Couples need time to readjust after deployment. It is important to understand that you both have changed. During this time you will be trying to find what is “normal”. Below is a guide to help you reconnect with your spouse.

What you need to know

Expect about six weeks to adjust to each other again. Knowing what to expect can make this period easier. Below are phases that many people go through:

Pre-entry occurs in the days before you come 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 you return. This is a time to relax and celebrate your 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 spouse.

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

What are some common feelings when returning home?

- Feeling awkward with your spouse. You may have trouble talking and being intimate.
- Difficulty resuming previous family roles. You may find changes in routine and who makes family decisions. You may resent how well your spouse has managed the home.
- Distrust of your spouse. You may worry if your spouse was faithful.
- Resentment for the work you had to do. You might both feel you “had it worst.”
- Jealously about losing your position in the family. You might feel your kids prefer the “other” parent better.
What Are Ways To Make The Homecoming Less Stressful?

- **Expect everything to feel a little awkward at first.** It’s normal and can be part of the fun of coming home.
- **Be understanding and forgiving.** Your homecoming may not match your plans and hopes.
- **Expect changes in your spouse.** You have changed some, too. Remember that change often means growth.
- **Look at homecoming as an opportunity.** This is your chance to address things about your relationship. Maybe there were things that you or your spouse didn’t like before. Or, you can build on the love you’ve always shared.

What Are ways to Improve Your Relationship

- **Don’t rush things.** Take time to know each other again. Make intimacy – not sex – the focus of your reunion. Sex can resume when you and your spouse are ready. Intimacy takes longer to re-establish.
- **Be sensitive to your spouse’s needs.** Men tend to focus on the physical relationship. Women tend to focus on verbal communication and affection.
- **Communicate.** Talking about your wartime experiences and feelings may increase understanding.
- **Avoid power struggles.** Take note of the many tasks your spouse did while you were gone. Take time to ease back into your routine. This covers everything from parenting to finances.
- **Don’t try to change your financial affairs if they are in order.** Chances are your spouse has been handling them fine.

Tips for reconnecting with your spouse.

- **Check yourself emotionally.** Be aware of any “extra baggage” you bring from the battlefield. These can be mood swings or new bad habits. Encourage your partner to do the same. Try to react positively if your spouse points out changes in your behavior.
- **Spend time with your spouse.** If possible, delay reunions with relatives and friends. Leave time for normal routines to become established at home.
- **Expect some anger and insecurity along with love and happiness.** These feelings are normal and need to be expressed.
- **Get a “second opinion”** if your relationship is strained. All couples can benefit from observations of another person. You have many people to choose from. Talk with your faith leader, a chaplain, a family counselor or a mental health professional.
Reconnecting with your spouse takes time. Problems that continue over months may become negative habits and lead to divorce. Drinking, using drugs, and being physically abusive are warning signs of trouble. Withdrawing from others and losing your temper are other danger signals. If you are using these harmful ways to cope, seek help.

**REMEMBER...**

Adapting to family life after deployment takes time. Expect about six weeks to adjust to each other again. It is important to understand that you both have changed. Remember that change often means growth. Get a “second opinion” if your relationship is strained. All couples can benefit from observations of another person.