

# Return & Reunion Workshop



# What's the Plan?

My Reunion Plan \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---



Your Marine's Plan \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

## ANTICIPATION OF RETURN

You have put your plan down on paper and the anticipation for the return of your Marine is building. How are you doing? As you are planning for the return of your Marine, are you starting to feel stressed because of the return of your Marine? It is common and expected that you and your family may feel stressed at the return of the Marine into the home. You might feel an increased energy level and be more active as you plan for the return, you might have trouble sleeping or eating, and you might feel anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, and impatience.

If you have the opportunity, share with your Marine the concerns and the excitement you have about the return and reunion. Share the expectations you have for the return and include the expectations your children may have regarding the return of the Marine. An additional stressor to the return and reunion process is the changes in the official return schedule. Be patient with circumstances no one has any control over. Continue to prepare for a successful return.

Remember the difference between fantasy and reality and keep the lines of communication open if at all possible.

- ⇒ Be aware of what you expect
- ⇒ Be reasonable in what you expect
- ⇒ Be clear what you expect

These are some questions you might want to ask your returning Marine in regards to the plan for homecoming.

- ⇒ How do you want to notify family and friends of the homecoming?
- ⇒ What do you want to do on your leave time?
- ⇒ What does the family want to do on your leave time?
- ⇒ Do you want to plan a get together with friends and family?

As you have a conversation about homecoming, these are additional considerations:

- \* Don't forget about the in-laws, they love your Marine too!
- \* Talk to the children. What do they expect of the homecoming?
- \* What are you going to wear to the homecoming?
- \* Preparation of the Marine's favorite foods.
- \* Unpleasant habits your Marine may have picked while gone.
- \* Driving might be a challenge for your returning Marine.
- \* Your Marine may want to spend time with buddies.
- \* RELAX - everything doesn't have to be perfect.
- \* Be flexible, things may not go as planned
- \* Patience is a virtue.

This page intentionally left blank

# Communication



# Communication

How have you and your Marine communicated during the deployment?

---

---

---

What have you missed by not having Face 2 Face Communication?

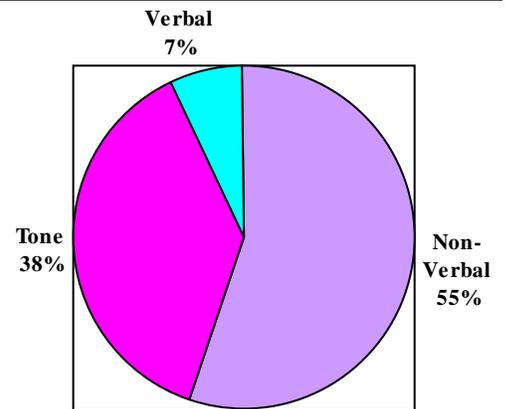
---

---

---

List personal factors:

- Verbal
- Non-Verbal
- Gender



55% of our message is received from Nonverbal Communication.

38% of our message is received from Tone.

7% of our message is received from Verbal Communication.

My Communication List

“I can’t wait to tell you about...”

1. _____	2. _____
3. _____	4. _____
5. _____	6. _____
7. _____	8. _____
9. _____	10. _____

# Tips for Helpful Communication

## **These are some keys to "active listening":**

- o Be there to hear what they have to say. If you don't have time at that moment, have the conversation when both of you do have the time.
- o Accept what is being said without reservation or judgment.
- o Trust the ability of the other person to handle their emotions. Work with them to find solutions.
- o Accept the other person's feelings, whatever they may be.
- o Listen to the other person. Don't plan what you are going to say, solve their problem, or console them.
- o Stay objective and quiet.
- o Put yourself in their shoes. Understand what that person is saying, feeling, or thinking.

## **As you are trying to communicate with your Marine, these are some speaker skills that might keep the lines of communication open.**

- o Think about what resolution you may want.
- o Share your side of the issue while acknowledging the other side of the issue
- o Be short. Do not go on and on.
- o Be specific and stick to one point. Don't bounce around.

