Olive Oyl, Naval Wife

The crazed ramblings of a wife of a Royal Navy Sailor

DEPLOYMENT SURVIVAL TIPS FROM THE TRAIN DRIVING SQUIRRELS

Ok so the focus topic for this edition I've been told is deployment and spending time apart. A nice and easy topic at first glance. But I sat down to write and my brain started simultaneously thinking of about 50 different potential articles, which reflects only a small number of the topics that come under that very big umbrella.

Like several squirrels trying to drive a train, these thoughts collided and the writing train ground to a halt.

It's a HUGE topic. And full disclaimer- I won't be able to do it justice here. My relationship with Popeye isn't the same as the one you, dear reader, are in. **Our families are different. The way we cope will be different too**.

The *time* we spend apart will be the same, because time is on a continuum. How that time *feels* depends entirely on what has hit the fan whilst you are apart, what support you have around you, and importantly what **you do** with that time.

I'm not going to bang on about keeping busy because that's an obvious one. In fact I'd first like to remind you to *rest* when they are away. Don't pile activities into every nook and cranny of the week. You will burn out and **still miss them**.

You are the main activity co-ordinator and Logistics Officer when there's a deployment on. The buck lands squarely at **your** feet. There's no relieving Officer of the Watch. If you don't wrestle time back for yourself, you run the risk of crumbling psychologically. **So please, please take time to nourish yourself**- baths, walks, books, meditation, wild water swimming- whatever it is- make sure it's just for you, and that it's not a means to an ends, i.e. there's no "point" to it- it's just for fun or relaxation. An hour every week or two will make the world of difference to your resilience.

Here are a few other top tips that have been tried and tested by yours truly:

Be extra kind to yourself, buy yourself flowers, write your name in the sand etc. Invest in yourself and have a daily affirmation- mine is "you've got this". Feel free to borrow it if you can't think of one.

Cool fact- if you say something to yourself in the mirror five times- you start to believe it. So say your affirmation out loud five times each day whilst staring at your beautiful reflection.

Cereal counts as a dinner. That's it. That's the advice.

Don't expect contact every day. Then if it happens it's a bonus, rather than feeling let down by something that is totally out of your sailor's control. Once a week is good. Twice is lovely and three times a week? All I can say is Ooh ambassador you are really spoiling us!

Join a secure Facebook group or approved forum for the ship- you find out loads on there.

Don't watch the news until they are home- think of it as a proactive stress

Olive Oyl is a pseudonym for a Naval wife who started a blog to express her thoughts on the day-to-day frustrations, general hilarity, chaos, sadness and happiness that goes hand-in-hand with being a Naval Wife. The other aim of the blog is to bring some reassurance to other Naval wives that they are not completely loopy, or it might just serve as concrete evidence that she is the one round the bend, and every other Naval wife is a pillar of strength and sanity!

'Olive Oyl' is married to a sailor, known as Popeye. They have two young daughters, affectionately called 'Sweetpea' and 'Sproglet', and a Westie.

management strategy. This is doubly mega ultra important if they have deployed somewhere scary, which unfortunately covers quite a few areas of the world nowadays.

(You can still watch the news if they've popped to Plymouth etc).

Don't try to not worry. You will worry. But do a spot of worrying then *move on.* Think of another thought. Acknowledge "wow that was a good old worry session" and then park it for the rest of the day/week. Pop a new thought into your head to chew over- like, "what should I have for dinner? Ooh maybe paella! I wonder if I should buy a paella pan one day? Do we eat paella enough to justify buying a special pan for it? Would it fit in the kitchen cupboard? In Spain do they just call them pans?" Because the worrying sesh is over, for today.

Before you know it you've stopped worrying and moved your thoughts on. No guilt, no trying not to worry, just worry, notice it's "a worry sesh" then, when you're ready, close down the session with a brand new shiny thought. Most people don't have several squirrels of thoughts running around at the same time and find that doing this, shuts down the worrying thinking nicely, whilst giving yourself permission to have a worry sesh.

Do something you couldn't do if they were home. Most people say starfishing in the bed- I say do something weird or fun or even better something weird AND fun- like the one time I grew out my leg hair just to see what it looked like. (It was a winter deployment). No one else was going to see and I was pleasantly surprised at how soft and downy it was after the stubble layer grew out. Shaved it all off before he came home and voila! I satisfied the curiosity I'd had about my own body hair I had since first lifting the Bic as a young teen.

Other weird and fun things I've done- tried to grow loads of plants from leaf cuttings (kitchen was filled with pots of mud and leaves for a few months), bought a hot glue gun for making things, moved all the furniture around in the living room and then back again, slept with my head at the foot of the bed so I could watch thunderstorms out of the window as I drifted off, etc etc.

Anyway, I think those are all the top tips I've got that I haven't already shared with you. **Time apart sucks** but you've got to do it. Just make sure that you don't waste the time away, how you spend the time is important too. We can't speed it up after all.

Muchos love-

Olive x

