MILITARY KIDS

When a Soldier serves the nation, their Family also serves. Like their parents, military kids also face some of the challenges of Army life like Family separations during deployments and leaving friends behind during Permanent Change of Station moves. To prepare young people to thrive in both good and challenging times, parents should reinforce the core elements of resilience outlined below.

CONFIDENCE

Children with confidence may find it easier to rebound from failure, seeing it as an opportunity for growth rather than a catastrophe. Frequent PCS moves can support confidence-building as young people learn to adjust to new settings and friends, but some children need extra support to build their confidence in new settings. To encourage confidence:

- Notice their efforts and successes, but avoid unearned praise
- Nurture and support their development of skills
- Stand beside them as they navigate challenges

CONNECTION

The connection with your children is the most protective force in their lives. And the more connections children have – with friends, Family, schools, and communities – the better. Connection is most directly affected by deployments and PCS. It takes intentional effort to maintain connection with our children, especially when deployed. To strengthen connection:

- Love them based on seeing who they really are, their strengths and flaws, not based on a temporary behavior or by what they might produce
- Create a safe space to feel, so they can share instead of hold back their feelings
- Spend time together with your child; it's quality rather than quantity that counts

CONTRIBUTION

Young people want to matter. One of the best ways youth learn they matter is by giving to or serving others. Military youth should know they serve already as part of a Family committed to contributing to the nation's well-being. Continue to build their sense of contribution by:

- Helping them to volunteer, even an hour a week, in their local community
- Encouraging them to do acts of goodwill for Family, friends, and neighbors
- Teaching them to also receive, so they know they can seek help without shame

CONTROL

Core to resilience is knowing that our actions matter. People either believe they are passive victims or that they can control what happens to them. How we parent and discipline affects our children's sense of control. It is important that even if separated by distance, all caregivers are on the same page and actively participating in discipline:

- When disciplining, teach or guide your child. Those who are told, "You'll do what I say because I said so!" often have difficulty making their own decisions
- Help teens learn their actions lead to consequences, but they have control over their actions and can alter outcomes
- Set clear boundaries to keep them safe, but be flexible to honor their growing independence and recognize their developing skills



COMPETENCE

Youth need to develop a set of skills that allows them to trust their judgments, make responsible choices, and face difficult situations in many aspects of daily living. Frequent PCS moves may challenge the development of new skill sets. Parents can teach and model effective competencies by:

- Talking to their kids instead of lecturing at them
- Letting them find solutions to problems, instead of telling them what to do
- Giving them genuine encouragement about existing strengths they have

CHARACTER

Young people with strong core values make the greatest contributions, have the best sense of self, and form the most secure and healthy relationships. Army kids have a head start as they are typically raised by parents driven by strong values and a commitment to serve the greater good. Nurture your children's character by:

- Modeling integrity; actions speak louder than words
- Treating them with empathy today, so they may treat others with fairness and kindness tomorrow
- Teaching them the value of delayed gratification and that planning up front (like starting a savings account) produces better results in the end

COPING

How we respond to the discomfort of stress is called coping. Youth who learn to cope effectively are better prepared to overcome life's challenges. We can raise our children with a range of healthy coping strategies to make wiser choices during challenging times:

- Encourage effective problem solving by approaching problems calmly and breaking large problems into smaller, more manageable ones
- To help manage stress, teach them to maintain healthy bodies through proper nutrition, sleep, exercise, and relaxation
- Encourage children to express their feelings in a healthy way like writing, talking, laughing, praying, crying and more