## **At some point the conversation will come around to a difficult subject.**

### **How do you address a difficult subject when you are still relearning how to communicate?**

- \* Have the conversation during a stress free time. Avoid the subject if either of you is tired, hungry, or pressed for time. Avoid the subject when children may overhear the conversation.
- \* Keep your sense of humor. Humor can break the tension and pressure.
- \* Talk about one difficult subject at a time. Set your priorities and address issues one at a time. Stay on the present subject and save the other important matters for a different time.
- \* Talk about the issues, not who is right or wrong. Focus on finding the solution not on assigning blame.
- \* Acknowledge the other point of view. This does not mean you agree but it shows you are listening.
- \* Take a break when needed. Avoid the conversation getting overheated by taking a short break from the subject and possibly each other. Avoid saying things you may regret.

It's beneficial to remember that any kind of separation or deployment can heighten our emotions and our reactions to comments.

Remember to think about what you are saying:

- Organize your thoughts

- Make a communication list

- Don't try to talk about different topics at the same time

- Careful of use of personal triggers, or "buttons"

Messages can be delivered in many ways:

- Statements that don't usually require a response

- Questions when you are looking for an answer

- Commands can be thought of as forceful

- Warnings can cause alert

Body language can send a different message:

- Voice you use

- Touch

- Silence says a lot without saying anything

- Gestures and expressions

Language:

- Be careful of the words you use

Timing effects communication:

- Make sure you speak in a clear voice



Adapted from "Improving Your Communication Skills"-Channing L. Bete 1999

# Deployment Stress



# WHAT IS STRESS?

---

---

---

Prolonged exposure to situations that produce stress can cause your body to experience negative consequences. Stress releases hormones that prepare us for action (to fight or take flight/flee). If we don't take action to resolve the stressor, the stress response can lead to both physical and psychological health problems.

## HOW DOES DEPLOYMENT STRESS AFFECT YOUR FAMILY?

---

---

---

Normal day-to-day stress can be challenging enough. Now you have added the stress of deployment on top of this. Multiple deployments bring even more stress, as the changes pile one on top of the other. In addition, just as you finally get into a routine, it is time for the stress of Return and Reunion.

Here are some of the challenges of homecoming for family members:

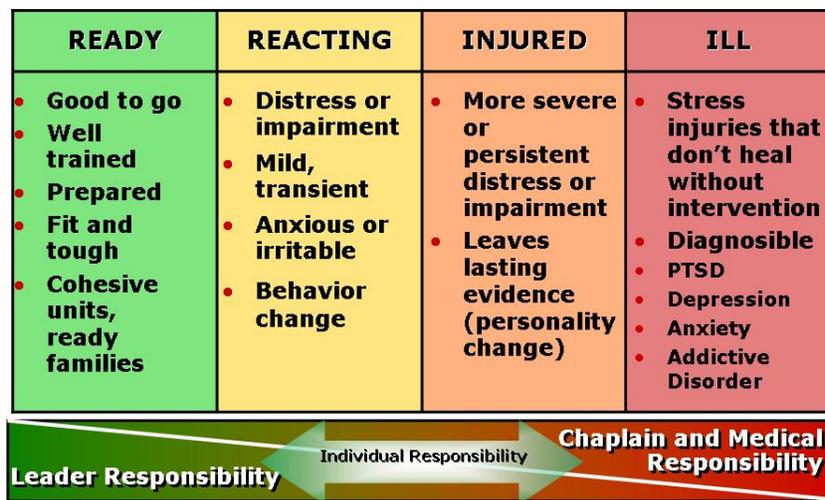
- Getting to know (and trust) each other again
- Your Marine spouse has changed
- You have changed
- Fitting Marine spouse back into family routines
- Money problems: "Where did it all go?"
- Marine spouse wanting to spend time with buddies
- How much should you ask? How much can you listen?

# COMBAT OPERATIONAL STRESS

Your Marine has been under stress too. However, the stressors your Marine has experienced have been different from yours. Extreme stress can cause neurologic changes that affect the way your Marine responds to you and the environment. Sometimes these changes are mild and sometimes they are severe.

