

Coping Strategies and Resources for Families Separated from Loved Ones During the Holidays

Prayer for a Family

Lord, bless our family, all of us now together, those far away, all who are gone back to you. May we know joy. May we bear our sorrows in patience. Let love guide our understanding of each other. Let us be grateful to each other. We have all made each other what we are. O Family of Jesus, watch over our family.

Coping Strategies:

- Pray for the one that you are separated from. Ask God for comfort, guidance and peace. Make extra time for adoration, daily Mass, and confession.
- Ask your child what would be most comforting and meaningful for each holiday. Then do your best to do at least one of the things he or she suggests.
- Talk about the one that you are missing. Share funny stories and favorite memories.
- Take care of yourself; you are showing your child how to take care of him or herself when you do so. It will also help you to have the necessary energy to take care of your child(ren).
- Make a gift, write a letter, or offer a gift to someone on behalf of the loved one you are missing.
- Help others: invite someone who is alone to join you for the holidays, volunteer at the hospital, a soup kitchen, youth program, nursing home (wherever you and your child(ren) are comfortable).
- Surround yourself with loved ones and friends
- Ask for help when needed (people love to feel needed and want to help but often don't know how).

RESOURCES

For families separated because of military deployment

- <http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil>
 - Sesame Street-Talk, Listen, Connect (video to help young children understand and cope with separation and homecomings)
 - Holiday Stress & Deployment
 - Helping Children Cope with Deployment
 - Helping a young child cope with deployment

Post Deployment Support Group

Hearts Apart: Support Group for spouses of deployed military

Call 703.432.1903 to find out more information; childcare provided.

For Families Separated Due to Divorce

Teen guides to parental separation and divorce: This resource is secular, yet fact oriented with sound advice. You may want to review it prior to sharing it with your child.

- <http://www.familieschange.ca/teen/index.htm>
- http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/Parents/divorce.html

Kid's guide - <http://www.familieschange.ca/kids/index.htm>

Coping with Divorce & Separation for Children and Parents

In Step Counseling Services of Fairfax: 703-876-8480 - <http://insteppc.com/divorce.shtml>

For Families Separated Due to Death

Understanding grief and tips for helping those who are grieving: adults & children

- http://www.helpguide.org/mental/helping_grieving.htm

Activities for children, teens, and adults to discuss in regards to their loss.

- <http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/>

Online support groups for children, teens and adults

- <http://www.griefnet.org/support/sg2.html>
- http://www.kidsaid.com/k2k_support.html

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Diocese of Arlington - <http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/yam/parishgroups.php>

Haven of Northern Virginia, Annandale, 703-941-7000 - <http://www.havenofnova.org/>

Capital Hospice: Falls Church; 703-538-2065 - <http://www.capitalhospice.org/>