

# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

**Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**  
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

# **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

## **Designed for Soldiers and Families of the Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve**

This workshop material was developed in two phases under a contract with the Department of the Army and HQDA (CDSC-FSA), the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (USDA-CSREES), and the Texas Agricultural Extension Service (TAEX), The Texas A&M University System.

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# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

Soldiers

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# Homecoming and Reunion Soldiers

## Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- ☞ Facilitator's Guidelines  
help the facilitator prepare for the workshop
- ☞ Workshop Overview  
highlights key components of the workshop
- ☞ Workshop Plan  
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- ☞ Workshop Resources  
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

**Topic:** **Soldiers**

**Goal:** Soldiers can prepare for the challenges of reunion before returning to their loved ones.

**Audience:** This session is designed for **soldiers**. It is most helpful for this to be offered before reunion occurs.

**Time Required:** 2 1/2 hours

**Room Requirements:** This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions, with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

### Facilitator's Preparation

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (master located under Flyer Master) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:
  - ☞ plan an ice breaker
  - ☞ encourage participation
  - ☞ check for understanding
  - ☞ prepare room
  - ☞ make workshop personal
  - ☞ gather needed material
  - ☞ enjoy yourself
  - ☞ offer amenities, such as parking and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:
  - #1 Soldiers
  - #2 Objectives
  - #3 Ways to Communicate
  - #4 Expectations of Change
  - #5 Areas of Readjustment
  - #6 Stress-Coping Skills

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together (710652/TVT 20-1048)*, and the accompanying discussion guide if you plan to use them in the workshop.

*Note:* A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if the participants have seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare flip charts for group use.
  - Divide each sheet into two columns—**Joy and Concern**.

Prepare flip charts for facilitator use.

Divide one sheet into three columns—**Physical, Mental Attitudes, and Actions**.

Label one sheet **Helpful Resources**.

9. Reproduce the necessary number of handouts from the Handout Masters:
  - #1 Adjustments for Soldiers
  - #2 Homecoming and Reunion Brochure

10. Prepare table tents for group discussions:
  - Single Soldiers
  - Single-Parent Soldiers
  - Married Soldiers



11. Assemble all other necessary workshop materials and equipment

**Workshop Materials:**

Flip chart paper on 1 easel and colored markers  
Extra markers for flip chart paper activities at tables  
Masking tape for securing charts  
Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

Overhead transparency projector and screen  
Television and VCR

# Soldiers

## Workshop Overview (time 2 ½ hours)

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V	Handout-H	Brochure-B
10 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2		
10 minutes	Reunion Joys and Concerns	Flip Chart Activity (in groups)		
20 minutes	<i>Getting Back Together</i>	Video		
10 minutes	Group Discussion			
5 minutes	Ways to Communicate	V#3		
5 minutes	Intimate Relationships	B, Item #1		
15 minutes	Break			
5 minutes	Expectations of Change	V#4		
30 minutes	Adjustments for Soldiers	V#5 H#1, Flip Chart Activity		
5 minutes	Stress	B, Item #2 and B, Item #3		
5 minutes	Symptoms of Stress	Flip Chart Activity (Facilitator) B, Item #4		
10 minutes	Stress-Coping Skills	V#6 B, Item #5		
10 minutes	Sources of Assistance	Flip Chart Activity (Facilitator) B, Items #6 and #7		
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#2		

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Soldiers

*(time 2📄 hours)*

### Introduction

[*Visual #1: Homecoming and Reunion: Soldiers*]

Welcome to the Homecoming and Reunion Workshop—**Soldiers**. We will be working in groups to facilitate discussion with others who have shared similar experiences and challenges.

This session is designed to prepare you for the challenges of reunion so that problems can be minimized and positive aspects of homecoming can be maximized.

Many of your loved ones have had a similar workshop session back home. The purpose of these sessions is to help smooth the adjustment phase of reunion for both you and your loved ones.

The material we will cover applies to all soldiers. Activities are designed so that you may benefit by working with soldiers who have had similar experiences.

Feel free to share your experiences and concerns. Sharing will help all of us to understand that we have a great deal in common when it comes to reunion adjustment.

At this time, please group yourselves according to your personal situation. Tables are designated as follows:

- ☞ Single Soldiers (unmarried)
- ☞ Single-Parent Soldiers (those who have children)
- ☞ Married Soldiers (with and without children)

*(allow a few moments for groups to form)*

### Objectives

[*Visual #2: Objectives*]

During our time together, we will:

- ☞ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ☞ Develop an understanding of the 4 areas of readjustment
- ☞ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ☞ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance

## Reunion Joys And Concerns

I would like to begin by asking you what reunion means to you.

*(take a few responses)*

The dictionary states that a reunion is the reuniting of people after a period of separation. Close your eyes for just a moment and picture what your reunion will be like.

Focus on some joys you expect at reunion time.

Now focus on some concerns you have about reunion.

*(allow participants a few moments to imagine what reunion will be like, both the joys and concerns they may anticipate)*

*[Flip Chart activity (in groups)]*

There are flip charts at your tables. For the next 5 minutes, I would like one person at each table to list your thoughts about your joys and concerns about reunion.

*(allow 5 minutes to complete)*

I'd like a person from each group to post their list on the wall.

*(volunteers post flip charts on wall with masking tape)*

Let's take a moment to compare lists. As you can see, many of you are looking forward to the same joys, and many of you have some of the same concerns. Let's discuss the common items you have on your lists.

*[Facilitator leads discussion]*

*(allow a few moments to discuss the common joys and concerns from the groups' charts)*

## Getting Back Together

Expectations and fantasies are an important part of our lives. It does not matter if expectations are joys or concerns about homecoming and reunion.

No matter what you daydream about, you may not be physically or mentally able to carry out some of your expectations and fantasies.

There is no way to predict what homecoming and reunion will really be like. The video we are about to see, *Getting Back Together*, illustrates this point.

This video has been made especially for homecoming and reunion. The people portrayed in the video share how their expectations and fantasies are experienced when they are together again.

The purpose of the video is to assist you in understanding the adjustment process after separation. Issues raised in this video could apply to all returning soldiers.

As you watch the video, note the thoughts and feelings that both the soldier and the spouse are expressing.

A major strength of the video is that it deals with the things we just talked about—the joys, the concerns, the expectations, and fantasies of reunion. The video also addresses how couples communicate.

[*Show the video: **Getting Back Together***]

*(allow 20 minutes for video)*

## **Group Discussion**

[*Facilitator leads discussion*]

Now that the video is over:

- ☞ What did you learn from it?  
(take a few responses)
- ☞ What coping and communication techniques were used?  
(take a few responses)
- ☞ What did you see in the video that applies to you?  
(take a few responses)

*(allow 10 minutes for discussion)*

One thing to remember from the video and in our group discussions is that not only have you changed, but so have the people you are returning to.

All the problems you left behind have not magically disappeared. All the expectations you have about your reunion may not happen.

Thus, it is important to understand and accept that things back home will probably be different from what you expect.

Accepting change is a major factor in reestablishing yourself when you return from a deployment.

Keeping this change factor in mind, if I had asked the people you are returning to the same question about their joys and concerns, do you think your list would match with theirs?

*(take a few responses)*

Many of their expectations may be the same, but some may be very different. We are beginning to understand that our expectations and theirs may not coincide.

## Ways To Communicate

[Visual #3: *Ways to Communicate*]

A key to understanding different expectations is in how well we have communicated during the deployment and how well we will communicate when the deployment has ended.

What are some ways we can communicate during separation?

*(take a few responses—answers may include letters, cards, tapes, videos, phone calls)*

Letters and cards are the least expensive way to communicate. Sometimes, phone calls are available during a deployment, but phone calls can be very expensive. Cassette tapes and video tapes are also good methods of communication.

Now that you are going home, what can you say or write besides reporting the current weather conditions, or discussing how tired you are of the food in the mess tent?

*(take a few responses)*

Before your return, you can start talking and writing about some of your expectations.

Lines of communications should be open and two-way. Encourage your loved ones to communicate their expectations for reunion.

Some **joy** expectations you might share are the same ones you listed on the flip chart paper. For example, you could begin by saying that you would like to go to a movie when you return.

Or you might tell your loved one that you would really like a quiet evening alone. In return, ask them what they are looking forward to.

You could also begin to share some of your concern expectations. Your old job will seem rather tame after the adventure of a deployment.

You may confide that you are concerned about what your relationship will be like with the children, your spouse, with your mother or father, or with your friends.

Continuous communication during separation plays a critical role in maintaining an emotional bond between the soldier and those back home.

By expressing your expectations before you return (it's not too late) and by asking the people you are returning to about **their** expectations, you are establishing a line of communication that will cross many barriers and minimize problems when you return.

## Intimate Relationships

[Distribute Brochure: *Homecoming and Reunion*]

Among the major adjustments you face when you return are your intimate and sexual relationships. The best thing you can do is to go slowly. Don't anticipate "normal" sexual relations for a few days.

You and your partner are likely to feel like strangers with each other, and strangers do not have good sexual relations.

Take the time to reestablish your sexual relationship naturally. Rushing sexual relations can create major communication problems.

A few ideas that may be helpful during this period of adjustment are:

- ☞ Try not to rush
- ☞ Talk a lot about how you feel, and . . .
- ☞ Ask how your partner feels regarding intimacy and sexual matters
- ☞ Read brochure Item #1, **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**, for other helpful ideas.

[Brochure Item #1: **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**]

No matter how well prepared you are or how well you communicated during deployment, there are many adjustments to make upon returning.

Changes that occurred while you were away may cause you to adjust your way of thinking.

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we return, we will discuss change in depth.

[Break 15 minutes]

## Expectations Of Change

Welcome back from the break.

[Visual #4: *Expectations of Change*]

Let's begin by discussing change. You can view change in two different ways. One way to view change is as a crisis or threat. The other way is to view change as either a hidden opportunity or as a slight disruption in the way things used to be.

If change is viewed as a crisis or threat, people try to pretend the change did not happen. They may use inappropriate coping strategies. They may avoid or deny the change. They may spend time wishing things were the way they used to be.

Another poor coping mechanism people sometimes use is to blame everyone else and everything else for the change. This negative behavior only leads to a dead end and may cause even more problems.

If change is viewed as a hidden opportunity or merely as a slight disruption in the way things used to be, then it usually is more readily accepted.

People who view change in this positive way acknowledge that change has occurred, and that it can become an accepted part of life. Often, this view of change mobilizes people into new ways of thinking, which leads to a fresh beginning.

What changes might have happened while you were gone?

*(take a few responses)*

Do you view these changes as a hidden opportunity or as merely a slight disruption of the way things used to be?

*(take a few responses)*

Do you view these changes as a crisis or threat?

*(take a few responses)*

Ideally, all change should be viewed as hidden opportunity. Remember that no matter how accepting of change you are, it takes time for the impact of change to become integrated into your way of thinking or acting.

There is no definite period for change to begin to feel normal. On average, it takes several weeks or even months, depending on the length of separation, and on your acceptance of change.

## **Areas Of Readjustment**

*[Visual #5: Areas of Readjustment]*

Now that we have discussed change, let's look at how it affects our reunion adjustment. We will be following the activity Adjustments for Soldiers, as we discuss the various areas of adjustment.

*[Handout #1: Adjustments for Soldiers]*

These areas include family, social, environmental, and military and civilian employment. As we work through each area, you will be following the activity handout and writing your comments on it. Later, we will discuss these areas in our groups.

We will discuss each of the four areas separately. I will say a few words about each area, and then I will give you 3–4 minutes to answer the questions in that area.

When everyone has completed the activity, we will discuss the questions on the response portion at the end of the activity.

## **Family**

The first area we will discuss is family. Please complete the questions in the activity column marked Family. Remember, family can be blood relatives or those people in your life to whom you feel very close.

*(allow 3–4 minutes to complete)*

## **Social**



The second area of readjustment is social. Soldiers you met during the deployment will be returning to their homes. Others will go on leave to visit family. Still others will be transferred or sent to school. The camaraderie you have experienced may no longer be there.

You may suddenly feel like you're all alone because those you were close to are no longer around. Friends you had before deployment may have moved or established other interests. Please complete the "social" column in your activity.

*(allow 3–4 minutes to complete)*

## **Environment**

The third area of readjustment is environment. Environment can be everything from getting behind the wheel of your car, to the weather, to what is the latest in music, clothing, or TV shows.

Environment can also mean how well you will be accepted by the community. Keeping these things in mind, complete the third column.

*(allow 3–4 minutes to complete)*

## **Military And Civilian Employment**

The final area of readjustment is your career. Have people been transferred? Is your old job available, or has someone else taken it over? Are there new people in the organization?

What is your view of how you will be received if you are returning to your military assignment or former employer? Are the old familiar faces still there? Has the boss changed? Is the management style different or the same?

What are other changes that may have taken place since you left? Keeping these questions in mind, complete the "military and civilian employment" column on the activity.

*(allow 3–4 minutes to complete)*

Ask for a volunteer from each table to take a few notes on the discussion of each area. When everyone is finished, that person can report on what your group discussed about family, social, environmental, and military and civilian employment.

*(allow 15 minutes for this activity)*

Please note that all of you have a resource section on the back of your activity sheet. You can use this to record the information from your group.

*(allow 15 minutes for group work)*

May we now hear reports from the group volunteers?

[Group reports]

*(allow 2 minutes per group report)*

As you can see, a lot may have happened while you were gone. There is always the tendency to take the negative, or crisis, view of change. This is normal.

Some people want to overdo, catch up on time they have missed, spend money, and generally go full speed ahead without much direction. The most important thing to remember is to go slowly.

Reestablish a network of support with your loved ones and try not to let the stress of adjustment overtake you. The very act of being away from and returning to your loved ones can cause stress.

We will take the next few minutes to examine the symptoms of stress. We will also discuss some coping strategies, and give you some tips on where to go if you need assistance.

## **Stress**

A point to remember is that people back home experienced different types of stress than you did. You had the opportunity to focus almost exclusively on your job while you were away.

Your loved ones, on the other hand, not only maintained the day-to-day tasks that already existed, but they may also have had to take on many of your day-to-day tasks.

*[Brochure Item #2: **Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return**]*

Children had to cope with stress and uncertainty in their lives due to the separation. A returning soldier must understand that change is often frightening for a child.

Depending upon the duration of the separation, a parent(s) may seem like a stranger, especially to younger children. Item #2 in your brochure, **Children's Reactions to Soldier's Return**, lists techniques to help you and your child adjust to reunion.

Soldiers with children may have to restart their relationship with their children. This can be a very stressful period for the child and the parent. Remember that both you and your children have experienced changes. Work slowly and lovingly to reestablish your bond.

*[Brochure Item #3: **Homecoming and Reunion Stress**]*

Take a few minutes to look at item #3, *Homecoming and Reunion Stress*, in your brochure regarding reunion stressors. You will notice that they mirror what we have discussed so far. This handout has very good information that can be used by all of you. Notice the helpful hints.

What events did you encounter during your deployment that may cause you stress when you return? For example what did you see, hear, or experience?

*(take a few responses)*

What do you think are some stressors people back home have experienced while you were gone?

*(take a few responses)*

## **Symptoms Of Stress**

Many symptoms of stress are the same, no matter what the cause. Think about the last time you were under stress.

How did you feel physically?

*[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]*

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in “physical” column)*

What was your mental attitude?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in “mental attitude” column)*

How did you act toward other people?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in “actions” column)*

You may experience many of these symptoms when you return. But there is often a period called the “honeymoon period” that you may experience. Everything will seem new and exciting. Just being back around your old buddies, family, and surroundings will keep you excited for a time.

However, the honeymoon period will end. That is when stress often sets in—when you realize things are not living up to your expectations and fantasies. In fact, things have changed and you may become “stressed out.”

*[Brochure Item #4: **Stress Symptoms**]*

Take just a moment and look at item #4, **Stress Symptoms**, in your brochure. These are the symptoms you should be aware of both now, and when you return home. They may occur not only to you, but also to your loved ones.

Please take a minute to look at the list. Be aware of any symptoms you may have experienced. When you return home from your next deployment, refer to it again to check your stress level.

