



Homecoming: Tips for Reuniting with the Family

Tips for Reuniting with Your Family

There are several things to keep in mind that will help when you come home after a deployment. The following list includes suggestions that can help with children of any age:

- **Remember—you all are adjusting!**
- **Tell your children how much you love them.** Tell them how much you missed them and how happy you are to see them again. It may seem like they should know this, but they need to **hear** it from you.
- **Don't take it personally.** When children are upset or confused they often say and do things they don't mean.
- **Listen sensitively to your children.** Let them know you are interested and ready to hear all they have to say.
- **Don't force your children to spend time with you.** Take it easy and let things happen naturally. Give your children time to readjust to you at their pace.
- **Spend time with each child individually; make a date with each of them.**
- **Limit your criticisms and judgments of your children.**
- **Praise your children both verbally and physically over and over again for accomplishments, no matter how small.** Tell them, "Nice job!" "Wow, I'm impressed," or "I am so proud of you." Here are some things you can do: give your child a hug, a high five, a pat on the back, or create a special handshake. Children **cannot** be "spoiled" with praise.
- **Keep in mind that children mirror their parents.** If you demonstrate strength and patience, it is likely that your child will be strong and patient, too.
- **Do not change discipline procedures your spouse established while you were away.** Discipline methods should be changed only after you and your spouse have had a chance to discuss options privately.
- **Honor the relationship between your child and your spouse.** Your children were your spouse's center of attention while you were away. Don't abruptly demote your children to the number two spot upon your return.
- **Learn about what's happened while you were away and what your child has accomplished.** Together look at pictures, home movies, scrapbooks, art work, homework, awards, report cards, medals, trophies, and so on.
- **Bravery medals.** Give your children "bravery medals" for being brave while you were away.
- **Show an interest in the everyday events of your children's lives.** Find out what new interests your children developed while you were away. Do not tease your children about their interests, no matter how silly or odd they may seem to you. Instead, get involved in their activities. In addition to these general recommendations, here are some specific things to do to help your children during the homecoming:



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Helping Children During The Homecoming

Age Activity: 0-12 months

- Hold your baby often.
- Bathe and change your baby often.
- Feed and play with your baby often.
- Be patient—your baby will warm up.

Age Activity: 1-3 years

- Give your child space and time to warm up.
- Don't force interactions.
- Sit and play at their level (*play on the floor with them*).
- Be gentle and fun; speak with a soft voice.

Age Activity: 3-5 years

- Listen to your child without criticism.
- Accept your child's thoughts and feelings.
- Play games with the child that she or he chooses.
- Tell and show your child you love them.
- Find out about the new things in your child's life (*friends, books, a TV show, a new sport, etc.*).



Age Activity: 5-12 years

- Praise your child's accomplishments since you've been gone.
- Let your child show you her or his pictures, homework, or scrapbooks.
- Be positive; don't criticize.
- Get involved in your child's education and activities.

Age Activity: 12-18 years

- Share what has happened during your deployment.
- Listen to your child's stories with undivided attention.
- Be positive; don't criticize or be judgmental.
- Respect your child's privacy and friends.
- Don't tease your child about her or his interests.
- Get involved in your child's education and activities.