HOMECOMING GUIDE
A guide to assist your preparation for homecoming
Produced in collaboration with 1st Psychology Unit
INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed to assist you in your preparation for homecoming. It will explain some commonly experienced issues associated with homecoming and provide useful tips and advice for preventing and minimising any negative effects experienced. The intent of this guide is to promote positive well-being and enhance adjustment.

The return of military personnel from deployment is usually associated with positive feelings. Members and their families usually understand the feelings associated with separation, such as loss, loneliness and guilt, however few people consider the negative emotions associated with homecoming, including stress and anxiety.

The guide has been prepared to promote awareness of key areas of potential concern or possible challenges, identified from experiences of previously deployed members. To ensure quick access to this useful information a directory is provided on the next page.
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REALITIES OF HOMECOMING

Homecoming experiences are often as diverse or different as the members and families themselves. However, reports from previously deployed personnel highlight some realities of homecoming that are commonly experienced. While not all of the following realities will apply to you and your homecoming experience, you may expect to experience at least some of these. It is important that you realise and anticipate some of these realities, as you will cope better if your expectations are as closely aligned to reality as possible.
What worked on ops may not work at home

• Everyone develops strategies to cope with the unique demands of the operational environment they work in. We develop ‘survival skills’ to perform at our best on ops. Low tolerance for mistakes, drills, discipline, emotional control and targeted aggression are appropriate and often necessary to be successful while deployed.

• However, homecoming necessitates that we ‘switch off’ some of these strategies in order to reconnect with others. Being flexible, communicating emotion and switching off aggression are important in order to re-establish bonds that may have been tested through the separation that a deployment brings.

Remaining alert and on guard may not change overnight

• Personnel on deployment may be placed in harm’s way, and are subsequently more likely to see the potential for danger than those who have not deployed, even when objectively little danger exists. This vigilance becomes instinctive and does not simply ‘turn off’ automatically when the member returns home.
This vigilance can make regular life experiences somewhat difficult on homecoming. Crowded places or circumstances in which the member may feel confined or trapped can be particularly anxiety provoking. Personnel might be easily startled by changes in their environment or sudden noises. On homecoming, you will need to retrain your body and mind to relax. This retraining can be accomplished by exercising, self monitoring and practising relaxation (see section entitled ‘Relaxation Techniques’).

**Relationship dynamics may change**

- Your relationships may have been maintained over Facebook, email and telephone while you’ve been deployed. However, relationship dynamics are likely to have changed somewhat during your deployment. This may be because you’ve grown professionally and personally as a result of your deployment experiences, or your friends’ and family’s experiences at home have changed them in some way.

- Flexibility, communication and time are required in order to facilitate reintegration into your relationships. Accept that with time and good coping skills, your relationships can bounce back from the period of separation caused by your deployment. Simply enjoying relaxing time with those you care about, being flexible in your approach and taking small steps to improve relations can be all that’s required to re-establish close bonds.
Attitude changes towards work are common

- Having done your job ‘for real’ on ops can sometimes mean returning to your old job is something of a let down. While on Ops you may have been given a lot of responsibility, dealt with danger and threats well above what was expected of you at home. Going back to training to do it all again can sometimes feel unnecessary and frustrating.

- Anticipating and managing any change in your attitude will be key to your reintegration at work. You may need to accept that training is part of life in the military. Just as a footballer who has reached the pinnacle of the game by playing in a grand final will need to return to pre-season training, you may also need to reset and restart training. Setting new career goals can also assist with the natural change in work attitudes that may arise after returning from a deployment.

Your physical and mental health may change on homecoming

- Your health and well-being may have deteriorated while on ops through increased smoking, excessive caffeine consumption and difficulty sleeping. Conversely, your health and well-being may have improved, due to increased time engaging in physical training (PT) and reduced alcohol consumption. As changes will certainly occur in your daily routine on homecoming, it is likely that your health and well-being may also change.
• Managing these changes on return to Australia is key to achieving a positive sense of well-being. Getting adequate sleep and exercise, consuming a healthy diet and monitoring alcohol consumption may assist. Whilst drugs and alcohol may provide a quick fix to help reduce stress or block out upsetting memories in the short term, personnel who begin using drugs (prescription or other) or alcohol as a way to cope can quickly become reliant on such strategies. This can often lead to mental health issues that are much harder to treat later on and that are compounded by addiction problems.

ANTICIPATION OF HOMECOMING

In the period leading up to homecoming the Service member will often encounter a range of positive and negative emotions. There is often a great degree of excitement felt from the opportunity to be re-united with loved ones. However, a degree of anxiety about the reunion can be quite common - both by the Service member and by their partner/family/friends. Both you and those at home will have hopes and expectations about the homecoming. These thoughts can at times be idealistic so the reality of the situation needs to be placed into perspective. Emotionally preparing for going home allows you to think about the challenges and discuss plans with loved ones and friends.
Common Reactions:

• Increased energy and activity.
• Sleep and appetite disturbances.
• Feelings of joy, excitement, anxiety, apprehension, restlessness, impatience.
• Distraction from operational role and task.

Tips for preparing for homecoming

• Remain focused on your tasks to ensure all work is completed on time before returning home.

• Plan your return and make sure you communicate your plans, including times and dates, to loved ones well in advance.

• Share your expectations and feelings, both positive and negative.

• Make your homecoming special. Use the occasion to improve relationships. Try to make the event special for you, your partner, friends and loved ones.

• Leave your bad deployment habits in the AO, e.g. swearing, excessive smoking. They may not be appreciated back home.
Time of homecoming

Before you return home, consider the time of year you will be returning. If you are returning at the end or beginning of a year you may have to consider the details relating to a removal, organising leave at a new unit, or starting a new job in a new location. If you are returning mid year, remember that command structures and role may have changed, new members may have posted in and old friends may have posted out.
Jetlag

Jetlag can impact on the success of your homecoming. When you are planning your homecoming activities take into consideration the effects of jetlag. The effects of jetlag can include fatigue, tiredness, disorientation, grogginess, concentration difficulties, nausea, headaches, sinus irritation, insomnia, disrupted sleep, dehydration, loss of appetite, irritability and irrationality. These effects may worsen 2-3 days after arrival before improving.

