

Veterans: What to Expect When You Return from Deployment

Returning from deployment is a time of expectation, excitement, and change. However, many military families find that the reunion can be more stressful than the separation. Many families go through an adjustment period that can last for weeks or even months. Knowing what to expect can make the transition easier.

These are the phases you might go through when you return home:

- **Pre-entry.** You may be excited to come home and might spend a lot of time thinking about what things will be like. You plan things to do at home, at work, and with your family.

- **Reunion.** This is the “honeymoon” phase just after you come home. It is a time for you to reconnect with people and relax.

- **Disruption.** Problems may come up as you realize how much things changed while you were away. Your family may have new routines, and it may take time for you to adjust. You might be surprised that your family managed as well as they did without you, or feel like they don’t need you anymore. It is normal to feel envious or resentful during this period.

- **Communication.** It is important to talk to your family about how things have changed. You and your family may need to set up new routines. Some things that might need to be discussed are physical changes, finances, decision making, and changes in the relationships with your spouse and children.

- **Normalcy.** You and your family accept the changes and reestablish routines. Even though there may be problems, this transition often leads to unexpected growth at home and at work.

The following Web sites for veterans and their families have information about returning home after deployment:

- **After Deployment**

<http://www.afterdeployment.org>

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**

Support for Military Children and Adolescents

<http://www.aap.org/sections/uniformed-services/deployment/resources.html>

- **Mental Health America**

Operation Healthy Reunions

<http://www.nmha.org/reunions/resources.cfm>

- **Military Homefront**

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>

- **Military K-12 Partners**

<http://militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/references.html>

- **Military OneSource**

<http://www.militaryonesource.com>

- **National Military Family Association**

<http://www.nmfa.org>



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continued 

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- **Sesame Workshop**

Deployments, Homecomings, Changes

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion/tlc>

- **SOFAR: Strategic Outreach to Families of All Reservists**

<http://www.sofarusa.org>

- **U.S. Army Hooah 4 Health**

Deployment Guide for Families of Deploying Soldiers

<http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/familymatters/reunion.htm>

- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Families of Military Personnel

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/returning-war-zone-guide-families.asp>

The following Web sites for veterans contain health-related information:

- **Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center**

<http://www.brainline.org>

- **Military Pathways Screening Program**

<http://www.militarymentalhealth.org>

- **National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Benefits for Returning Service Members

<http://www.oeifoif.va.gov>

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Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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