



HELPING THE SERVICE MEMBER RECONNECT WITH THEIR CHILD

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

OBJECTIVES

Participants will learn:

- Possible reactions children have to their returning Service Members
- Ways to help their child reconnect



AGENDA

What To Expect and Tips That Can Help:

- Infants
- Toddlers/Preschoolers
- School-Age Children
- Teens



INFANTS

What to Expect:

- May react to the Service Member as a “stranger” by crying or clinging to the other parent
- May not recognize the service member



Tips:

- Help your Service Member get involved slowly by having him/her help with daily care such as changing diapers, helping with bath time and bedtime
- Encourage your Service Member to engage the child in a playful way such as playing peek-a-boo
- Give lots of affection: loving strokes, kisses, holding, and encourage your Service Member to do the same



TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS

What to Expect:

- May have regressive behaviors
- May not recognize the Service Member
- Might cling to the other parent/caregiver
- Could test limits
- May want all of the Service Member's attention

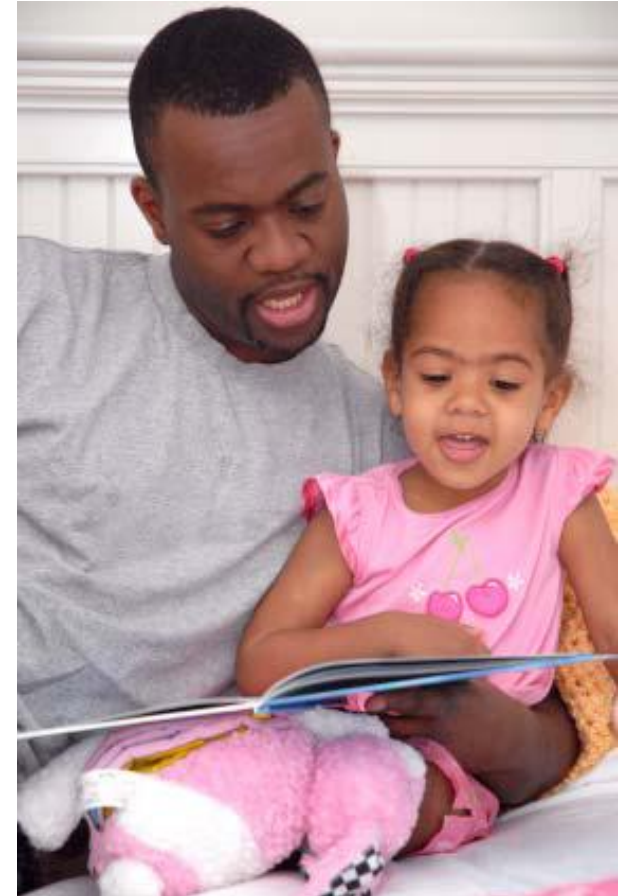


TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS

CONTINUED

Tips:

- Rewarding positive behaviors should be done by both you and the Service Member
- Encourage the Service Member to arrange special play time with their child
- Both you and the Service Member will need to have patience with the child
- Maintain established routines



SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

What To Expect:

- May want all of the Service Member's attention
- Could have mixed feelings about their return
- Might test the limits
- May cling to other parent/caregiver
- May feel very proud of the Service Member



Tips - Encourage the Service Member to:

- Show their child plenty of love and attention
- Praise their child for all of his or her achievements while they were gone
- Be involved in daily activities such as homework and sports
- Be patient with their child



TEENS

What To Expect:

- May have mixed feelings about the Service Member's return
- Could test the boundaries
- Might feel self conscious about sharing their feelings
- May withdraw and/or act out



Tips - Encourage the Service Member to:

- Avoid criticizing or teasing their teen
- Share appropriate deployment experiences with their teen
- Find a shared interest or activity that they both enjoy
- Be patient with their teen



OTHER EXPECTATIONS

Many children and teens are:

- Excited to have their parent back in the home
- Happy to have their parent involved in their daily lives again
- Proud of their parent's service
- Excited to share their accomplishments with their parent



**All children and teens can adjust
given time, patience and love**



CONCLUSION

Encourage the Service Member to:

- Be patient
- Allow time for themselves and their child to adjust and appreciate these changes



SUMMARY

When a parent returns home:

- Infants and younger children may not recognize the returning parent and may cling to the other parent/caregiver
- Older children and teens may test limits, act out or withdraw
- It's important for both you and the service member to be patient and allow time for reconnecting
- Seek help from military and community resources if needed





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services





THANK YOU