Tips to assist with jetlag

In the days leading up to your flight home:

• Sleep well. Try to get plenty of sleep in the nights leading up to your departure.

• Avoid stress. Try to arrive at the airport relaxed and with plenty of time.

• Abstain from alcohol the night before the flight, even if it is available and permitted. A hangover not only feels similar to jetlag, it can exaggerate its effects.

Whilst on the plane:

• Drink plenty of water.

• Exercise and stretch. Walk around the cabin and stretch in your seat to reduce muscle cramping and swelling.
• Avoid alcohol, even if it is available and permitted. Alcohol causes dehydration and may exacerbate the effects of jetlag.

On arrival:
• Attempt to eat and sleep according to the new time zone.
• Go outside. Daylight assists your body clock in adjusting to the new time zone.
• Exercise. Exercise helps the body clock to adjust faster.
• Use sleep aids, like eye shades and ear plugs. If you have trouble falling asleep, try using some of the techniques detailed later in this guide - e.g. stretching, meditating, taking a quick shower or any other activity you find relaxing.

REUNION

Day of reunion
The day you arrive back to be reunited with your loved ones and friends is generally a very special and rewarding day. It often involves the outpouring of a lot of emotion that has been built up over the period of your deployment. Tears, excitement, and happiness are quite common reactions. Some members might also experience a sense of loss, uncomfortableness or uncertainty associated with the
transition from the deployment environment back into the Australian environment. Such feelings are usually overcome within a couple of days but there are some things you can do on the day of the reunion to ensure a smooth transition.

**Common Thoughts/Feelings in the Service person**

- Why do I feel like a stranger in my own home?
- That should be my decision!
- My partner/family/friends think I’ve just been on a holiday.
- I just want a few days to relax and do nothing.
- Why does my partner want to continue to do that now that I’m back?
- I don’t seem to fit in around here any more.
- I’m tired of all this attention - I need time to myself.
- My partner/family/friend is not the person I remember.

**Tips for the day of reunion:**

- Your arrival - On most occasions when service personnel arrive at the reunion location, their partner/family/friends are there to meet them. However, changes in scheduling, missed messages and other unforseen circumstances may mean that there is no one waiting for you when you arrive. If this is the case, be prepared to feel disappointment but understand that there will invariably be a justified reason for their lateness, and they really do want to see you.
• Be prepared for changes - When you first arrive home you will no doubt be aware of changes to the home, relationships, social arrangements, friends and other things that you cherish, that have occurred during your absence. Take the time to look for the positive aspects of these changes and only make positive remarks about them until you have adjusted into the new environment.

HOMECOMING

Accepting change

The readjustment period can affect people in different ways. Some members have little difficulty readjusting, while others can find the process unsettling. Members may have issues adjusting to city and traffic noises again, seeing the large selection of goods in the supermarket, having to use money again or the sense of time and urgency. Other issues may concern the home, such as new places for kitchen utensils, a new coffee table that you had no say in purchasing, or a new layout in the lounge room. Sometimes these ‘little things’ signify just how much home has changed.

Adapting to homecoming

Common Issues

• Reunion can often be more stressful and emotional than separation.

• You may have very different expectations from your family and friends about your homecoming.
• Routines may be disrupted and/or changed.

• There may be an increase in disagreements over things that have (or have not) been done whilst you have been away.

• You may feel emotionally distant or have difficulty enjoying certain activities.

• It is common to experience feelings of grief related to separating from friends made on deployment or the deployment experience in general.

• Sexual intimacy with your partner may be initially awkward, as you might both have quite different hopes and expectations - talk openly and respectfully about these issues.

• You may have developed habits that might not be appropriate back at home (e.g. Use of bad language or increased levels of smoking).

• Your tolerance for alcohol will be considerably lower than it was prior to your deployment. Also, be aware of the effects that alcohol might have on your body when consumed in conjunction with prescription medications that you may have to take.
Useful Tips

• It is completely natural to feel nervous or apprehensive about returning home to see family and friends, and it is quite likely that they will be experiencing similar feelings prior to your arrival. If you initially feel like this do not be alarmed.

• Allow yourself time to readjust to life back in Australia, just as you would have done when you arrived in-country to commence your deployment.

• Make plans prior to your homecoming with regard to how you would like to spend your first weeks back home. If you communicate openly beforehand there will be fewer opportunities for disagreements and misunderstandings later on.

• Having to constantly catch up with a number of family and friends when you first get home can be draining. If possible, try to organise one large gathering to reduce the number of engagements that you may feel obliged to keep. Also use this opportunity to ask people what they have been doing whilst you have been away. This should help you to feel more in touch with what has happened at home in your absence and therefore less alienated.

• Try to plan a break or at least some other novel activities during the first few weeks after homecoming.
Expectations

Both you and your loved ones (especially partners and young children) will be facing the homecoming with huge excitement and some apprehension. All concerned will have hopes and expectations about the homecoming. These thoughts tend to become rather romantic or the stuff of fantasy. It is unfortunate that these expectations and daydreams are often shaken by the reality of the arrival home. For some couples the homecoming may well be a second honeymoon - for many, however, it takes considerable time before they feel like a couple again. For returning individuals without partners, it can be a lonely time, as many of your friends may have filled the gap that you once took up with new friends and interests. Every moment can impact on the success of your reunion. It only takes one insensitive statement (for example, ‘How much did that dress cost?’) or omission to hurt feelings, dash expectations, or start tempers flaring.
## Common responses to homecoming

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<td>Fear</td>
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<td>Fatigue</td>
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<td>Muscle tension</td>
<td>Easily distracted</td>
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<td>Exaggerated startle response</td>
<td>Decreased decision making ability</td>
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Intimacy

Intimacy involves both emotional and physical togetherness. During separation, these connections may change and there may be difficulties regaining connections upon return. Over the course of a deployment, particularly if the separation has been stressful, an emotional as well as physical disconnect may occur. When reunited, it may take some time for the couple to return to their previous level of emotional and physical intimacy.

