Preventing children for parent’s return

Deployment is a stressful time for all family members, especially children. Preparing children for a parent’s return during this time of uncertainty can help ease their stress.

Use the checklist below as a guide for preparing children for their deployed parent’s return.

As a parent, I:

___ Help my children count down the days.

___ Tell my children what I can about the deployed parent’s return.

___ Allow my children to ask questions and give open and honest answers in words they can understand.

___ Show patience when my children ask the same questions and I repeat the same answers.

___ Encourage my children to share feelings through words, play, drawings, etc.

___ Remind my children that everyone has changed while the deployed parent has been away and that it might take time for everyone to adjust to being together again.

___ Realize that my children might feel and display a variety of emotions during this time.

___ Remind my children that some rules may change once the deployed parent returns.

___ Watch for signs of stress in my children (nightmares; excessive worry; anxiety about being away from home; anxiety about going to school or other activities; stomach aches, headaches; withdrawal; lack of interest; acting out; and sudden changes in eating or sleeping habits).

___ Seek professional help, if needed.

As a family, we:

___ Talk about favorite activities that our children and the returning parent like to do together.

___ Plan a special “Welcome Home” celebration for everyone and special outings for each child to have with the returning parent.

___ Find some time to talk about feelings.

___ Keep routines as normal as possible.

___ Include the returning parent in all family decisions.