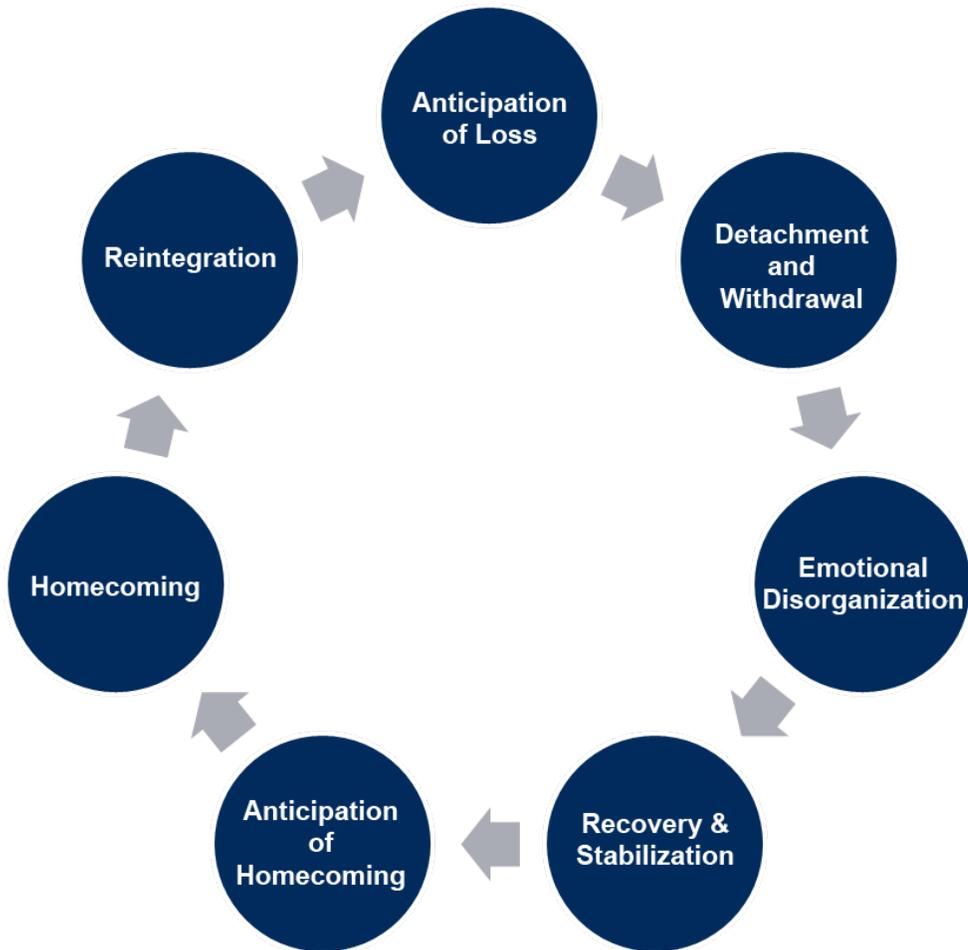




## ***Cycle of Emotions during Deployment***

Most people experience deployment in a predictable cycle. Planning and preparation for deployment and focusing on the suggested success strategies can greatly reduce stress levels and opportunities for growth can be successfully explored.





### ***Stage 1: Anticipation of Loss***

*Anticipating loss may occur for Marines as soon as you are notified of an impending deployment. Some experienced Marines and their families say they tend to delay thinking about an extended deployment until it is imminent and efforts must be made to prepare. Most are anticipating this loss four to six weeks before a planned deployment. It can often be a time of tension and confusing emotions.*