Different people will experience different reactions upon reunion with their partner. Some may experience low sexual interest that can cause disappointment, friction or a sense of rejection. Others may feel unfamiliar or awkward around their partner. Others may have high sexual interest. Common concerns of couples include hoping that one is still loved; dealing with rumours or concerns about faithfulness; concerns with the current strength of the relationship or compatibility of the couple; or concerns about medications that can affect desire and performance.

Once reunited, some people find that physical intimacy is re-established quickly, while the emotional intimacy may take time to develop. Others may find physical intimacy uncomfortable without having re-established the emotional connection. Some individuals may find that love and sexual desire cannot be rekindled as quickly as their partner would prefer. Sometimes in the anticipation of reunion, men can forget the need for gentleness and patience or that
enjoyable sex is a two-way process. It is best to establish intimacy slowly, making an effort to be patient.

With time, physical and emotional intimacy usually returns to normal, and doubts and concerns usually pass. However, to speed up the process there are several things you can do:

- Openly and honestly discuss your expectations and desires with your partner
- Spend time alone to rediscover each other
- Set aside time for romance
- Openly discuss your feelings towards intimacy and your reaction to the reunion. Encourage your partner to do the same
- Communication and trust are integral to developing emotional intimacy
- Be receptive to your partner and try to notice signs of discomfort
- Have patience
- Reassure them of your respect
- Don’t expect too much on the first reunion
- Do special things for each other and acknowledge positive changes in your partner
- Allow each other time to settle back into life together
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR

The partner

In order to have a smooth homecoming, ensure you have the correct time and location of your partner’s arrival. Whilst this may seem obvious, details such as the correct terminal and time of arrival are often mistaken in the excitement of your partner returning home.

Have a back-up plan. Flight details are prone to change. Ensure you have another person who can be there to meet your partner when they arrive if you are unable to make it.

Plan something special for your partner. Something as simple as a welcome-back meal or a small gift can set you on the right path to have a successful reunion. When making these arrangements, consider fatigue and jetlag. Your partner may have just arrived home after a long flight and may prefer a meal at home rather than go to a restaurant. Prepare children for homecoming and involve them in reunion activities.

Manage your expectations about the reunion. Be prepared for the reunion to fall short of your expectations and hopes. View the reunion as the beginning of a process of adjustment rather than a single event.
The first few days

When your partner arrives home, take your time to become reacquainted with each other. Avoid trying to cover several months of adjustment in several days. Understand that your partner may have changed during their deployment experience, developing and maturing as a person.

When at home, reassure your partner that they are needed and you are happy they have returned safely. A common issue upon return among members is the feeling that they are no longer required at home as their partner has been able to cope successfully and manage the household without them.

Be calm and assertive, rather than defensive, when discussing events that have taken place during the separation. Your partner may need to hear that it wasn’t the same doing things alone, that you are glad they are back, and that you’d like to discuss problems calmly.

Ensure you have both set aside time to rest and schedule social events and activities to accommodate these rest times. Minimise consumption of alcohol. Remember alcohol may have been restricted during your loved one’s deployment and their tolerance may now be lowered.

Access your supports if necessary - your family, friends and military resources.
Considerations:

• Avoid over-scheduling the first few days after return. After several months of regimentation and routine, serving members often seek relief from constant responsibilities and scheduled activities. It is normal for the returning partner to ‘need space’ upon their return.

• Don’t expect your partner to take up their previous roles immediately. Often the return trip from an area of operation leaves most service members in need of rest to recover from jetlag and work.

• Set aside time to communicate. You have both been through separate experiences during your partner’s deployment and you have both changed in some way as a result. Talking can help you to get to know each other again, regain the intimacy you had before and rebuild family routines.

• Expect your children to test the rules. Whenever there is a change in a family, children work to find out whether the rules have changed. Discuss any new rules you have set with your partner to ensure you present a united front.

• Maintain activities that you enjoy and help you relax. If you have adopted an exercise routine, taken up a hobby you like, or joined a club, don’t give it up just because your partner is home. Whilst you may need to be flexible to fit these activities into the new family schedule, do your best to find a way.
• Prioritise time for your immediate family. Postpone visits to relatives and friends until you both have settled into a comfortable routine at home.

• Children may be feeling the same confusing things you and your partner feel, such as worry, fear, stress, happiness or excitement. They may be unsure of what to expect from the parent who has returned. They may feel uncomfortable or think of them as a stranger. Allow children to give and receive the attention they need from the returning parent before you try to have quiet time alone with your partner.

The first weeks after the reunion

While the initial reunion can be a positive emotional experience, the first few days can be a relearning process. While you have certainly missed your partner, you both need to re-establish your relationship and reallocate roles and tasks. The whole family must work at readjusting, stabilising and accepting the serving member back into the family unit.

When you are re-distributing roles and duties with your partner it may feel like you are starting over or dating again. In this time, the whole family unit must work together at readjusting, stabilising and accepting this ‘new’ person back into their home.

There may come a time when your partner begins reasserting their presence and role within the family.
environment. This can lead to tension if you feel there is lack of recognition about how the relationship/family environment has coped and changed since your partner has been away.

For example, you may have become used to greater independence while your partner was away out of necessity for getting things done. You may have taken on roles and activities previously carried out by your partner. This may cause your partner to feel a loss of ‘identity’. Conversely, you may resent the loss of independence if the household returns to the roles that existed prior to the deployment.
Common thoughts/feelings of the partner

When your partner returns from deployment, you may experience a number of common thoughts and feelings. You may question who this stranger is in your home or why your partner has changed. You may not want to give up roles and responsibilities, just because your partner has returned or you may feel your partner is making decisions that should be yours to make. You may feel your partner does not appreciate the difficulties you have experienced or that they don’t understand that life kept going while they were deployed.

