

Perhaps you've been deployed several weeks or months and separated from your family, friends, colleagues and your familiar social environment. Now the day is quickly approaching when you'll get on that "freedom bird" headed for home! You've no doubt been anticipating getting back home. Or perhaps you've been managing the home front single-handedly while waiting for your spouse to return from a deployment. Have you considered that just as you and those with whom you live and work were required to make adjustments prior to the deployment, additional adjustments will likely be necessary once the deployment is over? The purpose of this information is to help you do just that--smoothly transition back into your home, work and social life.

In an effort to pave the way to your household's successful reunion, we'll look at five major areas: (1) reunion and the single member; (2) reunion and marriage; (3) reunion and children; (4) reunion and single parents; and finally (5) reunion and work. As we review these areas, you are encouraged to take the "shopping cart approach." That is, when you go shopping, you don't take everything in the store off the shelf and put the items into your shopping cart. You only take what you need at that time. Similarly, some of this information will be relevant to you and perhaps some won't. Take what's useful to you and strive to apply it to your life.

Throughout this booklet you'll find a major recurring theme about settling back into your home, work, and social environments: Go slow. Why? Because like deployment, reunion is a process, not an event. What does that mean? When you or your family member deployed, it probably wasn't after a morning notification followed by a same-day departure. Rather, you and your family went through a preparation process over several weeks. This involved attending pre-deployment meetings, receiving immunizations, qualifying on the M-9, reviewing checklists, packing bags, and so on. It also involved the "stay behind" spouse, friend or neighbor learning how to temporarily take over some of the deployed person's responsibilities, such as child care, vehicle maintenance, pet care, lawn care, checkbook balancing, etc.

As you were trying to take care of numerous projects and responsibilities prior to the deployment, you may have experienced some tension in your relationships at home as well as at work. Perhaps you were at times irritable with your spouse, children, or colleagues. At the same time, you may have noticed some resentment toward the deploying person for leaving, even though the deployment was necessary. Young children may be unable to understand why mom or dad must go away, no matter how carefully the need is explained. The person preparing to deploy may have felt guilty about leaving their family and colleagues with all those additional responsibilities. In any event, such unpleasant emotions as tension and irritability may have served a purpose as you prepared for the deployment: to create some temporary emotional distance making it easier for you and those you care about to say farewell.

Again, just as deployment was a process that required time and effort, the process of reunion will also require time and effort.