<b>Couples</b>	Partners may be angry and resentful of the increased hours the Marine spends preparing for the deployment. Marines may feel guilty that they are leaving their families while also looking forward to being able to put all of their training into action. Arguments and bickering are common. This bickering can be a useful way for a couple to distance themselves emotionally in preparation for the separation. Open and honest communication is important to help minimize potential hurt feelings.
<b>Children</b>	Parents must be sure to tell their child(ren) about the upcoming deployment and reassure them they will be cared for in the deploying Marine's absence.
<b>Single Marines</b>	Single Marines may also be eager to put their training into action, see foreign countries, learn new languages, and experience new cultures. They may also be concerned about the unknown aspects of the deployment and their families back home.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	Parents may feel worried about their Marine's deployment, especially if it is to a combat zone or hazardous duty location. Parents should keep in touch with the FRO, encourage their Marine to maintain communication during deployment, and learn about their Marine's deployment location. It is important that the Marine discuss communication expectations while deployed with family members prior to the deployment to manage expectation. For example, a Marine may want to tell family members that it may take a while to notify them that the mission destination has been reached safely. This allows the parents to know in advance what to expect and not be consumed by worry if their Marine does not call them the next day. Please note that the FRO can provide official communication to a parent only if the Marine has designated them as someone who should receive official notification about the Marine and his/her unit.



### ***Stage 2: Detachment and Withdrawal***

*Occurring in the final days before deployment, in many ways this can be most difficult, but the sooner you leave on this deployment, the sooner you will be home.*

<b>Couples</b>	Couples are often working extremely hard to get their affairs in order before deploying; however, both partners may stop sharing their thoughts and feelings with each other. This is a natural response as separation is imminent. Although physically together, they have separated emotionally. This can be especially difficult if it is seen as rejection rather than as a reaction to trying circumstances. Often the non-deploying spouse thinks, “If you have to go, go”. Marines think, “Let’s get on with it!” Be aware that this is normal and not a reflection of your relationship.
<b>Children</b>	Children may be confused and upset with the deploying parent. Younger children may feel their behavior caused their parent to leave. Older children may confuse a deployment with divorce. Reassure children that everyone is feeling uneasy because they will miss their Marine.
<b>Single Marines</b>	Marines are often working extremely hard and trying to get their affairs in order before deploying.  Single Marines, especially Marines who are also single parents, often must relocate their children to live with an extended family member during the deployment.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	Parents often travel to say “farewell” to their Marine prior to deployment. Parents often seek a way to stay connected to their Marine and his or her unit during deployment.



### ***Stage 3: Emotional Disorganization***

*The time immediately following deployment, and for up to four to six weeks, Marines and their loved ones may experience emotional disorganization.*

<b>Couples</b>	The non-deploying partner may feel an initial sense of relief followed by guilt. Many feel disorganized, sad, or restless. Old routines have been disrupted and new ones not yet established. They often feel overwhelmed as they face total responsibility for family affairs. A few are stuck in this stage, which can cause problems throughout the remainder of the deployment and beyond. Marines often report feeling as if they are in a “daze.” They try to focus on the mission instead of their family. The Marine will be kept busy, and it is best for family members to do the same: time will pass more quickly, and you will be surprised at what you can accomplish even when you are not feeling “100 percent.”
<b>Children</b>	Children tend to take their cues from their caregiver who may be struggling emotionally during the beginning of an extended deployment. They may show signs of emotional upset, schoolwork may suffer or behavior may regress. Maintain rules and routines, and provide extra emotional support.
<b>Single Marines</b>	Marines are usually excited at first, and then may become lonely or angry with the unit for having to be separated from their families and home. Mostly, Marines will be tired as there is plenty of work for them to accomplish.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	May feel proud and receive recognition from their peers regarding their Marine’s deployment. They may worry about safety and what their Marine is exposed to. Maintaining routines and staying busy will help.



### *Stage 4: Recovery and Stabilization*

*At some point early in the deployment, new routines are established.*

<b>Couples</b>	Those at home have begun to feel more comfortable with the reorganization of roles and responsibilities. Communication expectations are established. New sources of support and a new sense of independence and freedom are developed.
<b>Children</b>	Children too, with time, settle into more comfortable and adaptive behavior.
<b>Single Marines</b>	All Marines may be at a point where the newness and adventure of the deployment has worn off and monotony sets in. Communication patterns are in place.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	Communication patterns are established. Parents of service members have access to official notifications from the unit FRO if designated by their Marine.