Regardless of the different personal circumstances, there are several tips that can assist you and your partner in re-establishing a rewarding and satisfying relationship.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON'T</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do take time to be with your family and friends and plan some events even if you don’t feel like it.</td>
<td>Don’t bottle things up. Discuss concerns as they arise - your relationship will be better off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do try to fit in with the routine your family has established while you have been away. Take time to understand family dynamics and changes.</td>
<td>Don’t criticise or judge. Appreciate that your partner has done the best they can during your absence. Praise them for their efforts. Do not take over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do set aside time to talk with your partner. You will need time to get to know each other again. Talking now can help you lay the foundation for a newly strengthened relationship.</td>
<td>Don’t try to avoid thinking and talking about deployment experiences. Share them with your family and friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do spend time alone with each member of your family. It is important to spend some special time with each person to find out how they have coped with you being away.</td>
<td>Don’t isolate yourself. Try to be with people when possible, but also reserve some private time for yourself.</td>
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The single parent

The challenges for single parents when preparing for homecoming are unique. If you are a single parent, homecoming can be a very lonely and difficult time, and some of the issues you may face are the same as those faced by married members with children. During your absence you may have arranged for your children’s caregiver to stay at your house with the children, or your children may have lived with their caregiver at their house. You may have to find a new house altogether. Irrespective of your circumstances, you will need to establish your accommodation before you will be able to focus your attention on reunion with your loved ones.

If you are in a relationship, you and your partner are likely to experience many of the reactions, concerns and issues detailed earlier regarding married couples. Take the time to discuss any concerns openly.
Children

Approximately two weeks before you return home, both you and your family may begin to experience anxiety. You may be concerned about how your children have changed in your absence or that you have missed milestones in their lives. You may worry that you are no longer needed. Children can change very quickly in a relatively short time - babies become toddlers, daughters become young women, sons develop into young men. These changes are initially eye-opening developments but are usually quickly absorbed.

Children are unpredictable in their reactions. You may expect your children to welcome you back with open arms, however, some children’s reactions can be emotionally devastating. Despite the happy hugs and squeals of joy, there may be other feelings of hurt, anger, resentment, insecurity, hostility and even fear. Babies, toddlers and preschoolers may not recognise you and cry when held or flinch at a homecoming kiss. They may try to avoid or shy away from you, stop you from going near your partner or may even hide from you. Tantrums and ceaseless crying is common. Teenagers may seem distant and appear not to care about your return. Be patient and give them time to get to know you and accept you as a parent again. Prepare yourself for these reactions to prevent being upset by them.
Problem behaviour in children that initially occurred upon your departure may recur, including sleep disturbances, fighting with siblings and playmates, shyness, regression in development, acting out in school etc. Children will normally overcome these behaviours if parents show patience and concern. They should readjust once they understand you are another source of support and love, not a threat. Children who were well-adjusted throughout your absence may suddenly reveal problem behaviours on your return. They may not let you return emotionally into their lives, preferring to keep you at a distance. This may be their way of dealing with the possibility of you going away again. In these situations be patient and involve yourself in the child’s day-to-day activities as often as possible.

Most young children will experience an attention-seeking phase, where their behaviours can be positive (doing a special drawing for you), negative (breaking objects), or a mixture of both. Encourage positive behaviours by rewarding the child - speaking to them is often enough, however cuddles and sharing time are perhaps the best rewards. Try to ignore the negative behaviours as much as possible. Children’s behaviour is often driven by the reactions they receive and the behaviour they observe. The more you are able to accept the separation, adjust to and cope with the changes and return to normal routines, the easier the transition will be for your children.
Other problem behaviours may include:

- **Jealousy.** In your absence, children may have formed very close bonds with the parent who remained at home. They may be over-protective, clingy and resent your return.

- **Possessiveness.** Young children may become protective of you, refusing to let go of your leg or constantly seeking your attention. These behaviours may be reinforced the next time you are separated - such as when you return to work. Reassurance and brief calls can assist children in making the adjustment.

- **Discipline.** School-age children may initially be happy and loving towards you, but this may change if their established routine is disrupted too quickly and/or abruptly. Parents may need to discuss discipline with each other and new boundaries that have been set for the children prior to developing new ones or re-establishing old ones.
Remember these are natural responses for children at different ages. Adult children may also have concerns so ensure you communicate effectively with them.

Below are some general suggestions for dealing with children of all ages:

- Expect both positive and negative reactions from children. Try to show understanding of the negatives
- Spend as much time as possible with the family for at least a week after your return
- Be sensitive about showing favouritism
- Accept change and try to fit into the current routine
- Encourage children to talk about what happened during the separation
- Don’t force the situation; allow time for adjustment
- Let the child set the pace for getting to know you, be available for them when they are ready
- Don’t give in to demands because of guilt
Age appropriate suggestions to assist children adjusting to your return.

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<th>Suggestions</th>
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<td>Crying or pulling away from you, clinging to your partner or a familiar caregiver.</td>
<td>Engaging in activities that satisfy their basic needs is often effective, such as bathing, hugging, feeding and changing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toddlers</td>
<td>Acting shy and clingy. They may not recognise you. They may cry, have temper tantrums or temporarily regress developmentally.</td>
<td>Initially give them space and allow them time to ‘warm up’ slowly. Start a game with them which emphasises sharing and fun.</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Age</td>
<td>Typically they have a high degree of energy and excitement and spend a lot of time trying to get your attention. They may experience guilt about the way they have behaved in your absence.</td>
<td>Reinforce the positive things they have been doing while you have been away. Review class projects, school work, sporting achievements and pictures. Express an interest in their hobbies and activities.</td>
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<td>Teenagers</td>
<td>Teenagers are often more complicated, especially if they have gone through significant changes while you have been away. Feelings of guilt about not living up to standards are not uncommon, as are concerns about rules and responsibilities. They may be unwilling to change plans to spend time with you upon return.</td>
<td>Use a more mature method in renewing your relationship with teenagers. Sharing your experience of your deployment is quite useful and will encourage them to share their experience of you being away. You may need to re-establish boundaries that might have changed. Try not to be judgemental.</td>
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THE SINGLE MEMBER

When preparing for homecoming, it can be a very lonely time for singles, regardless of whether you live-in or live-out. In addition to experiencing many of the homecoming issues previously described, singles can have the added strain of finding accommodation, re-establishing friendships or letting go of old ones if they have become distant or dissolved over your deployment.

