Deployment can be a time of great stress on a family. Rather than focusing on the difficulties associated with this event, why not try to shift the attention onto a positive developmental task? Specifically, deployment can be a time when a parent gives new adult-like responsibilities to a teen.

- **Plan ahead:** This is a plan which should be thought out and talked about before a specific deployment has ever taken place.
- **Collect your thoughts:** Have a talk together and discuss the fact that a deployment of one (or more) parent(s) will mean that the teen will have to “fill in” while the parent(s) is(are) gone. Decide together on a date when you will discuss this in more detail and determine what responsibilities will need to be handled during the deployment.
- **Make a plan:** Well before the date arrives, go somewhere special (e.g., a restaurant or a park) with paper and pencil and hammer out the specific plan. Be specific about expectations. Parents should give their teens a chance to “practice” before the deployment occurs.
- **Save the plan:** Designate an official place of safe-keeping for this official plan so that everyone will know where it is when it becomes necessary for it to be put into action.

**How will this activity promote the parent-teen relationship?**

Giving appropriate adult-like responsibilities to teens will strengthen the parent-teen bond since the parent is showing the teen their willingness to let them handle some of these important tasks.

When handled in an adult-like manner, teens can use this opportunity to prove their maturity, trustworthiness, and reliability to their parent(s).

Even if the plan does not work exactly as expected, the process of developing it together can develop a newfound trust for each other.

**It is absolutely essential that . . .**

This task is NOT treated as a list of chores that the parent gives to the teen. This is a mutual agreement, that provides greater responsibility for the teen, in the absence of the parent. This means that the teen should also have input into what he/she is suppose to do. Some of these ideas may be “scary” for a parent, but the parent must be willing to compromise and allow the teen to handle some responsibilities which they have never before tried.