

FAMILY LIFE IN WARTIME

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**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS**

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Adjustments in Family Living

In wartime, we are called upon to make many changes in our way of living. We may not always agree that they are for the best, but if we are to live happily we must accept them without too much regret.

These adjustments can best be made if we are willing, in our own minds, to accept them and to make the most of them. The way we think about a thing affects the way we act. Families who talk together and who give courage and love to all their members, can easily make the necessary changes.

Common Wartime Adjustments and How We Can Make Them

Some family members will be away from home. This means added duties for all who remain at home.	Plan together for sharing added duties. See that a fair division is made. Work longer hours. Learn new skills. See that young children have proper care.
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The cost of living is increasing. This means fewer goods for the dollar.	Learn about ceiling prices and rations. Buy carefully. Take good care of the things we have. Waste nothing.
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There is a shortage in many of our usual goods. This means accepting and using substitutes and alternates and doing without some things.	Plan to use the substitutes or get along without the restricted articles. Learn how to use and care for alternates and substitutes.
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Travel is restricted. This means fewer trips and more time spent at home. It can mean more family fun and better family relationships.	Plan trips carefully. Make the home more comfortable. Have fun at home and go to neighborhood parties. Be more considerate of one another.
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There are fewer doctors and nurses to serve our families. This means that we must take care of ourselves and keep well. Poor health makes us cross and unpleasant.

Eat enough of the right foods. Get plenty of rest and sleep. Be vaccinated. If possible, have a health examination for each family member and follow the doctor's orders. Remove accident hazards. Have a family member trained in first-aid and home nursing. Equip a first-aid kit and home nursing shelf.

All of these changes mean that we will have to delay many of our desires and wishes.

Accept these facts. Make the most of what we have. Take part in war work. Make reasonable plans for the future.

Worthwhile Values Can Come From Required Wartime Adjustments

Our family can benefit:

1. Thrift—By becoming more thrifty. By providing more of our own actual needs. By investing part of our money for the future.
2. Simpler Life—By learning to live simply, yet happily with our families and neighbors. By learning to enjoy the common things of life.
3. Better Health—By keeping well and learning to care for ourselves and our family.
4. Increased Knowledge—By better planning, better management, and improved practices. By learning new facts and skills. By putting these new found facts and skills to work to improve family life and happiness.
5. Cooperation—By learning the joys of working together for a common cause, and by learning to put others first.
6. Greater Respect for Democracy—By using more democratic practices in families, neighborhoods, and communities, thereby strengthening good family life and democracy.

7. Increased Spiritual Life—By gaining a clearer understanding of the worthwhile values of life. By realizing more keenly than ever before our dependence upon something greater than ourselves.

These and many other values can and will come to those whose attitudes are such that changes can be made easily and happily.

Qualities Which Will Help Us Adjust Easily and Happily

What They Are

Tolerance — Respect for the opinions of others — even those who disagree with us.

How Our Family Can Practice Them

Allow everyone the right to talk. Discuss the points on which we disagree, and respect the other person's opinions and attitudes without quarreling.

Cooperation — Working and sharing together for the good of all—not just our own family.

Gladly do the things which will help win this war — such as working harder and longer; taking part in scrap drives; traveling less, etc. Do your share and help others do theirs.

Compromise — Doing without or giving up something in order to get something else we want.

Do willingly the things we must, such as allowing our boys and girls to go into service; obeying laws, restrictions, rations, etc.; so we may again have the things we hold dear.

Mental Health and Morale in Times of Crisis

It is not so much what happens to you that makes you what you are. It is the way you take it. Because your mind influences the way you act, a good healthy mind is necessary if you are to get along happily with yourself and others.

Good mental health is largely determined by your usual frame of mind, your disposition, your good cheer, or your grouch—the part of you that makes yourself and others happy or miserable.

Morale in wartime is really good mental health. National morale can be no better than the morale of the family, especially of women and children, and the morale of children can be no better than the morale of their parents, especially their mother. Far more than adults realize children sense the underlying thoughts and feeling of those they love. Therefore, it is wise to tell them the truth.

An occasional display of emotions by the parents will do little harm to the children if there is a deep feeling of love and loyalty. On the other hand, if a child is constantly with nervous, unhappy adults, they, too, will reflect unhappiness and insecurity.

Your children can take it if you can.

How Good Mental Health and Morale Can Help Us in Wartime

If we are to do our work happily, we must "feel right" about our family and its part in the war. We must think clearly.

What Our Family Needs to Do

Learn why this war is being fought. Study life in conquered countries. Know that everyone will have to bear a share of the war burden. Accept the idea that there will be some inequalities. Some of our men will be killed; most will not. Some of us will lose money, some will gain—that is part of war.

The enemy will try to confuse and frighten us, to turn us against our neighbors and them against us. We can make ourselves and them very unhappy.

Get instructions from agencies set up to help us. Know that most people are frightened by war. Frankly admit our fears—investigate their sources. If dangers exist, plan together for our safety. Visit more with our neighbors. They need our help just as we need theirs.

Many people will try to stir up in us feelings of hate and vengeance which will make it hard to plan a real, lasting peace at the end of the war.

Realize that our feelings are easily disturbed now. Show confidence in our leaders. Trust our fellow citizens to do their share, too. Put our hates on the wrongs people do instead of on the people. Read, listen, and think.

Wholesome family life, good mental health, and morale will help us do our war work well. Our total effort will be in work, in money, in sharing and in doing without. *Organize the family to do the job.* Talk freely at home, but guard your tongue elsewhere. Do not spread rumors.