*(allow a moment for participants to review handout)*

## **Stress-Coping Skills**

*[Visual #6: **Stress-Coping Skills**]*

The important thing to remember about stress is that everyone handles it differently. There are 4 areas that will assist you in coping with stress and adjustment after deployment. These areas are:

Personal **management skills** include organizing your time and energy around your priorities and following through on your commitments.

- ↳ Personal management skills
- ↳ Relationship skills
- ↳ Outlook skills
- ↳ Self-care skills

How do you develop good personal management skills?

*[Facilitator leads discussion]*

*(answers may include goal setting, time management, learning new skills)*

**Relationship skills** include sharing your joys and concerns with others—being open and honest. Listening to others is also very important.

How do you develop good relationship skills?

*(answers may include listening, improve personal connections, make time for yourself, understanding other people's stress)*

**Outlook skills** include learning to be flexible to the changes you will encounter, and looking for new and creative options.

How do you develop good outlook skills?

*(answers may include being able to laugh at yourself, appreciating your skills and accomplishments, and having pride in yourself)*

**Self-care skills** include finding outlets for your stress and tension. How do you develop good self-care skills?

*(answers may include exercising, relaxing, good nutrition, being kind to yourself)*

As we have said before, many military families find the stress encountered during reunion more difficult than the separation itself.

A list of strategies you may use to make life easier for you and your family during this critical adjustment period is in your brochure in Item #5, **Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies**.

*[Brochure Item #5: **Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies**]*

## **Sources Of Assistance**

*[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]*

What if you notice that you are experiencing many of the stress symptoms from Item #4, **Stress Symptoms** list?

Where could you get assistance about your concerns and the stress you may be encountering before you return?

*(record answers on the flip chart)*

[See Brochure Items #6 and #7: **Sources of Support and Assistance**, and **Other Sources of Assistance**]

There is no shame in asking for assistance from professionals who are trained to help you. Item #6 in your brochure, **Sources of Support and Assistance**, lists assistance sources for you.

Item #7, **Other Sources of Assistance**, is blank. If you will record the information we have written on the flip chart paper in your brochure under Item #8, you will have additional resources to contact if you should need assistance here or when you return home.

Anyone in your chain of command can tell you how to get in touch with any of the organizations that we have listed. Most of them are listed in your post or civilian phone books.

Not all of the organizations on the list will be available while you are deployed, but many of them are. The key is to ask for the assistance if you need it.

## **Conclusion**

Reunion may be a challenge. If you begin right now to communicate your expectations and encourage those back home to do the same, the transition will be easier.

Keep in mind that there will be stress due to the changes that have occurred. Remember to look at change as a hidden opportunity or a slight disruption, and not as a crisis or dead end. A positive outlook will make for a smoother adjustment.

When you return home, there will be workshop sessions to cover such areas as adjusting to relationships with your spouse and children, positive communication strategies, and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Check with your commander, first sergeant, or family support group leader for more information about these sessions.

*Handout #2*



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Soldiers

Do you have realistic expectations about reunion?

Do you understand the 4 areas of readjustment?

Can you recognize symptoms of stress?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!





# Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion

Soldiers

**Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**  
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# Objectives

- ✎ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ✎ Understand the 4 areas of readjustment
- ✎ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ✎ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance



# Ways to Communicate During Deployment

?



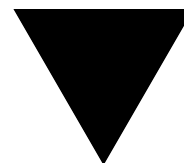
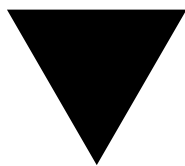
# Expectations Of Change

**Crisis or Threat**

**Hidden Opportunity**

**Avoidance or Denial  
Blame Others**

**Acknowledgment  
Action**



**Dead End**

**Beginning**





# Areas of Readjustment

P **Family**

P **Social**

P **Environment**

P **Job**



# Stress-Coping Skills

↳ Personal Management

↳ Relationship

↳ Outlook

↳ Self Care



# Adjustments for Soldiers

	Family	Social	Environmental	Military and Civilian Employment
What changes or adjustments may be waiting for you at home?				
What can you do about these changes, if anything?				
Do you want to do anything?				
How could you benefit from these changes?				



## Workshop Evaluation\*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop?  Yes  No
2. Do you think these objectives were met?  Yes  No
3. If you answered No to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:
  
4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:  
Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding
5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?
  
6. How did you benefit from this workshop?
  
7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants?  Yes  No
8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:  
Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding
9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?
  
10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.



# Homecoming and Reunion



## Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationships.

Most military couples face the question, “How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?”

Military couples often find that reunion may bring out feelings of uneasiness, and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The following information about communication barriers and enhancers may help you to reconnect with your partner

### **Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:**

- ☞ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ☞ Feeling anxiety about engaging in intimacy and sex.
- ☞ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ☞ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ☞ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ☞ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

### **Communication enhancers:**

- ☞ Communication will help bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ☞ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ☞ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ☞ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in developing negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ☞ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain or find a counselor who can help you work through these feelings.
- ☞ Besides communication, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly and enjoy your reunion.

<b>Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return</b>	
<b>Reactions</b>	<b>Techniques</b>
<b>Birth to 1 Year</b>	
Cries Fusses Pulls away from you Clings to spouse or caregiver Has problems with elimination Changes their sleeping and eating habits Does not recognize you	Hold Hug Bathe and change Feed and play Relax
<b>1 to 3 Years</b>	
Shyness Clinging Does not recognize you Cries Has temper tantrums Regresses - no longer toilet trained	Don't force holding, hugging, kissing Give them space Give them time to warm up Be gentle and fun Sit at their level
<b>3 to 5 Years</b>	
Demonstrates anger Acts out to get your attention; needs proof you're real Is demanding Feels guilty for making parent go away Talks a lot to bring you up to date	Listen to them Accept their feelings Play with them Reinforce that you love them Find out the new things on TV, at preschool, books
<b>5 to 12 Years</b>	
Isn't good enough Dreads your return because of discipline Boasts about Army and parent	Review pictures, school work, activities, scrap books Praise what they have done Try not to criticize
<b>13 to 18 Years</b>	
Is excited Feels guilty because they don't live up to standards Is concerned about rules and responsibilities Feels too old or is unwilling to change plans to accommodate parent Is rebellious	Share what has happened with you Listen with undivided attention Don't be judgmental Don't tease about fashion, music Respect privacy and friends

## Homecoming and Reunion Stress

Whether you are a single or a married soldier, a single-parent soldier, a spouse, or a child, you will face certain stressors associated with Homecoming and Reunion. Below are some of the normal stressors you may face, along with some hints to help you adjust to the changes in your life.

### Stressors

- ☞ Emotional letdown
- ☞ Restlessness or sleeplessness
- ☞ No one understands what I have been through
- ☞ Was my spouse faithful?
- ☞ Did my spouse miss me?
- ☞ My friends seem different
- ☞ I didn't expect things to change
- ☞ Other people's concerns seem petty
- ☞ I feel like a stranger at home
- ☞ How will the children react?
- ☞ Will the role I have filled change?
- ☞ Were my children treated well by their guardian?
- ☞ Can I make up for lost time?
- ☞ Did I handle things the right way?
- ☞ When will things feel normal again?
- ☞ I am concerned about finances
- ☞ I am concerned about future deployments
- ☞ The children appear confused and uncertain

### Helpful Hints

- ☞ Accept that things may be different
- ☞ Talk about your experiences
- ☞ Go slowly—don't try to make up for lost time
- ☞ Spend quality time with your children
- ☞ Reassure your children. Change often frightens them
- ☞ Curb your desire to take control or to spend money
- ☞ Accept that your partner may be different
- ☞ Intimate relationships may be awkward at first
- ☞ Take time to get reacquainted
- ☞ Forget your fantasies. Reality may be quite different
- ☞ Take time to readjust
- ☞ Communicate with your partner and your family

## Stress Symptoms

The following Stress Danger Signals focus on the medical and physical symptoms common to tension stress. Your physician can best determine your medical condition, but these guidelines will provide you with a general indication of your stress level. Check those signals which you have noticed:

- General irritability, hyperexcitability, depression
- Pounding of the heart
- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- Overpowering urge to cry or run
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, dizziness, fatigue
- Floating anxiety, being afraid and not knowing why
- Emotional tension and alertness
- Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- High-pitched, nervous laughter
- Stuttering, other speech difficulties
- Bruxism, or grinding of the teeth
- Insomnia
- Hyperactivity, increased tendency to move about
- Excessive sweating
- Frequent need to urinate
- Diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness, vomiting
- Migraine headaches
- Pain in neck or lower back
- Loss of appetite or excessive appetite
- Increased use of prescribed drugs
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Nightmares
- Accident proneness

The more signs that are present, the stronger the likelihood that there is a serious problem. See your physician if you are concerned about these symptoms.

## Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies

Most military families find that reunions are at least as stressful as separations. This seems to be true for couples with children, couples without children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family. Following are some coping strategies which may help:

*Expect to have a few doubts and worries.*

- ☞ Your partner may think you don't need them anymore.
- ☞ Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.

*Forget your fantasies.*

- ☞ Give up any fantasies or expectations you may have about what homecoming day should be.
- ☞ Take it easy and let things happen naturally.

*Don't expect things to be exactly the way they were before the separation.*

- ☞ You've changed, your spouse has changed and your children have changed.
- ☞ Don't get upset by things that are done differently.

*Tips on helping children adjust:*

- ☞ Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
- ☞ Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They might not understand about "duty" or "mission".
- ☞ Elementary school children and teenagers may understand, but show anger or fear by "acting out."
- ☞ Get reacquainted and take things slowly.
- ☞ Children are resilient.

*Accept and share your feelings.*

- ☞ Talk a lot about your feelings, and let your partner talk too.
- ☞ Really listen. Make sure you fully understand what your partner is saying before you respond.
- ☞ Communication is the key.

*See things from the other person's point of view.*

- ☞ An awareness that the soldier no longer feels a part of things helps us to understand why they can be upset by even the smallest changes.
- ☞ Recognition of the pride a partner feels in the way he/she handled everything alone will help the soldier to understand the importance of accepting changes made during separation.
- ☞ Children are people too. Try to understand how they feel. Change and uncertainty is often very frightening for them, so be patient.

*Your family relationships should regain normalcy in a few months. However, if you had problems before you left, those problems may still be there when you get back. If you continue having problems adjusting after a few months, seek help through one of the following offices:*

- ☞ The Army Community Service Center
- ☞ Family Program Coordinator
- ☞ Family Support Group leader for referrals
- ☞ Chaplain—a good source for confidential counseling
- ☞ Red Cross
- ☞ Social Work Services
- ☞ Community Service agencies—see your local phone book (e.g., Mental Health Department, Social Services Department)

*If deployment was to a war zone, natural disaster or urban riots, be alert for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of this disorder include:*

- ☞ Depression—chronic numb or flat feeling.
- ☞ Isolation—feeling withdrawn from family and friends.
- ☞ Alienation—absence of meaningful contact with others.
- ☞ Avoidance of feelings—inability to feel or express feelings.
- ☞ Rage—bouts of unexplained anger; may be internal or acted out.
- ☞ Anxiety—unexplained nervousness, tension or hyperalert feelings.
- ☞ Sleep disturbances—insomnia, nightmares, etc.
- ☞ Intrusive thoughts—recollections of traumatic experiences that appear for no apparent reason.
- ☞ Startle responses—unusual, involuntary reactions to loud noises, i.e., automobile backfire.

*PTSD probably won't go away on its own. It needs to be treated. If you or your spouse experience 4 or more of these symptoms regularly, seek professional help through one of the agencies listed above.*



## Sources of Support and Assistance for Army Soldiers and Families

1. *Army Community Service (ACS)*: ACS is the mainstay of family assistance for the Army on or near installations. It is staffed by paid professionals and volunteers. Among the services provided are Financial Management Assistance; Exceptional Family Members Program; Child Support Services; Family Advocacy; Relocation Services; and Information, Referral, and Follow-up.
2. *Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Family Program Coordinator Offices*: Although not staffed at ACS levels, these offices provide information and referral services on all of the above-listed services, both military and civilian, for the families of Reserve Component members who normally reside away from Army installations.
3. *Family Assistance Center (FAC)*: FACs may be established on and off Army installations during periods of lengthy deployment. FACs provide assistance and information and referral on such matters as ID cards and DEERS, health care, legal matters, financial counseling and assistance, and family support.
4. *Rear Detachment*: A military unit may create a Rear Detachment when it deploys for extended periods of time. It is the primary point of contact for family members who have questions or who need assistance prior to and during separations.
5. *Family Support Group (FSG)*: The FSG is organized to provide mutual support for a unit's family members. It is affiliated with a specific military unit, ARNG Armory, or USAR Center. The FSG forms the third component of the Army's family support system during deployment. It operates during periods of normal operations as well, in close coordination with the affiliated unit and, if convenient, with ACS or the Reserve Family Program Coordinator's office.
6. *Installation Chaplain*: A good source for confidential counseling.



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

Families

**Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**  
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Families

### Facilitator's Guidelines

This module provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop. The module has **4 sections**:

- ☞ Facilitator's Guidelines  
helps the facilitator prepare for the workshop
- ☞ Workshop Overview  
highlights the key components of the lesson plan
- ☞ Workshop Plan  
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- ☞ Workshop Resources  
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

**Topic:** Families

**Goal:** Families can prepare for the challenges of reunion before returning to their loved ones.

**Audience:** This session is designed for families. It is most helpful to offer this workshop before reunion occurs.

**Time Required:** 2 1/2 hours

**Room Requirements:** This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions, with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

**Facilitator's Preparation:**

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (master located under Flyer Master) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ☞ plan an ice breaker
- ☞ encourage participation
- ☞ check for understanding
- ☞ prepare room
- ☞ make workshop personal
- ☞ gather needed material
- ☞ enjoy yourself
- ☞ offer amenities, such as parking and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Families
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Ways to Communicate
- #4 Expectations of Change

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together (710652/TVT 20-1048)*, and the Video Discussion Guide if you plan to use them in the workshop.

*Note:* A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if the participants have seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare flip charts for group use.

Divide one sheet into two columns, **Joy** and **Concern**.

Label another sheet **Adjustments for Family Members**.

Prepare flip chart for facilitator use, **Families**.

Divide one sheet into three columns, **Physical, Mental Attitudes**, and **Actions**.

Label another sheet **Helpful Resources**.

9. Reproduce the necessary number of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Adjustments for Families
- #2 Homecoming and Reunion Brochure

10. Prepare table tents for group discussions:

Participants with Children

Participants without Children

11. Assemble all other necessary workshop materials and equipment

**Workshop materials:**

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel and colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart paper activity at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

- Overhead transparency projector and screen
- Television and VCR

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Families

### Workshop Overview

(time 2½ hours)

Estimated Time	Presentation	Visual-V	Handout-H	Brochure-B
10 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2		
10 minutes	Reunion Joys and Concerns	Flip Chart activity (in groups)		
20 minutes	<i>Getting Back Together</i>	Video		
10 minutes	Group Discussion			
5 minutes	Ways to Communicate	V#3		
5 minutes	Intimate Relationships	B, Item #1		
15 minutes	Break			
5 minutes	Expectations of Change	V#4		
30 minutes	Adjustments for Family Members	H#1 Flip Chart activity (in groups)		
5 minutes	Stress	B, Item #2 and B, Item #3		
5 minutes	Symptoms of Stress	Flip Chart activity (facilitator)		
10 minutes	Stress-Coping Skills	B, Item #4		
10 minutes	Sources of Assistance	B, Item #5  Flip Chart activity (facilitator) B, Items #6 and #7 H#2		
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3		

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Families

*(time 2📄 hours)*

### Introduction

[Visual #1: **Homecoming and Reunion** Families]

Welcome to the Homecoming and Reunion workshop for **families**. This session will prepare you for the challenges of reunion so that problems can be minimized and positive aspects of homecoming can be maximized.

Your soldiers have had a similar workshop in their theater of operations. The purpose of these workshops is to help smooth the adjustments of reunion for both you and your soldier.

The material we will cover applies to all families. Activities are designed so that you will benefit by working with others who have had similar experiences.

Feel free to share your experiences and concerns. Sharing will help all of us to understand that we have a great deal in common when it comes to reunion adjustment.

At this time, please group yourselves according to your personal situation. Tables are designated as follows:

- ☞ Participants with children
- ☞ Participants without children

*(allow a few moments for groups to form)*

### Objectives

[Visual #2: **Objectives**]

During our time together, we will:

- ☞ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ☞ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ☞ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance

### Reunion Joys And Concerns

I would like to begin by asking you what reunion means to you.

