

Sesame Workshop: Talk, Listen, Connect

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) realizes that helping our nation's war fighters means taking care of their families as well. To help our military families with small children, DCoE teamed up with Sesame Workshop to further develop its Talk, Listen, Connect initiative, a multiphase, bilingual, multimedia resource that guides families through the kinds of changes that are often intrinsic to military life. The first phase of the initiative was launched in 2006.

Talk, Listen, Connect addresses issues related to multiple deployments, family changes that occur when a parent is physically or psychologically injured, and the loss of a parent. The Sesame Workshop series uses recognizable characters to explain, in a manner understandable to young children, the situations that military families face.

The initiative includes:

- Helping Families During Military Deployment (2006)
- Deployments, Homecomings, Changes (2009)
- When Families Grieve (2010)

Each phase has included a PBS primetime special:

- "When Parents Are Deployed," starring Cuba Gooding Jr., describes the three stages of transition families go through when experiencing pre-deployment, deployment and homecoming
- "Coming Home: Military Families Cope with Change," featuring John Mayer and Queen Latifah, shares inspirational stories of military families coping with physical, emotional and psychological injuries
- "When Families Grieve," hosted by Katie Couric, features the Sesame Street Muppets and personal stories of several families with children coping with the death of a parent

In addition to the specials, each phase of the initiative has included bilingual (English/Spanish) kits, complete with helpful DVDs featuring Sesame Street Muppets and print resources for adults, children and facilitators, as well as an extensive online component.



Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn, left, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, center, Sesame Workshop President Gary Knell, and Sesame Street muppets Jesse, Elmo and Rosita host a preview of the PBS special "When Families Grieve" at the Pentagon, April 13, 2010. DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist Chad J. McNeeley, U.S. Navy

Another resource DCoE helped develop is the "Family Connections" website (www.SesameStreetFamilyConnections.org), which allows military families and friends to stay in touch through messages, artwork, photos and video clips. "Family Connections" offers communication tips for parents and videos for children that feature favorite Sesame Street characters asking questions and discussing their feelings.

