



# 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:

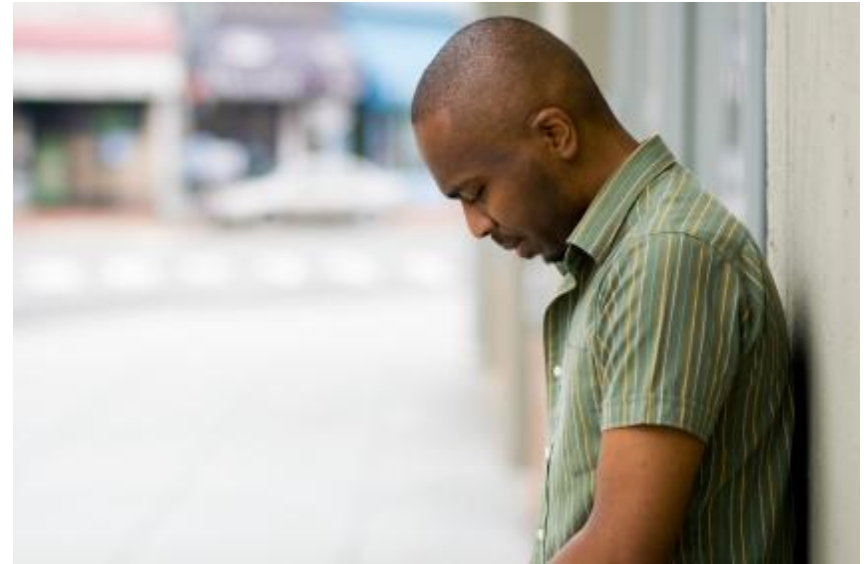
- Excessive Use of Alcohol and Drugs
- Reckless Driving
- Obsessive use of websites
- Misuse of Firearms



# 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.mil](http://www.Tricare.mil)
- Behavioral Health Services
- Defense Center of Excellence
  - <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/default.aspx>





**THANK YOU**

