

ADF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING
COMING HOME



JOINT HEALTH COMMAND
VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE



'Being away' often means that changes have occurred, both in the person coming home and in those who have remained at home.

In this age of modern technology, regular communication back home may have been taking place during separation. Sometimes however, this communication can be frustrating for all concerned because problems may be shared, but neither person can effectively help in the other location.

Therefore, it is important to realise that although you may have been e-mailing, SMS texting or talking on the phone, the type and quality of the communication is quite different to seeing each other 'face to face'. Furthermore, although coming home is exciting and obviously something you, your loved ones and friends look forward to, it can also be stressful and will usually involve a period of readjustment. This period of readjustment doesn't have to be viewed as a 'roadblock' or 'stumbling block'; it can actually be used to build stronger relationships.

Expectations and Tips

Some things may have changed at home such as taking on different roles, children have grown, and partners having become independent in new or different ways. You also may have changed in your outlook, your beliefs and your priorities. You may be looking forward to the 'perfect reunion', but remember that perfection (just like beauty) is in the eye of the beholder and your partner may have different hopes or expectations. Two tips to remember are:

'TAKE IT SLOWLY' and 'TALK AND REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER'

These tips are the building blocks for any relationship and they will help you get through the readjustment period.

Some other tips include:

- remember that people (including you) may have changed
- curb the desire to leap in and take over the reins
- acknowledge the good things your family and friends have done during your absence - limit any criticism
- go easy spending your money - think and plan
- respect each other's personal/emotional space (including the children's); you will need to get to know each other again
- sexual closeness may be awkward at first as your hopes and beliefs may be different from your partner's - talk openly and respectfully about this issue
- be patient with yourself, your family and your friends
- avoid using foul language
- previous problems may crop up again - do something about them this time
- include your family in any socialising
- be prepared to give and take
- with children, go slowly and adapt yourself to the new rules and routines that are now in place
- things that worked before may not work now; new strategies or techniques may be in place, so take the time to learn them.

For those at home

The returning family member or friend may have changed, and they may now be more sensitive to a lot of things that were pretty normal before. For example:

- they may be anxious or unsettled in crowds, in the rush and throng of a city or amongst the noise of family
- they may feel threatened by your new friends or supports and wonder how they can fit back into your life
- they may want to take back all previous responsibilities.

A few extra tips are - avoid scheduling too many things or activities, go slow and be patient. Remind the returning member that they are still needed and are still important to you.

If you identify any readjustment problems, talk to someone early so that guidance or assistance can be provided to you and your family as soon as you need or want it. You can talk to your doctor, chaplain, or mental health professional - you and your family have a wide range of assistance available to you.



Where to seek help

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support. You can also contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional, Chaplain or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The **ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line** (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas +61 2 9425 3878.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK** to locate the nearest support.

Chaplains are connected to all units in Australia and can provide support and appropriate referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal
www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

The Portal is an online information resource tool for all current and ex-serving ADF Members and their families.

Other Resources

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608)

www.defence.gov.au/dco

The Defence Family Helpline is your first point of call for support, information and connection with your community. The Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

You can also email the Helpline on DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au and receive a response within 24 hours.

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS). This 24-hour service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families on **1800 011 046**.