During your deployment you would have grown and developed as a person. The boundaries of your comfort zone would have been challenged, you would have learnt to adapt to foreign living and working environments. Upon homecoming, consider the potential impact of these changes on your social and personal relationships. Be prepared for parents and friends to note changes in your appearance, self-confidence, and maturity. Whilst these changes may not be obvious to you, they may be to others.

When it comes to homecoming partying, don’t over do it. Remember that your tolerance to alcohol may have decreased during your deployment. Try and balance your social life with some time to yourself.
Friends and family
It can be amazing how quickly and how significantly friendships and family relationships can change during an absence. Some friendships will be re-established as if you were never away, while others will fade. Friends remaining in Australia will have gone on to make new friendships and you may feel unwelcome in some of these new circles. Many friendships you made while deployed may become distant or dissolve although you may have formed close bonds with these people due to the nature of the deployment. Thus, the homecoming can be a sad and lonely time - especially for single personnel. New friends are left behind and old friends may not be all that friendly or may now seem juvenile, dull or too fixed in their ways.

Work
There are many potential frustrations associated with returning to your unit in Australia. It is not uncommon for members to feel unmotivated, for unit work to seem to be an anti-climax or to find the steady routine of your job to be boring. There may be more supervision and regulations compared to your job conditions overseas. Colleagues may appear disinterested or envious of your deployment and either avoid any discussion of it or make frequent cynical remarks such as ‘dash for cash’, ‘medal chasing’ or ‘swan trips’. Mates who remained in Australia may have been posted in your absence, others may have been promoted
ahead of you and you may feel forgotten. You may harbour grudges against the ‘system’ for a perceived lack of support to you and your family during your deployment.

These types of thoughts and concerns may affect your attitude and perceptions of work and may lead you to consider alternate options. Seek advice and opportunities to discuss your feelings related to the workplace before making major decisions such as applying for leave without pay, requesting discharge or resigning.

**Reservists**

Reservists returning to civilian work can also find it difficult and encounter stressors. You may experience difficulties readjusting to a civilian environment. You may feel your civilian counterparts lack ‘discipline’, or that they do not appreciate the experiences you gained on deployment. You may suffer a degree of intolerance to everyday issues which seem trivial upon your return. You may even reconsider the importance of your civilian work routine in light of your deployment experience. Tips for returning to work:

- Give yourself several weeks to readjust before making any significant decisions. All major decisions require good planning and execution. Talk to mates and career advisors first before making a decision.

- Take any opportunities you may have to share information about your deployment experiences - this will help you integrate your time on deployment with your civilian life.
• Remember that the return to civilian work for a reservist after deployment is a period of adjustment. Most reservists settle in well and get back to their civilian roles with gusto.

• Remember that military service, especially when it has involved physical challenge, learning new skills and the application of years of training, leads to increased confidence and self belief. This generally makes you a great asset to any employee, as you will have developed an improved capacity for responsibility and contribution.

MENTAL WELL-BEING OF RETURNING SERVICE PERSONNEL

Enhancing homecoming through stress management

We all experience stress in our lives - at work, at home etc. In moderate levels, stress can be motivating and can improve our performance. The trick is to maintain the optimal level of stress that will enable you to perform at your best. Too little stress (e.g. boredom) and too much stress (e.g. burnout) will deteriorate your performance, well-being and effectiveness. Stress management is essentially ‘performance enhancement’. Therefore it is important for you to be able to determine when stress is becoming problematic so that you may take action to alleviate it and enhance your performance.
Signs of stress

The longer you ignore your stress, the more difficult it may become to manage and the greater impact it may have on various facets of your life and the people within it. In order to manage your stress, you need to be able to recognise your personal indicators of when your stress levels are not at their optimum. People’s reactions, like their perceptions of stress, vary from person to person. On the next page there is a table of some common stress reactions that tend to surface when stress levels are not at their optimum.
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Many deployments are moderately to highly stressful for members. Any exposure to life-threatening and traumatic experiences is likely to elicit stress responses in the individual. Stress reactions should not be considered abnormal or a sign of weakness. Responses may range from temporary physical reactions (profuse sweating, trembling, headaches, change in appetite) to long-term responses (anxiety or depression, mood changes, difficulty sleeping). Other experiences which can trigger stress reactions include language barriers, lack of mail, unusual living conditions, limited access to communication facilities, bureaucratic ‘red tape’, lack of recreational opportunities and the prolonged separation from loved ones.

Stress responses may continue for a period of weeks or months, long after the incident(s) that caused them, or they may not present until the person is removed from the stressful environment and has returned home. Unfortunately homecoming has its own inherent stressors without being further complicated by delayed stress responses, therefore stress reactions need to be addressed swiftly.

There are numerous strategies which can be used to manage stress. Be prepared to try a few different strategies to find out which one suits you best. The following strategies are designed to assist in managing stressors post-deployment and maximise performance.
Tips to manage stress on homecoming

- **Allow time to adjust** to being home.

- **Eat well, sleep well, be well.** Maintain good nutrition through a sensible diet, get sufficient rest/sleep and exercise regularly.

- **Change your thoughts.** Your perception of a situation determines how frustrating or stressful it is. By changing your perceptions and thoughts you can decrease your stress levels. In particular, try to maintain a positive attitude and realistic expectations.

- **Time management.** Prioritise your tasks. Establish a routine and include effective work/rest patterns as often as possible. Use your leisure time for rest and relaxation, not work.

- **Mentally rehearse stressful situations.** Think through likely situations which are of concern to you. Consider your possible reactions and the options you have to deal with these possibilities. Think about the worst thing that could happen, often it is not as bad as you initially believe it could be.

- **Accept reality.** Understand there are things you can control and change, things you can influence, and things which are beyond your control and influence. We get the best results when we are able to accept those things that are outside of our influence or control, and focus our time and energy on what we can actually control. Be open-minded and flexible.
• **Exercise.** Exercise is one of the best physical stress-reduction techniques. It helps reduce muscle tension and sleeping difficulties, and causes the release of chemicals called endorphins into your blood stream which positively affect your sense of well-being. Exercise also improves blood circulation which carries the sugars and oxygen to the brain necessary for intense thinking.

