





Military Deployment Literature

- literature is limited, fewer combat exposed samples
- health of military children when compared to civilian counterparts - child and family strength
- elevated distress/symptoms in deployed families
- must differentiate and assess groups with risk factors based upon experience
 - (single parents, dual military parents, multiple combat deployments, injury, parental illness, death) and developmental level
- need to identify mediating factors that contribute to child and family problems or resilience
- differences in developmental impact at different ages
- longitudinal study needed



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Corrosive Impact of Stress

- **Multiple deployments during wartime**
- Distraction of responsible parties
 - many contingencies to address
 - manage anxiety and personal stress
 - potential impairment of role functioning
- Disruption of relationships, interpersonal strife, loss of attachments
- Most dependent are most vulnerable in the process
- Reduction of Parental Efficacy – the availability and effectiveness of the service member and spouse
- Impact on Community Efficacy – leaders and service providers



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Psychiatric and Behavioral Responses to War and Combat

Distress Responses

- Change in Sleep
- Decrease in Feeling Safe
- Isolation (staying at home)

Mental Illness

- Anxiety
- PTSD
- Depression
- Substance Use Disorders

Health Risk Behaviors (changed behavior)

- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Reckless driving

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Transgenerational Effects of PTSD In Vietnam Vet relationships/families

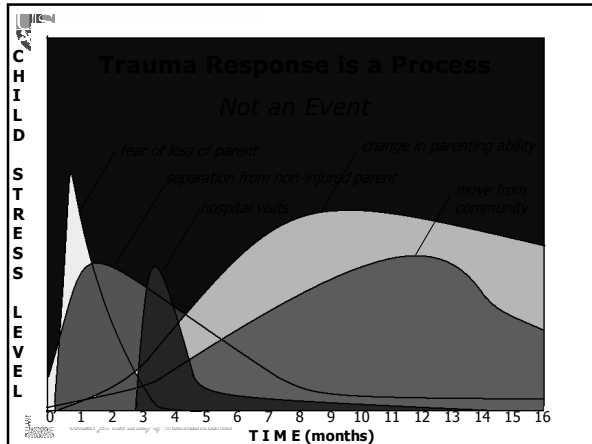
- Vietnam veteran families with PTSD evidence severe and diffuse problems in marital and family adjustment, parenting and violent behavior (Jordan et al .1992)
- Broad relationship problems/difficulty with intimacy correlated with severity of PTSD symptoms (Riggs et al. 1998)
- PTSD adversely effects interpersonal relationships, family functioning and dyadic adjustment (MacDonald et al. 1999)

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Impact of Parental Combat Injury on Children

- No identified literature examining the impact on children due to injury of parent during wartime
- May extrapolate from studies done in other injured/ill parent populations
- Unique child responses based upon parental illness are expected
- Parental psychiatric illness also impacts negatively on children

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Impact of the Injury on the Parenting Process

- Need for mourning related to body change and/or functional loss
- Self concept of “idealized parent image” is challenged
- Must develop an integrated sense of “new self”
- Parental attention must be drawn to child's developmental needs
- Explore new mutually directed activities and play (transitional space) that allows parent and child to “try on” new ways of relating

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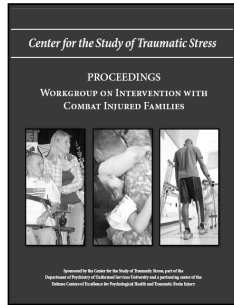
Impact of the Injury on the Child

- The meaning of the injury to the child
- Child's developmental limitations of understanding
- Time of parental distraction and preoccupation with injury
- Confusion about “invisible changes”
- Child must modify the internal image of his injured parent
- Health requires developing an integrated and reality based acceptance of parental changes

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Workgroup on Combat Injured Families



"The injury inherently disrupts the constellation and function of the family and adds stress to the family unit. It tends to widen splits in families that are already present, and add conflict when the dust has settled. Suddenly you have this injury event that just complicates things. Even when families pull together closely, the impact of the combat injury on families is more likely to disorganize than to organize families."

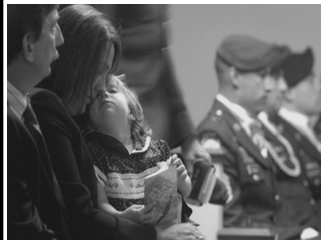
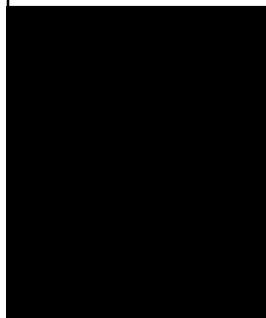


Children and combat death

- No reported studies examining combat deaths on U.S. children – some in development
- Israeli study examining difference between combat vs accidental injury in relatives (Bachar et al. 1997)
- vulnerability in children as a result of parental death
- bereaved children more susceptible to PTSD than other populations of traumatized children (Pfefferbaum et al, 1999; Stoppelbein and Greening, 2000)
- **childhood traumatic grief** – unique consideration (Cohen, et al. 2002)



Parental Death in Military Families





A Coordinated Effort

Military Population In Flux

- Change of station between communities
- Transition to civilian life
- National Guard and Reserve units
- Medical and psychiatric discharges
- Know your role
- Think about function across organizations



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Contact Information

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