

Things to Consider Regarding Communication

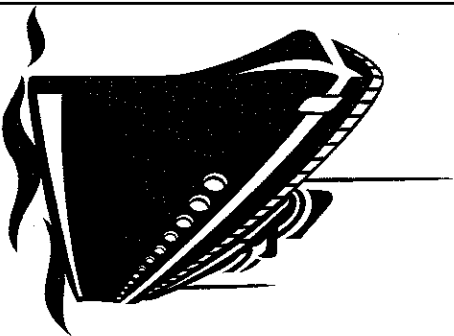
- The frequency is probably more important than the length of communications.
- The military services will not provide you with contact information for your friends. Their parents and/or spouses should have the required information.
- While all service members will have email accounts, it is unlikely that electronic communications will be "instant." Due to variables such as mission activity and the availability of computers, a soldier's response may be delayed for a week or more. Technological advancements have led some to speculate that, similar to the old practice of waiting in long lines at a phone booth to call home, soldiers will now be standing in long lines waiting to use computers for email.
- Snail-mail letters and cards are still one of the least expensive and most satisfactory ways to stay in touch with military personnel. Their advantage is that they can be reread during lonely moments or at times when other forms of communication are not available. Military postal

- Your friends may not be able to share much information about their location or mission. At the same time, they may talk passionately about their unit and desire to serve their country. This enthusiasm is essential to your friend's success and safety in combat, and it is important for you to recognize and honor this part of their experience.
- If you decide you would like to extend your good will efforts beyond your friend - the National Military Family Association (www.nmfa.org) can provide additional information about more general efforts to support our service men and women.

In closing, while it may seem premature at this point, you might begin to contemplate and prepare for your friend's return to the States. Friends and loved ones of military service members frequently have fantasies of what the reunion will be like, often harboring a strong desire to return to "the way we were." However, the passage of time and the experience of being deployed, not to mention the potentially life-altering impact of armed combat, can result in dramatic changes both within and between people. It is important to be willing to spend the time necessary to slowly get reacquainted with one another and to reestablish the relationship on both old and new terms.

COUNSELING CENTER
253-535-7206
COUNCEN@PLU.EDU

MY FRIEND OR
LOVED ONE IS
AT WAR



Pacific Lutheran University

COUNSELING CENTER
106 RAMSTAD HALL
TACOMA, WA
253-535-7206

Tips for students when a friend or loved one is at war

While all of us are faced with the unknown consequences of war, an increasing number of students will also be faced with growing concerns about friends and loved ones who have been (or may soon be) deployed for military service. These students, like the young adults of previous wartime generations, express feelings commonly associated with the trauma of military deployment (e.g. fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, etc.), with particular apprehension about what they will experience if their friends go into actual combat.

These are completely normal responses to an abnormally troubling situation. Nevertheless, they must face the issue of how best to cope with the deployment and possible combat involvement of their friends and relatives. Perhaps the single most critical challenge is to sustain a focus not on their fears but focus on what does remain under their control. To students it is suggested to continue "business as usual" as much as possible, while allowing for more talk and processing time during your week. Allowing your own personal needs and pursuits to decay will be of no use to you and may actually cause added concern for others.

Ways to Cope

- Take it day by day. Stick to the academic, work, and social schedules that give structure to your daily life. There is comfort in familiar routines.
- Try to eat well and get enough rest.
- Exercise regularly; anything you enjoy that is active is good for your body and your mind at times of high stress/ anxiety.
- Avoid excesses in alcohol and other drugs.
- Limit your exposure to the emotionally draining impact of television war coverage.
- Do not stew. Worrying about that which you can do nothing about leads to more worry- a vicious spiral.
- Spend time with people that you care about and do things with them that you enjoy.
- Seek perspective and comfort from spiritual leaders and others in your community.
- If you are struggling, talk about your feelings with friends and family who can accept how you feel and what you think without question. If things become more overwhelming, contact the Counseling Center (253-535-7206) and request an appointment to air out your concerns.

Sending Your Love

While the previously listed suggestions are all important to coping effectively with deployment/ combat issues, sometimes a good way to help yourself is to reach out and find meaningful ways to be helpful to others, especially your friends in the military. Consistent efforts to communicate with your friends who have been deployed can do wonders to raise their morale and strengthen them for the challenges that they face.

In fact, some incredibly moving and courageous compositions have been written between soldiers and their friends and loved ones (if you are interested, do a Google search for the 1861 letter written by Sullivan Ballou to his wife Sarah during the American Civil War).

If you are sending a package, check out the United States Postal Services website (www.usps.com) for information about what can and cannot be shipped to various locations.

Be creative with your packages. Send photos, silly toys, newly release CDs and interesting home newspaper and Mast articles. Make sure any food items are not perishable.