The Marine Corps views combat operational stress for Marines along a continuum or spectrum. Each zone represents how a Marine functions with stress. It ranges from green (ready) to yellow (reacting) to orange (injured) and red (ill). Marines in the orange and red zones need medical evaluation and treatment to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families as quickly as possible.

## Combat Operational Stress Continuum for Marines



Recognizing Stress injuries: It's important to recognize stress injuries in your Marine. You may see:

- Personality changes (emotional regulation, temperament, over-reaction, withdrawal)
- Problems with sleep, nightmares, hyper-vigilance
- Increased destructive, dangerous, or addictive behavior

## Common Stress Symptoms for Marines

READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Calm and steady</li> <li>•Confident and competent</li> <li>•Getting the job done</li> <li>•In control</li> <li>•Sense of humor</li> <li>•Sleeping enough</li> <li>•Eating the right amount</li> <li>•Working out, staying fit</li> <li>•Playing well and often</li> <li>•Active socially, spiritually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Feeling anxious, irritable</li> <li>•Worrying</li> <li>•Cutting corners on the job</li> <li>•Short tempered or mean</li> <li>•Grouchy</li> <li>•Trouble sleeping</li> <li>•Eating too much/little</li> <li>•Apathy, loss of interest</li> <li>•Keeping to oneself</li> <li>•Negative, pessimistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Loss of control of body, emotions, or thinking</li> <li>•Can't fall or stay asleep</li> <li>•Recurrent vivid nightmares</li> <li>•Intense guilt or shame</li> <li>•Attacks of panic or rage</li> <li>•Inability to enjoy activities</li> <li>•Disruption of moral values</li> <li>•Serious suicidal or homicidal thoughts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Stress injury symptoms that last for <u>more than 60 days</u></li> <li>•Symptoms that get <u>worse</u> over time instead of better</li> <li>•Symptoms that get better for awhile but then come back worse</li> </ul>

If you see these signs and symptoms, it will be important to know when to get professional help for stress injuries. If you see that the stress is affecting sleep, motivation, judgment, etc and affecting the Marine's ability to function socially or on the job, then additional outside help may be required to address the problem before it worsens.

There are three basic mechanisms involved in Stress Injuries:

1. **Biological changes** affect the way the brain handles information and emotions, and changes "set points" for mood and reactions. As a result, they may seem moody, irritable, over-reactive, and impulsive - not the same Marine who went to war
2. **Psychological changes** include difficulty making sense of what is happening to them, grief, guilt, lost sense of safety, and questioning of personal values and beliefs
3. **Social changes** include feeling isolated and that nobody else understands, questioning of society's sense of right and wrong, loss of moral compass, and loss of social support systems

## POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Not all combat operational stress symptoms add up to PTSD. It takes a certain set of stress injury symptoms, for a prolonged period of time, severe enough to affect job performance and relationships, plus formal diagnosis by a qualified doctor, to be called PTSD.

# TOOLS FOR MANAGING STRESS

Some stress reducing tips: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Here are some extra tips for taking care of yourself if your spouse has a stress related problem:

- Remember the good times
- Remember your spouse needs you to be strong
- Accept that you can't take away your spouse's grief, stop their pain, or make them change, but you can help them decide to get help
- Be calm and patient
- Find someone safe to talk to (friend, family, chaplain)
- Talk to others in your situation – find out you're not alone
- Consider a support group
- Open up at your own pace and comfort level
- Learn about PTSD and other disorders
- Remember there is no wrong or right way to feel
- Know your resources and use them
- Get additional help if things are not getting better

Here are some things to avoid:

- Don't keep everything to yourself
- Don't expect things to change quickly
- Don't blame yourself or your spouse for past decisions and actions leading up to the present situation
- Don't think your spouse can just decide to get better
- Don't think that your spouse's distance or irritability is your fault
- Don't think your spouse wants or likes to feel this way
- Don't tolerate abusive behavior
- Don't turn to addictive substances or behaviors yourself (reduces your options)
- Don't just keep hoping things will get better if they are getting worse

It's important to help the Marine understand that a stress injury is an **injury**. Stress injuries:

- Deserve to be fixed like any physical injury.
- Were incurred in dedicated service and the Marine deserves to feel better.
- Are treatable. For the sake of the Marine's family, buddies, and self, s/he needs to get back on track by getting care and getting better.