*(take a few responses)*



The dictionary states that a reunion is the reuniting of people after a period of separation. Close your eyes for just a moment and picture what your reunion will be like.

Focus on some joys you expect at reunion time.

Now focus on some concerns you have about reunion.

*(allow participants a few moments to imagine what reunion will be like—both the joys and concerns they may anticipate)*

*[Flip Chart activity (in groups)]*

There are flip charts at your tables. For the next 5 minutes, ask a volunteer at each table to list your thoughts regarding joys and concerns about reunion.

*(allow 5 minutes to complete)*

Would someone from each group post their list on the wall, please.

*(volunteers post flip charts on wall with masking tape)*

*[Facilitator leads discussion]*

Let's take a moment to compare lists. As you can see, many of you are looking forward to the same joys, and many of you have similar concerns. Let's discuss the common items you have on your lists.

*(take a few moments to discuss and compare some common joys and concerns from the groups' charts)*

## **Getting Back Together**

Expectations and fantasies are an important part of our lives. It does not matter if expectations are joys or concerns about homecoming and reunion.

No matter what you daydream about, you may not be physically or mentally able to carry out some of your expectations and fantasies. There is no way to predict what homecoming and reunion will really be like.

The video we are about to see, *Getting Back Together*, has been made especially for homecoming and reunion. The people portrayed in the video share how their expectations and fantasies are lived out when they are reunited. The purpose of this video is to assist you in understanding the adjustment process after a separation by addressing issues that may apply to each of you.

As you watch the video, note the thoughts and feelings expressed by both the soldier and the spouse. It deals with the things we just talked about—the joys, the concerns, the expectations, and fantasies of reunion. The video also teaches communication techniques.

*(allow 20 minutes for video)*

*[Show the video **Getting Back Together**]*

## Group Discussion

[Facilitator leads discussion]

Now that the video is over:

- ☞ What did you learn from it?  
(take a few responses)
- ☞ What coping and communication techniques were used?  
(take a few responses)
- ☞ What did you see in the video that may apply to you?  
(take a few responses)

(allow 10 minutes for discussion)

One thing to remember from the video and in our group discussions is that not only have you changed, but so has your soldier.

Problems have not magically disappeared. All the images you have about your reunion may not happen. Thus, it is important to understand that things will probably be different from what you expect.

Accepting change is a major factor in reestablishing you and your children's relationship with your soldier after a separation.

Keeping this in mind, if I had asked a room full of soldiers the same questions about their joys and concerns, do you think your list would match with theirs?

(take a few responses)

Many of their expectations may be the same, but some may be very different. We are beginning to understand that our expectations and theirs may not coincide.

## Ways To Communicate

[Visual #3: *Ways to Communicate*]

A key to understanding different expectations is in how well we have communicated during the separation and how well we will communicate when reunited. What are some ways we could communicate during separation?

(take a few responses—answers may include letters, cards, tapes, videos, and phone calls)

Letters and cards are the least expensive way to communicate. Sometimes, phone calls are available during a deployment, but phone calls can be very expensive. Cassette tapes and video tapes are also good methods of communication.

Your soldier will return soon, so what do you say or write besides the “kids are okay,” or “I went to work today.”

(take a few responses)

In the short time before your soldier returns, you could start talking and writing about some of your expectations. Lines of communications should be open and two-way. Encourage your soldier to communicate their own expectations for reunion.

Some **joy** expectations you might express are the same ones you listed on the flip chart paper.

You might begin by saying that you would like to go to a movie with your soldier. You might tell your soldier that you would really enjoy a quiet evening alone, or a break from the kids. In return, ask them what they are looking forward to.

You could also begin to express some of your concern expectations. You may be concerned about how you handled the children and the household tasks. You may confide that you enjoyed certain responsibilities.

Continuous communication during separation plays a critical role in maintaining an emotional bond between the soldier and those back home.

By expressing your expectations before reunion and by asking your soldier about their expectations, you are establishing a line of communication that could cross many barriers and minimize problems during reunion.

## **Intimate Relationships**

*[Distribute Brochure: **Homecoming and Reunion**]*

Among the major adjustments you face when your soldier returns is your intimate and sexual relationship. The best thing you can do is to go slowly. Don't anticipate normal sexual relations for a few days. There is no need to rush things.

You and your partner are likely to feel like strangers with each other, and strangers do not have good sexual relations. Take the time to let your sexual relationship reestablish itself naturally. Rushing sexual relations could create major communication problems.

A few ideas that may be helpful during this adjustment period are:

- ☞ Try not to rush
- ☞ Talk a lot about how you feel, and . . .
- ☞ Ask how your partner feels about intimacy and sexual matters
- ☞ Read brochure Item #1, **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**, for other helpful ideas.

*[Brochure Item #1: **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**]*

No matter how well prepared you are or how well you communicated during deployment, there are many adjustments that you and your children will face when your soldier returns.

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we return, we will discuss these changes.

*[Break 15 minutes]*

## **Expectations Of Change**

[*Visual #4: Expectations of Change*]

Let's begin by discussing change. Change can be viewed in two ways. One way to view change is either as a crisis or threat. The other way is to view change either as a hidden opportunity or as a slight disruption in the way things used to be.

If change is viewed as a crisis or threat, people try to pretend the change didn't happen. They may use inappropriate coping strategies. They may avoid or deny the change. They may spend time wishing things were the way they used to be.

Another poor coping mechanism people sometimes use is to blame everyone and everything else for the change. This only leads to a dead end and may cause even more problems.

If change is viewed as a hidden opportunity or merely as a slight disruption in the way things used to be, then it is usually more easily accepted.

People who view change in this positive way acknowledge that change has occurred, and that it can become an accepted part of life. Often, this view of change mobilizes people into new ways of thinking, which leads to a fresh beginning.

What changes have taken place while your soldier was away?

*(take a few responses)*

How do you think these changes will be perceived by your soldier when they return?

*(take a few responses)*

Ideally, all change should be viewed as hidden opportunity. Remember that no matter how accepting of change you are, it takes time for the change to become part of your way of thinking or acting.

There is no definite period in which change begins to feel normal. On average, it takes several weeks, or even months, depending on the length of separation and on your ability to accept change.

## **Adjustments For Family Members**

[*Handout #1: Adjustments for Families*]

Now that we have discussed change, let's look at how it affects our reunion adjustment. Look at the activity handout and take a few minutes to complete it on your own.

*(allow 5 minutes to complete)*

Now, discuss what you have written with others in your group and ask a volunteer to record your responses. After the discussion, a person from each group may share what was discussed. Please take a few minutes to do this.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete discussion)*

[Group reports]

At this time I would like to ask a volunteer from each table to share with us what you discussed. We'll cover each question in the activity handout.

[Group discussion and Flip Chart activity]

*(allow 2 minutes per group report)*

As you can see, adjustments may be necessary when your soldier returns. There is always a tendency to take the negative, or crisis, view of change. This is normal.

Some people want to overdo, catch up on time they have missed, spend money, and generally go full speed ahead without much direction.

The most important thing to remember is to go slowly. Reestablish your relationship with your soldier and try not to let the stress of adjustment overtake you.

## **Stress**

Everyone involved in the separation, including your soldier, has had to cope with stress. Children also experience stress, and change and uncertainty may often frighten them.

Take a moment to look at Item #2 in your brochure, **Children's Reactions to Soldier's Return**, which offers techniques to help children adjust to reunion.

[Brochure Item #2: **Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return**]

*(allow a moment for review)*

Perhaps those of you with children have had the opportunity to use the Operation R.E.A.D.Y. *Children's Workbooks*, which are designed to help them cope with the effects of being separated from a parent.

These workbooks are written for specific age groups and have proven to be very effective. If you haven't used them, contact your Family Support Group leader or the local ACS or Family Program Coordinator to obtain a copy. I have a few copies available if you would like one after this session.

[Brochure Item #3: **Homecoming and Reunion Stress**]

Take a few minutes to look at Item #3, **Homecoming and Reunion Stress**, in your brochure about reunion stresses. You will notice that they mirror what we have discussed so far. This handout includes hints which could be very helpful.

*(allow a moment for participants to review)*

## Symptoms Of Stress

Because stress can be a major factor in the reunion process, let's talk about some symptoms of stress. Many of these symptoms are the same, no matter what the cause. Think about the last time you were under stress.

*[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]*

How did you feel physically?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **physical** column)*

What was your mental attitude?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **mental attitude** column)*

How did you act toward other people?

*(facilitator writes responses on flip chart in **actions** column)*

You may experience many of these symptoms when the soldier returns. But there is often a period called the "honeymoon period" which you may also experience. Just having your soldier home again can make everything seem exciting.

However, the honeymoon period will end. That's when stress often sets in—when you realize things are not living up to your expectations and fantasies. In fact, things have changed and you may become stressed out.

*[Brochure Item #4: **Stress Symptoms**]*

Take a moment to look at Item #4, **Stress Symptoms**, in your brochure. These are the symptoms you should be aware of both now, and when your soldier returns.

*(allow a moment for participants to review handout)*

## Stress-Coping Skills

If your soldier seems to cut you off for a period, this is a normal reaction. If it continues, and the soldier does not return to their "old self" after several months, it could be caused by stress.

If you notice your soldier becoming too detached, unable to sleep, or if they seem like a different person, it is time to encourage them to seek outside assistance.

Once your soldier feels truly at home and safe, behavior, such as jumpiness, being overprotective, or going to extremes should subside. Patience is the key, so be willing to listen and try to empathize with them.

Finally, do not forget yourself. You, too, will be going through a period of adjustment. If you notice any of the danger signals we have discussed, think about where you could get assistance.

As we have said before, many military families may find the stress experienced during reunion more difficult than the separation itself.

[*Brochure Item #5: Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies*]

A list of strategies you could use to make life easier for you and your family during this adjustment period can be found in your brochure in Item #5, **Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies**.

## **Sources Of Assistance**

[*Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)*]

What if you notice that your soldier or your children are experiencing many feelings from the **Stress Symptoms** list? Where could you obtain help with your concerns and with the stress you may be experiencing? I will write your answers on the flip chart paper.

(*record answers on flip chart*)

[*Brochure Items #6 and #7: Sources of Support and Assistance, and Other Sources of Assistance*]

There is no shame in asking for assistance from trained professionals when you need help. Item #6 in your brochure, **Sources of Support and Assistance**, lists contact people. Item #7, **Other Sources of Assistance** is blank.

[*Brochure Item #8*]

If you will record the information we have captured on the flip chart paper in your brochure under Item #8, you will have additional resources should you or a loved one need assistance.

Anyone in the chain of command can put you in touch with the organizations that we have listed. Most of them are listed in your post or city phone books. The key is to ask for the assistance when you need it.

## **Conclusion**

As we have discussed, reunion can be a challenge. But if you begin right now to communicate your expectations and to encourage your soldier to do the same, the transition may be easier.

Keep in mind that there will be stresses because of the changes that have occurred. Try to look at change as a hidden opportunity or a slight disruption, and not as a crisis or dead end. A positive outlook will make for a smoother adjustment.

When your soldier returns, workshops will be offered which cover such areas as adjusting to relationships with partners and children, positive communication strategies, and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Check with your commander, first sergeant, or family support group leader for more information about these workshops.

[*Handout #2*]

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Families

Do you have realistic expectations about reunion?  
Can you recognize symptoms of stress?  
Would you like to know sources of assistance?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!







# Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion

Families

**Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**  
Resources for Educating About Deployment and You



# Objectives

- ✎ Establish realistic expectations about reunion
- ✎ Recognize symptoms of stress
- ✎ Identify helpful and reliable sources of assistance



# Ways to Communicate During Deployment

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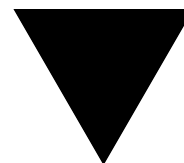
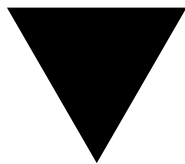
# Expectations Of Change

**Crisis or Threat**

**Hidden Opportunity**

**Avoidance or Denial  
Blame Others**

**Acknowledgment  
Action**



**Dead End**

**Beginning**



# Adjustments for Families

Directions: Take a few minutes to look at the following questions. Write out your answers in the spaces provided. You will have an opportunity to discuss your answers in your group afterwards.

1. How will it feel to have your soldier back in the house? Be honest about the good and the not-so-good aspects.

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2. How do you think your children will react?

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3. How will your soldier's return affect your work schedule, cooking habits, cleaning habits, free time, and general way of doing things?

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4. Have you developed new interests or friendships? Will these change when your soldier returns?

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5. What do you think will be the biggest change in your life when your soldier returns?

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# Workshop Evaluation\*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop?  Yes  No

2. Do you think these objectives were met?  Yes  No

3. If you answered No to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants?  Yes  No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.

# Homecoming and Reunion





## Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationships.

Most military couples face the question, “How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?”

Military couples often find that reunion may bring out feelings of uneasiness, and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The following information about communication barriers and enhancers may help you to reconnect with your partner

### Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:

- ☞ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ☞ Feeling anxiety about engaging in intimacy and sex.
- ☞ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ☞ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ☞ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ☞ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

### Communication enhancers:

- ☞ Communication will help bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ☞ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ☞ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ☞ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in developing negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ☞ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain or find a counselor who can help you work through these feelings.
- ☞ Besides communication, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly and enjoy your reunion.

<b>Children's Reaction to Soldier's Return</b>	
<b>Reactions</b>	<b>Techniques</b>
<b>Birth to 1 Year</b>	
Cries Fusses Pulls away from you Clings to spouse or caregiver Has problems with elimination Changes their sleeping and eating habits Does not recognize you	Hold Hug Bathe and change Feed and play Relax
<b>1 to 3 Years</b>	
Shyness Clinging Does not recognize you Cries Has temper tantrums Regresses - no longer toilet trained	Don't force holding, hugging, kissing Give them space Give them time to warm up Be gentle and fun Sit at their level
<b>3 to 5 Years</b>	
Demonstrates anger Acts out to get your attention; needs proof you're real Is demanding Feels guilty for making parent go away Talks a lot to bring you up to date	Listen to them Accept their feelings Play with them Reinforce that you love them Find out the new things on TV, at preschool, books
<b>5 to 12 Years</b>	
Isn't good enough Dreads your return because of discipline Boasts about Army and parent	Review pictures, school work, activities, scrap books Praise what they have done Try not to criticize
<b>13 to 18 Years</b>	
Is excited Feels guilty because they don't live up to standards Is concerned about rules and responsibilities Feels too old or is unwilling to change plans to accommodate parent Is rebellious	Share what has happened with you Listen with undivided attention Don't be judgmental Don't tease about fashion, music Respect privacy and friends

## Homecoming and Reunion Stress

Whether you are a single or a married soldier, a single-parent soldier, a spouse, or a child, you will face certain stressors associated with Homecoming and Reunion. Below are some of the normal stressors you may face, along with some hints to help you adjust to the changes in your life.

### Stressors

- ☞ Emotional letdown
- ☞ Restlessness or sleeplessness
- ☞ No one understands what I have been through
- ☞ Was my spouse faithful?
- ☞ Did my spouse miss me?
- ☞ My friends seem different
- ☞ I didn't expect things to change
- ☞ Other people's concerns seem petty
- ☞ I feel like a stranger at home
- ☞ How will the children react?
- ☞ Will the role I have filled change?
- ☞ Were my children treated well by their guardian?
- ☞ Can I make up for lost time?
- ☞ Did I handle things the right way?
- ☞ When will things feel normal again?
- ☞ I am concerned about finances
- ☞ I am concerned about future deployments
- ☞ The children appear confused and uncertain

### Helpful Hints

- ☞ Accept that things may be different
- ☞ Talk about your experiences
- ☞ Go slowly—don't try to make up for lost time
- ☞ Spend quality time with your children
- ☞ Reassure your children. Change often frightens them
- ☞ Curb your desire to take control or to spend money
- ☞ Accept that your partner may be different
- ☞ Intimate relationships may be awkward at first
- ☞ Take time to get reacquainted
- ☞ Forget your fantasies. Reality may be quite different
- ☞ Take time to readjust
- ☞ Communicate with your partner and your family

## Stress Symptoms

The following Stress Danger Signals focus on the medical and physical symptoms common to tension stress. Your physician can best determine your medical condition, but these guidelines will provide you with a general indication of your stress level. Check those signals which you have noticed:

- General irritability, hyperexcitability, depression
- Pounding of the heart
- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- Overpowering urge to cry or run
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, dizziness, fatigue
- Floating anxiety, being afraid and not knowing why
- Emotional tension and alertness
- Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- High-pitched, nervous laughter
- Stuttering, other speech difficulties
- Bruxism, or grinding of the teeth
- Insomnia
- Hyperactivity, increased tendency to move about
- Excessive sweating
- Frequent need to urinate
- Diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness, vomiting
- Migraine headaches
- Pain in neck or lower back
- Loss of appetite or excessive appetite
- Increased use of prescribed drugs
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Nightmares
- Accident proneness

The more signs that are present, the stronger the likelihood that there is a serious problem. See your physician if you are concerned about these symptoms.

