



REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES FOR THE SINGLE SERVICE MEMBER

Presented by Military and Family Life Counselors

AGENDA

- Common Problems
- Divorce and the Returning Service Member
- What is “normal”?
- Five Phases of Reintegration
- Myths and Misconceptions
- Guidelines
- Questions and Answers



COMMON PROBLEMS

Risky behaviors:

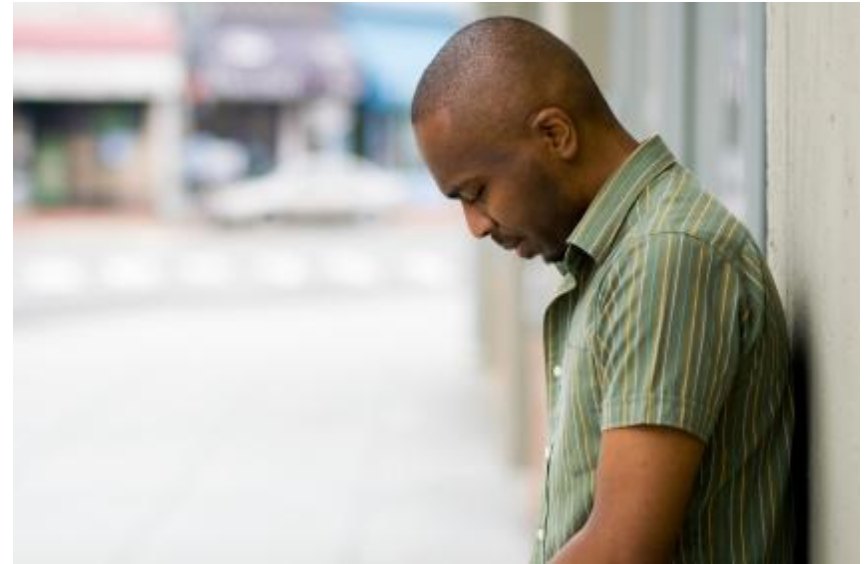
- Excessive Use of Alcohol and Drugs
- Reckless Driving
- Obsessive use of websites
- Misuse of Firearms



COMMON PROBLEMS

CONTINUED

- Flashbacks
- Lack of support (being single)
- Missing camaraderie
- Aggression
- Money and budgeting
- Dealing with questions from friends and family



COMMON PROBLEMS

CONTINUED

- Tolerance for those who have not experienced deployment
- Difficult career decisions
- Changes in priorities
- Changes in friendships
- Difficulties adjusting to civilian responsibilities



DIVORCE AND THE RETURNING SERVICE MEMBER

If a divorce was initiated or finalized during deployment, there may be some unique challenges upon return:

- Transition from married life to single life
- Possible custody issues
- Change in living situation
- Financial changes/challenges
- Grief and loss issues



WHAT IS NORMAL?

- With time, most service members will re-integrate successfully into society
- Each service member is unique, adjustment varies for each individual
- Change is normal but could be difficult at times



PHASES OF REINTEGRATION

Phases do not necessarily occur in this order, some phases occur simultaneously and some phases can be skipped altogether.

- Changes in behavior
- Exploration
- Celebration
- Projects
- Reality check



CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

Description: Service member seeks to rid him/her self of habits formed overseas that are now inappropriate at home

- Swearing
- Giving orders
- Personal hygiene
- Manners
- Tobacco use

Problems arise when: Habits don't go away automatically, a service member must make an effort to change the behavior



EXPLORATION

Description: Service member explores surroundings to understand what has changed in the last year

- Local area of residence
- Relationships
- Favorite hang outs
- Friendships
- Schools / Workplaces
- Living situation

Problems arises when: Service member skips the process and has expectations that relationships and friendships will be the same as when they left



CELEBRATION

Description:

Service member wants to celebrate being home and reunited with family and friends. May want to celebrate by partying and reconnecting with old friends.

Problems arise when:

Service member doesn't know when to stop partying and move on; service member's celebration becomes self destructive (substance abuse, risk taking behaviors)



PROJECTS

Description:

Service member undertakes projects to fight boredom and foster a sense of accomplishment. These projects are usually short term and easily under the service member's control.

- Going to school
- Hobbies
- Remodeling the home
- Working on a car
- Planning a wedding
- Moving
- Vacation

Problems arise when:

Service member starts many projects and leaves them unfinished.
Service member fails to achieve a sense of accomplishment.



REALITY CHECK

Description:

The final phase of reintegration is when the service member reintegrates back into society, resumes life, and returns to work/school.

Problems arise when:

Service member fails to reach this phase, or seeks to avoid it at all costs.



MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Statement:

“I don’t want to talk about it!”

Misconception:

Since my service member refuses to discuss his/her experiences in the war, he/she must be bottling up horrible feelings.

Possible explanation:

Service member may be tired of answering questions over and over and telling the same stories.



MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Statement:

"I'm going to get so drunk tonight!"

Misconception:

He/she wants to drink therefore he/she must be an alcoholic.

Possible explanation:

This may be only a temporary increase in use, watch for symptoms of abuse or dependence.



MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Myth:

All service members will return damaged or permanently scarred.

Reality:

Not true; most service members will have a successful reintegration. Remember that you are looking for red flags that are reoccurring over a period of time and impairing a service member's ability to function. Encourage your service member to seek assistance when needed.



PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING YOUR SERVICE MEMBER

- Be there
- Listen
- Ask permission to offer advice
- Encourage
- Respect
- Communicate
- Learn about available resources



SUMMARY

- Reintegration can present challenges
- Each service member is unique, adjustment varies for each individual
- Divorce issues can present unique challenges
- Most service members will have a successful reintegration
- It's important to offer support
- Keep the communication channels open
- Seek help when needed.





QUESTIONS?

RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.tricare.osd.mil
- Behavioral Health Services
- Defense Center of Excellence
 - <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/default.aspx>





THANK YOU

