

## Speaker Notes

Title of Presentation: Helping the Service Member Reconnect with Their Child

**Page 1** – none.

**Page 2** – none.

**Page 3** – none.

**Page 4** – Keep in mind that if the child reacts this way, it is normal and will subside quickly as the service member becomes more involved on a daily basis. The reaction is not about the service member or anything he/she has or hasn't done. It's simply the child doesn't know him/her yet and may be at a stage where he/she is experiencing stranger anxiety which is perfectly normal.

**Page 5** – Initially, interacting with your child when your service member is present and having your service member participate with you, can do a lot to alleviate your child's fears as he/she will see you and the service member as part of "a team."

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- Your child may have regressive behaviors, may not recognize the service member or might cling to the other parent.
- This is not always the case, but many toddlers and preschoolers are having a lot of separation anxiety and stranger anxiety. As with infants, this is perfectly normal and will subside as the child begins to see you on a daily basis as a caregiver.
- At the other extreme, your child may be very excited to have their service member there and may want to be with them every minute. Either way, things will normalize over time.

**Page 7** – Young children need consistency, repetition and lots of patience. They also need lots of affection and play time. Children learn and express feelings through play, so if you and the service member engage the child in imaginative play, this can be very helpful and fun!

**Page 8** – Most school age children will be excited and happy to see their service member. Some may have uncertainty about what to expect and how the service member will react to them. They may also not be quite sure how to interact with their service member. They may be demanding of the service member's attention and not understand why he/she wants time alone with the other parent/caregiver or siblings.

**Page 9** – Like toddlers, school age children need lots of patience and consistency. When the service member praises them often for appropriate behavior and recognizes their accomplishments, this helps the child's self-esteem and helps to increase bonding.

**Page 10** –

- Most teens will be excited and happy to have the service member back in their lives on a regular daily basis again. But remember, teens have many hormonal changes taking place and consequently, mood swings. They may be happy one minute and in tears the next minute. Privacy becomes very important to the teen, so they may be more withdrawn, and they may be resistant to expressing feelings.
- They have probably taken on new responsibilities while the service member was gone and may feel threatened that they are going to be taking some of those responsibilities back.

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- Teens are very sensitive to criticism and can feel devastated over things that, to you, might seem very small and unimportant. Find opportunities to praise them when you can and encourage your service member to do the same. Also encourage the service member to acknowledge their accomplishments and give them praise whenever they can.

- Since they may not feel comfortable talking with the service member about their feelings and concerns, participating with them in a fun activity can be a great way for the service member to connect with them again.

**Page 12** - none.

**Page 13** – none.

**Page 14** – none.

**Page 15** – none.

**Page 16** – none.

**Page 17** – none.

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