## Reunion Stress-Coping Strategies

Most military families find that reunions are at least as stressful as separations. This seems to be true for couples with children, couples without children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family. Following are some coping strategies which may help:

*Expect to have a few doubts and worries.*

- ☞ Your partner may think you don't need them anymore.
- ☞ Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.

*Forget your fantasies.*

- ☞ Give up any fantasies or expectations you may have about what homecoming day should be.
- ☞ Take it easy and let things happen naturally.

*Don't expect things to be exactly the way they were before the separation.*

- ☞ You've changed, your spouse has changed and your children have changed.
- ☞ Don't get upset by things that are done differently.

*Tips on helping children adjust:*

- ☞ Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
- ☞ Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They might not understand about "duty" or "mission".
- ☞ Elementary school children and teenagers may understand, but show anger or fear by "acting out."
- ☞ Get reacquainted and take things slowly.
- ☞ Children are resilient.

*Accept and share your feelings.*

- ☞ Talk a lot about your feelings, and let your partner talk too.
- ☞ Really listen. Make sure you fully understand what your partner is saying before you respond.
- ☞ Communication is the key.

*See things from the other person's point of view.*

- ☞ An awareness that the soldier no longer feels a part of things helps us to understand why they can be upset by even the smallest changes.
- ☞ Recognition of the pride a partner feels in the way he/she handled everything alone will help the soldier to understand the importance of accepting changes made during separation.
- ☞ Children are people too. Try to understand how they feel. Change and uncertainty is often very frightening for them, so be patient.

*Your family relationships should regain normalcy in a few months. However, if you had problems before you left, those problems may still be there when you get back. If you continue having problems adjusting after a few months, seek help through one of the following offices:*

- ☞ The Army Community Service Center
- ☞ Family Program Coordinator
- ☞ Family Support Group leader for referrals
- ☞ Chaplain—a good source for confidential counseling
- ☞ Red Cross
- ☞ Social Work Services
- ☞ Community Service agencies—see your local phone book (e.g., Mental Health Department, Social Services Department)

*If deployment was to a war zone, natural disaster or urban riots, be alert for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of this disorder include:*

- ☞ Depression—chronic numb or flat feeling.
- ☞ Isolation—feeling withdrawn from family and friends.
- ☞ Alienation—absence of meaningful contact with others.
- ☞ Avoidance of feelings—inability to feel or express feelings.
- ☞ Rage—bouts of unexplained anger; may be internal or acted out.
- ☞ Anxiety—unexplained nervousness, tension or hyperalert feelings.
- ☞ Sleep disturbances—insomnia, nightmares, etc.
- ☞ Intrusive thoughts—recollections of traumatic experiences that appear for no apparent reason.
- ☞ Startle responses—unusual, involuntary reactions to loud noises, i.e., automobile backfire.

*PTSD probably won't go away on its own. It needs to be treated. If you or your spouse experience 4 or more of these symptoms regularly, seek professional help through one of the agencies listed above.*

## Sources of Support and Assistance for Army Soldiers and Families

1. *Army Community Service (ACS)*: ACS is the mainstay of family assistance for the Army on or near installations. It is staffed by paid professionals and volunteers. Among the services provided are Financial Management Assistance; Exceptional Family Members Program; Child Support Services; Family Advocacy; Relocation Services; and Information, Referral, and Follow-up.
2. *Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve Family Program Coordinator Offices*: Although not staffed at ACS levels, these offices provide information and referral services on all of the above-listed services, both military and civilian, for the families of Reserve Component members who normally reside away from Army installations.
3. *Family Assistance Center (FAC)*: FACs may be established on and off Army installations during periods of lengthy deployment. FACs provide assistance and information and referral on such matters as ID cards and DEERS, health care, legal matters, financial counseling and assistance, and family support.
4. *Rear Detachment*: A military unit may create a Rear Detachment when it deploys for extended periods of time. It is the primary point of contact for family members who have questions or who need assistance prior to and during separations.
5. *Family Support Group (FSG)*: The FSG is organized to provide mutual support for a unit's family members. It is affiliated with a specific military unit, ARNG Armory, or USAR Center. The FSG forms the third component of the Army's family support system during deployment. It operates during periods of normal operations as well, in close coordination with the affiliated unit and, if convenient, with ACS or the Reserve Family Program Coordinator's office.
6. *Installation Chaplain*: A good source for confidential counseling.





# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## **Celebration Planning**

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Homecoming and Reunion Celebration Planning

## Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- ☞ Facilitator's Guidelines
- ☞ Workshop Overview
- ☞ Workshop Plan
- ☞ Workshop Resources

**Topic:** Celebration Planning

**Goal:** Family Support Groups (FSGs), and those who assist them, will learn a 4-step process for organizing and planning homecoming activities.

**Audience:** This session is designed for **Family Support Group members, and key support personnel**. It should be offered before homecoming.

**Time Required:** 1 hour

**Room Requirements:** This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the number of participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts and overheads.

### Facilitator's Preparation:

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (located in Flyer Master section) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ☞ plan an ice breaker
- ☞ encourage participation
- ☞ check for understanding
- ☞ prepare room
- ☞ make workshop personal
- ☞ gather needed material
- ☞ enjoy yourself
- ☞ offer amenities, such as child care, parking, and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided.

- #1 Celebration Planning
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Homecoming Activities
- #4 4-Step Process

7. Prepare flip charts with the following title for each table, and distribute before the workshop begins:  
Activities

8. Prepare flip chart paper (for facilitator's use) with the following titles:

- Soldiers
- Family Members
- Community

9. Reproduce the necessary numbers of handouts from the Handout Masters—1 set for workshop use, 1 set to take home.

- #1 Activities Planning Guide

10. Assemble all other needed workshop materials and equipment.

**Workshop Materials:**

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel with colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart activity at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

- Overhead transparency projector and screen

# Homecoming and Reunion Celebration Planning

## Workshop Overview (time 1 hour)

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V Handout-H
5 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2
10 minutes	Organizing a Homecoming Activity	Flip Chart activity (facilitator) V#3 Flip Chart activity (in groups)
10 minutes	4-Step Process Planning	H#1 V#4 H#1 Step 1
15 minutes	Objectives	H#1 Step 2
5 minutes	Assigning	
5 minutes	Controlling	H#1 Step 3
5 minutes	Evaluating	H#1 Step 4
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#1 (blank copies for participants) H#2



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Celebration Planning

*(time 1 hour)*

### Introduction

[Visual #1: *Homecoming and Reunion Celebration Planning*]

Welcome to the Homecoming and Reunion workshop for Celebration Planning. Today we will be work at tables in small groups, so please take a seat at a table.

*(allow a few moments for groups to form)*

This workshop is designed for Family Support Groups (FSGs) and those who assist them. We will be using a group process to learn how to plan successful homecoming celebrations.

### Objectives

[Visual #2: *Objectives*]

During our time together, we will:

- ☞ Discuss the significance of homecoming activities to soldiers, family members and the community
- ☞ Learn how to organize a homecoming activity that encompasses the entire community

### Organizing A Homecoming Activity

Today you will use an activity guide that will help you organize a homecoming activity.

Before we begin that project, let's address some important questions.

[*Flip Chart Activity (Facilitator)*]

Why is it important to soldiers to have homecoming activities?

*(record responses on flip chart entitled "Soldiers," and post on wall)*

Why is it important for family members to have homecoming activities?

*(record responses on flip chart paper entitled "Family Members," and post on wall)*

Why is it important for the community to have homecoming activities?

*(record responses on flip chart paper entitled “Community,” and post on wall)*

It is good for a soldier to be welcomed home and to be home. As you can see, homecoming is important to all three groups. It is significant to recognize the personal sacrifices that the soldiers, the families, and the communities have made during deployment. Recognition can help bring closure to an event.

[*Visual #3: **Homecoming Activities***]

The idea behind homecoming activities is to show support and appreciation for soldiers, family members, and all who assisted during deployment. These activities clearly demonstrate to everyone that sacrifice and service to our country is appreciated.

Planning homecoming activities takes time and coordination. This includes not only the military community, but the civilian community as well. We will plan a homecoming activity in this session.

[*Flip Chart Activity (in groups)*]

To get our creative juices flowing, I would like for you to look at the flip chart paper on each table that has the word “Activities” at the top. Take 5 minutes to brainstorm all the “homecoming activities” you can think of.

*(allow 5 minutes)*

Please have a volunteer post your flip chart on the wall, and we will compare responses.

Your responses are excellent and, as you can see, many of them are similar. Looking over the charts that your group developed, take a moment to choose an activity for which your group could plan a celebration.

## **4-Step Process**

[*Handout #1: **Activities Planning Guide***]

Now that each group has selected a celebration to plan, let me take a few moments to explain the activity guides.

[*Visual #4: **4-Step Process***]

The activity guides are divided into **4 steps**:

- ☞ **Planning**  
determines the objectives, actions, who will do what, by when, and with what resources.
- ☞ **Assigning**  
determines who will do each action—this is also known as delegating.
- ☞ **Controlling**  
monitors the progress of each step and makes adjustments.
- ☞ **Evaluating**  
assesses how the activity was received. Were the goals met? Did everyone do their job? Are there ways to do it better next time?



## Planning

We will start with the first step—planning. This step is easy; you each have a goal to accomplish “X” activity. The important part is to decide what your objectives are.

For example: You are planning a picnic, your objective is:

To feed 50 people hot dogs and hamburgers on September 15, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at a cost of not more than \$2 per person.

Let’s begin our planning with each table group coming up with several objectives. This is the first step. Be sure to read the explanation of a good objective in Step 1, Number 2, of the Activities Planning Guide. Note that it must be action-oriented and measurable.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

### Step 1—Planning

*[Handout #1, Step 1]*

The next sheet in your activity guide is an objective worksheet. Notice that there are 4 columns:

- ☞ action steps
- ☞ by whom
- ☞ by when
- ☞ resources

Think about our picnic example. Some action steps might be:

- ☞ coordinate with the chain of command
- ☞ secure a picnic location
- ☞ send out notices about the picnic
- ☞ make reservations for those attending and set an RSVP date
- ☞ determine how many hamburger and hot dog buns you will need
- ☞ determine how many pounds of hamburger and the number of hot dogs you will need to serve 50 people

A word of caution here: in your action steps, **do not forget** to coordinate your activities with the proper person and to obtain the proper clearances. If it is a large activity, you may add the objective to coordinate with the commander, the community, or other officials.

For example, if you want to launch balloons, you will not only have to obtain the commander’s permission, but perhaps also that of the FAA and the city, county, and state, as well. This is a very important step that must be **completely** and **thoroughly** fulfilled!

Also, if you are obtaining donations from the community, such as a banner printed by a local printer, you must get approval from the legal office to be sure it is an acceptable contribution.

You must also remember to send the proper thank-you notes. This also could be an objective (obtain local support for the homecoming activities) with its own set of action steps.

A helpful hint is to make sure your action steps are in numbered in the logical order of completion. This will make it easier to set the completion or deadline dates.

[Handout #1: **Step 2**]

Next, you should decide who will complete each action step—this means writing someone’s name down next to the step. In Step 2 of the Activities Planning Guide, there are several questions about the person you have chosen to complete the activity.

Beside each action step in the third column, you need to put a completion date. Since the picnic is September 15, you need to decide how much time is necessary. For example:

- ☞ Location secured: July 15
- ☞ Flyer mailed: August 15
- ☞ RSVPs due: September 10
- ☞ Buns purchased or ordered by: September 14

Finally, list your resources to make sure you have enough money to complete the project. Don’t forget anything when estimating cost.

You have 15 minutes to concentrate on the action steps for 1 or 2 of the objectives that you identified.

*(allow 15 minutes)*

You may have only a few objectives, or you may have many. It depends on the magnitude of the activity. The important thing to remember is that for each objective you will have a set of action steps. Thus, you need an action worksheet for each objective.

## **Assigning**

When you are planning your activity and have written down who will do what by when on your objective worksheet, you will have completed the second step—**assigning**. Assigning is sometimes called delegating. Review Step 2 to make sure you’ve covered all the tasks in assigning.

*(allow 5 minutes to review)*

## **Controlling**

[Handout #1: **Step 3**]

The third step is **controlling**. Controlling involves someone in the group (Family Support Group leader, project coordinator, etc.) keeping track of who is doing what, if it is being done on time, and assisting with any necessary coordination. Take a moment to select someone from your group to control your homecoming activity and fill in the blank in Step 3.

*(allow a few moments for selection)*

## Evaluating

*[Handout #1: Step 4]*

The final step is **evaluating**. You must evaluate as each objective is completed, and also at the end of the activity. Unfortunately, few people take the time to evaluate. It is important for Family Support Groups to evaluate. Evaluating can assist you in planning future events and shows that you are well organized.

The evaluating step is not complete until a thorough after-action report is prepared. The after-action report is both a record of the project and a valuable reference for the future. In the after-action report, you review all the evaluation points and make recommendations for planning future activities.

Be sure to include what steps were taken, how long it took, how much money and resources were needed, and what the results were. Take a moment to review Step 4.

*(allow a moment to review Step 4)*

## Conclusion

As you have seen from our activity, planning a homecoming activity is not a job for one person. It should involve as many people as possible so that it will not overburden any one individual, organization, or contributor. It is a team effort that requires planning.

If you plan carefully, any activity you hold will be a success. It will show the returning soldiers that their contributions were appreciated. It will help reunions with families, friends, and communities. Take time to plan and make it a meaningful activity.

Here is a blank copy of the Activities Planning Guide. Keep this guide handy for future reference when planning a homecoming activity.

*[Distribute blank copies of Activities Planning Guide]*



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Celebration Planning

Do you know why homecoming celebrations are important to soldiers, family members, and the community?

Would you like to learn a step-by-step process for planning a successful homecoming celebration?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## **Celebration Planning**

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**





# Objectives

- ✎ Discuss the importance of homecoming activities to soldiers, family members, and the community
- ✎ Learn how to organize a homecoming activity that includes the entire community



# Homecoming Activities



# **4-Step Process**

**Planning**

**Assigning**

**Controlling**

**Evaluating**



# Activities Planning Guide

**Step 1—Planning** involves deciding what is to be done. It is accomplished through setting objectives, listing action steps, deciding who will do what, by when, and what resources will be needed.

1. What is the activity to be accomplished? (The activity to be accomplished is a picnic.)

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2. What is the objective of this activity? Use an action verb; be specific; think about time frames. (The objective is to feed 50 people hot dogs and hamburgers at a cost of not more than \$2 per person on September 15 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.)

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Is this a good objective statement? Ask these questions:

- ☞ Is the objective clear?
- ☞ Does it set a time?
- ☞ Does it say what needs to be done?
- ☞ Does it consider available resources?

3. An important part of planning is determining what will be done, by whom, by when, and what resources will be needed. Remember, resources mean time, people, and money. (For example: what—coordinate with the chain of command; by whom—the Family Support Group leader will do it; when—by July 1; resources—it will cost \$35, and will require 10 volunteers.)

# Objective Work Sheet

Action Steps	By Whom?	By When?	Resources

**Step 2—Assigning** is determining who will do each action step. This is sometimes called “delegating,” or, in the military, “tasking.”

Look at the **By Whom?** column on your **Objective Work Sheet**. Ask the following questions:

- ☞ Can this person do the job?
- ☞ Do they need more training?
- ☞ Do they have the skills?
- ☞ Do they want to do the job?
- ☞ Do I have the time to work with them if they do not have all the skills?
- ☞ If I cannot work with them, is there someone else who could?