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

# Re-Integration



# Re-Integration

This can cause joy or confusion. Physically you are together as a couple but emotionally; it may take a bit longer.

Definition:

1. Bring into a whole
2. To complete

What does this mean to you and your family?

---

---

---

List some possible “Blockers” to your successful Re-Integration

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Is there any one common “Blocker” within this group? What is it?

---

---

---

Solutions?

---

---

Will your Marine feel the same things?

## Let's TALK...



Write down what each of these words mean to you .

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Romance: \_\_\_\_\_

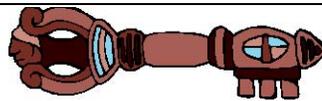
Timing: \_\_\_\_\_

Respect: \_\_\_\_\_

Patience: \_\_\_\_\_

Intimacy: \_\_\_\_\_

Patience is the Key!



### **Romance/Intimacy/Sex**

Talking about intimacy and sex can be challenging to address, especially if you have been separated for a long period of time. The first step in reconnecting is understanding how men and women think differently about intimacy and sex. Intimacy and sex do not mean the same thing to both.

During your separation, hopefully you and your Marine have maintained an "emotional connection". This emotional connection does not replace the sexual component of a relationship. This component of a relationship will become a key focus of the reunion. Also, because of the personal aspect of marriage you, as a couple, will need to handle this area with patience. Just as you need to go slow in the areas of reintegration into the home, you will need to approach the physical reconnection just as slowly.

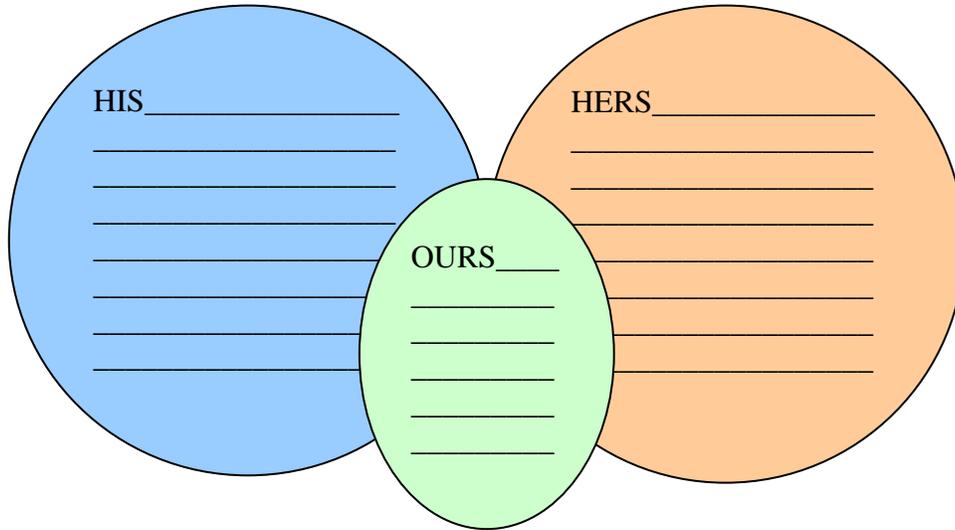
It is normal for temporary awkwardness to arise at first. Take the time to get to know one another again, to regain the intimate connection you did not have due to the distance and length of the separation. If you have an uncomfortable experience, do not make too much of the situation. Move on, relax, take your time, and let the sexual part of your relationship resume at it's own pace.

Most people do not think about all of the areas of their relationship so let's define the different areas of a relationship and how you may be able to share about these different areas of your relationship.

For example, when do you discuss what is important to each of you? There are several factors that are essential.

It is very common for the physical part of the relationship to resume immediately. It is also common for the other areas of the relationship to fall by the wayside as life and children and work take over. Take the time to address all of these areas of your relationship. Do not get defensive, or take it personally if things do not pick up right where they left off.

# Roles & Responsibilities



Part of roles/responsibilities is to consider the finances of your family.  
What will change?

