

Anticipation

Both you and your spouse were probably thinking a lot about what it will be like to get home, and though you're excited about reunion, perhaps you're also a bit worried about some "unfinished business" in your relationship. After all, whatever challenges existed in your relationship before the deployment will not have magically been resolved during the deployment.

Maybe there are other lingering doubts and fears. Sometimes, for example, as partners prepare to reunite they both wonder how the other will respond after being reunited about the possibility of infidelity. Over all, though, you're probably very excited about spending time together as a family and sharing private time with your spouse.

Changes at Home

Although you're excited about reunion, and the whole family is probably thrilled with the return of the deployed person, everyone may experience a range of thoughts and feelings.

- ◆ Perhaps the deployed person will be a bit worried about how well he or she will fit back in.
- ◆ At the same time, family members might also be concerned about how the deployed person will treat them. They may wonder if their accomplishments will be appreciated or resented.
- ◆ They may be concerned that the deployed person will violate the "go slow" principle and attempt to immediately "take over" everything.
- ◆ These concerns are a normal part of the reintegration process and typically require little more than some time, patience and communication to sort things out.
- ◆ The "stay behind" spouse probably had to change some rules and routines while the deployed person was gone. In any event, the deployed person should remember to **go slow** when adjusting to reunion with their family. Integrating back into the family is a process, not an event that can simply happen at the



front door of your home by your announcing, in essence, "I'm home and I'm in charge." To take that approach is to invite arguments and hurt feelings.

- ◆ If you are the military member, how will you respond to the way your partner has handled things in your absence? What about decisions he/she made that you question? Will you second-guess your partner, or will you recognize that he/she was operating in a stressful environment and made the best decisions he/she was capable of making?
- ◆ If you choose to criticize your partner's judgment, you'll be doing damage to your spouse's self-esteem and ultimately to your relationship. So, it's in everyone's best interest for you to accept the decisions your spouse made, acknowledge that he/she made them under difficult circumstances, and move on.

Trust/Fidelity

How would you characterize the trust level in your relationship when the deployment occurred?

- ◆ To what extent did you trust your partner to handle finances?
- ◆ What was your trust level in terms of your partner maintaining sexual fidelity?
- ◆ What do you think his/her trust level in you was in these and other key areas?
- ◆ Worries about a partner's unfaithfulness are a lot more common than the occurrence of infidelity. It is wise to assume you've both been faithful to one another unless you have strong evidence, not merely suspicion, to indicate your spouse has been unfaithful. After all, accusations of infidelity are very serious and strike at the very core of a relationship.
- ◆ If your marital relationship was overall satisfactory before the deployment, it's unlikely that any infidelity has taken place. When infidelity does occur, deployment notwithstanding, it is almost always a sign of much deeper relationship problems.

Communication

Homecoming is the time you resume communicating "face to face" again.

- ◆ What will you and your partner talk about?
- ◆ Are you open to talking about changes that have occurred in each of your lives as positive experiences that can promote growth in your relationship?
- ◆ Are you willing to really listen?
- ◆ Your partner may want to tell you many things that happened while you were away. Even though you may have been fortunate enough to have frequent phone contact, letters, and perhaps e-mail and video teleconferences, your partner needs your undivided attention, face to face.
- ◆ You, as the military member, have received ribbons, medals and awards for doing a good job in the military. The only appreciation your spouse receives for supporting your decision to be in the military is the appreciation she or he receives from you.
- ◆ Many military spouses feel that without that emotional payoff, going through deployments and other military-related disruptions of family life is just not worth it.



The Who Had It Worse Game

Avoid getting into the “who had it worse” game. The truth of the matter is that the separation was difficult for both of you.

Intimate Relationships

- ◆ Intimacy and sex are not the same thing. Hopefully you and your partner have maintained a solid sense of intimacy, or “emotional connection”, during the deployment through frequent communications. What you have not been able to maintain, as you and your partner are no doubt acutely aware, is the sexual component of your relationship.
- ◆ Since sex tends to be prominent in the thinking of both spouses during deployment, it tends to become a key focus of reunion. Given that sexuality is a highly personal aspect of your personal and marital lives, you need to deal with this area with patience.
- ◆ Although sexual intimacy can resume instantly, and this may well be your mutual desire, the level of overall emotional intimacy and comfort with one another that you experienced before the deployment make take awhile to regain.
- ◆ Keep in mind over the past several months you’ve only been able to communicate with each other, at best, a few minutes a day, and that you’ve had no face-to-face contact. Again, **go slow**. Adapted from www.hooah4health.com



Community Resources

If you feel like you are having trouble coping with adjustment, contact one of the agencies listed below.

- ◆ **Mental Health**
Crisis Intervention
Stress Management
- ◆ **Family Advocacy**
Prevention program
New Parents Support Program
Consultation and Referral
- ◆ **Airman & Family Readiness Center**
Financial Counseling
Air Force Aid Society/Give Parents A Break
Personal and Worklife Education
Military Family Life Consultants
- ◆ **Chapel**
Counseling Sessions
Marriage Enrichment
- ◆ **Youth Center**
Child and Youth Behavioral Military Family Life Counselors
- ◆ **DoDDS Counselors**

Web Resources

www.deploymentconnections.org
www.militarychild.org
www.hooah4health.com
www.militaryonesource.com

**HQ USAF Caring for People
Airman and Family Services Division
201 12th Street South, Suite 413
Arlington, VA 22202-4306**

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Coming Home Reintegration and Marriage

