

As a parent, extended family member, or friend of an active, Guard or Reserve Service member, who is just coming home or is arriving soon, you are probably both excited and nervous about the homecoming. Even if you've been through a mobilization/ deployment before, this one has been different because of the increased stressors of the time. Regardless of your experience and Service member's assignment, there will be a period of adjustment. You may find this tip sheet helpful in ensuring a successful homecoming and readjustment.

What to Expect When the Service member Comes Home:

- ✓ You have certainly missed your Service member, as they have missed you. Reestablishing relationships will take time and communication.
- ✓ It's normal for the returning Service member to "need space" upon their return.
- ✓ It's normal to feel nervous and anxious about the homecoming. Plan for homecoming day. After homecoming, allow the returning Service member to schedule the next few days or weeks.
- ✓ Expect things to be different. Take time to understand how the Service member has changed. Be prepared and flexible.
- ✓ The Service member may have seen or experienced some things that were very upsetting. Some normal reactions to these abnormal situations are fear, nervousness, irritability, fatigue, sleep disturbances, startle reactions, moodiness, trouble concentrating, feelings of numbness, and frequent thoughts of the event. Talking with others who were there and/or counselors trained in crisis stress reactions is very important. The Service member

may be facing a change in job assignment or a move. Readjustment and job transition cause stress. This may be especially true for demobilizing Guard and Reservists who are transitioning back into civilian life.

Making the Reunion Easier:

- ✓ Take time to get reacquainted. Communicate your love and concern.
- ✓ **COMMUNICATE!!** Tell each other how you feel—nervous, scared, happy, that you love and missed them. Listen to each other. The best way to get through the reacquaintance jitters and regain closeness is to talk and actively listen.
- ✓ Reassure the Service member that they are needed, and that you are happy he/she has returned safely.
- ✓ Be calm and assertive, not defensive, when discussing events that have taken place during the Service member's absence. The service member may need to hear that it wasn't the same doing these things alone, that you're glad he/she's back, and that you'd like to discuss problems and criticisms calmly.
- ✓ Prepare children of the extended family for homecoming and involve them in reunion activities.

Take Time for Yourself to Make the Reunion for Everyone Concerned Easier:

- ✓ Make time to rest. Negotiate social events and activities.
- ✓ Limit your use of alcohol. Remember alcohol was restricted during the Service member's deployment and tolerance is lowered.

- ✓ Go slowly in getting back into the swing of things. Depend on family and friends for support. You are part of the Service member's support network.

Remember...

Go slowly – don't try to make up for lost time.

Accept that your Service member may be different.

Take time to get reacquainted.

Reassure your loved ones.

Seek help for family members, if needed.

Many of these tips have cross-application to the Service member, spouse, children, extended family members, and friends. If you feel like you are having trouble coping with adjustment, it is healthy to ask for help. Many normal, healthy people occasionally need help to handle tough challenges in their lives. Contact a counseling agency or a minister, a Military Family Center, Military Chaplain, the Veterans Administration, or one of your community support groups that has been established in your area.

Points of view or opinions in this pamphlet do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Defense.



“COMING HOME”

**A Guide for Parents, Extended
Family Members or Friends
of Service Members Returning from
Mobilization / Deployment**