**Remember** you do not have time to do it all!

Keep in mind that assigning will work best if it is done in an open, honest way. If this is the first time someone has worked on a project like this one, you will need to go into more detail with them.

If the person has participated in projects like this one before, you could simply discuss what is to be accomplished. You may recall your leadership training in Family Support Group. It will help you in this phase. When you do assign a task to someone, follow these guidelines:

- ☞ What do you expect them to do?

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☞ What will the action step(s) look like when it is completed?

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☞ How much time will they have to do it? When is the deadline? What dates will you check back with them to monitor progress?

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☞ Who are the other people with whom they need to coordinate?

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☞ How does this step fit into the entire activity?

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☞ What authority will the person have? What decisions can they make? What are the limitations?

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☞ What people, resources, equipment, and money will they have to complete the action step(s)?

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**Step 3—Controlling** is tracking or monitoring the work in progress and making adjustments, as needed. Be careful not to overcontrol the work or make more changes than are necessary.

Controlling is accomplished through meetings with the entire activity team and also with individuals on the team. In what ways will you manage your work group in this activity?

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**Step 4—Evaluating** should be done throughout the course of the project as each step is completed, not just at the end. The following questions could be asked any time during the process:

- ☞ Are the action steps on schedule?
- ☞ Does everyone know what is expected of them?
- ☞ Are the action steps being completed on time? If not, why?
- ☞ Did people follow through on their assignments? If not, why?
- ☞ Were there changes from the plan? Why? Were they positive or negative?
- ☞ What would you do in same way next time?
- ☞ What would you do differently?

**Remember**—Evaluation is not complete until you have prepared a follow-up report. It is both a record of the project and a valuable reference for the future.

# Workshop Evaluation\*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop?  Yes  No

2. Do you think these objectives were met?  Yes  No

3. If you answered **No** to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants?  Yes  No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.

# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

Communication Techniques

## **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques

## Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- Facilitator's Guidelines  
helps the facilitator make preparations for the workshop
- Workshop Overview  
highlights the key components
- Workshop Plan  
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- Workshop Resources  
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

**Topic:**                      **Communication Techniques**

**Goal:**                         Soldiers and family members can recognize and deal with problems that may arise or persist after the soldier returns.

**Audience:**                This session is designed for **soldiers** and their **spouses** to attend together. It should be taught as soon after reunion as is practical.

**Time Required:**            2 hours

**Room Requirements:**    This workshop requires a room large enough to accommodate the number of participants. It is designed as a group process for roundtable discussions, with 8–10 people at each table. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

**Facilitator's Preparation:**

1. Reserve a location for conducting the workshop that will accommodate the number of participants.
2. Prepare flyers (located in Flyer Master section) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ☞ plan an ice breaker
- ☞ encourage participation
- ☞ check for understanding
- ☞ prepare room
- ☞ make workshop personal
- ☞ gather needed material
- ☞ enjoy yourself
- ☞ offer amenities, such as child care, parking, and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Communications Techniques
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Homecoming
- #4 How Do People Communicate?
- #5 Communications Skills
- #6 Feedback

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together (710652/TVT 20-1048)*, if you plan to use them in the workshop.

*Note:* A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if participants have seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare table tents that have group designations on them and place on tables before workshop begins:

- ☞ Couples with Children
- ☞ Couples without Children
- ☞ Single-Parent Soldiers
- ☞ Single Soldiers



9. Prepare flip charts with the following titles:

**Couples with Children**

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Spouse
- ☞ Children
- ☞ Myself

**Couples without Children**

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Spouse
- ☞ Friends and Family
- ☞ Myself

**Single-Parent Soldiers**

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Children
- ☞ Friends and Family
- ☞ Myself

**Single Soldiers**

Make 4 columns:

- ☞ Soldiers
- ☞ Friends
- ☞ Family
- ☞ Myself

10. Prepare flip chart (for facilitator use) with the following title:

**Communication Roadblocks** (single sheet)

11. Reproduce the necessary numbers of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Homecoming and Reunion Changes
- #2 Reconnecting Personally

12. Assemble all other needed workshop materials and equipment.

**Workshop Materials:**

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel with colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart paper activity at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

- Overhead transparency projector and screen
- Television and VCR

# Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques

## Workshop Overview

*(time 2 hours)*

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V Handout-H
5 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2
5 minutes 10 minutes 20 minutes	Homecoming Changes Group activity	V#3 H#1, Question #1 Flip Chart activity Group reports
5 minutes 5 minutes 10 minutes 10 minutes	Renegotiation Intimate Relationships Making the Adjustment Importance of Change	H#2  H#1, Question #2
15 minutes	Break	
10 minutes 5 minutes 5 minutes	Prioritizing Change Meaningful Communication Roadblocks to Communication	H#1, Question #3 V#4 Flip Chart activity Communication Roadblocks (Facilitator)
5 minutes	Communication Skills	V#5
5 minutes 10 minutes	Feedback Thinking It Through	V#6 H#1, Question #4
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Communication Techniques

*(time 2 hours)*

### Introduction

[Visual #1: *Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques*]

Welcome home!

*(make appropriate remarks depending on the deployment)*

This Homecoming and Reunion workshop is for **soldiers**, single and married, and **their families**. Its purpose is to assist you with the challenges you may face now that you are back home.

You will join in small groups to facilitate discussion with others who have shared similar experiences and challenges. At this time, please group yourselves according to your personal situation. Tables are designated with the following name tents:

- ☞ Couples With Children
- ☞ Couples Without Children
- ☞ Single-Parent Soldiers
- ☞ Single Soldiers

*(allow groups to form)*

You will be using activities that may help you meet the challenges you face during your homecoming and reunion readjustment phase.

### Objectives

[Visual #2: *Objectives*]

- ☞ To develop an understanding of the challenges of readjustment
- ☞ To develop an awareness of positive interpersonal communication strategies
- ☞ To identify effective communication techniques

### Homecoming

[Visual #3: *Homecoming*]

I am going to ask you how your reunion has been so far. You do not have to raise your hands or stand up—just think about your experiences.

Was homecoming everything you thought it would be?

Did it live up to your expectations and fantasies? Did you live up to your expectations and fantasies? Be honest with yourself.

How many of you discussed your homecoming expectations with your family or soldier before your reunion?

*(ask for a show of hands)*

I know many of you who were deployed had the opportunity to attend homecoming and reunion workshops before you returned. Those who remained at home attended similar workshops.

One point of the workshop was to encourage you to express your expectations before your reunion. By doing so, you could understand each other's anticipations.

After a separation, your expectations of each other may have changed. These new expectations may be stumbling blocks, or they may be opportunities for growth.

Our goal today is to build constructively and positively on changes that may have occurred in your life during your separation.

## **Changes**

*[Distribute Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes**]*

You will be working with this handout during the workshop. We will address each of the 4 questions, one at a time, and at the end of the workshop, you will have some tools to help you resolve interpersonal conflicts. You will also have some strategies for better communication.

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes (Question #1)**]*

I would like for each of you to take about 10 minutes to complete Question #1 in the handout. Remember, these are your answers and your impressions. There are no right or wrong answers.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

## **Group Activity**

*[Flip Chart Activity (in groups)]*

At your tables are flip charts for recording your responses. Ask a volunteer to write some changes you noted in Question #1 on the paper.

After you have finished, we will discuss what your groups have written.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

[Group Reports]

Let's take a few minutes to look at the list. Let a person from each table tape the paper to the wall. Volunteers can tell us what your group discussed about changes you face.

*(allow 2 minutes for each group report)*

As you can see, you are facing many changes. Some people think that reunion is more stressful than deployment.

You may have had a fantasy that everything would be perfect when the unit returns. This is not necessarily so.

You will be going through a period of readjustment. You may have already experienced some readjustment stress. Stress is a normal, healthy reaction to change.

You may also have experienced a time known as the "honeymoon period." This is when everything is wonderful shortly after a soldier's return.

Maybe you have **not** experienced a honeymoon period. Problems that occurred before deployment may still be there when you are reunited.

Whether homecoming was a honeymoon, or a thunderstorm, or anything in between, there will come a time when you will need to look at the changes that have taken place in your life. Some of these changes may require renegotiation.

## **Renegotiation**

Renegotiation raises many questions. It relates to the "where do I fit in" syndrome. For the soldier, renegotiation may involve such questions as: Where or how do I fit into my job? Where or how do I fit in with my friends? Where or how do I fit in with my family? Am I still needed? What will our intimate relationship be like? Will my spouse still love me?

For the family, renegotiation may involve such questions as: Do I have to change my way of doing things? Do I have to give up paying the bills? I enjoyed it. Do I have to start cooking huge meals again? What will my relationship be with my spouse? Will my spouse still love me?

Do we need to change any legal arrangements made before deployment, like powers of attorney, wills, guardianships, or bank accounts?

Children may wonder: Do I have to start doing it dad's or mom's way now? Will my curfew change?

These are some issues that you will need to discuss in the renegotiation stage. As you can see by your charts, you have already been thinking about these issues.

## **Intimate Relationships**

*[Distribute Handout #2: **Reestablishing Intimate and Sexual Relations**]*

One issue many of you have already faced concerns your intimate relationship with your spouse. You may have had fantasies that were really wonderful, but those fantasies may not have been realized when you were together again.

It will take time to get over some of the awkwardness of reestablishing intimacy. Intimacy means closeness, trust and communication. After separation, reestablishing intimacy will not happen immediately. Take things slowly and enjoy your reunion.

## **Making The Adjustment**

You have looked at some challenges you face in your relationships due to the changes that occurred during the deployment. Let's talk about ways to make your adjustment easier.

## **The Importance Of Change**

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes (Question #2)**]*

Look at the next page in your activity handout. Question #2 asks you to look at some changes you listed in Question #1, and then asks you how important the change was to you, and whether you want to talk about it.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we return, we will continue with this activity.

*[Break 15 minutes]*

## **Prioritizing Change**

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes (Question #3)**]*

Welcome back from the break.

Look at Question #3 on your activity handout. It refers to Question #2. Select several changes you would like to talk about. Answer each of the three areas posed in Question #3.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

I know you are beginning to wonder where this is all leading. It is leading to better interpersonal communication.

Let's take the rest of the time we have together to explore communication in depth. Then you may complete the activity handout. When you finish, you will have some ideas to help you to communicate more effectively.

## Meaningful Communication

[Visual #4: *How People Communicate*]

Meaningful communication sometimes requires great effort. But at reunion time, it is **very important**.

Can you tell me several ways that people communicate?

*(take a few responses—answers may include words, actions, body language)*

As we communicate with another person, several things take place. We send a message to someone and hope they receive it the way we intend it. If they do—**success**. If not—**trouble**.

The trouble comes when the other person misinterprets what we have said, does not understand the words we have used, or there is much emotion involved in the conversation.

## Roadblocks To Communication

[Flip Chart Activity (Facilitator) *Communication Roadblocks*]

If there is a problem in communication, and there are feelings of anger, hurt, or confusion, the process can be difficult, and roadblocks may develop.

These roadblocks may lead to interpersonal conflict. Roadblocks are the way people say things, or the words people use that cause you to stop listening or paying attention to the person who is talking.

What are some roadblocks to communication? You can name these aloud, and I will write your responses on the flip chart paper.

*(take a few responses—answers may include tone or loudness of voice, placing blame, negative comments)*

So if these are the roadblocks, what could we do to avoid them?

*(take a few responses—answers may include listening, feedback)*

## Communication Skills

[Visual #5: *Communication Skills*]

By improving our communication skills, we can improve the quality of our relationships with others.

As you can see on the overhead, keys to effective communication include tuning in, listening, giving feedback, and responding.

To “tune in” and become a good listener you can:

- ☞ Stop talking and try not to interrupt
- ☞ Get rid of distractions
- ☞ Make eye contact with the other person
- ☞ Concentrate on the message they are sending you

## Feedback

Feedback reflects the message as you understand it. For example, your spouse:

- Sends a message:  
“When will you be deployed again?”
- You receive that message, determine what is meant, and reflect what you heard:  
“You are concerned about how long we have together.”
- The sender then responds or clarifies what was actually meant:  
“Yes”; or “No. I was wondering about \_\_\_\_.”

By using feedback, misinterpretation and conflict about what was said can be avoided. **But** you cannot listen effectively if you are too tired, you are rushed, or if you are not accepting of the person or the situation.

Often, if one of these conditions exists, you can tell the other person that you know it is important to them, but you are too tired, or whatever. “Could we talk about it later?” is an honest response.

Take a moment to look back at the roadblocks listed on the flip charts, and your answers to Question #3 in the activity handout.

Pinpoint one important change that has happened since your reunion. Think about what we have discussed about communicating.

*(allow a few minutes for participants to think this through)*

## Thinking It Through

*[Handout #1: **Homecoming and Reunion Changes** (Question #4)]*

Using the skills you have learned, take a few minutes to write down some ways you would like to approach the person(s) involved in the change.

Using the space allotted to Question #4 in the activity handout, write what you would like to say to them.

This activity will help you sort out what you want to say ahead of time. When you finally address the individual involved in the change, you can then rationally explain your concerns.

## Conclusion

The key to returning home and readjusting is to recognize that changes have occurred. These changes may cause conflicts.

By addressing them in sequence, as you have done here, you can pinpoint which changes are causing you the most concern.

I think you will agree that this is not an easy time. Readjustment requires patience and skill. We have seen how the changes that everyone has gone through affect you and your relationships.



Remember that the way to reunion success is through communication. It is essential not only to communicate how you are feeling, but to listen to what those around you are saying and feeling. Talk openly, but also listen carefully.

*[Handout #3]*



# Homecoming and Reunion Communication Techniques

Do you understand the challenges of readjustment?

Do you recognize blocks to communication?

Would you like to learn more effective communication skills?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ✦ take-home information
- ✦ checklists
- ✦ practical ideas
- ✦ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## Communication Techniques

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Objectives

- P To develop an understanding of the challenges of readjustment**
- P To develop an awareness of positive interpersonal communication strategies**
- P To identify effective communication techniques**





# Homecoming

P **Expectations**

P **Changes**

P **Renegotiation**



# How Do People Communicate

?



# Communication Skills

P **Tune in**

P **Listen**

P **Give feedback**

P **Respond**



# Feedback

- P **Sending messages**
- P **Receiving messages**
- P **Responding**





# Homecoming and Reunion Changes

1. Since you or your soldier have returned, what changes have you noticed in your: (answer those that apply to you). List your positive and negative feelings about the changes.

Friends and buddies?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

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---

Spouse?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

---

---

---

Soldier?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

---

---

---

Children?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

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---

---

Myself?

Positive Feelings

Negative Feelings

---

---

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2. Looking at your positive and negative feelings, how important are these changes? Place the changes in the spaces below. Then decide how important they are to you.

Change

---

---

- Important to me and I want to talk about it
- Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

---

---

- Important to me and I want to talk about it
- Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

---

---

- Important to me and I want to talk about it
- Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

---

---

- Important to me and I want to talk about it
- Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

Change

---

---

- Important to me and I want to talk about it

→ Not important to me and I do not want to talk about it

3. Look at question number 2. Thinking about the changes that are important to you and that you would like to talk about, answer the following questions.

◆ **The change is**

---

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

---

---

Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

---

---

Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

---

---

◆ **The change is**

---

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

---

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Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

---

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◆ **The change is**

---

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

---

---

◆ **The change is**

---

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

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◆ **The change is**

---

I would like for my (spouse, friends, children) to:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if they would:

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Adjusting to change would be easier if I would:

---

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# Reestablishing Intimate And Sexual Relations

One adjustment you may face when military separation occurs is reestablishing your intimate and sexual relationship. Most military couples face the question, “How can two people work together toward achieving intimacy when one of them is often absent from the relationship for extended periods?”

Military couples often find that reunion brings out feelings of uneasiness and that their personal relationship is strained. Through an understanding of the effects of separation, you can better cope with the stress that accompanies reunion.

The section below will provide you with information about communication barriers and enhancers. This information can help you to reconnect personally with your partner.

## Barriers to intimate communication and sexual relations:

- ☞ Unrealistic fantasies and expectations.
- ☞ Feeling anxiety about intimacy and sexual relations.
- ☞ Feeling that your partner is a stranger.
- ☞ Feelings of anger, hostility, stress, or negative feelings about the separation.
- ☞ Concern about faithfulness to your relationship.
- ☞ Feeling that sexual relations need to be rushed to make up for lost time.

