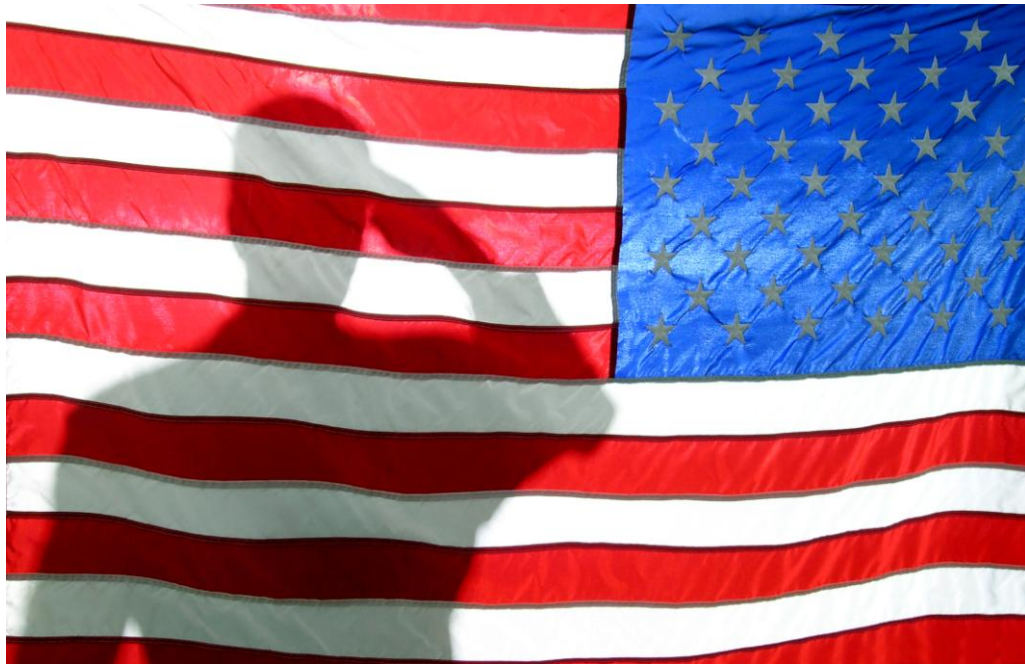


# 101 Ways To



## Support Our Troops

Written by:  
Ginny Dye

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Author's Note:

Whether or not you agree with our current foreign policy, it is important we all support the brave men and women serving in the U.S. Military. Too often you're just not sure what to do, or how you can help. I hope these 101 Ideas will propel you to get started, and then guide you as you move forward.

I'd like to share with you the words of a young person I am close to: "Ginny, I don't know why people complain about the world if they're not going to do something to change it. They should either put up, or shut up."



Ouch. He's a little blunt but he could not be more right. No matter where you live; how much money you make (or don't make); whether you are healthy or sick; whether you are young or old; whether you are busy or have a lot of free time - YOU can make a difference.

You simply have to *CHOOSE* to.

Ginny Dye



## **101 Ways to Support Our Troops**

*Let's start with the ways that will cost nothing, or very little...*

- 1) When you see a person in a military uniform, shake their hand and say, "Thank you for serving our country."
- 2) The month of May is National Military Appreciation Month. Go to [www.NMAM.org](http://www.NMAM.org) for a list of events in the month of May where you may show your support for our military and different ways you can participate.
- 3) Memorial Day is always the last Monday in May. Honor it :
  - by visiting cemeteries and placing flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes.
  - by visiting memorials.
  - by flying the U.S. Flag at half-staff until noon.
  - by flying the 'POW/MIA Flag' as well (Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act).
  - by participating in a "[National Moment of Remembrance](#)": at 3 p.m. to pause and think upon the true meaning of the day, and for [Taps](#) to be played.
  - by renewing a pledge to aid the widows, widowers, and orphans of our fallen dead, and to aid the disabled veterans.

- 4) Take a special video of their family and send it to them
- 5) Take a video of their family at a school function, picnic or sports event. The hardest thing for our military is being separated from those they love. They will love being able to see their family over and over.
- 6) Compile a video of their friends and neighbors sending special messages, singing a song, playing around, or whatever they want to do - it will simply let them know they are cared about. I promise these videos are something they will play over and over!
- 7) Get your entire neighborhood involved in sending them a Care Package every month. You can distribute a list through the neighborhood and let everyone contribute some of the things on the list. Then put together the package, include a letter with notes from everyone, and send it to them. They will so appreciate knowing their neighbors haven't forgotten them.
- 8) Ask your elected officials at all levels to recognize our military.
- 9) Collect jokes on the Internet and make a little booklet to send. Everyone needs to laugh!
- 10) Send nice newspaper clippings and pictures about the good things they are doing overseas. It will help them to know what they are doing is important and being noticed.



