

Questions & Answers about Reunion

1. In the past when my wife came home, the children wanted to be with her all the time. She also wanted to spend all her time with them, but after a while, she felt overwhelmed by all the attention. How do I get my kids to understand that it won't be like a party every-day?

Your children will be excited about the return of a parent and it is very common for families to celebrate the reunion. It may help to plan some specific activities (including a party) when the parent returns. This could mean doing a special activity with each child as well as some activities as a family. By having a plan, you may be able to share some good times with and without the kids. With a plan, your children will know when it is their turn to do something special. You can also help your children understand

that they should respect the returning parent's need for alone time, time with the spouse, and time with friends.

2. My husband is coming home next week. We are all excited, but I am also worried. So much has changed since he left. The kids are different and I am different. How do I prepare my kids for his return?

It is important to realize that some things may be different. Everyone has grown and changed and your family routines may have changed as well. It is time to begin thinking about how things may be different when your spouse returns. Start by talking to your children about what has changed since their dad or mom left and what life may be like when he or she returns. Help your children think about what they would like to keep the

same and what they would like to change. If possible, involve the returning parent in some of these discussions. Remember that even positive change will require some adjustment time.

3. How can I help my children tell their dad about everything that has happened since he was away?

When parents are deployed, some things change at home. Your children grow, take on more responsibilities, make new friends, and develop new interests. Through letters, phone calls, and e-mail, the deployed parents will know about some of this, but it is still different from being there. The deployed parent often feels like he or she has missed something.

Your children can make a scrapbook or a video diary to show the returning parent. Ask your children to help you think of all the things that may have changed since dad or mom has been away. Find pictures, schoolwork, toys, and other things that will help remind the children about what they have done so that they can tell the returning parent. Show the parent what new skills your children have learned.

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<http://mfrc.calib.com/healthy parenting>

4. I took care of my son's child while he was deployed. Now that he is coming back, it is going to be a big change for all of us. I will miss having my grandson around, but I am also happy that my son has returned safely. What can we do to ease the changes?

Children need to know what to expect and to have regular routines. Your son's return may cause a big change. This will take some getting used to by you, your son, and your grandson, so remind yourself that everyone is going to feel some stress for a while.

Try to keep things as normal as possible when your son returns. This may not be easy, but here are some suggestions. Your son may consider staying with you for a while so that your grandson can have the same bed, house, and routines. If this is not possible, give your son information about his son's schedule, what he has been eating, his favorite toys, games and interests. Also, make plans for how your grandson will continue to stay in touch with you. You are important in his life.

5. My husband returned about a week ago. We have celebrated his return, but now my kids are bouncing off the walls. I am feeling overwhelmed. What can we do?

It is very common for families with returning service members to go through a time when

everything seems out of whack. To get things back to normal, your family needs to let go of some of the patterns set when your husband was gone and to try new patterns now that he is back.

Find routines that fit your family now. First, you and your spouse need to think about some of the routines that are needed to make things work. Think about your work schedules, school schedules, and other activities. What is important? What happens every week? Who can handle what? How will you pay the bills and get the children to school and day care? Once you answer your questions, sit down with your children and get their ideas about how they can help. Try out some schedules and routines and see what works and make changes, as needed. Things will settle down once you have a more regular way of living your lives.

6. My kids are worried about their dad's return. They are excited, but are now used to doing a lot of things on their own. How can I help them deal with the changes?

One of the best things about the deployment of a parent is that children often have to be more responsible around the house. It provides a good opportunity for children to learn new skills and contribute to the family. Your kids may complain, but they often take great pride in contributing and in knowing that their

parents value their work.

You don't want to lose this when their dad or mom returns. Most returning parents are proud of their children's new abilities. Think about what each child has learned and make sure that the returning parent gets a chance to celebrate your children's abilities and talents. This could be tying shoes, preparing meals, learning to read and do math, playing a band instrument, or throwing a ball. Also, ask your children to think of ways that the returning parent can help them learn even more new things. This makes the returning parent feel important and involved in each child's life.

7. My son said he doesn't want his dad to come home. I don't think he really means this, but I am concerned about what he is thinking. Is this a common reaction?

There are many reasons why children may say that they don't want a parent to return. It may be that they don't want to deal with the changes to come. Your son may be worried about things that happened in the past. Or it may just be a reaction to other worries about the parent.

This is common. Your child gets used to his world being a certain way and it's hard to change. It is important to find out what your child is worried about or what he is thinking. Ask him questions. This will give you a chance to figure out

what to do. If your child continues to feel this way, you may want to visit the Family Center in your installation for assistance.

8. I remember growing up in the military and the excitement when my dad would come home, but I also remember feeling let down when he came home. It seemed like it wasn't that exciting after a day or so. I don't want my kids to feel let down. Is there anything I can do to prevent this feeling?

The return of a parent is usually a joyous event. It is similar to other big events in our lives like holidays, special occasions, and exciting vacations. After it's over, or even during the celebration, there can be moments of sadness or feelings of being let down. Sometimes we spend so much time looking forward to the event that it becomes less than we expected.

You and your children need to be ready for these feelings. Remind your children that, while it is joyous to have their dad home, lots of things are still the same—dishes still get dirty and homework still needs to be done. Remember that it is normal to have this “let down” feeling. It probably means that life is getting back to normal. You should treat this as a good sign. Also, think about making sure you count the joys of everyday living—encourage everyone in your family to think of one thing each day that

makes them happy or proud of the family and of each other. In the long run, these little joys and pleasures weave your family together.

Sources:

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