



Uploaded to VFC Website

▶▶▶ February 2013 ◀◀◀

This Document has been provided to you courtesy of Veterans-For-Change!

Feel free to pass to any veteran who might be able to use this information!

For thousands more files like this and hundreds of links to useful information, and hundreds of "Frequently Asked Questions, please go to:

[Veterans-For-Change](http://Veterans-For-Change.com)

*Veterans-For-Change is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Corporation
Tax ID #27-3820181*

If Veteran's don't help Veteran's, who will?

We appreciate all donations to continue to provide information and services to Veterans and their families.

https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=WGT2M5UTB9A78

Note:

VFC is not liable for source information in this document, it is merely provided as a courtesy to our members.



Military Teens Cope With Wartime Challenges

Elaine Wilson | American Forces Press Service

April 27, 2010

With a cocky grin and larger-than-life presence, Cornelius Madison commands attention when he walks down the high school hall here, always with a hint of a swagger.

Bumping fists and cracking jokes, Cornelius seems impervious to stress or worry. It's only when discussing his deployed mother in an interview does he reveal a small chink in his otherwise impenetrable bravado.



"As long I know she's alive, then, I'm good. But if I ever get that call" His words drift off and he looks away, unwilling to share his potential pain.

His mother, Army Staff Sgt. Asia Lowe, and stepfather, Army Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Lowe, deployed to Afghanistan for a year about a month ago, their second deployment in three years. Cornelius and his two younger siblings are staying with a family friend.

At 16, Cornelius has assumed the role of man of the house in a home that isn't even his own.

"It's not easy, but I was brought up to keep going, no matter what," he said. "I have to do it for my Mom. I'm really proud of her."

Cornelius is one of the nearly 2 million American military children and youth growing up in a decade marked by war. He's also one of the some 900,000 military children whose parents have deployed multiple times. These children endure long separations from a parent who may be in harm's way, frequent moves, and multiple new schools. They mark major milestones, including graduations, prom nights and sports events, either alone or without one or both of their parents.

The challenges and stressors they endure would knock most well-functioning adults to their knees, said Nancy Beale, school psychologist for the Fort Campbell High School here.

"Yet these kids get up and come to school and maintain their grades and do the best they can," she said. "It blows me out of the water. And it gives me faith in that concept we call resiliency."

The ongoing Afghanistan and Iraq wars have taken their toll on the post here. About two-thirds of the active-duty soldiers assigned to Fort Campbell are slated to deploy by fall, noted Bob Jenkins, a post spokesman. That's a big hit to a post with a total soldier population of roughly 30,000.

While some of his peers take the deployments harder, Cornelius takes the separations and moves – this is his fifth so far – in stride, shrugging them off as an inevitable part of military life. "Other people have it worse," he said.

Cornelius' laid-back attitude may seem surprising to some, but actually is the new norm for adolescents growing up in the military, Beale noted.

"Adolescence is such a time of independence and breaking away from their parents and being on their own," she said. "Taking on that adult role is what they're supposed to be doing. They take pride in doing that, in holding it together."

That unflappable attitude among most adolescents, Beale noted, is a marked difference from the reactions of younger children. Younger children may exhibit deployment-induced stress with sleep disturbances and regression, she said. But for the majority of adolescents, she added, separations can be empowering.

Still, becoming the "man of the house" can have its drawbacks. Families with high-level needs, such as a special-needs child or money issues, can grow too dependent on a teen's assistance. "Then it goes from being, 'I'm going to take a role and help my family' to overburdening," Beale noted.

Separated from peers and unable to enjoy free time, resentment can grow, she explained.

High school junior Chelsea Jarvis pitches in heavily at home. Her father, Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Adam Jarvis, is deployed with a Special Forces unit, and she often is called on to help with her special-needs brother, Jacob. At 13, Jacob already has undergone seven brain surgeries and is unable to talk.

Since her Dad's departure, the 17-year-old has taken on tasks from bathing to changing diapers to babysitting her brother.

"My mother can't do it all by herself," she said, quickly adding that she doesn't mind pitching in. "We pick up the pieces when he's gone. It's just something we do."

Chelsea was born after her father enlisted, and, like Cornelius, has grown accustomed to her father's deployments, which are briefer but more frequent than those experienced by soldiers in other military occupational specialties.

"My Dad's missed a lot of milestones, but I'm not going to blame him," she said. "It's something you just have to get used to, or you'll probably be a blubbing mess."