- 11) Send them the weekly newspaper or some of the daily newspapers. The news may be old to you but it will be new to them and will allow them to stay in touch with home.
- 12) Request a special prayer for them at your church, synagogue or mosque - then tell them the day and time the prayer was said. They will appreciate it so much!
- 13) Send some CD's of their favorite music. They have a lot of time on their hands. Help them to pass it with things they enjoy.
- 14) Send magazines they like. Not only will they enjoy them - they'll be able to share them with their buddies. Your gift will have a much greater impact than you thought.
- 15) Dedicate a song to them on their favorite radio station. Ask the station if they will make a recording of it so you can send it to them. Make sure it's a song they like! You can also do a dedication to an entire unit, squadron, etc. All of them will enjoy hearing it.
- 16) Put their name in the local newspaper or on the radio station asking for a "Thinking of You" or "Thank You" card shower. Have everyone send the cards to the station by a certain date. You pick them up and put them all together, then send them. You can just put them in a big box or compile them into a journal they can keep forever!
- 17) Send pictures of the newest businesses that have opened in their hometown. It may seem a little silly to you, but it keeps them informed and let's them not be so surprised when they return.
- 18) Keep them up-to-date on local gossip. It will give them a laugh and let them know they are still a part of everything.
- 19) Send them a one year diary and ask them to keep a Gratitude Journal - writing down at least one thing every day that they

are thankful for. It can be hard to focus on the good things but it will help keep them from sinking into despair during hard times.

- 20) Send them a Journal that they can record daily happenings in. It will become a valuable record of days and years of their life - a treasure that can be passed down through the family for generations to come.

When they return home portions could be read at schools; published in papers; or simply archived in the local library. It may not seem important now but their recollections will become an important part of this nation's history



- 21) Send them a Frisbee. They will have hours of fun with their friends. You can play Frisbee ANYWHERE!
- 22) Compile a list of different ways to make the days go faster. Make them funny - to keep them and their buddies laughing. Once you have compiled it, send it to as many of the troops as you can. All of them will appreciate it!



- 23) Show respect, gratitude and thanks to the troops by studying and understanding the contributions made by the military to American history, as well as the contributions they are making today to create history.

Talk to your schools and ask them to invite veterans into the classrooms so students can meet "real people" who have given to their country. Putting a human face on history can make it so much more powerful.

- 24) Send cards and notes to hospitalized veterans and those living in Veteran's homes. So many times they feel alone and forgotten. Your cards and notes can let them know their contribution was appreciated and it will ease their loneliness.
- 25) Make requests to your favorite radio stations to play patriotic theme songs in honor of our troops.
- 26) If you are a member of your local Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Shriner and Elks clubs; Masons & Soroptimist International, etc. - make recommendations to honor our military, invite them as guest speakers, etc.
- 27) Get your community involved by distributing this book or just telling them to go online and download it - then let everyone pick certain ideas they want to do. It will greatly increase the impact if you're not the only one.
- 28) Fly the American flag on your house, car or business every day our troops are deployed.
- 29) Urge your community to fly the American Flag from May 1<sup>st</sup> through June 14<sup>th</sup> - Flag Day.
- 30) **A Neighborhood or City Wide Scavenger Hunt** for communities, schools, church groups, etc.

Here's a fun way to gather items soldiers need and want. Create a scavenger hunt - listing the items below and assigning point values to the ones the most difficult to obtain, or the ones most wanted. Then turn your teams loose, with prizes awarded at the end. See if you can get local restaurants to host different teams as a means of showing THEIR support.

