

Reuniting: Post-Deployment

Goal: To increase parents' awareness of the issues related to reuniting and post-deployment.

1 **Worksheet 1:
Post-Deployment: Some-
thing Gained and Some
thing Lost**

- Have parent complete Worksheet 1.
- If couples are not attending, have the attending member project what their deployed partner might be experiencing upon return.
- Allow each parent an opportunity to share their thoughts.

(5) While you deal with the stress of reunion, other stressors may have developed that affect the relationship that was not present before. Financial stressors, as well as emotional and physical challenges can add even more stress to what you hoped would be a joyous reunion.

(6) You might feel let down after your partner returns. This is normal, and it doesn't make you a bad person. Some of the expectations you had for the reunion might have been unrealistic. Unrealistic expectations lead to feelings of disappointment and frustration.

For every gain, there is a loss. For every loss, something is gained. (7) Issues about power, control, head of the household, and controlling finances are common gains and losses.

A sense of cooperation among couples will help ease the transition back to establishing a functional partnership.



Readjusting As a Couple

(8) Readjustment is a process. And it doesn't happen overnight.

(9) Before the deployment, you had developed your routine as a couple. There were certain expectations you and your partner had for the relationship, and for each other.

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Worksheet 2: Fantasies About Homecoming

- Have parents complete Worksheet 2.
- Allow parents and opportunity to discuss each area as a group after it is completed.

Discussion Question

- Think about your special relationship with your partner.
- What kind of activities can you do as a couple to reunite after the reunion?

During the deployment, these routines got disrupted and you had to operate independently. New expectations for the relationship and your partner were developed as the relationship was redefined by distance.

You and your partner probably fantasized about what life was going to be like when the deployment ended. These images are rarely based in reality and can lead to hurt feelings and misunderstandings. (10)



In order to move on and operate as a couple again, both partners have to redefine the expectations of the relationship. What worked before the deployment, may not work after the deployment. Couples must acknowledge changes in each other and the relationship to reaffirm their bond and commitment to another.

(11) Couples that succeed at reuniting after a deployment are flexible in their roles and expectations. Just because the relationship has changed doesn't mean that the new relationship can't be just as good, if not better than before. (12)



Coming Together as a Family

Reuniting after deployment as a couple and as a family is a joyous and sometimes challenging event. Life in post deployment is largely a matter

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of readjustment, no less than adjusting to life in deployment. The following guidelines are offered to facilitate a smooth transition. (14)

Go slow (dangerous curves ahead). You've seen those road signs warning you to go slow or possibly experience a wreck. Take the Department of Transportation's advice and slow down.

For the returning active duty member, transition is the key. You are coming back to an environment that has functioned on some level for many months in your absence. A pattern of family responsibilities and routines has been established.

Remember, children need the feelings of predictability and consistency. Gradually transition into sharing the responsibilities with your partner. (15)

No "dumping" responsibilities. You may have also seen the signs that say "No Dumping Allowed." Keep this rule in mind. It is not okay for the returning partner to have all the family responsibilities "dumped" on him or her.

The stress of having responsibilities for the family functioning during the period of deployment may have been great. (16) However, assuming your partner will immediately take over all these responsibilities is an inappropriate expectation that is likely to lead to problems. (17)

No "snatching" responsibilities. It is not okay for the returning partner to snatch the responsibilities away from their husband or wife.

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Discussion Question

- How can you limit the possibility of “dumping” or “snatching” responsibilities?

Home Practice:

Worksheet 3: Dividing Roles

- Ask parents to complete this worksheet at home. This activity will help parents divide roles and responsibilities of the home.

He or she has been the head of the household for many months and has built up a personal sense of pride in managing the family affairs.

Just as it's not okay for the returning member to have family responsibilities immediately dumped on them, it's not okay to “snatch” the family responsibilities from your partner. Hard feelings can develop early. (18)



Make a plan. As partners, make a list of the role responsibilities that can be shared or can be transitioned to the returning partner. A plan will minimize confusion and will serve to reinforce an orderly transition. (19)



Role confusion. Life as an active duty member in the military has many unique characteristics. (20)

Among these characteristics is giving and receiving orders and commands, expecting immediate compliance/obedience, talking a lot more than listening, not being open to suggestions, complaints or ideas “for the good of the order,” punishments for non-compliance, and a general sense of orderliness, scheduling and time punctuality.

That is the military. (21) Typically, this is not the way life is in a family, especially with young children.

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Being in the role of an active duty member is different from being in the role of a father/husband or wife/mother.

When you're in civilian clothes, remember to be your family role. When you put on the uniform and report to work, take on the appropriate role. (22)

Where's your daddy? In your absence, your wife may have had a child. A child you have only known in stories told to you, pictures, perhaps audio recordings, and most probably known most in your imagination.

In reality, you may be the biological father but until you and the child have a chance to bond, you are a stranger. In the beginning, all you two share is DNA. So, to expect your child to bond to you immediately would be like watching your child bond to every complete stranger that he or she meets. That would be worrisome and very problematic.

A healthy parent-child bond is built on trust. In fact, all healthy relationships are built on trust. Take the lead from your wife and gradually share the parenting responsibilities so your child can learn to trust you. (23)

Want to have dinner tonight? Returning to your wife or husband after an extended period of time away may require a period of courtship. After all, both of you have grown in your separate and shared lives. Each of you is no longer the same person you were before the deployment.

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If deployment was to a war zone, the changes that have occurred to the deployed spouse could be dramatic. If a child was born during the time of deployment, dramatic changes have occurred that have altered the husband/wife relationships.

Just like with the roles and responsibilities, allow the hearts of two people to draw closer from caring, trust and love, not from expectations.

Make love not war. A husband and a wife who have not been together for an extended period of time may feel very comfortable in picking up their sexual passions right where they left off before deployment.

For other couples, the absence of sexual involvement during deployment may have contributed to some of the emotional distance they are experiencing during post deployment. (25)

Awareness and sensitivity are key factors that can help. To experience passion requires a level of vulnerability and openness.

Traumas witnessed secondhand or experienced firsthand make vulnerability a weakness. (26) If the passion is not there in your sexual relationship, remember "this too shall pass" over time with trust and respect. (27)

Support our troops. Deployment to a combat zone creates lasting memories for all service personnel. Some of the memories of harsh and brutal events are suppressed by some, spoken about by others.