

Strategies that can help you communicate with family and friends:

- Decide ahead of time what you want to discuss.
- Share only what **you** want to share and don't rush yourself.
- Don't start talking if you're already angry—cool off first.
- Work on skills to deal with painful feelings so you don't lash out.
- Try not to interrupt or get defensive when people offer their opinions.
- If you are unclear about how you are presenting yourself to others, check in with them by asking for feedback.
- When talking about your deployment, it's **normal** to feel some tension. A good practice is to learn relaxation skills.



Things to remember in your relationships with friends and family:

- Most people don't know as much about the military as you do. Be patient if they don't understand your point of view. For example, you could say:
 - *"I understand that you have not gone through what I have, and that's okay."*
- Be specific when something is bothering you:
 - *For example, rather than saying, "You never listen to me!" you can say, "I get frustrated when you're text messaging other people while I'm trying to talk to you."*
- Tell the person what they can do to help:
 - *"I need to talk about some things. Do you have some time now to listen?"*
 - *"I know you're trying to be helpful when you give advice, but when you interrupt, I can't say what I want to say. If you could just listen for now, it would help a lot."*
 - *"Thanks for listening – it helps when I can get things off my chest."*
- Many people have a hard time showing that they care, so notice the "little things" someone is doing to support you:
 - *For example, taking the kids to the park so you can take a nap; offering to run errands; making a special meal, etc.*

Things you can say when you are asked frustrating questions:

- "No offense, but I don't like to talk about my deployment experiences."
- "I'm not comfortable with those questions right now, but thanks for asking."
- "I would rather not talk about that, let's talk about something else."
- "I have lots of opinions on that subject. Do you really want to hear what I think?"
- "I would like to discuss this, but now is not a good time. Maybe we can find another time."
- "That's not cool to say or ask. Please don't say or ask me that again."

Strategies you can use when people don't respect your needs:

- Keep in mind that taking care of **yourself** is your top priority.
- Reduce the time you spend with them.
- Have a supportive person with you when you are around them.
- Do not discuss upsetting or other private issues with them.
- Set limits and ask them to stop if they are being rude, prying, or critical.