Here's the list of most requested and desired items:

\* Purple font = most NEEDED & REQUESTED Items

**Food:**

- Fruit Roll-Ups
- **Beef Jerky / Slim Jims**
- Hard Pretzels
- Wrapped GUM and hard candy
- Granola Bars & Power Bars
- Small packs of Fig Newtons, Oreos, Cheese-Its
- Trail Mix, dried fruit
- Ramen Noodles/Cup-o-Soup (just add water)
- Salted Peanuts or mixed nuts
- Tea bags, Hot Chocolate packets
- **Salted Pumpkin Seeds/ Sunflower Seeds**
- Ready-to-eat Pudding, Jello, fruit cups
- Girls Scout Cookies (chocolate will melt in the summer!)
- NO CHOCOLATE (April-Sept.) – it will melt!
- **Gatorade/Kool-Aid/Crystal Light (Instant Drink Mixes)**
- Cheese& Cracker packs
- Chex Mix
- Condiments and spices
- Instant oatmeal
- **Tuna in pouches**
- Salad dressing (plastic bottles only)
- Cereal (small individual boxes)
- Rice Krispie treats

**Toiletries: TRAVEL SIZE ONLY!**

**NO HOTEL SAMPLES!**

(Some troops have allergies & need Brand name toiletries which list all ingredients. The military issues toiletries to our troops, however troops often miss their favorite brand shampoo or soap. Our goal is to send troops reminders of home & items they miss, not free samples. Thank you!)

- Baby wipes (travel size)
- Lozenges and cough drops
- Liquid hand sanitizer/cleaner (travel size)



- Breath Mints/ Listerine strips
- Razors (disposable)
- Dental Floss
- Shampoo (travel size)
- Hair Gel (for female troops to put hair up)
- Combs & brushes
- Soap and Deodorant (travel size)
- Q-tips (travel size)
- Eye drops (i.e. Visine)
- Band aids
- Lip balm & Chap stick
- Moleskin
- Baby powder (travel size)
- Mouthwash (travel size)
- Tissues: Individual packs/travel size
- Sunblock, SPF 45, Zinc, vitamin E
- Bug Spray/ DEET - Skin So Soft (Avon)
- Dust Masks
- Hand & body lotion (travel size)
- Foot powder
- Toothpaste & toothbrushes
- Nasal spray
- Nail clippers
- Nail files / emery boards
- Feminine hygiene products
- Cotton balls
- Tylenol or aspirin packets
- Shoe insole cushions

#### **Entertainment:**

- Batteries: "AA" and "C"
- 35 mm disposable cameras
- USA Flags
- Pens & pencils
- Stationery & envelopes
- Plastic-coated Playing Cards
- Dominoes
- Yo-Yo's
- **Electronic gadgets or games**
- Magazines (new or used)
- Crosswords and search words books
- Nerf footballs
- Day planners and small calendars
- Whiffle Balls
- Paper back books (new or used)

- Mini board games such as UNO, checkers, chess, Othello (travel size)
- Frisbees
- Hackey Sacks
- Portable CD players
- Music CDs (used or new)
- DVDs (used or new)
- Xbox Games (used or new)
- PS2 Games (used or new)

**Other:**

- Small Flashlights (powered by AA batteries)
- Baggies (Zip lock, gallon size)
- Bandanas
- Pre-Paid phone cards
- Duct tape
- White cotton socks
- Black Cotton or wool socks
- Generic sunglasses
- Fly swatters and fly paper
- Baseball & other sports equipment (new or used)
- Toys/school supplies for the Iraqi children



- 31) You can also conduct a **Neighborhood Drive**. Ask a grocery store for brown paper bags, then staple the shopping list to it. Write on the list the day you will drive by and collect the bags left on front porches.

- 32) You can do a Drive through your church or school as well. Simply hand each person a bag with the list - asking them to bring it to church next Sunday, or to school the next day.
- 33) Collect hotel and sample sized toiletries. Everyone has a bag full at home.
- 34) Ask your local drug store for free samples of lotions, etc. At conventions, ask those with you to give you their unused toiletries.
- 35) Ask any local casinos to donate playing cards. These provide hours of entertainment to our troops.
- 36) Ask insurance and real estate agents (or anybody else who has them) for small calendars.
- 37) Ask your neighbors, church and club groups to collect items for the soldiers, too.
- 38) Call your dentist, as well as other ones in town, for a donation of toothbrushes, floss, toothpaste and mouthwash. You'll be surprised what you will receive once they understand it is going to our troops.
- 39) Call your medical doctor, dermatologist, etc. and ask for samples as well. Just make sure they know what they are for.
- 40) Collect all the free charity greeting cards and stickers that come in the mail, as well as the left-over cards you have from the holidays. They can all be sent to the troops for them to turn around and send them home!



