



## *Reconnecting with your Service Member after Deployment*

Coming home can be a joyful time. Keep in mind that things don't always go as planned. Roles and relationships may have changed. It will take time for everyone to adjust.

### **What You Need To Know**

The adjustment time after deployment can be long. It may last for weeks or even months. Knowing what to expect can make this period easier. Below are phases that many people go through:

**Pre-entry** occurs in the days before your service member comes home. You may be excited as you prepare for the homecoming.

**Reunion** is often called the "honeymoon" phase. This lasts for the first days after the service member returns. This is a time to relax and celebrate their homecoming.

**Disruption** occurs when problems are noticed. You may realize that your relationship has changed. You may feel as if nothing is the same.

**Communication** is the phase of readjusting to new roles and routines. It is a time to reconnect with your service member.

**Normalcy** is the return to a routine. You and your service member must learn to accept changes. There will still be problems. Over time, the relationship with your service member will grow stronger.

### **What Can Hinder Reconnecting With Your Service Member?**

Your service member may not act like the same person you remember. It may be difficult to reconnect because your service member:

- May be tired and stressed.
- May withdraw and have trouble trusting others.
- May feel unwanted and be unable to show warmth to others.
- May act strangely and appear nervous or awkward

### **What Are Ways To Make The Homecoming Less Stressful?**

- **Keep the homecoming celebration simple.** Having a small get-together at home may be the best choice. Remember that the homecoming may not match your plans and hopes.

- **Give each other time.** You may feel uncomfortable when first talking together. The most important thing is to be loving and show respect. Go slowly and make a special effort to talk. It takes time to get back to where you once were.
- **Realize that the service member may be guarded.** He or she may have trouble trusting others. Be available and listen carefully, but don't pry. Be aware of the service member's need for privacy.
- **Encourage individual conversations.** Everyone needs time to talk with the service member. This includes parents, siblings, and close friends. Let the service member control how much and how soon he or she wants to share stories and feelings.

### Tips for Reconnecting With Your Service Member

- **Leave room for flexibility.** The service member has had a strict daily routine. At home, the service member may rebel against schedules and planned events. This is a normal response.
- **Be patient.** In a war zone, the service member could not relax. He or she had to be self sufficient to survive. It will be hard to stop these behaviors at home. Talk about your concerns without blame. Tips for Reconnecting With Your Service Member
- **Be sensitive and limit your criticisms.** Don't say comments like "I told you so." Avoid comparing your service member to others. Try not to bring up past events.
- **Expect some disagreements.** Go slowly and allow time for everyone to speak. It takes working together to solve problems. Take a "time out" when arguing. Return to discussions when everyone is calm.
- **Offer your help to the service member.** Providing small favors shows your support. Offer to baby-sit, prepare a meal, or perform a household chore. This allows the service member time to relax alone or with others.

### When Should You Get Help?

Expect about 6 weeks to adjust to new roles and relationships. Seek help if you notice that problems persist or worsen. Don't try to diagnose or solve serious problems on your own. The service member may not ask for help. He or she may have fears of admitting a problem.. It's important to seek help if the following behaviors continue:

- Arguing and verbal abuse

- Withdrawal and distrust of others
- Nightmares, flashbacks of trauma, and constant fear of impending danger
- Drinking too much alcohol or taking drugs

**Seek immediate help if there is physical abuse or violence.**



## **REMEMBER...**

*Your service member may not act like the same person you remember. Roles and relationships may have changed. It will take time for everyone to adjust. It takes working together to solve problems. Take a "time out" when arguing. Return to discussions when everyone is calm. Give each other time. The most important thing is to be loving and show respect. Go slowly and make a special effort to talk.*