### ***Stage 5: Anticipation of Homecoming***

*Homecoming preparation begins at different times for those at home and those on deployment.*

<b>Couples</b>	<p>Approximately four to six weeks before the Marine is due back, spouses and partners who remained at home may realize that they have not finished everything they had planned to accomplish during the separation. There is a feeling of joy and excitement in anticipation of being together again. Feelings of apprehension surface as well at the prospect of dealing with changes and decisions made during deployment begin to surface.</p> <p>Marines in relationships are excited and anxious, too, wondering if they will be accepted or needed by their families and if their children will remember them.</p>
<b>Children</b>	<p>Younger children take their cues from their caretaker. Older children may have similar feelings as their caregiver. They will be excited, joyous, and may feel anxious. They may believe that they did not live up to their deployed parent's expectations.</p>
<b>Single Marines</b>	<p>Many Marines indicate that they do not begin to anticipate homecoming until they are sure they are actually returning. Toward the end of a deployment, they are eager for some time away from the unit and concerned that close friendships developed with their fellow Marines may change upon homecoming.</p>
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	<p>Parents may make plans to greet their Marine upon return, and are relieved that the deployment is almost over!</p>



### ***Stage 6: Homecoming***

*Homecoming is an exciting event. Logistics, travel arrangements, and last minute planning can be the primary focus right before the Marine returns from deployment.*

<b>Couples</b>	Couples may feel awkward, excited, and nervous. In-person communication skills are rusty and may seem awkward. Many feel a loss of freedom and independence, since now they must make decisions as a couple again. The first few days after a deployment are like a honeymoon, allowing the opportunity for a fresh start in all aspects of their relationship. Some Marines, however, report that they often feel like strangers in their own homes. They may also plan to take leave to visit family, or take a much-needed vacation as a family!
<b>Children</b>	Homecoming is exciting, confusing, and can be tiring for children. Young children often reflect their parents' emotions. Just as parents need time to re-establish relationships, so do children. Initially, it is best for the returning parent not to make drastic changes to the children's routine, rules, and responsibilities. For the first few days after your Marine has returned from a deployment, children will likely go to the parent who has remained at home for permission, questions, and assistance. Do not take this personal; they just need time to adjust to you being home again!
<b>Single Marines</b>	Marines may be excited if they are expecting to be greeted by family or friends or they may feel left out if they have not made plans for homecoming. Single Marines may need to renegotiate relationships with roommates, friends, and family. They may also take leave and travel to see friends or family, or take a vacation and do something they had been planning during deployment.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	Parents of Marines may travel to greet their returning Marine, or may prepare for a visit from their Marine. They are usually proud and impressed with their Marine's accomplishments.



### ***Stage 7: Reintegration***

*While many people think a deployment ends at the homecoming celebration, reintegration, or getting back to a normal routine, takes time. The length of time it takes for reintegration is a point of discussion. With predictable deployment cycles, most Marines and their families indicated they felt back to their pre-deployment state of normal within four to six weeks after homecoming.*

<b>Couples</b>	Spouses feel more relaxed and comfortable with each other. There is a renewed sense of being a couple and a family. They are back on the same track emotionally and can enjoy the warmth and closeness of being a couple again.
<b>Children</b>	Young children may worry that their parent will leave again. Older children are usually delighted that their family is reunited even though they at times, may resent the discipline enforced by having two parents at home.
<b>Single Marines</b>	Marines are pursuing interests away from work such as athletics, college, hobbies, and developing relationships.
<b>Parents of Marines</b>	Parents may wonder about their Marine's future duty assignments as well as career and personal plans.

### **By understanding The Emotional Cycle of Deployment, you will:**

- Have a smoother overall deployment experience
- Recognize your emotions, strong or intense are “normal”
- Plan ways to support the ones you care about
- Try new positive coping strategies
- Manage stress better and build resilience
- Openly share your feelings
- Help children and/or extended family members cope
- Handle multiple deployments successfully