- 41) Ask your local card shop for unused envelopes, as well as any greeting cards they are taking from the shelves.
- 42) Stickers are great for care packages as well. They can be sent to the troops to use on their letters home.
- 43) Ask restaurants to donate condiment packets. Soy sauce, catsup, etc. make military meals a bit tastier. Make sure you put them in zip lock bags in case they break open!

*There are so many organizations that have been established to support our troops. One of the best ways to help is by joining them in their mission. Here are just some of them:*

- 44) ADOPT A SOLDIER - **My Soldier** is a program that puts politics aside and lets U.S. troops know someone back home cares. Sgt. Juan Salas, who served for 14 months in Iraq, established the program with the help of his school, Manhattanville College, when he returned from the war. The goal of the program is to show support for troops by establishing pen-pal relationships with them. When you enroll in the "No Cost" My Soldier program you agree to adopt a soldier. You will receive a "starter kit" containing a red My Soldier bracelet to publicly show your support for American troops and guidelines for writing letters to your soldier.  
<http://www.mville.edu/mysoldier/index.html>

- 45) Imagine if whole school classes, or youth groups, college clubs, or other groups decided to all "Adopt a Soldier". Imagine what an impact that could have. The soldiers will have communication and the "Adopters" will know they have made a difference.

- 46) The **USO Care Package Program** was created to provide a safe and secure way for the public to show their support for our men and women in uniform. The USO is a Congressionally-chartered non-profit corporation whose mission is to provide morale, welfare, and recreation-type services to military personnel. The USO operates 125 centers, including centers in Kuwait and Qatar, and will soon open a center in Afghanistan.

For a \$25 dollar donation, Americans can sponsor a care package for a service member who is either en route to an overseas assignment or currently deployed. Each USO Care Package is assembled by volunteers and contains, at a minimum, a 100-minute international calling card, a disposable camera, toiletries, sunscreen, and a message of support from a Care Package sponsor. Over 480,000 care packages have been distributed as of December 2004.

Additional information about the USO Care Package Program is available at [www.usocares.org](http://www.usocares.org) or by calling (877) USO-GIVE.

- 47) Project Homefront - While our troops take care of our homeland, we can help take care of their homes.

This was originally created by the Home Depot to help over 1700 of their associates currently serving in the military but they have extended the program, in coordination with Rebuilding Together and USA Freedom Corps, to help the families of all active duty military. This effort will help these families keep up their home lives and their homes while their loved ones are away.

You can: volunteer; sponsor a house; start an affiliate; or help in other ways. To find out how you can help go to:

<http://www.projecthomefront.org>

- 48) Send a Thank You Note to our troops. **A Million Thanks** is a year-round campaign to show your U.S. Military Men and Women, past and present, your appreciation for their sacrifices, dedication, and service to your country through your letters, emails, cards, prayers and thoughts. Go to: <http://www.AmillionThanks.org> for more information.

- 49) USA Help is another organization where you can adopt a soldier and send care packages. Our soldiers are in desperate need of letters, communications and supplies. Visit <http://www.usahelp.us> for more information.

- 50) **Cell Phones for Soldiers** - The **Cell Phones for Soldiers** program was started by thirteen year old Brittany Bergquist and her twelve year old brother Robbie of Norwell MA. After hearing a news report about a local soldier who ran up a massive phone bill calling home from Iraq, they decided they wanted to do something to help.

Donated cell phones will go to recyclers. The income generated goes to purchase calling cards for our troops.



You can send them directly to the recyclers or put together a community effort to collect 50 or more - qualifying for free pickup and delivery from FedEx - one of their corporate sponsors.

Communication is so vital to our troops and this is a way everyone can help. How many people do YOU know with old cell phones? For more information go to [www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com](http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com)



51) Pets can be a great source of comfort to troops. Many American military adopted cats and dogs from overseas and want to return home with them. This is where Military Mascots steps in. There are several opportunities to support our military in bringing their pets home:

- You can become a pet foster home, caring for a pet until a soldier is rotated home.
- Greet pets at the airport, helping them clear customs or making sure they catch connecting flights.
- Help to sponsor a mascot

Go to <http://www.militarymascots.org> for more information

- 52) Do you live near a major airport? Check to see if you have soldiers coming through there for R&R. Consider what one group of women are doing...

