



Preparing 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.



IMAGINE STEPPING INTO
YOUR CHILD'S WORLD
AND SEEING THINGS
FROM HIS OR HER POINT
OF VIEW.

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