• **Talk it out.** Talking is one of the best strategies to get something off your chest. When you are particularly upset it can be obvious to those around you. Use your peers and mates as a sounding board - sometimes it may help to vent, other times it may help you to develop a solution. Friends are often just waiting for you to approach them to have a chat.

• **Acknowledge emotions.** Realise it is okay to feel frustrated or upset. These are natural reactions to stressful circumstances. It is healthy to admit to and work through your emotions.
• **Write letters/journals.** You may prefer to write down your feelings and thoughts. This may help you clarify your thoughts and feelings or it may help you to simply relax. You may use these written words as a starting point for discussion with others or choose to keep them private. Just because you choose to write your thoughts in a letter does not mean you have to send it. In fact, be cautious about sending anything you write in these circumstances as you may regret it later.

• **Relaxation techniques.** There are a variety of physical and mental relaxation techniques that can be used to manage stress reactions. These include imagery, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation and self-hypnosis. Try a number of techniques to find out which one works best for you. These techniques are used widely, particularly by elite sportspeople to enhance their performance, and are detailed in the ‘Relaxation Techniques’ section of this guide.

• **Limit alcohol/caffeine/tobacco intake.** These substances are unhealthy and are likely to exacerbate, rather than reduce, stress. They may seem to offer temporary relief; however they can mask or disguise problems and can become unhealthy habits.

• **Use humour.** Laughter can reduce tension. Be sensitive in its use as it can be perceived as inappropriate.
Seeking assistance

There are times when stress becomes so overwhelming you can’t manage it alone. Seeking assistance is not a sign of weakness but rather a recognition that the situation is beyond our normal coping abilities. In this situation you can choose to ignore/deny the issue, which will negatively affect your well-being and work performance; or seek professional support through a medical officer, psychologist, chaplain or the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS). Contact details for support services are available at the back of this booklet.

The following list is not complete, but indicates circumstances in which you may need to seek assistance with stress management:

• You are experiencing chronic (ongoing) signs of stress
• You experience ongoing disturbed sleep and/or nightmares
• You have no-one with whom you can talk
• Your relationships (work or social) are suffering/deteriorating
• You are having frequent accidents or difficulty concentrating
• You have noticed changes in your emotions or behaviours that are concerning
• You have thoughts of self-harm or suicide
• You are unable to meet requirements at work or home
Another support service is the ADF All Hours Support Line, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:  
**1800 628 036** (FREECALL within Australia) and **+61 2 9425 3878** (outside Australia).

**Helping your mates/family deal with stress**

Once you have returned home, it will often be your family, mates or colleagues who will be the first to notice when you are stressed. Actively seek help from your friends when you find it difficult to cope and also be there to listen when they need help. The following are some tips for helping you and your mates manage stress:

- **Realise that stress reactions do occur.** Everyone reacts differently to stress and different stressors cause different stress reactions.

- **Accept stress responses in others.** Reassure them that it is okay and that these reactions are normal.

- **Be available and approachable.** Your mates will feel reassured if you show an interest and offer your support.

- **Listen.** This is not always easy; it takes time and practise however it is one of the best ways to assist a friend.

- **Be careful with advice and do not judge.** Avoid saying, “it could have been worse”, or “you shouldn’t have let them do that” as these comments do not change or help the situation. Remain optimistic but avoid making promises that may not come true, such as “everything will be alright”.

• Be sensitive to changes in people. Changes in behaviour, mood and personality can be a warning signs that someone isn’t coping. Such warning signs should not be ignored. Ask the person if they are okay. If you aren’t convinced that they are, despite their response, seek help.

• Know your limits. Helping others deal with stress can be stressful. Do not let your own well-being suffer by taking on too many emotional problems of others. Use resources you have available to you, such as psychologists, doctors or chaplains. To make your friend feel more comfortable, you may like to go with them when they seek help.

Relaxation techniques

Using relaxation techniques on a regular basis can be very beneficial in helping us cope with the stress of day-to-day life. Anyone can use relaxation, almost anywhere and at any time. Relaxation techniques can be self-administered and with little practise, most people find them easy to master. When used on a regular basis, relaxation techniques can prevent stressful events from becoming cumulative stressors as they help to ‘break the stress cycle’. They can improve energy levels, vitality, concentration and memory and alleviate insomnia and fatigue.

Over the next few pages you will find strategies and scripts to help you practise relaxation techniques. Some people like to have these pre-recorded onto an .mp3 file, so they can simply listen to them. Others are comfortable reading/remembering the instructions for each. Choose what works for you.
Controlled breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Inhale deeply through your nose and hold the air for a count of three (inhale, two, three). As you inhale, the hand on your belly should rise higher than the hand on your chest. This ensures that your diaphragm is pulling air into the base of your lungs.

Slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of three (exhale, two, three). Once all the air is released, gently contract your abdominal muscles to evacuate any remaining air. You deepen respirations by completely exhaling, not by inhaling more air.

Repeat the cycle nine more times for a total of ten deep breaths, establishing a breathing rate of one breath every 6 seconds (or ten breaths per minute).

Progressive muscle relaxation

If you are lying down, lie on your back with your arms alongside your body, but slightly away from your sides. Turn your palms upward. Let your fingers curl so that your thumbs and index fingers form circles. Your legs should be slightly apart with the toes turned outward.

If you are sitting up, put your feet flat on the floor and sit with your spine straight but not stiff. Close your eyes.
Tighten your face muscles by squinting your eyes, wrinkling your nose and tightening all your facial muscles ... tight ... tight ... tighter ... really tense ... tenser ... then relax them completely. Inhale very deeply and slowly through your nostrils. Then exhale very deeply and slowly. Feel the tension and strain flowing out of your face.

Take your awareness to your neck and shoulders. Tighten them up ... really tight ... tighter ... tense ... tense ... tenser ... then relax completely. Inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly through your nostrils. Feel the tension and strain flowing away.

Become aware of your arms. Make a fist and tighten all the muscles in your arms. Tense up your hands, palms, forearms and triceps. Tighten them ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax. Let your hands and arms go completely limp in your lap or by your sides.

Take your awareness to your chest. Tighten all your chest muscles really tight ... really tense ... tighter ... tight ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax. Inhale very deeply and slowly ... and exhale very deeply and slowly.