While she admits to some concerns about her father's safety, particularly in his line of work, it's unproductive to focus on the death count and the statistics, she said.

"If you focus on that all the time, it's harder to keep going," she said. "I focus on what I'm doing here. I try to stay busy."

Beale said the school invests a significant amount of time and energy to ensure students like Chelsea have a plethora of activities to keep them occupied, from sports to academic clubs to social outlets. The small school of more than 700 students offers a jam-packed slate of activities, she added. Students can pursue the typical sports teams; participate in organizations such as Teens, Crime and Community or Future Educators of America; satisfy their academic goals in Homework Club or National Honor Society; and their more creative outlets in the drama club, chorus or band.

Teens find strength in the activities as well as in the camaraderie they foster, Beale noted. "We spend a lot more of our efforts trying to build relationships with our students through those avenues," she said.



The one type of group parents won't find at the high school is a deployment support group. Beale said she's found they're more effective for elementary-age children. Younger children enjoy the support a formal group may provide, while older children benefit more from an active lifestyle, she noted.

A recent Army study validated the school's efforts. The study found that the No. 1 factor in mitigating deployment stress for Army adolescents was their participation in activities, such as sports, followed by a strong family foundation.

Peer groups, such as those formed through sports and clubs, are vital for adolescents, Beale noted. "It's often a peer group that alerts me to problems," she said. "A friend brings them to me much more often than a student comes to me for help."

In any case, parents and teachers should be on the lookout for significant changes in behavior, such as a drastic drop in grades or withdrawal from family and friends, and then engage the teen or seek help, Beale advised.

Darien Crank leans heavily on his football team, looking to his buddies for support while his father, Army Sgt. Arthur Carter, is deployed to Afghanistan. It's the father's third deployment since he joined the Army six years ago.

"They know what it's like to be new and move around, and so they're really welcoming and warm," Darien said of the military families here.

Unlike many children who grew up in the military, Darien is well aware of a major shift in lifestyle; his father joined when he was 12.

"At first it was weird with him being home every night and then just leaving and being gone for two or three months at a

time,” the 18-year-old senior said. “That’s the first time he’d left for that long.”

On his first deployment to Iraq, Darien’s father asked his son to be the man of the house. Wanting to appear strong, Darien didn’t cry until his father left. The second time his father deployed, he didn’t cry at all.

“Now he’s always gone,” Darien said. His father will miss his prom, graduation and his sendoff to college this fall. Darien plans to attend Tusculum College in neighboring Tennessee on a football scholarship.

He relies on friends, he said, and has matured in his father’s absence.

“My dad understands he’s gone a lot,” Darien said. When he comes home, he added, his father gives him space and allows him to continue his role as “man of the house” in some capacity, a consideration he appreciates.

But the frequent separations take their toll on their relationship, Darien admitted. He recalls his father teaching him to ride bikes and play games, but his memories stop short with his earlier childhood.

“He’s been gone for so long, I can’t even imagine our relationship being really close,” he said.

Darien’s concerns are common in a military society that, over the past decade, has been confronted with frequent and lengthy family absences, Beale said.

“The logistics of it get easier, and the idea,” she said. “What I don’t think is easier is the resentment of their parent missing so many years.

“They know they can handle it, they know what they need to do, and they know they’ll be fine,” she continued. “But then it becomes, ‘But, I’m tired. I’m tired of Dad missing another soccer season. I’m tired of Mom not being here for all the major holidays.’”

The lasting impact of the separations on military families concerns Beale.

“I am worried more about the families themselves,” she said. “I see a lot more splintering apart of husbands and wives, which of course is absolutely the worst curveball you can throw our students amongst all this other stuff they’re going through. That’s what concerns me the most.”

However, Beale said she’s also reassured by the adaptability of military children and their ability to form deep friendships quickly due to a fast-paced military life.

“There’s an acceptance of a reality: ‘This is the Army way,’ or ‘It’s Dad’s job or Mom’s job’” in the military, she said. “Their ability to accept war and the role that their parent plays for our country is very mature.”

It remains to be seen what the long-term effects of a decade of war will have on military children, Beale said. But whatever the future holds, they should be proud of what they’ve already achieved.

“Some of that initiation by fire, that ‘I can do anything,’ I don’t think they realize what they’ve done,” she said.

Source: http://www.health.mil/News_And_Multimedia/News/detail/10-04-27/Military_Teens_Cope_With_Wartime_Challenges.aspx