Discussing danger while a parent is away

During times of military conflict, children may fear that a parent is in danger. What can you do to help make this difficult time easier for your child? Here are a few ideas for helping your children cope while a parent is away.

Share information with your children.
- Explain where the parent is and the special job that he or she is doing for our country, if possible.
- Answer questions openly and honestly, using words your children can understand.

Encourage your children to share with you.
- Let your children know it is okay to share whatever fears they have about danger.
- Encourage them to express their feelings about danger through talk, play, drawings, etc.

Help your children during this time.
- Help your children sort out what they hear and see in news reports.
- Let them know it is okay to ask questions.
- Find out what your children know and understand and talk with them about their feelings.
- Follow your child’s lead. Give small pieces of information at a time and see how the child responds before deciding what to say next.

Help your children feel more at ease.
- Let your children know that other children share similar feelings about their parents’ dangerous work.
- Assure them that they are cared for and safe while the parent is away.
- Tell them that the parent who is away is doing everything he or she can to stay safe.
- Offer your children comfort by touching and holding them, especially if they have trouble sleeping.
- Keep them as close as possible to a parent or caregiver during times of danger so that they feel safe.

Helping Children Understand Their Fears

Children need these things from parents and caregivers when they have fears:

**Support**
- “You have fears and it is okay that you have them."

**Comfort**
- “I can understand why you are fearful and upset.”

**Room to feel**
- “Maybe you need a few minutes to cry and then we can talk about your fear.”

**Talk:**
- “Let’s talk about what made you cry.”

**Chance to learn:**
- “Maybe we can think of ways to help you be less fearful next time.”

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