Every single day roughly 200 troops arrive at the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport to begin their two week R&R leave. A group of "Army Moms" began to gather there daily to greet these soldiers. As an added bonus, these Army Moms have had the honor to greet and bolster the morale of the buddies and fellow soldiers of their own sons and daughters who are involved currently in the war and actively serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. This daily greeting has become an event talked about and anticipated by the troops arriving at DFW on their way home. From this group of "Army Moms" and support from an "Army Families" email support group of one of the moms, evolved the *"Defenders of Freedom"*.

### 53) Defenders of Freedom

Defenders of Freedom.us is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting our men and women in uniform. They support our troops who are at war, wounded troops in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, and their families. The organization's volunteers raise funds through various venues with 100% of all monies going to the troops.

A great way to help is to purchase a wrist band to show your support for our troops. They cost just \$2.00 and are an easy way to keep our troops in your thoughts and prayers. Due to the nature of the tie-dye, no 2 bracelets will ever be the same.

Go to: <http://www.DefendersofFreedom.us> for more information

### 54) Operation Paperback

Donate your slightly used paperback books to our troops through **Operation Paperback**. Many of our troops are serving

far from home and living in facilities that provide few of the comforts of home. There is very little for servicemen and women to do at the end of the duty day, and the opportunity to escape into a good book is welcomed. Every week Operation Paperback receives thanks from servicemen and women who are glad to be appreciated and remembered.

Go their website at:

<http://operationpaperback.usmilitarysupport.org> to get all the information you need to become part of their project.



- 55) To send even more paperbacks go to used book stores and ask if they will donate. Go to new book stores as well. When a book's shelf life expires they are returned to the publisher. I'm sure they can work out an arrangement where the books can be donated to our troops instead.
- 56) Call Publishing companies and ask if they would be willing to donate their extra books (trust me, they have them) to our troops. You could probably even get them to cover the shipping - simply providing them the mailing information provided to you through Operation Paperback.



- 57) Go to garage sales and ask people if they will donate left over books to troops. You always find a lot of books at yard sales. You pick them up at the end of the day and handle shipping them.
- 58) Give 2 The Troops - This is another great organization that sends care packages and letters to our troops. With thousands of members from many states, they've sent care packages to hundreds of thousands of our men & women serving.

Go to: <http://www.give2thetroops.org> for more info and to get involved in their mission.

- 59) Do you like to sew? People are needed to sew blankets for the thousands of wounded soldiers in our country, or in hospital's abroad. These blankets have brought hope to many of our wounded heroes. To get involved send an email to: [blanketsofhope@soldiersangels.org](mailto:blanketsofhope@soldiersangels.org)



- 60) Become a Soldiers Angel - This amazing organization was started by an "ordinary Mom" who had a son in the military. He wrote home expressing concern that some of his buddies weren't receiving the same kind of support and care he was - motivating his Mom to send extra letters and packages, then enlisting a few of her friends to help. That initial effort became **SOLDIER'S ANGELS**.

Visit their website at <http://www.soldiersangels.org> to check out their many projects and find out just how you can help!

- 61) There are so many orgs collecting items for Care Packages. Why not pick just one item from the "shopping lists" for these organizations? Spread the word you are collecting this one item for the Troops. This is a great easy way to make a big impact.

Be creative and tie the item into a holiday. Christmas? Do a toy drive for all the children in the villages of Iraq that the soldiers want to help so much.

- 62) Launch your own **Operation Honey Do**

This organization was founded by a small group of handymen to assist families whose regular problem-fixers are at war. They won't build additions but they will perform small maintenance jobs on the weekends such as fixing plumbing, repairing screen doors, checking lawn mowers, sharpening blades, staining a deck, and anything else a handy spouse would do. If they can't fix the problem, they help the families find a reliable service.

Find out more by going to: <http://www.operationhoneydo.com/>

- 63) Donate your Frequent Flyer miles to help soldiers and families connect. To find out how to do this check out: <http://www.heromiles.org/>

**Operation Hero Miles** was created by the US Airlines and Congressman Ruppersberger to meet the needs of our soldiers deployed overseas. It relies on the generosity of thousands of fliers who have donated over 540 million miles to help our soldiers.

64) **Operation Homefront**

Created by spouses of active-duty military personnel - mostly National Guard and Reserve Troops - this organization's website is Treasure Trove of different ideas for how you can help. There are links to organizations who will accept money or household items, land, vehicles, and other goods to assist military families whose loved ones are deployed overseas.

