



SUPPORTING FAMILY WELLBEING WHEN LIVING APART

Moving to recategorise to Unaccompanied Resident Family (URF) can be one of the toughest decisions a Defence Force family make on their journey of Defence life and may come as a result of medical reasons, housing availability, career obligations and more. Here is a guide to support your wellbeing during this time.

Our top 5 tips for managing URF:

1. Build your village.

Who is in your village, how do you connect with them and where are the gaps? Write a list and keep it on your fridge so when those vulnerable moments arise you can easily access this information. Do you know who to turn to when you are running late to pick up your child from school, who might join you for a meal when you are lonely, who you might hike in the bush with for exercise and connection, who you can call when you miss your loved one or who might come and help you fold the mountain of washing you have been avoiding. These might be friends, family, other Defence spouses. If any gaps arise in your support village, find new ways to fill them through connection.

2. Practice regular self-care.

Self-care is crucial to a thriving URF journey. It doesn't have to be elaborate or lengthy which may put more pressure on you. Self-care can be as simple as a 5-minute guided meditation, a bath with your favourite essential oils, 10 minutes of gratitude journaling, a walk around the block or being in nature. Setting realistic goals for self-care makes it more achievable. Set yourself a goal for 5 minutes of self-care this week.

3. Have an open line of communication with your loved one.

This one can be challenging when your loved one is on deployment and communication is sparse. The key is to continue sharing as much of your lives

with each other as possible when you are apart. Talk about your day/week/month, your challenges, your successes, your goals and what you are looking forward to about your next reunion. Sometimes it can be hard to share feelings however it is through vulnerability that connection thrives.

4. Rituals matter.

Family rituals are special events you practice regularly. They are mindful and intentional and support you to stay connected. Rituals may include a Friday night movie with popcorn, a picnic on Sundays at the beach, a unique way of honouring a birthday, code words or special names for each other. Many of these can be done via online platforms or you can save them for when your next reunion. Continuing these rituals can help support you through changing and challenging times. Perhaps there are new rituals specific to URF that you might like to include in your family.

5. Ask for help.

Be specific in the support you require. Ask for help early and often. You might be surprised by the amount of help you receive when you ask for it. You may have people in your life who are waiting for you to ask for help. Perhaps they aren't sure of your needs. You may need help with meal preparation, childcare, housework or garden maintenance. Tell those in your village and ask if they can meet your needs today, tomorrow or in the future.