



REUNION BRIEFING

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

REUNION OBJECTIVES

Reunion briefings help to provide an understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors common to most service members and their families after redeployment.



AGENDA

- The importance of reunions
- Reunion and
 - single service members
 - the spouse
 - the children
 - married service member
- Changing roles
- Common reactions for service members
- Positive coping mechanisms
- Potential roadblocks
- When to seek assistance
- Reunion tips



THE IMPORTANCE OF REUNIONS

- Reunions can be both joyful and stressful.
- Emotions can be intense.
- Reunions impact all family members.
- Reunions cause changes in the family.



REUNION & SINGLE SERVICE MEMBERS

- Will there be any celebrations for me?
- Will my family be there to greet me?
- Will I still matter to my friends and lovers?
- Will I still have contact with my “battle buddies”?
- Will I be put on details or have to help with reconstitution?
- Will I have new barracks or a new room mate?
- Will my things in storage be lost or damaged?



REUNION & THE SPOUSE

- How much has my partner changed?
- Will we still have things to talk about?
- Did I make good decisions about our money?
- Did I do OK with the kids?
- Will I have to stop seeing my friends?



REUNION & CHILDREN

- Will Dad / Mom come to meet my teacher / coach / scout leader?
- Will I get punished because I didn't behave all the time?
- Will the rules change?
- How long will Dad / Mom stay this time?



REUNION & MARRIED SERVICE MEMBERS

- What about my finances?
- How did things go while I was gone?
- Will my family be happy to see me?
- Will my partner still want and need me?
- Will my kids recognize me?



CHANGING ROLES

- Partners - may have learned to be more independent.
- Children - may have matured and have taken on more responsibilities than before.
- Service members - may have new job skills and added responsibilities.



POSSIBLE CHANGES

- Appearance
- Attitudes
- Values
- Independence
- Trust
- Faith
- Interests
- Habits
- Preferences - food, clothing, recreation
- Goals - education, money, career
- Priorities - what's important in life



COMMON REACTIONS FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Frustration
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Emotionally numb (“I just don’t feel much of anything anymore)
- Concentration / memory problems
- Crying spells



COMMON REACTIONS FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

CONTINUED

- Loss of trust
- Loss of interest / motivation
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
 - Oversleeping
 - Trouble falling asleep
 - Waking up in the middle of the night
- Feeling jumpy
- Intrusive thoughts



INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

Intrusive thoughts are recurrent and unwanted distressing images, ideas, or perceptions.

Although bothersome and distressing, intrusive thoughts are generally normal and not associated with more serious problems unless they persist for several months or cause significant interference in a service member's ability to function normally.



POSITIVE COPING MECHANISMS

Reconnecting or staying involved with your social support system and recreational activities

Utilizing programs and services as needed such as:

- Military Family Support Services
- Military OneSource – 800-342-9647



POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS



- Drinking alcohol excessively or using illegal drugs
- Driving recklessly or engaging in other risk-taking behaviors
- Picking fights
- Going on spending sprees
- Gambling



POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

CONTINUED

- Isolating yourself for long periods
- Dropping out of pleasurable or recreational activities
- Working all the time as a way of avoiding distressing memories
- Trying to constantly avoid exposure to people, places or thoughts that are associated with the traumatic event



WHEN TO SEEK ASSISTANCE

- Reactions such as isolation, sadness, alcohol use do not subside and cause impairments in functioning at work or in personal life
- Occurrence of family violence
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else



REUNION TIPS

- Adjust gradually
- Stay positive and be patient
- Communicate and negotiate
- Respect each other's right to feel a little resentful
- Rethink your budget
- Resist spending sprees
- Discuss new rules and schedules
- Support and compliment positive changes



REUNION TIPS

CONTINUED

- Plan a special celebration as a family
- Spend time together as a couple
- Re-establish sexual intimacy slowly
- Spend time with children (together and individually)
- Go easy on discipline
- Make time for yourself and allow others their free time also



REMEMBER...

- Separation does not solve problems that existed prior to deployment
- Old habits do not just disappear
- Don't expect to resolve the old (or new) problems right away



SUMMARY

- Reunions can be both joyful and stressful
- Emotions can be intense
- Reunions impact all family members
- Give yourself and your family time to adjust
- Stay connected
- Seek assistance if your reactions affect your ability to function





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

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





THANK YOU