



Introduction

My dad served in the Navy during World War II on the island of Okinawa, Japan, before I was born. My whole life, I've listened to stories about Okinawa, but only recently was I able to visit a U.S. installation there. During my visit, I tried to envision some of the stories he had told, tried to make them come to life, but it was too far in the past. My friends Barbara and Louis took me to shops where beautiful silk kimonos brightened the windows. The island was too peaceful and too full of wonderful things to see and do for me to imagine what it was like during the war.

Although I missed being a military kid by a few years, my heart has always been with kids whose parents serve in the military and who are separated from them during times of deployment.

I didn't know it when I started my career, but all along I was taking steps to help military families and children. After working as a teacher and caregiver of children for over twenty years, I became a college professor. I taught social-emotional devel-

opment to students who would one day be advocates for and teachers of children, using my practice and experience to inform my teaching. I then had the good fortune to become a consultant and curriculum writer for military-based programs and was able to visit many installations around the world to see a side of the military child that I had not seen as a classroom teacher. I earned a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction from Texas A&M University, with emphases in early childhood education and child development. This experience and preparation have given me respect and passion for the thousands of children with military parents and the challenges they face.

Why This Book Is Necessary

One-half of all military personnel are married with children. Almost a half million children under the age of eight live in military families in which one or both parents are deployed (www.military.com). In no other situation are children placed on such high alert for a parent's impending danger and faced with the kinds of stress that living the life of a military

kid brings. Transitions that arise when parents and family members face assignment or reassignment and when family relocation separates children from loved ones or moves them into new schools and communities bring challenges and change. It's important not to overlook the unique stressors involved when working with military families. This book provides support and strategies for teachers, caregivers, trainers, and advocates working with military children.

Although this book is written specifically about the challenges children face related to deployment, the coping strategies it outlines will be helpful when working with other children as well. Whenever a parent leaves home for an extended period—whether he is working on temporary duty (TDY) that takes him away from home or he is working in another country—children experience a sense of loss. Of course, not every parent in the military goes to war or even leaves home. Jobs in the community as recruiters and positions on military installations that keep parents close by are common. Much of the information in this book will still be helpful to caregivers in these situations.

If you are a family child care provider, a family member or friend of the family, or a center care provider, know that providing care for the military child is one of the most important jobs you will ever have. This book will help you to provide quality and nurturing care. If you care for military children with special needs, I recommend *Including One, Including All* (Wanerman, Roffman, and Britton 2010).

Whom This Book Is For

Deployment: Strategies for Working with Kids in Military Families is written for those who work with or on behalf of children whose parents serve in the U.S. military—Army, U.S. Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, National Guard, and Reserves. You may be teaching or caring for military kids on an installation or off, in Department of Defense Schools, public schools, private schools or home schools, or

family child care or center-based child care, or you may be their grandparent or other family member or friend. Social workers, program directors, trainers, and principals can all gain a better sense of the military child by reading this book and thoughtfully reflecting on their programs and the principles that inform or guide their decision making about the military child.

For the purposes of this book, *military child* is defined as one whose parent is serving either in the active-duty forces or in an activated and mobilized National Guard or Reserve unit. The age span for the military child in our discussion includes infants through school-age children. In this book, the term *primary caregiver* refers to the adult who is responsible for the child while the parent or parents are away on military duties. Primary caregivers are often the first point of contact and consultation for children when their parents are deployed. They provide care for the child when out of center or school care. A primary caregiver can be the other parent, a relative, or a close friend of the parents. The terms *caregiver* and *provider* in this book refer to a child care provider (center or home-based care) or teacher who cares for the child in a part-time capacity.

Family Child Care

Family child care supports military parents by providing quality care and education and as an alternative to center-based or kinship care. As a licensed family child care provider, you have decided to provide high-quality early care and education for military children. You know that their needs are unique, and you will be expected to provide for their social, emotional, learning, and physical needs while exercising patience and understanding. When stress levels are high, you focus on temperament and a goodness of fit (Thomas and Chess 1977) where individual children's needs are concerned, providing just the right solution for each child. To increase your own circle of support and to become a member of a large network of family child care

providers, visit the National Association for Family Child Care Web site at www.nafcc.org.

Kinship Care

If you are a relative, stepparent, godparent, or any adult who has a bond with a child and you care for that child while his parents are deployed, you are engaging in kinship care. You are not alone! More and more military personnel are relying on kinship care for their children during deployment. (This is also common within the civilian population.) Parents are trusting you to keep their children safe and to carry on established traditions and routines. The responsibility can be overwhelming, especially if you have not cared for children before or have not done so in a long time. Caregivers at child care centers and teachers in schools may be able to help you in this time of transition. See also the agency Web sites listed in appendix B of this book under What Caregivers Can Expect.

Child Development Center Care

Once military parents have been given a departure time, they begin to assess their options for the care of their children. If there are no other trusted family members or friends to care for their children full-time, parents may turn to a child development center for child care. Some of the questions you may be asked are, “Do you have extended hours?” “Do you have experience in caring for military children?” “Can you keep me informed of what my child is doing?” Deployed parents have the added job stress of being separated from their children for long periods of time, and your assistance is critical in helping the parent left behind, or the family or friend who is left to care for the child if both parents are deploying (called *dual deployment*). In the case of dual deployment, you will be in a relationship with the primary caregivers and the deployed parents. Some days it may seem like a thankless job, but just knowing the importance of caring for the

youngest, and maybe the bravest, children in itself can be rewarding.