Take your awareness to your legs. Stretch them out in front of you. Arch your toes and tighten all the muscles in your legs ... your thighs, your calves, your feet ... really tight then relax completely. Feel your legs sinking into the floor. Inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly.
Take your awareness from the very tip of your head to the very bottoms of your feet. Tighten the entire body ... make a face ... curl your hands ... arch your toes ... tense your arms ... chest ... stomach ... buttocks ... legs ... face ... tighter ... tighter ... even tighter ... then relax completely. Inhale very deeply and slowly through the nostrils ... exhale very deeply and slowly. Again inhale and exhale very deeply and slowly. Relax for a few minutes in this position, breathing normally.
Suggested exercises for specific muscle groups

There are a number of isometric techniques that can be used to help identify the feeling of tension in specific muscles. Some suggested exercises for specific muscle groups include:

• While sitting, slowly tense your leg muscles by crossing your feet at your ankles and pressing down with your upper leg while trying to lift your lower leg, or trying to pull your legs in opposite directions;

• Place your hands palm against palm, and press down with your top hand while trying to lift your lower hand;

• Place your hands under the sides of a chair and pull into the chair;

• Place your hands behind your head and interlock your fingers. Try to pull your hands apart while pushing your head backwards into your hands;

• Tightly grip an immovable rail or bar and let the tension flow up the arms;

• While standing, lock your legs stiffly straight, then release;

• Facial muscles can be tensed and relaxed in a variety of ways, often by exaggerating different expressions (e.g. smiling and frowning).
Simple meditative relaxation

Sit comfortably with your back well supported, your feet flat on the floor, your head in a comfortable alignment with your shoulders, and your hands in your lap. Close your eyes or let them be downcast.

Start your relaxation by taking your attention outside, into the distance, and begin to listen to sounds far away ... finding a sound ... being aware of it ... leaving that sound and searching with your mind for another ... just moving from one sound to another ... leave the sounds outside and bring your attention into this room (or into this building) searching for sounds close to you ... again just moving from one sound to another.

Leave the sounds and bring your attention to the whole of your body, sitting on the chair ... feeling comfortable ... relaxed ... be aware of your legs being so relaxed that the floor takes all the weight (and your knees probably roll in or out a little) ... be aware of all your trunk being supported by the chair ... no tension in your tummy muscles ... your shoulders feeling relaxed, your arms heavy and your fingers free ... feel your jaw release ... no tension in the little muscles around your eyes ... and your forehead so relaxed that it becomes smoother and free from the furrows of tension.

Take your attention to your breathing ... not controlling it in any way ... just observing it ... and as you breathe, start repeating a word or sound to yourself-just repeating the word ‘one’ or whatever word you prefer, each time you
breathe out ... using the constant repetition of the breath as a rhythmical pattern on which to repeat that word ... let your mind continue to dwell on that repeating word ... when thoughts or ideas or images come into your mind, it doesn’t matter ... just allow them to pass by and return your mind to focus again on the rhythm of the breath and that repeating word ... when you find you are daydreaming or your thoughts get busy, once you become aware that this has happened, let those thoughts go and return again to your chosen focus ...

Treat sudden sounds and disturbances in the same way ... if they intrude on your relaxation and you become aware of that sound, again just let it go, and return to repeating your word ... and ... if itches or bodily discomforts intrude, treat them the same way, too ... just let them go or if necessary move a little to rub the itch or change position and then leave that itch or discomfort and return again to the comfortable rhythm of the breath and the word you have chosen).

Continue now for some minutes in silence..... and now ... slowly ... cease repeating the word and cease being aware of the breath, and bring your attention back to the whole of the body sitting in this room ... as you start to come out of your relaxation think about the way you are sitting, the colours and furniture in the room around you ... start moving your hands .. and your feet ... and when you are ready ...
in your own time ... open your eyes ... stretch, rub your face and yawn if you wish .. and finish your relaxation feeling refreshed, alert and awake.

Sit quietly for a few moments before returning to normal activity.
Alcohol

On homecoming, your use of alcohol could present some risks that you may not have expected and may not be ready for and your family could see some behaviour that will be hard to explain. If you and your family are aware of the risks and consequences you should be able to celebrate your homecoming without problems.

Each deployment differs. Some are dry while others allow some consumption of alcohol. In either case, your tolerance to alcohol may be lowered during the course of a deployment. This means that you may become drunk quicker than you did before on the same quantity of alcohol. If you are not ready for it, you may be taken by surprise. Therefore you should moderate your alcohol consumption on your return. Talk to your mates and family and let them know that you plan to take it easy.
It is expected that you will celebrate your homecoming by having a few drinks with family and friends. We know from research and experience that on return from deployment you will be at increased risk of excessive alcohol consumption and binge drinking. We also know that there is often a tendency to use alcohol to deal with anxiety and adjustment issues. Sometimes you may find that you are drinking a lot without realising why. When you are feeling upset, angry or stressed it is not a good thing to try to escape from these feelings by using alcohol. It doesn’t work and will usually only make the situation worse. If you are experiencing problems, seek support through a Medical Officer, Psychologist, Chaplain or other mental health professional.

Drinking at risky levels can negatively impact all areas of your life, including your family and social relationships, health and career. This will ultimately increase the issues that cause you to drink in the first place.

The Australian Alcohol Guidelines outline low-risk alcohol consumption levels to help you make decisions to maximise your health and minimise risks. These guidelines state men and women, on average, should have no more than two standard drinks a day to reduce the lifetime risk of alcohol related disease. It is also recommended that you should drink no more than four standards drinks on any single occasion to minimise the risk of injury and accident. Your risk increases with each additional drink.
The figure on the next page provides information on what constitutes a standard drink. If you would like to assess your drinking, there is an excellent self administered tool on The Right Mix website. You can find it at http://www.therightmix.gov.au.

**Celebrating safely**

Whilst it is recommended you curtail your alcohol consumption upon return, it is realistic to expect alcohol will be consumed at many of your homecoming celebrations. Below are some practical strategies for celebrating safely and reducing potential risks associated with alcohol use:
• Plan where you are going, who you will be with, how much you are going to drink, and how you will get home. Consider tasks you need to do the next day.