---

---

---

---

Be prepared by identifying your needs and your wants so that you can more easily adjust to a new financial situation. Will this affect your personal choices?

## Independence

How might you lose some independence with the return of your Marine? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## Renegotiation of Responsibilities

We both have different perceptions of how each will act and be when the Marine returns. These perceptions will effect how we renegotiate responsibilities in the family. Keep these in mind as you have the discussion of roles and responsibilities and how they will change. This is what we SHOULD expect when the Marine returns:

### **The remain-behind parent should expect:**

- The returning Marine will be different
- The returning Marine will have "unmarried habits", such as being messy and inattentive to the family schedule.
- Both of you will be romantic and want gifts.
- The returning Marine will have trouble sleeping because they will be used to a ships vibration or the presence of other people in the barracks.
- You will want to recognized and appreciated for handling all of the financial matters during the separation.
- Be patient as the Marine gets reacquainted with the children. Remember, the Marine wants to be included in decisions regarding the children.
- Expect the physical intimacy to be awkward at first. Talk it over.

### **The returning parent should expect:**

- Expect the remain-behind parent to be different.
- The remain-behind parent may be more independent and confident. The fact they can cope without you doesn't mean they want to cope alone.
- The remain-behind parent may want to be waited on hand and foot. They may believe they have had the hardest tour.
- The remain-behind parent is used to having the bed to themselves.
- The returning parent may want to spend freely. Try not to criticize the way your spouse has handled the finances while you have been gone.
- Gradually move into the authority role in the home. Appreciate the efforts of the remain-behind parent while you have been gone.
- Expect the physical intimacy to be awkward at first. Talk it over.

## **Renegotiation of Responsibilities**

Renegotiation of the roles and responsibilities in the home when the Marine returns means answering the question "Where do I fit in?"

Some of the questions the Marine may ask would be:

- o Where and how do I fit into my job?
- o Where and how do I fit in with my friends?
- o Where and how do I fit in with my family?
- o Am I still needed?
- o What will our intimate relationship be like?
- o Will my spouse still love me?

For the family and especially the spouse, the questions might be a little different, such as:

- o Do I have to change my way doing things?
- o Do I have to give up paying the bills? (I like doing it!)
- o Do I have to start cooking large meals again?
- o What will my relationship with my spouse be like?
- o Will my spouse still love me?
- o Do we need to change any of the legal arrangements made before the departure?

Children may ask:

- o Do I have to start doing things Mom's way or Dad's way?
- o Will my curfew change?
- o How will my parent being home change how my life has been?

When you start the renegotiation process, it requires open and honest communication with each other and a commitment to the family. Patience with each other and the children as the family goes through this process together and avoiding making assumptions about each will also assist the renegotiation of the roles and responsibilities of the family.

As the spouse that has been taking care of things while the Marine has been gone, you have taken additional roles. Which of those do you want to continue doing and which would you like to turn back over to the Marine? Keep a sense of humor and bring up one item at a time as you patiently discuss how the roles of everyone in the family will have to adjust when the Marine returns home.

### **Remember**

The workload can be shared, but perhaps in a new way. Celebrate together the personal growth each has achieved during the separation.

## Renegotiation of Roles and Responsibilities

As you renegotiate the changes in your family when the Marine returns, you might want to ask yourself and your Marine these questions.

1. What do you want to keep doing when your Marine returns home?

---

---

---

---

2. Will this change cause conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How will you deal with this conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

4. How do you feel about the changes in your family's responsibilities?

---

---

---

5. How does your family feel about the changes in responsibilities?

---

---

---

As you ask and answer these questions, you will be able to figure out "Where you fit in".

What's the NEW Plan?

My Family Plan \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*Bringing it all together...*



For those times when things are not going as planned.....

Religious Ministries Services (PREP, CREDO) -----	enter local phone number
Chaplains after hours -----	enter local phone number
Family Counseling Services -----	enter local phone number
Military OneSource -----	enter local phone number
Marine Corps Family Team Building -----	enter local phone number
Personal Financial Management Program -----	enter local phone number

