Preparing the Service Member for Reintegration

Just like every child is unique and will react to the initial reunion and the reintegration period in their own way, so is every service member unique and therefore his or her reaction during the initial reunion and reintegration period will be different and unique. It is important to keep in mind that each service member has had a different experience during deployment as well. Though there is uncertainty surrounding what reintegration will be like for the service member and the whole family, there are steps that each family member can take to make the transition back from deployment as joyful and stress-free as possible.

It is important for everyone to establish realistic expectations about the actual upcoming reunion. Communication between the service member and the family will be extremely important before the service member arrives home. Keep in mind that things at home have definitely changed and that the service member may not be aware of these changes—your pre-teen or teen’s new friends, etc. The service member should pre-plan readjusting into the family as much as possible.

Tips for the Service Member

There are many things the service member can do to help prepare for reintegration:

1. If possible, communicate over the phone or use Skype during times when your pre-teen or teen can participate, and talk about how your child has changed since the deployment started.

2. Talk about how roles and responsibilities for each family member has changed because of the deployment. People grow and change as time passes, and be aware that roles and responsibilities will be shifting again during reintegration.

3. It is going to take some time for your pre-teen or teen to adjust to you. He or she may be more comfortable with the parent or caregiver who stayed home, and this is normal! Slowly transition to being more involved with your pre-teen or teen. He or she may have lots of questions about the deployment, be open to communicating about it.

Your Pre-Teen/Teen:
- May be nervous and excited about how things will be different when the deployed service member comes home
- Can comprehend world events and may like watching the news
- Is experimenting with clothes, styles, hobbies, etc.
- Is thinking about his or her future (career and education)

Parent Tips:
- Remember that it will take time for things to feel “normal” in your family again. It is best to slowly transition into new routines and caregiving roles. For example, when your child asks for permission to hang out with friends, make sure both the service member and the non-deployed parent or caregiver are present. Slowly transition to letting the service member do more monitoring of your pre-teen or teen.
- It is important to communicate to the service member that he or she is needed at home, even though roles and responsibilities shifted to other family members during deployment.
Things To Do with your Children and Family in the Twin Cities Area

Things may be awkward at first during reintegration, but spending some time together away from the home can help families reconnect. Here are some things your family can do together after the service member comes home!

1. **Visit Lake Calhoun** — Free except for water excursions
2. **Go to dinner at your pre-teen or teen's favorite restaurant**
3. **See a movie together at the Riverview Theater** — Matinees on weekends are only $2 for adults
4. **Cheer on the St. Paul Saints Baseball Team at a Saints game** — Tickets range from $5-$20
5. **Cheer on any Minnesota Team at a game!** Swarm, Lynx, Timberwolves, Twins, Vikings
6. **Valley Fair** — Pricing varies between $19.99-$42.99 depending on seasonal rates and age
7. **Sea Life Water Aquarium** — Prices range from $15.99-$19.99

Be sure to ask about military discounts when you and your family do anything together — many businesses and parks throughout the Twin Cities give military service members and their families great discounts!

ADAPT is gearing up for the next wave of the project. You can help us better understand reintegration in military families and have a say in future resources and services provided to reintegrating military families!

If you live in Minnesota, are a parent of a 5-12 year old, and have been deployed (or your spouse/partner has been deployed) since 2001, we want to hear from you!

To learn more about the ADAPT project, go to www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt. For more information, you can call us at 612-624-4830 or e-mail us at adapt@umn.edu.

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