## Communication enhancers:

- ☞ Communication will help to bring you closer together. It gives you time to become reacquainted, and helps to let your partner know how you feel.
- ☞ Understand that feelings of anxiety are a very normal part of the reunion process.
- ☞ You have been apart from each other and you both have grown. Take time to get to know each other again.
- ☞ Discuss your negative feelings and frustrations. Fear of losing your partner plays a major role in the development of negative feelings. Listen carefully to what your partner is trying to communicate to you.
- ☞ Don't assume the worst about your partner. If you have concerns about fidelity, talk to your chaplain, or find a counselor that can help you to work through these feelings.
- ☞ Along with communicating, allow yourself time to readjust to being together again. Go slowly, and enjoy your reunion.



# Workshop Evaluation\*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop?       Yes     No

2. Do you think these objectives were met?       Yes     No

3. If you answered **No** to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

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4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

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6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

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7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants?       Yes     No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

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10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.

# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

Reunion Stress Management

**Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

### Facilitator's Guidelines

This section provides the facilitator with resources needed to plan and conduct a workshop.

Each workshop unit has **4 sections**:

- Facilitator's Guidelines  
helps the facilitator make preparations for the workshop
- Workshop Overview  
highlights the key components of the workshop
- Workshop Plan  
provides the facilitator with an outline for conducting the workshop
- Workshop Resources  
include program activities, supporting videos, flyer, handout materials, and transparency masters

**Topic:** Reunion Stress Management

**Goal:** Help soldiers and family members recognize and deal with problems that may arise or persist after the soldier returns.

**Audience:** This session is designed for **soldiers** and their **spouses** to attend together. It is most helpful to offer this workshop as soon after reunion as is practical, following the Communication Techniques workshop (preferably on the same day).

**Time Required:** 1 ½ hours

**Room Requirements:** This training requires a room large enough to accommodate the soldiers and their partners. The training process is group work at round tables of 8–10 people. Work is done with an activity handout, with flip chart activities in groups, or with flip chart activities facilitated by the instructor. The room should be arranged for maximum visibility of the flip charts, videos, and overheads.

**Facilitator's Preparation:**

1. Reserve a location for conducting the training that will accommodate the number of attendants
2. Prepare flyers (located in the Flyer Master section) and distribute them 1–2 weeks before the workshop.
3. Familiarize yourself with the goals of the workshop.

4. The facilitator's job is to lead the workshop, which includes distributing handouts and organizing group flip chart activities. Other tips include:

- ☞ plan an ice breaker
- ☞ encourage participation
- ☞ check for understanding
- ☞ prepare room
- ☞ make workshop personal
- ☞ gather needed material
- ☞ enjoy yourself
- ☞ offer amenities, such as child care, parking, and refreshments

5. Suggested activities are presented in square brackets ([ ]) in the lesson text.

The lesson text is meant to assist you and is not intended to be read aloud to the participants. The **suggested activities** list the visuals, handouts, or group activities that are used at particular points in the workshop.

6. Prepare overhead transparencies from the Transparency Masters provided:

- #1 Reunion Stress Management
- #2 Objectives
- #3 Adjustment Tips
- #4 Giving Back to the Community

7. Preview the video, *Getting Back Together* (710652/TVT 20-1048), and the Video Discussion Guide, if you plan to use them in the workshop.

*Note:* A video is not used for every workshop. Determine if participants have already seen it and expand your workshop, if necessary, to show the video.

8. Prepare flip chart paper (for facilitator use) with the following titles:

**Stress** (single sheet) with two columns:

**Soldier**

**People at Home**

**Resources for Soldiers and Families** (single sheet)

9. Reproduce the necessary numbers of handouts from the Handout Masters:

- #1 Reunion Priorities
- #2 Sources of Support and Assistance for Soldiers and Families
- #3 Evaluation Form



10. Assemble all other needed workshop materials and equipment.

**Workshop Materials:**

- Flip chart paper on 1 easel with colored markers
- Extra markers for flip chart paper activities at tables
- Masking tape for securing charts
- Pens and pencils for participants' use

**Equipment:**

- Overhead transparency projector and screen
- Television and VCR

11. *Note:* Issues in this workshop are best addressed by the Family Advocacy Program Director or a counselor who has skills to recognize undue stress.

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

### Workshop Overview

*(time 1 ½ hours)*

Estimated Time	Presentation Section	Visual-V Handout-H
5 minutes	Introduction Objectives	V#1 V#2
5 minutes	Common Reunion Stressors	Flip Chart activity (facilitator)
20 minutes	Reunion Priorities	H#1, Questions 1 and 2
10 minutes	Group Discussion	
15 minutes	Break	
10 minutes	Role Adjustment	H#1, Questions 3 and 4
10 minutes	Discussion	
5 minutes	Adjustment Tips	V#3
5 minutes	Helpful Resources	Flip Chart activity (facilitator) H#2
5 minutes	Giving Back to the Community	V#4
5 minutes	Conclusion	H#3

# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

(time 2📄 hours)

### Introduction

[*Visual #1: Homecoming and Reunion Stress Management*]

Welcome to this final session of the Homecoming and Reunion workshop. This training is designed for **soldiers**, both married and single, and **family members**.

You will learn to recognize the stressors associated with postdeployment adjustment by participating in a variety of activities.

### Objectives

[*Visual #2: Objectives*]

During our time we have together, you will:

- ☞ Recognize the common stressors associated with postdeployment adjustment
- ☞ Identify information and referral services in your community
- ☞ Identify practical ways to “give back” to the community to show appreciation of their support

In the Homecoming and Reunion workshops which many of you attended before you came home, or before your soldier returned home, you talked about stress. Those workshops dealt with the joys and concerns, expectations, and fantasies of returning home.

Now that everyone is back together, you have different challenges due to the many adjustments you are experiencing.

### Common Reunion Stressors

[*Flip Chart activity (instructor)*]

This question is for those who were deployed. What are some things that have caused you stress since you have returned home?

I will write your responses on the flip chart paper.

(*record responses under flip chart column, “Soldiers”*)

Now, let's hear from those who remained here during deployment. What are some things that have caused you stress since you have been reunited?

*(record responses under flip chart column, "People at Home")*

Let's look for similarities in the 2 columns. As you can see, there are several.

Some of them are expected. For example: trying to do too much; trying to make up for lost time; noticing how well the other person has done without you; negotiating activities and roles; determining how to fit in; a homecoming letdown; whether your intimate relations will work out; who is in charge of what; who do I listen to, mom or dad?

There are many more—all common areas of stress after deployment. We will look closely at several of these.

Remember, all these stressors and readjustments will take time to work through. Readjustment does not happen immediately.

One stress after deployment is finding the time needed to work through the stressors and to readjust. There is so much to do, so much to readjust to, and so much to catch up on, that time just flies.

## **Reunion Priorities**

*[Distribute Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 1)]*

On the activity handout, **Reunion Priorities**, you will notice many blank lines on the first page. Above each of these lines is a word.

What I would like for you to do is to fill in the blanks under No. 1 with activities that you would like to do.

For example, next to "Myself," you might write "read 'X' book." Next to "Children," you might write "go to the zoo."

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

*[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 2)]*

Next you will see **4 areas** under No. 2:

- ☞ Urgent Priority
- ☞ Urgent, But Not a Priority
- ☞ Not Urgent
- ☞ Not Urgent, Not a Priority

Take 10 minutes to fill in the 4 areas with the appropriate activities you listed in No. 1.

For example, if you think that going to the zoo with your children is an Urgent Priority, put it in that area.

If reading "X" book is Not Urgent, But Still a Priority, list it in that area.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify things you would like to do and prioritize them. One major stressor after deployment is trying to do it all today because you want to make up for lost time!

Turn to your spouse and compare notes. Take a few minutes to discuss the differences and the similarities.

*[Group Discussion]*

*(allow 5 minutes for discussion)*

How did your answers compare? Were they just alike, or were there differences?

*(take a few responses)*

If you were to try this exercise with friends, your children, or other family members, what do you think the results would be?

*(take a few responses)*

As you can see, stress can occur when your priorities do not match with the priorities of people around you.

As we have discussed in earlier workshops, when this happens, it's time to renegotiate and communicate what we would like to do.

Let's take a 15-minute break. When we come back, we will continue this activity.

*[Break 15 Minutes]*

## **Role Adjustment**

Role adjustment is a major stressor for everyone at the end of a deployment. Many tasks done by the soldier before deployment were done by their spouse and children during deployment.

Time schedules, eating habits, and general ways of doing things may have changed. When the soldier returns, does everything automatically return to the way it was before deployment?

Most people say, "No way!"

*[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 3)]*

Look at No. 3 on your handout. Please take 10 minutes to answer those questions that apply to you.

*(allow 10 minutes to complete)*

*[Facilitator leads discussion]*

We will take a few minutes and look at some role changes you have listed.

Many of you have noticed similar role changes.

Let's start with the soldiers who were deployed. How have you adjusted to the role changes?

*(take a few responses)*

For those of you who remained here, are there any roles you would now like to give up since your soldier has returned, or any tasks you would like for them to resume?

*(take a few responses)*

How could you assist the soldier in adjusting to the role changes?

*(take a few responses)*

Soldiers dream about home and of the stability they had. They build up their expectations of homecoming based upon their past experiences—the way it was. But when they return home, it may not be the same anymore.

[Handout #1: **Reunion Priorities** (No. 4)]

If you think there are problems with your roles changing, look at No. #4 on the handout. Take 5 minutes to answer this in the space provided.

*(allow 5 minutes to complete)*

Seeing change as positive can assist in the adjustment phase. One way of doing this is through communication and by examining your priorities, as we have just done.

## **Adjustment Tips**

[Visual #3: **Adjustment Tips**]

Some hints to make the adjustment easier and reduce stress are to:

- ☞ Think positively (people may look and act differently, but they still care about you)
- ☞ Negotiate activities (the exercise we just completed can assist in doing this)
- ☞ Negotiate roles (don't change things that are working—be flexible and adjust gradually)
- ☞ Make time for all the important people in your life
- ☞ Be patient—it will take weeks, and even months to readjust
- ☞ Support positive changes
- ☞ Expect some tension in your intimate relations
- ☞ Expect unusual feelings (Where do I fit in now? Am I still needed?)
- ☞ Talk to your spouse, children, friends, and family members—use effective communication skills
- ☞ Ask for help if you need it

Remember this last tip—ask for help if you need it. There are many resources available to assist you if the adjustment and stresses of homecoming overwhelm you.

Keep in mind that it will take several weeks and even months after a long deployment for things to reach a “normal” state.

Also, remember “normal” does not mean “what used to be.” Here, it means that the symptoms of stress are reduced. The jumpiness, sleeplessness, fatigue, and other physical signs should stop after a reasonable period.

## Helpful Resources

*[Flip Chart activity (Facilitator)]*

If the signs of stress should continue, seek assistance. Let’s take a moment to list some available resources.

*(write responses on flip chart paper)*

*[Distribute Handout #2: Sources of Support for Soldiers and Families]*

Please take a moment to record this list of resources on the **Sources of Support for Soldiers and Families** handout, so that if you need assistance, you will have a place to start.

## Giving Back To The Community

*[Visual #4: Giving Back to the Community]*

The final area we will discuss is “giving back” to the community. The homecoming activities that you experienced took much planning, coordination, and support from the community.

This support often leaves the soldier and family members with a feeling of wanting to “give back” to those who supported them.

What does giving back to the community mean to you?

*(take a few responses)*

What are some ways you could do this?

*(take a few responses)*

Most communities and installations have established programs that would allow you to give of your time and talents?

Several examples of programs that could use your help are:

- ☞ Installation Volunteer Coordinator
- ☞ Guard or Reserve Family Program
- ☞ Family Support Group
- ☞ Civilian Social Service Agencies
- ☞ Voluntary Action Centers
- ☞ United Way or other charitable organizations

Some military communities have soldiers who work shifts. During their “off time,” soldiers from the unit assist underprivileged children. Others work in community projects to assist older citizens.

Do you know of any projects in your community that soldiers and their families are involved in? (take a few responses)

What are some ways that you could give back to your community?

*(take a few responses)*

My challenge to you is to find where you can give back to your community. This very act of giving back can help you readjust to the community and to being home again.

## **Conclusion**

*[Handout #3]*

During this workshop, you have looked at some stressors that you may have experienced during your readjustment to homecoming.

You have considered role negotiation.

Finally, you have thought of ways to give back to the community, so that you, too, can say, “Thanks for the support.”

I would like to leave you with a few closing thoughts:

- ☞ Adjusting to being home, and to having your soldier home, will take time.
- ☞ Be open to the changes that you have experienced in your life. Take it slowly. Do not rush. Enjoy being together again.



# Homecoming and Reunion

## Reunion Stress Management

Do you recognize the common stressors associated with reunion?

Would you like information on community support services ?

Do you want to rejoin your community life and to learn how to “give back” to them for their support?

This workshop will provide you with:

- ☞ take-home information
- ☞ checklists
- ☞ practical ideas
- ☞ opportunity to meet people with common interests

Join us at \_\_\_\_\_

For a workshop on \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

For more information contact \_\_\_\_\_

See you there!



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## **Reunion Stress Management**

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**



# Objectives

- P Recognize the stressors associated with reunion readjustment**
- P Identify information and referral services in your community**
- P Identify practical ways to give back to your community to show appreciation for their support**



# Readjustment Tips

- P Think and be positive!**
- P Negotiate activities and roles**
- P Make time for others**
- P Be patient**
- P Reinforce positive changes**
- P Expect tension and unusual feelings**
- P Get assistance if needed**





# **“Giving Back” to Your Community ?**

**How?**

**Where?**



# Reunion Priorities

1. Fill in the activities you would like to do with each of the following:

**Friends—who**

---

---

**Spouse**

---

---

**Children—who**

---

---

**Other family members—who**

---

---

**Myself**

---

---

2. Looking at the information in No. 1., determine the priorities for each of these activities:

**Urgent Priority**

---

---

**Urgent, but Not a Priority**

---

---

**Not Urgent**

---

---

**Not Urgent and Not a Priority**

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---

3. Answer those questions that apply to you.

☞ For the returning soldier:

✎ What role changes have you noticed since you returned from the deployment?

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✎ How could you adjust to the role changes? Or do you like the new roles and think no adjustments are necessary?

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☞ For those who stayed at home:

✎ What role changes happened while your soldier was deployed?

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✎ How could you assist your soldier in adjusting to the role changes? Or are there some you would like to change back to the way they used to be before deployment?

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4. If you need to discuss role changes, what are the positive and negative aspects of these changes?

☞ Which areas could you negotiate on?

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☞ What would you be willing to give up?

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# Workshop Evaluation\*

1. Did you understand the objectives of this workshop?  Yes  No

2. Do you think these objectives were met?  Yes  No

3. If you answered **No** to either 1 or 2, please explain your answer below:

4. Circle the word which best describes the effectiveness of this workshop:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

5. Based on your above response, what are your suggestions for improving this workshop?

6. How did you benefit from this workshop?

7. Did this workshop meet the needs of the participants?  Yes  No

8. Circle the word which best describes the facilitator's presentation:

Inadequate      Marginally Effective      Effective      Very Effective      Outstanding

9. Please share your comments about the facilitator's presentations?

10. If you were the next facilitator to lead this workshop, how would you improve it?

# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

## **Video Discussion Guide**

### **Operation R.E.A.D.Y.**

**Resources for Educating About Deployment and You**





**U.S. ARMY  
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY  
SUPPORT CENTER**

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# **GETTING BACK TOGETHER**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE TO ACCOMPANY THE  
HOMECOMING AND REUNION VIDEOTAPE**

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*prepared by*  
**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
RIVERSIDE**

The videotape, *Getting Back Together*, was developed in 1993 by the University of California, Riverside, Cooperative Extension. It was produced for the US Army through an interagency agreement with the US Department of Agriculture Extension Service.

