

Post-deployment



Tips for dealing with children

Showing a clear interest in your children after a long period of separation can go a long way towards restoring a close strong family bond.

It is essential to recognise children will experience the prolonged absence of an adult family member differently to grown-ups. Factors such as age, the closeness of the relationship and the support they receive from other family members and friends will play an important role in the re-bonding process.

Children are highly resilient but they, like adults, can be bruised by a long period of separation from a significant family member. Here are a number of tips which should make re-assimilation with your children a little easier.

Expect

- Positive and negative reactions from your children – try to show understanding of their negative reactions
- The possibility your children may have changed significantly during your absence
- To be presented with the challenge of having to 'win back' their affection

Some general points

- Spend as much time with your family after return
- Let your children set the pace in getting to know you again
- Be careful to avoid making any major changes to their routine for several weeks following your return
- Take it slowly and be readily available for them with both your time and emotions
- If you have several children, be careful not to show favouritism to any one individual
- Encourage them to tell you their story of how life was for them whilst you were away
- Validate their achievements (however small they may seem to you) and be wary of giving criticism

Finally

- Help your children adjust to the changes that have occurred in their lives since your return
- Maintain family routines and show them lots of affection (Yes, even teenagers need hugs!)
- Try to do more family-orientated events and be prepared to temporarily lower your expectations and standards relating to school performance and their bedroom tidiness



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