Child development centers on military installations are designed to be a good fit for young children, care providers, and families. The program at such a center addresses the whole child, is developmentally appropriate for children, and provides relevant and significant curricular experiences on a daily basis. Those who work with and on the behalf of young children attend to development in cognitive, language, physical, social, and emotional areas. Music and movement, math, science, social studies, science and technology, as well as nutrition, health, and safety, are at the heart of the curriculum. Learning activities are not left to chance but are carefully planned and implemented based on the needs of the children in care. Care providers are well trained, and provider-to-child ratios are more than adequate. Efforts are made to work with primary caregivers or the non-deployed parents or guardians who take care of military children while the parents are deployed. Child development centers and child care providers play a huge role in assisting primary caregivers during deployment or temporary-duty assignments.

SUGGESTION FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

The Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library, which can be found at <http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil>, is an excellent resource for parents who are getting ready to deploy.

SUGGESTION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (www.naeyc.org) and the National Association for Family Child Care (www.nafcc.org), both of which have state and local affiliations, are great networks of caregivers that can become your arms of support.

How to Use This Book

Throughout the book you will find strategies for helping military kids and their families cope with deployment issues and challenges. Each chapter features different topics that provide information about the military child and her world, but you do not have to read the chapters in succession to find the information that you need. Based on a sound theoretical foundation, this book is mostly about good practices, and the strategies offered in each chapter attempt to inform you of ways to address the needs of children and their families as they face separation by deployment and other military duties.

Because military children face unusual or irregular hardships, their experiences throughout the stages of deployment must be discussed. At the same time, they are still children and have many of the same experiences that children outside of military families have. Adults outside the military can use this book to learn more about military children and how to support the adults caring for military children. Both nonmilitary adults and adults living and/or working inside the military can use this book to learn more about the stages of children's development and how each stage can be positively fostered and celebrated. Throughout this book, I highlight strategies to advance military children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs.

In chapter 1, I give an overview of what teachers and providers can expect when working with the military child. I provide strategies that will help the child during the parent's absence and address the complex issues that preclude caregivers from offering best practices in care. Since they represent both sides of care for the child, providers and primary caregivers should understand each other's perspective. I encourage you to examine your own practices and explore ways to improve your understanding of kids from military families in your care.

Chapter 2 focuses on how to offer emotional support for children in your care. Its strategies will

help you plan emotionally positive environments based on sound child development principles and practices for children from birth through age eight. You will learn about how secure attachments in infants and toddlers are founded as well as how you can provide emotionally supportive environments for babies, preschoolers, and schoolagers. I provide strategies for enhancing patriotism in children, providing peaceful environments, and teaching tolerance through specific activities. I also address the important issue of bullying, which military kids sometimes face, and give strategies for responding to it. The chapter also details strategies to help children with the challenges of being left behind during deployment, with an emphasis on fostering emotional intelligence and resiliency. Finally, I discuss how to use routines and rituals to maintain stability in the environment and provide strategies for celebrating holidays with children.

Chapter 3 addresses the emotional benefits of play and how you can help kids understand their feelings by offering an emotion-centered curriculum. Play is monumentally important for military children, and this chapter helps you to know when it is disrupted and what you can do about it. There are suggestions for how to foster play through music, dance, art, and books. I also discuss how to scaffold children's learning and offer strategies for when a child's behavior is outside the norm (including violent behavior) and needs more attention from outside professionals.

Chapter 4 discusses the social, cognitive, and physical benefits of play. I discuss strategies for setting up outdoor play environments, loose-parts play, and games with rules. The chapter addresses the benefits of play for children of all ages.

In chapter 5, I focus on the benefits of programming in music and literacy. I discuss how to incorporate music and creative movement throughout your curriculum, including using music as part of transitions. I explain how you can use principles of music therapy in your early childhood program.

In discussing literacy programming, I provide many ideas of how to use storytelling, circle time, and environment enhancements, such as a computer center, to provide literacy rich environments.

Chapter 6 focuses on multiple intelligences theory and the Reggio Emilia approach as resources for creating quality child care programs. I discuss Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and ways to observe children and make curriculum plans using his theory. In the section on Reggio Emilia, I describe how you can make your environment a "third teacher" and how you can use documentation to guide your practice with children. An exciting part of this chapter, inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, is learning to teach preschool and school-age kids to delve into a topic and make their own projects. As researchers, children can use critical thinking with your guidance and conduct their own investigations of the environment, which can result in in-depth learning.

Chapter 7 concentrates on developing partnerships with parents and primary caregivers and learning to work together in family-centered environments. I provide strategies for verbal and written communication with parents and primary caregivers as well as ideas for preparing family-friendly and useful bulletin boards, newsletters, personal notes, signs, and program-to-home activities that parents or primary caregivers and children can do together.

Chapter 8 explores strategies for staying connected when military children are separated from friends and family after relocation or from a parent or parents after deployment. I suggest ways military children can stay in touch with loved ones, includ-

ing using technology such as podcasts, wikis, and blogs.

Chapter 9 discusses other important issues that children of military parents face, such as repeat and extended deployments, and addresses children and grief. I offer strategies for you to use when both parents are deployed or when single parents are deployed, and I list signs to alert you when children, parents, or primary caregivers are at risk and what help you can provide. I also offer strategies for helping children grieve the death of a parent.

Many providers, especially in communities away from military installations, have limited experience with military children and are not familiar with the uniforms (including weapons), language, and rituals of the military. A sister of a service member commented that she was surprised the first time she and her children saw her brother in uniform. She had always taught her children not to play with guns; she spent lots of time after her brother was deployed explaining to her children that her brother was going to use his gun to be a peacekeeper. It is a good idea for providers to have at least a basic understanding of the challenges and triumphs that military families (especially children) face. A glossary of common military terms is included at the end of this book.

This book is based on careful research and selection of best practices in child development and early education. As you provide care for military children, I hope it will serve you well.