Go to [www.OperationHomefront.org](http://www.OperationHomefront.org) to check it out. I'm sure there is a way for you to help.

65) Our troops and their families will always appreciate gift certificates for restaurants and groceries. How about a gift certificate that can be used at any commissary in the world?

To find out how you can send your gift certificates just go to: [http://www.certifichcks.com/cgi-local/SoftCart.exe/military\\_list.htm?E+scstore](http://www.certifichcks.com/cgi-local/SoftCart.exe/military_list.htm?E+scstore)

66) Get involved with the **Coalition to Salute America's Heroes**. Every day a wounded veteran and their family must struggle to overcome the loss of a limb, significant burns, or even the reality of being in a wheelchair. Our mission is to help them overcome these obstacles and resume a productive and fulfilling life.

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes was created to provide an easy and meaningful way for individuals,



corporations and others to help our severely wounded and disabled veterans and their families rebuild their lives.

There are many ways you can support SAH - you can find details at their website: <http://www.saluteheroes.org>, but I wanted to highlight one of them.

- 67) Contribute a very special and unique experience to the Salute America's Heroes' eBay auction benefiting our wounded Heroes. Examples include—

- Concert tickets with backstage passes and opportunity to meet the celebrity entertainers
- Resort travel
- Share a meal with a favorite sports figure, etc.
- Unique—one of a kind experiences that would be valuable as an auction item

Contact them at: <http://www.saluteheroes.org>

- 68) Are you involved in the Building Industry in any way? Retail, Manufacturing, Contracting, Construction, etc. Then you can make a huge difference by getting involved in **Homes For Our Troops**.

Homes for Our Troops is strongly committed to helping those who have selflessly given to their country and have returned home with serious disabilities and injuries. They assist injured service men and women and their immediate families by raising donations of money, building materials and professional labor and coordinating the process of building a new home or adapting an existing home for handicapped accessibility.

Get involved by going to: <http://www.homesforourtroops.org/>

- 69) Offer whatever skills you have. Do you know that EVERY organization created to support our troops is probably in need of office help; administrative assistance; research; grant writers; envelope stuffers, etc. Contact any of the organizations listed here, or go online and put Military Support

Organizations into the Search Engine. I have barely scratched the surface here. There are so many people committed to making a difference for our troops, and there is so much you can do to help them.



*A very important part of supporting our troops is supporting and caring for their families. They deal with the constant fear their loved ones won't come home, as well as the loneliness and sometimes financial hardships their being gone brings. What can you do to help them - at the same time making it easier for our troops because they know their families are being cared for too?*

- 70) Send the family a care package - making sure there are special things for the kids, remaining spouse, etc. Many times now it is the wife who has been called away for duty. Don't forget that husbands left behind have the same fears and struggles.
- 71) Form a family support team within your neighborhood. Find out what your neighbors need, then all commit to doing your part.

- 72) Give restaurant gift certificates to military families. Too many times that kind of enjoyment is just not possible in the budget. The best way to do it is through an online company called Restaurant.com. Just go to [www.ShopForCharityDay.com](http://www.ShopForCharityDay.com). Put Restaurant in the store search box and it will come up. You can buy certificates that give 50% off meals in thousands of restaurants all over the country!

An additional perk is that each purchase gives money back to an organization of your choice - allowing you to give in multiple ways!

- 73) Include them in your family outings - everyone, but especially the kids. Invite them to go on a picnic, go fishing, go along to the Amusement park, etc. It will be great fun for them and give the remaining spouse a break from being a single parent.
- 74) Help them out with some of their bills - anonymously if you can. Often, you can call the companies and let them know you want to pay a bill for a service person and they'll let you do it. Some ideas: Internet bill; Cable service; etc.
- 75) Have each family in your neighborhood buy a calling card. Put it in a special package for your neighbor who can then send it on to their deployed loved one.
- 76) Buy a season's family swimming ticket. Get certificates to a bowling alley. A skating rink. Talk to the owner of the facility and let them know you want to help military families. Many times they will donate the passes and certificates for FREE!
- 77) Invite them to dinner.
- 78) Invite them for the holidays. These can be especially lonely times for the ones left behind. Birthdays? Help them celebrate. Embrace military families as if they were your own!

- 79) Ask your local newspaper to do a special feature on Active Military - featuring a different person each week. The families will be so appreciative and they can send a copy of the article to their loved one. It will also raise awareness in your community of families that need support and care.