Practices That Will Help You Build Good Mental Health and Morale

1. Guard Your Health—Eat right. Get enough rest. Keep clean. Have a physical check up once a year if possible. play some each day.
2. Face Facts—See things as they really are—not as you wish or imagine them to be. Accept things that come and make the most of them. Have the desire to know the truth and to be open minded to the other person's point of view.
3. Work—In addition to regular jobs, do some extra bit of useful war work. Improve your own work.
4. Develop and Maintain Self Respect—Believe in yourself and in your ability to do the things you must. You have an important part in winning this war, even though you do not wear a uniform.
5. Adjust to Changes—Make the necessary changes even though they are inconvenient. Some good can come from every experience. Look for the good.
6. Have hope in the future—make reasonable plans.
7. Strengthen spiritual loyalties. Know that you are not alone.
8. Get some fun out of life—Play with the family. Visit friends, take walks, or do whatever you like to give your mind and body a rest.

Protecting Family Members From Fear and Worry

If members of your family are to do their best war work, they must be free from harmful fear and worry. One good way to protect them is to guard against the causes which produce fear and worry. Help all your family members develop good mental health and morale. See that they get plenty of rest, eat enough of the right food, keep calm, avoid strains, exercise when fit, rest when tired, play and relax.

Fear and Worry Affect Family Life

Most people are frightened by war because it is a strange, unpleasant experience. Parents are anxious for the well-being of their family. Rumors often picture the situation worse than it really is.

What Our Family Needs to Do

Study the real situation in which we live. If dangers exist prepare to meet them. If dangers do not exist forget them. Understand that fear is not cowardice. Do not tease people about their fears. Encourage them to examine and talk about their fears and to carry on in spite of them. Read, listen, think and evaluate.

Constant worry is harmful. Most worrying is done over things that never happen.

Take every reasonable precaution and then get busy with things that really need to be done.

Everyone needs a part in the family's war effort—a role to play and a responsibility in the family's plan.

Include all members in family plans. See that everyone has some war work to do. Make each one feel sure that he is wanted and loved.

Each person reacts differently to the strains of war. Changes in behavior — night terror, temper tantrums, quarreling, poor appetite, stomach upset, and restlessness may indicate worry and fear.

Treat each family member according to his needs. One may need more love and assurance. Another may need more responsibility.

Put emphasis on necessary routine and slack off on unnecessary requests. This will reduce the tendency to nag. Give simple instructions and not too many.

Children often worry because those around them worry. They may be disturbed by what they see and hear about war that they do not understand. They may worry over remarks and stories. Lack of understanding undermines their security.

If possible keep children with adults who are free from harmful fears and worries. Explain fully any marked changes in routine. Answer their questions truthfully and simply. Listen to their comments without ridicule. Give school-age children a chance to learn the real facts about war. Teach older children and youth why we are fighting and how we hope to make a fair peace for all. Give each child opportunity to talk out his thoughts regarding the war. Allow them to play their war games.

Older boys and girls often try to hide their worries and fears more than any other group. Their lives are changed and their difficulties increased by war. Growing up is difficult in normal times. It is harder now.

Be as sensitive as we can to the changes of mood that they will be feeling and at the same time respect their wish for privacy. Stand by but don't pry. Give them plenty of love, comfort, and security without hampering their independence. Allow them to take on new war tasks.

The best protection is helping children to keep their faith in their parents and in themselves as persons able to meet emergencies.

Give practice in democratic living. See that each person has the satisfaction of doing something well. Establish a plan for family and neighborhood recreation.

Our Adolescent Army at Home

Too little has been said or done about our youthful army at home. They are far too important to overlook.

How the War is Affecting Adolescent Boys and Girls and How We Can Help These Young People

The young adolescent facing the adjustments natural to the teen years is especially subject to the emotional and nervous tension of war. He needs understanding and guidance.

Talk together about war practices in relation to our standards of right and wrong. Avoid unnecessary nagging and criticism. Watch his health. See that the energetic child does not do work that is too heavy. Discuss sex problems freely with him.

His ideals and moral concepts are being shaken. There is always a marked increase in juvenile delinquency. The awareness of being a needed person in his family and the respect shown him will help to stabilize him. His family and all it stands for is the only stable thing he has to cling to.

Understand that due to the excitement of war there will be some change in behavior. Talk over and plan with him the amount of freedom he shall have and how to use it. Have him help plan the family's war program. See that he has some war work to do. Provide neighborhood recreation as well as home play.

The tendency is to hurry the "growing up" process.

Give him more companionship on an adult to adult level. If father is away from home, ask a male relative to give the young person some companionship.

It is natural of adolescence to want to feel important. At present the family's attention is focused on the boys and girls in service. Those left at home often feel slighted.

Respect the desire of older boys and girls to do an adult's part in this war. Encourage activity in community life. Express appreciation for the things they do. Show them how to help win this war at home.

Many girls feel that their lives are abnormal because all the boys are "at war."

Help them find useful and interesting things to do. Keep up neighborhood entertainments. Encourage them to talk about their share in winning this war.

The problem of older youth quitting school to go to work is widespread. He needs help in finding his best role in the war: whether to continue school, go to work, or stay on the farm.

Talk freely with him about the decisions he must make. Help him to see the future as well as the present need. Try to understand his viewpoint and respect his decisions. Be willing for him to make some mistakes.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Books— *The Family In a World at War*
Gruenberg
Harper and Brothers, New York, 1942

Personal Problems of Everyday Life
Travis and Baruch
D. Appleton Century Company, New York, 1941

Youth and the Future
American Youth Commission, 1942
Washington, D. C.

Magazines—*National Parent-Teacher Inc.*
Chicago, Illinois
Parents' Magazine
New York

