

Identifying and Building Strengths in Military Families

Presented by:

Kimberly Greder, Ph.D.

Associate Professor & Extension and Outreach Specialist,
Dept. of Human Development and Family Studies, Iowa State University

David Brown, Ph.D.

LMFT Wing Director of Psychological Health, 132nd Fighter Wing, Air National Guard



WELCOME

Be sure to ...

- Have paper and a writing utensil available



- Share your thoughts and ideas in the chat box



Share your **job title** and your
main job responsibility

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Non-normative Challenges


What are **unexpected challenges** that military families face?

What do military families who face non-normative challenges have in common?

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Commonalities among families who face non-normative challenges:

- **Additional stressors** added to normal stresses of parenting
 - Typically, families are **not prepared** ahead of time.
 - Almost all families **want good things** for their children.
 - Families will respond to challenges **the best way they know how**, using the resources they believe are accessible and appropriate for them to use.
 - The same challenge may have **varying responses** among different families and among family members.
 - Families **understand their experience better** than anyone else.
- 



Share your definition of ...

“ a family strength ”

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What are family strengths?



...relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics that create a sense of positive family identity, promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members, encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members, and contribute to the family's ability to deal affectively with stress and crisis.

-- (Stinnet, 1979)



Share examples of ...



family strengths you have
seen in military families

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Why is it **important** to help military families **identify** and **build** upon their strengths?

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Resiliency...



“ family’s ability to cultivate strengths to positively meet the challenges of life. ”

~National Network for Family Resiliency, 1993 ~

Family Strengths

What are **common traits**
of **strong families**?

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Common Traits of Strong Families

- Adaptability
- Appreciation
- Clear roles
- Commitment to family
- Communication
- Community and family ties
- Encouragement of individuals
- Shared time



What do these concepts mean?

- Adaptability
- Appreciation
- Clear roles
- Commitment to family
- Communication
- Community and family ties
- Encouragement of individuals
- Shared time

How can they
help **build**
strong military
families?

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Cohesion and Adaptability

Particularly **important strengths** for military families

What words come to mind as you think of **cohesion? adaptability?**

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Cohesion and Adaptability

- lie on a continuum
- important to be in balance with each other




What would be **too much** cohesion?
Too little cohesion?

What would be **too much** adaptability?
Too little adaptability?

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Contrasting family strengths

- **Acceptance and compliance** in contrast to **negative reactions and rejection** of intervention services.
 - **Seriousness** in contrast to **humor**.
 - **Quiet, reserved response** in contrast to **outspoken communication**.
 - **Independent, go-it-alone approach** in contrast to **family spirituality and faith/community support**.
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The Protective Factors Framework

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

How do you **help**
families **identify** their
own **strengths**?



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Strategies to help families identify their strengths:

1. Asking “how” or “what” questions. How did that help you? What difference did that make for you when ...
2. Focus on what is going well. Talk about aspects of a family’s experience that are not problems. What does your family
 - ... do well?
 - ... like to do that gives your family good feelings about itself?
 - ... do that helps your family get along with or relate to other people?
 - ... do that helps your family get what it wants and needs for its members?

Strategies to help families identify their strengths (cont.):

3. Recognize and celebrate family successes and strengths. It is important to do this even if the family does not recognize them.

What **IDEAS** do you have?

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American Family Strengths Inventory: A tool for families

Online at:

[www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/
live/g1881/build/g1881.pdf](http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/live/g1881/build/g1881.pdf)



Make a plan as a family to build strengths ...

- Put an **“S”** for qualities where you think there are **STRENGTHS**.
 - Put a **“G”** for qualities where there is a potential for **GROWTH**.
 - Put an **“NA”** for **NOT APPLICABLE** beside characteristics that are not applicable to your family or are not important to you.
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How might you **use**
this inventory with
families you work with?



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What are **other activities** for military families to **recognize strengths** of family members and their family as a whole?

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Your challenge...

On your own, **complete** the
ENTIRE American Family
Strengths Inventory and make a
plan with your family!

HOMework