- 80) Treat the family to a special Pizza & Movie night. You can collect some videos from neighbors (if you know what they would like) or ask the local video store to donate a gift certificate. (Of course you can always pay for it, too.) Then arrange for pizza delivery from a local store. My guess is that they would do this as a gift to the community!

Send a card to the family letting them know they are receiving a special Appreciation gift.

You can do this for people in your neighborhood. You can also set up a special program to honor one to two families a week (maybe tied in with the newspaper feature) - setting up an ongoing arrangement with the video and pizza stores. Make sure they throw in drinks!

- 81) Mow their lawns or do other things to help them take care of their yard and home. Rake leaves. Weed gardens. Do simple repairs. Do complicated repairs if you know how! ☺ Many of our families are left in financial hardship - especially if their loved ones were called away from jobs to serve in the National Guard. You can help fill in the gap and meet their needs.

*When it's time for their loved ones to come home what can you do to celebrate the occasion?*

- 82) Help them plan and put together a "Coming Home Party". Especially get the kids involved in putting it together. It will keep them busy, make the time go faster, and let them know they are making a valuable contribution.

However, let them have a couple days with their family before you have the party. They haven't seen their family in months and will need a couple days to settle in. Then they will be ready to celebrate with everyone else!

- 83) Join with your neighbors to create a lot of Welcome home signs with their names on them. Have them line the road all the way from the airport, with even more posted in your neighborhood. And of course have a huge sign in their yard!
- 84) Prepare a very special dinner and have it in the house for the family the night their loved one returns home.
- 85) Do you have a Time Share? Share it with a military family - giving them a chance to have some special time together.

- 86) Donate a computer to a family that doesn't have one so they can communicate via email. If they don't know how to use a computer make sure you take the time to help them set it up, then teach them how to use it!
- 87) Work with schools, churches, service clubs, Veteran's groups, YMCA's, etc. to sponsor local military and their families. Many people working together can make a big job easy.
- 88) Volunteer at a local VA Hospital to honor veterans who served in the past. So many times they are lonely and need to know they are still appreciated and remembered.
- 89) Many of our military, especially those without close family, are forced to give up their pets when they are deployed. You can help by becoming a "foster parent" to their pets until they return.

*You may have a co-worker or friend with a loved one who has been deployed to the Middle East. Here are some ways you can provide special support during this difficult time.*





**90) What to expect**

During times of crisis and war, everyone handles uncertainty, painful feelings, and separation differently. Some people with a loved one serving overseas cope by keeping busy and focusing on work. Others may be distracted or have trouble concentrating. Some people need to talk about the war with trusted relatives, friends, and co-workers; others cope by not talking about their feelings, fears, or thoughts. Many people find coping more difficult due to the ever-present radio and TV news coverage.

To a large extent, the absence of a loved one can be like living with a heartbreak that doesn't end until the person's safe return. Nothing can replace the absent person in your friend's heart or mind. Your friend may feel

- an acute sense of sadness and loss
- a sense of helplessness, of not knowing where to turn
- anger about the absence
- constant worry about the loved one's safety and health
- a strong sense of duty to remain strong for others
- a compulsive need to read the news and listen to TV on a regular or continuous basis

Caring expressions of concern from friends and co-workers can go a long way in helping people left behind feel supported and less alone during this difficult time.

**91) What can you say?**

People with a loved one who has been deployed may or may not want to talk about what they are going through. Remember that this is no reflection on their feelings about you, your friendship with them, or your willingness to be available. It's important to take your cues from the other person and be there to listen if and when the person wants to talk.

When you see your friend or co-worker, here are some things you can say:

- *"How are you holding up?"* (Ask this sparingly, not every time you see the person.)
- *"This is such a difficult time."*
- *"I just want you to know that if you would ever like to get together and just talk, I'm here."*

If your friend or co-worker wants to talk, just listen. Don't be afraid of the feelings you hear. If the person begins to cry or seems upset, you might say, "Would you like to go somewhere private to talk?" Then find a private place for a conversation. In your conversation

- *Reflect back what you hear.* If your friend or co-worker talks about the difficulties of his or her situation, you might say, "This must be so hard."
- *Don't try to give advice.* Just listen. Be nonjudgmental.
- *Ask if the person has family or friends he can count on for help and support.* This will help you know whether your friend or co-worker is actively seeking help.
- *Let your friend or co-worker know that you would be glad to talk again.* Reassure the person that you have the time and want to listen. If the conversation needs to continue, but you don't have time right now, invite your friend or co-worker to sit down at a later time.
- *If the friend or co-worker is someone you like to do things with, make plans.* Ask him or her out to lunch, or call spontaneously on a weekend or evening to go shopping, for a walk, or to a fun movie.

