

HOMECOMING AFTER DEPLOYMENT: DEALING WITH CHANGES AND EXPECTATIONS A National Center for PTSD Fact Sheet

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With deployment comes change. Knowing what to expect and how to deal with changes can make homecoming more enjoyable and less stressful. Below are some hints you might find helpful.

Expectations for Soldiers:

- You may miss the excitement of the deployment for a while.
- Some things may have changed while you were gone.
- Face to face communication may be hard at first.
- Sexual closeness may also be awkward at first.
- Children have grown and may be different in many ways.
- Roles may have changed to manage basic household chores.
- Spouses may have become more independent and learned new coping skills.
- Spouses may have new friends and support systems.
- You may have changed in your outlook and priorities in life.
- You may want to talk about what you saw and did. Others may seem not to want to listen. Or you may not want to talk about it when others keep asking.

Expectations for Spouses:

- Soldiers may have changed.
- Soldiers, used to the open spaces of the field, may feel closed in.
- Soldiers also may be overwhelmed by noise and confusion of home life.
- Soldiers may be on a different schedule of sleeping and eating (jet lag).
- Soldiers may wonder if they still fit into the family.
- Soldiers may want to take back all the responsibilities they had before they left.
- Soldiers may feel hurt when young children are slow to hug them.

What Children May Feel:

- Babies less than 1 year old may not know you and may cry when held.
- Toddlers (1-3 years) may hide from you and be slow to come to you.
- Preschoolers (3-5 years) may feel guilty over the separation and be scared.
- School age (6-12 years) may want a lot of your time and attention.
- Teenagers (13-18 years) may be moody and may appear not to care.
- Any age may feel guilty about not living up to your standards.
- Some may fear your return ("Wait until mommy/daddy gets home!").
- Some may feel torn by loyalties to the spouse who remained.

Source: US Department of the Army. Homecoming after Deployment: Tips for Reunion. US Army Medical Department Center and School, Combat Stress Actions Office, Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio Texas. Modification of materials prepared by 101st Airborne Division Mental Health Section for the Persian Gulf War (1991).