This discussion guide and the accompanying videotape were developed as a part of an overall Army Community Service and Family Support Group training program. The program is designed to help Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve families better prepare for separations that are caused by deployments for the active duty personnel and mobilization and deployments for the Guard and Reserve personnel. The project, a collaborative effort between the University of California Cooperative Extension and the Texas Agriculture Extension Service, Texas A&M University, consists of the *Army Family Readiness Handbook*, Operation R.E.A.D.Y. training modules and accompanying videotapes, and four children's workbooks. This project is known as Operation R.E.A.D.Y.—*Resources for Educating About Deployment and You*. See your Army Community Service or Family Program Coordinator for the availability of the other Operation R.E.A.D.Y. training materials.

This discussion guide was written by Neal H. Emper Jr. and Karen P. Varcoe, Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, Cooperative Extension.

# Getting Back Together

## Discussion Guide: Homecoming and Reunion

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### OVERVIEW

Growing awareness that the military readiness of service personnel is directly related to the family's well-being prompted this videotape. This awareness was confirmed during Desert Storm and continues to be a major force in the development of military support programs for families.

The purpose of the reunion video, *Getting Back Together*, is to help soldiers and their families readjust after a separation due to deployment/mobilization. The video instructs viewers on how to plan for reunion and homecoming, and cope with postdeployment stress. While reunion is a joyous occasion, it can also be a very stressful one. Both the soldier and the spouse may have unrealistic expectations regarding the reunion which could make the period of readjustment longer and more difficult.

#### **Description:**

*This 17-1/2 minute video is designed to assist spouses and their families understand:*

*. . . what emotional patterns they might expect to experience during homecoming and the reunion following a separation, and*

*. . . how to readjust more quickly and complete the deployment/mobilization experience on a positive note.*

The video opens with shots of homecoming and the types of scenes the audience may be anticipating for themselves. Using graphics, we have inserted some thoughts, fears, and anxieties soldiers and their families may be anticipating during their reunion following the long separation they have just experienced. The scene then moves into a TV studio where Tony and Sylvia, a soldier and his wife, relate their story about homecoming and adjustment, exposing the pitfalls families can expect to encounter, and keys to adjustment. During their story they cover the following topics: anxieties, expectations, coping with change, underlying feelings, helping children cope, renegotiating of relationships, and what to do if problems continue.

## DESIRED LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The desired learning objectives for the reunion video, *Getting Back Together*, and discussion guide are as follows:

### Cognitive Objectives:

After viewing this video, the audience will *know* . . .

- ☞ that the reunion may be more stressful than the actual deployment.
- ☞ the fantasies and fears soldiers, spouses, and children frequently have about reunion.
- ☞ how these fantasies and fears can get in the way of a smooth readjustment.
- ☞ how to develop more reasonable expectations about homecoming and reunion.
- ☞ that soldiers, spouses, and children are all likely to have changed somewhat during separation, as are family roles and routines.
- ☞ how those changes can lead to family problems.
- ☞ that readjustment takes time and patience, "taking it slowly" offers the best chance for success.
- ☞ some tips for homecoming day.
- ☞ how to renegotiate roles, routines, child discipline, and other matters.
- ☞ how to help children cope with postdeployment stress.
- ☞ how to reestablish intimacy.
- ☞ where to go for help, if needed.
- ☞ the signs of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) when applicable and if necessary, where to go for assistance.

### Affective Objectives:

After viewing this video, the audience will *feel* . . .

- ☞ less idealistic in their expectations about homecoming and reunion.
- ☞ relieved that their misgivings and apprehensions about reunion are normal and shared by others in their situation.
- ☞ more confident about their ability to meet this new challenge in their relationships.
- ☞ motivated to help their relationships benefit from the deployment/reunion experience.

### Desired Action:

Our goal is to have families adopt some of the tips presented in the video for making a smooth transition to regular family life.

## **SUGGESTED USES**

This video should be shown to all active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve soldiers and spouses before and/or after actual homecoming so that problems can be minimized. It should only be used with the Operation R.E.A.D.Y. Postdeployment Training Module. A facilitator (Chaplain, Army Community Service Representative, Family Program Coordinator, or psychologist) should be present to expand on the video message using guidelines set forth in this discussion guide. It is strongly recommended that this video be shown in a group setting to encourage open discussion.

## **ADDITIONAL OPERATION R.E.A.D.Y. MATERIALS**

In addition to this video, *Getting Back Together*, the Operation R.E.A.D.Y. staff has produced the following training and informational materials for your use:

### Training Modules

- Predeployment
- Postdeployment
- Family Assistance Center
- Family Support Group

*The Army Family Readiness Handbook*

### Video Programs:

- Family Assistance Centers*
- Another Family: The Family Support Group*
- Ongoing Readiness and Financial Planning*
- Coping with Military Separations*

### Children's Workbooks:

- My Goodbye Book* (ages 1 - 4)
- Goodbyes are Hard* (ages 5 - 8)
- I Can Do That* (ages 9 -12)
- Separation Happens* (ages 13 - 17)



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE FACILITATOR

This video should only be used as a part of Operation R.E.A.D.Y. Postdeployment Training Module, refer to the guidance and placement set forth in the lesson plan.

During this presentation you should have someone from Social Work Services, Mental Health, or a chaplain present. They should be a trained professional capable of discussing the subject adequately, ready to present a short briefing and/or answer questions.

Duplicate the three handouts located at the back of this guide for each participant.

1. **Getting Back Together** – A handout that describes what to expect during homecoming and provides tips that will help you and your children adjust.

2. **Support Agencies** – Add to or overprint this form with a list of your local agencies, both on and off post, that can be depended upon to provide competent support to military families.

3. **Evaluation Sheet** – Use the evaluation sheet that has been provided with the Operation R.E.A.D.Y Postdeployment Training Module. Use the attached evaluation sheet only if you want a more in-depth evaluation of the video program.

The attached outline follows the content and theme of the video program you are about to show. As a means of introduction, ask your audience to think about their anticipated homecoming and reunion.

**What are their expectations, fantasies, and fears about reunion?**

**What kinds of changes do they anticipate in their soldier, spouse, or children?**

**What changes have they experienced in themselves?**

**What kinds of problems may they realistically expect?**

*(YOUR AUDIENCE SHOULD VIEW THE VIDEO PROGRAM BEFORE PROCEEDING.)*

Now that your audience has viewed the video program you should discuss some of the key points in the following outline. Questions are provided to stimulate group discussion.

# **GETTING BACK TOGETHER: Homecoming & Reunion**

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## **(An Outline of the Video Program)**

Most military families find that reunions are stressful. We have found this to be true with all military members—couples with children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family.

### **Lesson 1. Expect to have a few doubts and worries.**

- A. Each may think the other doesn't need them anymore.
  - 1. They have been handling things pretty well independently.
  - 2. They may be afraid they will be criticized for the way they have handled things.
- B. Single parents and single soldiers may have similar doubts about fitting into the environment to which they are returning.
- C. Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.
- D. Recognize that you will have these doubts but don't take them too seriously.

*Discussion Questions:*

**What are some of the joys and concerns you have about your upcoming reunion?**

**What joys and concerns may your children have?**

**What are some of your accomplishments that your spouse might find troubling?**

**What happens if your spouse doesn't like the way you've handled something or a decision you have made?**

### **Lesson 2. Forget your fantasies—take it easy and let things happen naturally.**

- A. Example: that first meal at home may not be what either of you expect.
  - 1. The spouse left behind may be looking forward to eating out at a fancy restaurant—quiet, elegant, romantic.

2. The returning soldier may be picturing a good, home cooked meal with the family sitting around the table and the spouse serving the dinner.
3. What may happen is the exhausted soldier "crashes" on the sofa and the spouse has a pizza delivered.

**B.** Example: that first attempt at intimacy may prove to be awkward.

1. The wife may be nervous and want to take it slow—romance, soft music, etc.
2. The husband will certainly think he'll be raring to go.
3. In reality, the soldier may be too exhausted the first night.

***Discussion Questions:***

**Ask your group to think about what fantasies they may have about homecoming.**

**What fantasies do you think your partner is having in anticipation of homecoming?**

**How do you envision your first day together?**

**After considering the practical aspects of travel, the emotional adjustment needed after prolonged separation, and the time constraints, how does this vision change? Ask if anyone in your group would like to share how the practical realities changed their fantasies.**

**Lesson 3. Don't expect things to be exactly the way they were before the separation.**

- A.** You've changed; your spouse has changed; and your children have changed.
- B.** If you expect them to be exactly the same, you're in for a hard time.
- C.** Don't get mad at each other for doing things differently from how they were done before separation.
- D.** Helping children adjust:
  1. Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
  2. Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They don't understand about "duty" or "mission" or even "having to do a job."

3. Do not threaten your children with punishment from the missing parent when that parent returns. It's hard for the child to welcome the missing parent when he/she expects to get punished.
4. Don't leave your children with the burden of being the adult of the house while you're gone; they may take it seriously and be hurt when they lose grownup status when you return.

***Discussion Questions:***

**What changes have you noted in yourself, your partner, your children, or other family members as a result of this separation?**

**How do you anticipate others will react to the changes in you?**

**What are some of the positive and negative changes that have occurred in you since your partner deployed?**

**How might these changes affect your relationship in general?**

**Lesson 4. Accept and share your feelings.**

- A. This requires a lot of talking and a lot of listening.
- B. Active listening means to really listen. Let the other person finish what they are saying before you respond. Think carefully before you speak.
- C. If you need to clarify what was said to you, repeat it in your own words. When you understand, respond thoughtfully.
- D. You may have to renegotiate your relationship. You've changed; your spouse has changed; and your children have changed. You may have to figure out who the new soldier and the new spouse are and what your new relationship will be.
- E. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

***Discussion Questions:***

**How did you feel when your separation began?**

**How do you feel about the separation now?**

**What are some of your feelings since the reunion?**

**What have you learned about your family's feelings?**

**What are some of the indicators that confirm you are really communicating with your partner?**

**In what ways can you share these new feelings with your partner in order to help him or her know and understand the new person you have become?**

**Lesson 5. See things from the other person's point of view.**

- A. Once the spouse realizes that the soldier may no longer feel a part of the family, the spouse will understand why the soldier is so touchy about even the smallest changes.
- B. And, once the soldier sees the spouse's pride in the way he/she handled everything alone, the soldier will understand why the spouse gets upset when the soldier comes barging in to take over.
- C. Practice understanding when dealing with children.
  - 1. Don't push yourself on your kids.
  - 2. Spend some one-on-one time with them.
  - 3. Be patient
  - 4. Cut them some slack when they're acting up, they also are stressed and may be feeling uncomfortable with you.

***Discussion Questions:***

**What are some of the roles and routines that have changed as a result of this separation?**

**What concerns do you think your children will be anxious about?**

**What are your spouse, children, and other family members likely to expect of your first day together?**

**How do you think the feelings of your spouse and children have changed due to the growth and change they have experienced?**

**How can you help them recognize and share these feelings, and others that you may not be aware of, with you?**

**If they have problems, where can they go for help?**

**Your family relationships should get back to normal again in a few months, but that will be a renegotiated normal. If you had problems before you left, it's a sure thing those problems will still be there when you get back. If you continue having problems adjusting, seek professional help through one of the following offices or people:**

- A.** The Army Community Service Center
- B.** Family Program Coordinator
- C.** Family Support Group leader—for referrals
- D.** Chaplain—a good source for confidential counseling
- E.** Red Cross
- F.** Social Work Services
- G.** Community Services agencies—see your local phone book (e.g. Mental Health Department, Social Services Department)

**If the deployment was to a war zone, natural disaster, or urban riots be aware that the soldier may suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If you are concerned about PTSD contact one of the agencies or people listed above for additional information.**



## GETTING BACK TOGETHER

### Homecoming/Reunion

Most military families find that reunions are more stressful than the separation. We have found this to be true with all military members—couples with children, single parents, and single soldiers coming back to friends and family.

#### **Expect to have a few doubts and worries.**

- ☞ Each partner may think the other doesn't need them anymore.
  - ☞ Both partners may be more confident and independent
  - ☞ They may be afraid they will be criticized for the way they have handled things.
- ☞ Single parents and single soldiers may have similar doubts about fitting into the environment to which they are returning.
- ☞ Anxiety is a natural and normal part of getting back together.
- ☞ Recognize that you will have these doubts but don't take them too seriously.

#### **Forget your fantasies.**

- ☞ Give up any ideas you may have about Homecoming Day.
  - ☞ You may be exhausted.
  - ☞ You may have lots of friends show up to greet you when you arrive.
  - ☞ Your parents may show up and move in with you for a few days.
- ☞ Take it easy and let things happen naturally.
- ☞ Don't count on getting your fantasies, especially your sexual fantasies.

#### **Don't expect things to be exactly the way they were before the separation.**

- ☞ You've changed; your spouse has changed; and your children have changed.
- ☞ If you expect them to be exactly the same, you're in for a hard time.
- ☞ Don't get mad at each other for doing things differently from how they were done before separation.

#### **Tips on helping children adjust.**

- ☞ Children can get angry about their parent being gone.
- ☞ Toddlers and preschoolers may act like the homecoming parent is a stranger. They don't understand about "duty" or "mission" or even "having to do a job."
- ☞ Children may understand but they show anger or fear by "acting up" or "testing the limits."
- ☞ Do not threaten your children with punishment from the missing parent. It's hard to welcome the missing parent when the child expects to get punished when the soldier returns.
- ☞ Don't leave your children with the burden of being the adult of the house while you're gone; they may take it seriously and be hurt when they lose grownup status when you return.



### **Accept and share your feelings.**

- ☞ Sharing requires a lot of talking and a lot of listening.
- ☞ Active listening means to really listen, not thinking about how to defend yourself.
- ☞ If you need to clarify what was said to you repeat it in your own words. When you understand, respond thoughtfully.
- ☞ You may have to renegotiate your relationship.
- ☞ You've changed; your spouse has changed; and your children have changed.
- ☞ You may have to figure out who the new soldier and the new spouse are and what your new relationship will be.
- ☞ Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

### **See things from the other person's point of view.**

- ☞ Once the spouse realizes that the soldier no longer feels a part of the family, the spouse will understand why the soldier is so touchy about even the smallest changes.
- ☞ Once the soldier sees the spouse's pride in the way he/she handled everything alone, the soldier will understand why the spouse gets upset when the soldier comes barging in to take over.
- ☞ These principles also apply to dealing with children.
  - ☞ Don't push yourself on your kids.
  - ☞ Spend some one-on-one time with them.
  - ☞ Be patient.
  - ☞ Cut them some slack when they're acting up; they too are a little stressed out.

**Your family relationships get back to normal in a few months, but that will be a renegotiated normal. If you had problems before you left, it's a sure thing those problems will still be there when you get back. If you continue having problems adjusting after a few months, seek professional help through one of the following sources or people:**

- ☞ The Army Community Service Center
- ☞ Family Program Coordinator
- ☞ Family Support Group leader for referrals
- ☞ Chaplain—a good source for confidential counseling
- ☞ Red Cross
- ☞ Social Work Services
- ☞ Community Services agencies see your local phone book (e.g. Mental Health Department, Social Services Department)

**If the deployment was to a war zone, natural disaster, or urban riots watch out for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If you are concerned about PTSD contact one of the agencies or people listed above for detailed information.**



# EVALUATION SHEET

## "Getting Back Together," The Homecoming/Reunion Video

Now that you have finished viewing the video program "*Getting Back Together*," please take a few minutes to give us your feedback. If you need more space, you may write on the back of this sheet.

1. Overall, this video program was: CHECK ONE

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not very helpful
- Not at all helpful

Comments:

2. Please check any of the following topics that you learned something about from this video program. CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

- How to differentiate between fantasies and reality
- That soldiers, spouses, and children are likely to change after being separated
- Some useful tips for homecoming day
- Why it will be necessary to renegotiate roles, routines, etc.
- Ways of helping children cope with postdeployment stress
- Where to go for help, if needed

Comments:

3. How realistic was the video? CHECK ONE

- Very realistic
- Somewhat realistic
- Not at all realistic

Comments:

4. Overall, what did you think of the video?

5. What suggestions do you have for improving this session?

6. Do you have any other comments?

**Thank you. Please leave the completed form in the place designated by the group leader.**

## **"GETTING BACK TOGETHER"** **HOMECOMING & REUNION VIDEO SCRIPT**

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The program opens on scenes taken from stock footage of actual homecomings, over appropriate music. After few seconds, graphically presented on the screen are some of the thoughts families have about their reunion: "I'm sure I'll find Dan right away. He said he'd be the one in fatigues." "There's Linda-- and my Mom! Which one do I hug first?" "I've been dreaming for months about Angie's long dark hair...." "I wonder if Jerry likes my new haircut...?" "I wonder if he's been cheating on me?" "I wonder if she was running around while I was gone...?" "Oh-oh. Dad's home. I'm in trouble now...."