## Ways to offer support

Know your friend or co-worker is mentally preparing for the long haul. Despite their feelings of sadness or confusion, they are probably very aware that there is no certainty of the outcome -- when their loved one will return or whether he or she will be safe at all times. So you should try to be there for the long haul as well. Small acts of caring can go a long way in helping your friend to remain strong and optimistic.

- 92) *Help your friend or co-worker find groups or online bulletin boards where parents or loved ones are sharing their experiences.* If you live in a larger metropolitan area, help your friend find a group to share experiences with -- through the local newspaper, community resources, or the library. The military offers many resources for families of service members living on or near a military installation; help your friend get connected to these resources.
- 93) *Check in.* Find out how your friend is doing by phone, e-mail, or by just dropping by. Your conversation can be brief but still caring. You might say, "I just wanted to know how you are." Find out if your friend is exercising, eating right, and assuming most of his or her normal routines. See if you might help with an errand or help care for children to give your friend time to get out.
- 94) *When you are together and when there is time, encourage the person to talk about her loved one who has been deployed.* Laugh and cry together. Tell stories about the person. Do what seems to come naturally to your friend or co-worker.
- 95) *Avoid political discussions about the war that could trigger sensitive emotions.* Avoid "pro and con" discussions or debates about the war in front of the person. In general, avoid heated discussions about politics or war in the workplace.

96) *Rejoice with your friend when a letter or e-mail arrives from the person overseas. Any extended time between contacts with the person deployed will be very difficult. Anxiety and worry will increase when communications are delayed.*

97) *Remember that holidays and birthdays will be tough for the person. Be sure your friend or co-worker has a place to go or has plans to socialize in some way. Celebrate in a special but low-key way. Shop for something special. Again, take cues as to what the person needs or seeks in terms of support.*

*It may be a long wait before your friend's loved one is home and safe. Worry and anxiety will affect your friend's daily life and routines. Friends and co-workers have to be prepared to provide ongoing support for weeks or months. Heartfelt expressions of support can help your friend feel cared for, more rooted in life's normal routines, and stronger during this difficult time.*

98) Are you a photographer? Offer to take really great photos of a military family; pictures of the children; pictures of pets. Put together a collage that can be sent to the deployed loved one. They will appreciate it so much!

99) **Operation Homelink** provides free refurbished computers to either parents or spouses of deployed service men and women in the ranks of E-1 through E-5. Their program allows email communication between our troops and their loved ones.

Especially needed are corporations and businesses that are upgrading and getting rid of large banks of perfectly good computers, or ones that just need some refurbishing.

To get involved go to: <http://www.OperationHomelink.org>

- 100) Here's a fun one... Send Pizza and Drinks to our troops by going to [www.gipizza.com](http://www.gipizza.com). They have arrangements with pizzerias in every area of the world who will deliver hot pizza. What a great surprise and treat!
- 101) And finally... we've created this book for FREE because we want to put it in as many hands as possible. Please help support our troops by forwarding this book on to as many people as possible!

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS!!**

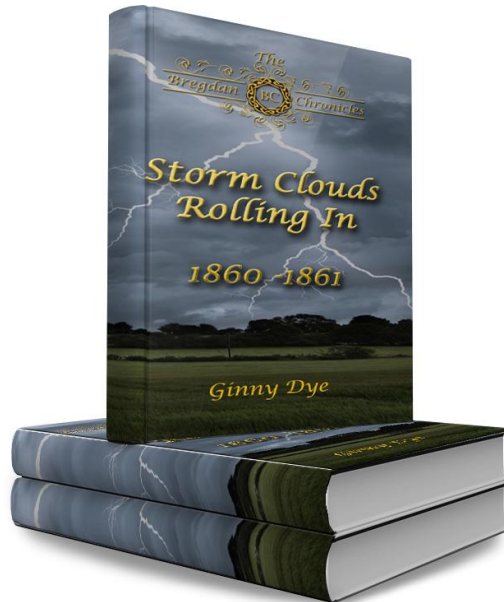


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