These are worded and presented to create a light, humorous effect. The last sound bites express doubts that a reunion is desired.

After a few moments we hear Maria's voice over a picture of Maria's face as she looks for Tony:

---

**SYLVIA:** *I couldn't believe it. Homecoming. The day I had been looking forward to for weeks, and there I was, not sure I really wanted it.*

**TONY:** *You spend hours thinking about your family, and what it's going to be like to be with them. Then you're almost home and, wham, you're hit with all these doubts.*

**SYLVIA:** *Finally, we found each other. And all the worrying disappeared. "We're gonna be all right, "I thought. But then, Tony reached for Maria*

**TONY:** *... And she was scared. My little girl didn't even know me.*

**SYLVIA:** *It was then I knew that there was no such thing as "automatically all right." Being together again was going to take some work.*

**TONY:** *I know it's hard to believe, but most military families find that reunions are even more stressful than separations!*

**SYLVIA:** *It doesn't matter whether you 're a couple with children, like we are...*

**TONY:** *Or a single parent... or even a single soldier coming back to your friends or family... Getting back together can be harder than you think!*

**SYLVIA:** *We learned a lot those first few weeks, and we'd like to share our story with you.*

**TONY:** *It's a long and grisly tale, full of ups and downs...*

**SYLVIA:** *But it has a happy ending. Us.*

**TONY:** *Now we know what to expect next time.*

**SYLVIA:** *Next time?*

**TONY:** *I'm in the Army, remember?*

**SYLVIA:** *Hmmmm. Okay, next time, I'll be ready for all that pre-homecoming anxiety. Do you know, I actually thought Tony might not want me anymore after being gone six months?*

**TONY:** *Funny girl! You were all I thought about. I worried that you might not need me any more since you were handling things so well by yourself.*

**SYLVIA:** *Funny guy! Like I married you because you knew how to balance a checkbook! And remember how afraid I was that you'd criticize all the decisions I made?*

**TONY:** *Only the bedroom drapes. Yecch! Everything else you did was great!*

**SYLVIA:** *As you can see, most of that worrying was unnecessary. But, and this is important, the anxiety was a natural and normal part of getting ready for a reunion.*

**TONY:** *That kind of anxiety is only a problem if you take it too seriously. Then you can really get yourself worked up and ready for a fight!*

**SYLVIA:** *So, lesson number one: Expect to have a few doubts and worries. They're really no big deal. Once you know you have them, just notice them and let them go.*

**TONY:** *That's easy enough. But what happened next was a little harder to deal with.*

**SYLVIA:** *You can say that again! You see, while Tony was gone, I spent a lot of time day dreaming about having him home again. I fantasized constantly about what it was going to be like to be back together.*

**TONY:** *So did I.*

**SYLVIA:** *Now fantasies are okay. In fact, they're a lot of fun and can help you through some pretty rough times. Where they get to be a problem is if you start counting on them coming true... and make them expectations.*

**TONY:** *Like we did. And some of our expectations were pretty unrealistic! Like, homecoming day.*

**SYLVIA:** *Well, I hadn't been anywhere but fast food restaurants for six months. So I just knew we would get a babysitter and go out for a lovely dinner the first night Tony was back. Y'know... quiet, elegant, just the two of us with a little candlelight.*

**TONY:** *And I imagined a good, old-fashioned, home-cooked meal, with my family sitting around the table and my loving wife dishing up dinner.*

**SYLVIA:** *Dream on... Of course, what actually happened was completely different. Tony was jet-lagged and exhausted, and dinner wasn't home-cooked or elegant. That was the first bubble that burst for us.*

**TONY:** *The second bubble burst later that night. All those months away from Sylvia, I had dreamt up some pretty steamy ideas of how to spend our first night together.*

**SYLVIA:** *Mine were more along the romantic lines. Y'know, soft music, a little snuggling...*

**TONY:** *Instead I was crashed out on the couch all night. So by the next night, I was really raring to go... I counted the hours until we could be alone!*

**SYLVIA:** *And I got more and more nervous. I just wasn't ready to be intimate with Tony yet. I needed some time to get to know him again, and a little more romance.*

**TONY:** *Well, to make a long story short, the only thing steamy about that night was the fight we had! You see the problem with expectations?*

**SYLVIA:** *We were both really disappointed. I felt Tony had let me down; he thought I let him down. We got angrier and angrier with each other. All because we were counting on getting our fantasies.*

**TONY:** *So, lesson number two: Give up any pictures you have about how homecoming day should be. You might be exhausted. You might have a million people meet you at the airport. Your parents might even show up and move in with your family for a few days. There's lots of stuff you just can't predict... so forget your fantasies. Take it easy and let things happen naturally.*

**SYLVIA:** *Taking it easy is also a good advice for the first few weeks. But Tony and I were slow learners.*

**TONY:** *Yep. We moved like gangbusters trying to get things back to normal, and got even madder when things didn't go like we thought they would. I guess I expected things to be exactly the same as they were before I left.*

**SYLVIA:** *And I'd had a lot of responsibility while Tony was gone. Managing our money, car troubles, taking care of Maria by myself. I'd changed a lot while he was gone... and things were anything but the same.*

**TONY:** *Everything was different. Like the way we paid the bills.*

**SYLVIA:** *I did a good job.*

**TONY:** *You did a great job. But you did it different than we used to. Remember what happened?*

**SYLVIA:** *Oh, yeah! Taking care of a baby and everything, I never seemed to have enough time to pay the bills when they came due. So I got into the habit of writing out all the bills at the beginning of the month, stuffing them in envelopes, and mailing them later on payday (the midmonth 15th). It worked great until Tony came home.*

**TONY:** *I saw this pile of envelopes on the desk made out to all our creditors, so I mailed them.*

**SYLVIA:** *About two weeks too early! Can you imagine what happened when those checks hit the bank?*

**TONY:** *I thought Sylvia was gonna kill me.*

**SYLVIA:** *I couldn't believe he'd just mail them without checking with me.*

**TONY:** *And I blamed her for changing the way we did things.*

**SYLVIA:** *Then there was the great television feud.*

**TONY:** *Before I left, I always watched the basketball game. Sometimes Sylvia watched with me.*

**SYLVIA:** *But then, while Tony was gone, I started watching one of those evening soap operas. I really got hooked! So when Tony came in and automatically changed the station to basketball.*

**TONY:** *Fireworks! Lesson number three: Don't expect things to be exactly the same as they were when you left. Some of it will, but a lot of it won't. Face it: your family has had a life while you've been gone. They've changed. Their day-to-day routines have changed. In many ways, it's a different family. If you expect them to be exactly the same, you're in for a rough landing.*

**SYLVIA:** *It was rough around here all right. And we couldn't seem to sort it out. Every time we tried to talk, we'd fight. We might have never figured it out, but one day, I picked up this brochure about reunions from Army Community Service. It talked about some of the feelings soldiers and families have about separations that they might not even realize they're having. Feelings that really get in the way of working things out. As I read the brochure, I saw myself in it. I discovered I was pretty angry with Tony for leaving, even though I knew he had to.*

**TONY:** *When I read it, I found out that I felt pretty guilty about leaving my family, even though I had to. It didn't make sense, and it sure wasn't logical, but it was true.*

**SYLVIA:** *And it was normal. Most family members feel angry about their soldiers leaving. Both the kids and the grown-ups.*

**TONY:** *And most soldiers with families have a sense of guilt about leaving them. And we're usually afraid we won't fit back in again.*

**SYLVIA:** *The problem is not in having these feelings. They're a natural and normal part of being separated and coming back together. The problem is when you don't know -- or maybe you don't want to admit -- that you have these "illogical " feelings, like anger, guilt or frustration.*

**TONY:** *Like they're not okay or something. So you kind of swallow them, and make them go underground. But strong feelings can be pretty sneaky. If you don't accept them and talk about them, they come out in other ways.*

**SYLVIA:** *Like blaming each other for every little thing.*

**TONY:** *Or fighting about what television to watch.*

**SYLVIA:** *Knowing that also helped us make sense out of Maria!*

**TONY:** *Maria was awfully shy the first few weeks I was home. I knew she remembered me, but she acted like I was a stranger.*

**SYLVIA:** *It didn't seem to make sense then, but it sure does now. I mean, if we grownups are angry about our soldiers leaving, even though we know they have to, think about how our kids feel. Toddlers and*



*preschoolers don't understand about "duty" or "the mission" or even "having to do a job." They just know they've been left behind. So they're angry.*

**SYLVIA:** *Elementary school kids and teen-agers understand more, but like grown-ups, they may be angry anyway. Only they show it differently.*

**TONY:** *They may "act up" to let you know how angry they are. Y'know, "get smart" and "test the limits."*

**SYLVIA:** *Sometimes older children can actually be afraid of the soldier, especially if Mom's been keeping them in line by threatening "what's gonna happen when Dad gets home." It's hard to welcome Dad with open arms when you expect to get in big trouble.*

**TONY:** *Some soldiers leave their kids with a mission to be the "man" or "woman of the house." Not a good idea. Sometimes it's too big a burden for a little kid; they take that stuff so seriously. Then when you come home, they lose that "grown-up" status, and may resent you for it.*

**SYLVIA:** *So reading that brochure really helped us. We finally had a clue what was really going on.*

**TONY:** *And it gave us some ideas on how to make things better. The first thing Sylvia and I did was to have a long talk. We shared some stuff that we weren't very comfortable talking about.*

**SYLVIA:** *I told Tony how angry I was about his leaving, and how disappointed I was that homecoming wasn't more romantic.*

**TONY:** *And I told her how guilty I felt about leaving, and that I felt like a stranger, and was afraid there wasn't room for me in her and Maria's lives anymore.*

**SYLVIA:** *We really opened up and shared a lot, and cried a little.*

**TONY:** *You cried. I got... a little choked up.*

**SYLVIA:** *It was the best talk we ever had. It really cleared the air.*

**TONY:** *And we got closer than ever. Positively steamy.*

**SYLVIA:** *It was very romantic! So lesson number four is to uncover and accept your feelings, then share them with your loved ones. That way, you don't have to fight about them.*

**TONY:** *And don't stop with just one talk.*

**SYLVIA:** *We didn't. That first talk helped so much, we decided to keep talking, to keep sharing those feelings, no matter what.*

**TONY:** *As we talked, we started to "renegotiate" our relationship.*

**SYLVIA:** *It was pretty clear we weren't the same old Tony and Sylvia any more. We had to figure out who the "new" Tony and Sylvia were, and what our relationship was.*

**TONY:** *That took a lot of talking & and a lot of listening.*

**SYLVIA:** *What they call "active" listening. That means really listening to what the other person is saying, not thinking about how to defend yourself or what you're gonna say next.*

**TONY:** *One way to do that is to repeat what the other person just said. That way you really have to listen.*

**SYLVIA:** *We did that, and it works really well. It helps you see things from the other person's point of view. Like once I realized that Tony felt like he was no longer part of the family, I could understand why he was so touchy about even the littlest changes.*

**TONY:** *And when I saw things from Sylvia's point of view that she was proud of the way she was handling everything—I could see why she'd get upset with me barging in and taking over.*

**SYLVIA:** *So lesson number five was: See things from the other person's point of view. Every time something came up, we did just that. We shared our feelings, we listened to the other person, and we saw the situation from each other's point-of-view. Then it was easy to figure out what to do, how to change things so we'd both be happy.*

**TONY:** *I did the same thing with Maria. I stopped trying to push myself on her, and just spent some time with her one-on-one doing things she liked to do. I got to know her all over again. I was amazed how much she'd grown up, how well she talked, how her mind worked. And I let her get to know me at her own speed. It didn't take long before she was Daddy's little girl again.*

**SYLVIA:** *We did do a good job with Maria. The key with children is patience. You need to take it slowly with them, just like you do with each other. Children need time to adjust, whether a parent's leaving or coming home. Give them some space, and the chance to get to know you again, and they'll let you back into their lives and their hearts soon enough.*

**TONY:** *And cut them some slack when they're acting up. They're not really challenging your authority as a parent, they're just a little stressed out by all the changes. Who can blame them? Well, as you can see, renegotiating our relationship worked. Or we wouldn't be here together today. Things were back to normal in a few months.*

**SYLVIA:** *The "renegotiated" normal, that is.*

**TONY:** *In fact, most families are doing pretty well within a couple of months. But some don't. Especially if they had problems before the separation.*

**SYLVIA:** *Sometimes when couples are having problems, they think all they need to do is be apart for a few months, and the separation will save their marriage. But it doesn't work that way.*

**TONY:** *No, it doesn't. If there were problems before you left, it's a sure thing those same problems will still be there when you get back. So if things haven't settled down within a couple of months, the smart thing to do is ask for help.*

**SYLVIA:** *Army Community Service provides counseling*

**TONY:** *Or if you'd rather not have anyone know you're having problems, talk to the Chaplain. The only person he'll ever discuss it with is the man upstairs, and I don't mean the general.*

**SYLVIA:** *Or you can ask your Family Support Group leader where to go. You can count on her to keep it to herself.*

**TONY:** *There's one other area to look out for during your reunion: post-traumatic stress or PTS. If the deployment was in a war zone, or something like urban riots or a natural disaster, some soldiers may have trouble coping with what they've been through. I've seen it happen.*

**SYLVIA:** *That can be rough on them, and on their families, for a very long time.*

**TONY:** *Here's some symptoms to watch for: Soldiers with post-traumatic stress may be very depressed, and have trouble snapping out of it. They often feel alone and out of touch with everyone else. Sometimes they seem to go numb, with no feelings, like a robot. Or they might get enraged over nothing, or have anxiety attacks. Some have trouble sleeping, and have nightmares. Or they may find themselves having trouble controlling their own thoughts, having flashbacks to whatever disturbed them so much.*

**SYLVIA:** *If this is you, or your spouse, you need help. It won't go away on its own. Call ACS, or the Chaplain, or your Family Support Group, and get the help you deserve.*

**TONY:** *So your family can have you back again.*

**SYLVIA:** *Well, I don't have anything more to add, do you?*

**TONY:** *Just in review: "Expect some anxiety," "give up your fantasies," and "take things slowly."*

**SYLVIA:** *How about "get in touch with your feelings" and "see things from the other person's point of view!"*

**TONY:** *And most of all...*

**TOGETHER:** *Communicate, communicate, communicate!*

**SYLVIA:** *That's worked for us!*

**TONY:** *It sure has! Hey, can we put Maria to bed early tonight? It's getting pretty steamy in here.*

**SYLVIA:** *Tony!*



# **Postdeployment Homecoming and Reunion**

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The Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., South Deerfield, Mass., offers useful information booklets on military family life. The titles listed below are available as of February, 1993:

- About Being a Guardian for a Military Dependent Family Member*
- About Deployment*
- About Reunion*
- Annual Training*
- Credit Management for Military Personnel*
- Family Care Plans*
- Family Support Groups*
- Good Money Management for Military Personnel*
- It's Time to Move! Coloring and Activities Book*
- Let's Talk About Deployment: An Information and Activities Book*
- Let's Talk About Reunion: An Information and Activities Book*
- Military Families are Special! Coloring and Activities Book*
- Preparing for Mobilization*
- Until Your Parent Comes Home Again: A Deployment Coloring and Activities Book*
- You Belong to the National Guard Family*
- You Belong to the U.S. Army Reserve Family*
- Your Army Community Service Center*
- Your Military Chaplain*
- Your Parent is Coming Home! Coloring and Activities Book*

Extensive bibliographic listings are available from The Military Family Clearinghouse, 4015 Wilson Blvd., Suite 903, Arlington, Va. 22203-5190. Phone: (703) 696-5806 or (800) 336-4592.

**For a complete listing of all references and audiovisual training devices, contact your nearest installation AC or RC Family Program Coordinator's office.**

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\*Use the back of this sheet to continue your responses, if necessary.