• Start with a non-alcoholic drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking alcohol.

• Choose light beer or other low alcohol drinks

• Eat something before you start drinking.

• Drink one drink at a time. Pace yourself and drink slowly.

• Do something else while you are drinking, such as playing pool or dancing.

• Don’t leave your drinks unattended.

• Do not join a ‘shout’.

• Look out for your mates.

• Drink water between drinks and before you go to sleep to rehydrate.

Sleep

It is common for members to experience sleep disturbances upon homecoming. Normally it will take you a few weeks to return to your normal sleep pattern, once you have adjusted to your new surroundings and having someone else in bed with you. However, should your sleep difficulties fail to improve after a month, seek early assistance from your mental health provider.
Sleep is a basic necessity. It is as important to your health and well-being as diet and exercise. It helps renew your body, clear your mind and maintain mental and physical efficiency. The amount of sleep needed to operate effectively differs for everybody, however somewhere between 6-8 hours per night is a good guide.

**Sleep diary**

Keeping a sleep diary for a few weeks can be helpful in identifying behaviours which are contributing to your sleep disturbance. Record when you wake up, go to sleep, drink caffeinated beverages, exercise, eat, drink alcohol and any other suspected sleep stealers. Simple changes in your daily routine may vastly improve your quality of sleep.

**Tips for good sleep**

- Maintain a regular sleep pattern.

- Ensure your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable - you may need to wear ear plugs or use a white noise machine, like a fan, to block other noises.

- Unwind before going to bed (read, have a bath, listen to music).

- Practice relaxation exercises.

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine for at least 4-6 hours before bed.

- Refrain from exercise for at least 4 hours before bed.
• Use your bed for sleeping and sex only - do not eat, read or watch TV in bed.

• If you are tossing and turning, get out of bed and rest in a comfortable chair until you feel tired.

• Avoid day time naps.

• Do not stimulate your brain before bed by working on the computer or reading a thriller.

• Lower the room temperature. A cool environment improves sleep.

• Avoid using backlit electronic devices such as lap tops or iPads before bed.

**Anger management**

It is normal for returning members to experience an increase in frustration and anger on homecoming due to things taking longer or people working at a slower pace than you are used to. If this anger is not controlled, it can impact on every aspect of your life. Anger management helps soothe both your feelings and thoughts toward the situation.

**Signs of anger**

Below are common indicators of anger. Not everyone will display these reactions, nor is anyone likely to display all of these reactions at once. You may display some of these signs or you may display other signs which are unique to you.
• **Emotional.** Being nervous, anxious, keyed up, excessively worried.

• **Physical.** Heart pounding, rapid breathing, dry mouth and throat, trembling hands, headaches, eye tension.

• **Behavioural.** Short temper, withdrawing socially, change in appetite, sleeping difficulties, increased risk-taking behaviour, irritability, confusion, forgetfulness.

In order to manage anger effectively, you need to be aware of your personal signs and manage them before they become uncontrollable.

Anger can affect your ability to process information accurately, resulting in impaired judgement, decision making, and problem solving. If you find you have difficulty controlling your anger, listed below are techniques you may find helpful. These techniques help you understand, control and manage regulate your reactions more appropriately.

• **Relaxation.** Simple relaxation tools can help to calm down angry feelings. Try breathing deeply from your diaphragm, slowly repeating a calm word or phrase such as ‘relax’ or ‘take it easy’ or using imagery to visualise a relaxing place/experience.
• **Change the way you think.** When people are angry their thinking can become exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing exaggerated thoughts with more rational ones, e.g. “This is frustrating but it is not the end of the world”. Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix the situation.

• **Problem solve.** Anger can be the result of real or inescapable problems in our lives. Focus on how you can manage these problems. Make a plan to resolve the problem and check your progress along the way. Remember some problems can’t be solved, only managed.

• **Better communication.** Pause and think before you speak. Avoid saying the first thing that comes into your head. Listen carefully to what others are saying and take your time before answering. Be assertive. Present the facts, as you perceive them, use ‘I’ statements and acknowledge your feelings, make fair requests that are specific and achievable.

• **Humour.** Humour can be used to help ease tense situations. Rather than ‘laughing off’ your problems, use humour to help yourself calm down and so you can face your problems more constructively.

• **Change your environment.** Sometimes our immediate surroundings cause our irritation and fury, so try adjusting your environment and evaluate if the adjustment has helped.
POST OPERATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SCREENS (POPS)

Post-Operational Psychology Screens (POPS) are interviews conducted by Defence psychology personnel with Defence members, three to six months after the member has returned from deployment. These screens assess how the member is coping and integrating back in to life in Australia, and determine whether the member would benefit from additional education or professional help. Provided the member is willing and comfortable, their partner or a family member can request to attend.

During the POPS interview both the member and their partner are encouraged to discuss the impact of the deployment and how the member has reintegrated into home and work life since their return. Both the member and their partner will learn about behaviours which are normal and abnormal upon a member’s return, strategies to manage these behaviours and the services that are available to provide support and assistance.
CONCLUSION

Periods of separation are not always negative experiences. The difficulties and issues discussed in this guide do not always eventuate. Those at home and in the area of operations can benefit from new experiences that separation offers. Some positive changes that often occur are:

• Feeling more capable, having dealt with major challenges during the separation

• Being able to say things to your loved ones you couldn’t before, for example, telling them how proud you are of them

• Relating more closely to one or both parents when previously you could not

• No longer worrying about trivial things

• Family members learning to support each other through periods of stress

• Feeling a sense of purpose that previously wasn’t there

• Having more clear goals in life

• Becoming less self-centred, more patient, more ‘worldly’, more willing to help those in need
• Gaining a renewed appreciation of Australian culture and lifestyle

• Gaining a deeper appreciation of the value of life and loved ones

Remember

• Some things have changed while you were away

• Roles may have changed to manage normal chores

• Your expectations may be different to those of your partner, family and friends.

• Face-to-face communication may be difficult initially

• Friends/partners usually remember promises made by phone/letter/email

• Intimacy may be awkward at first

• Children have grown and may be different in many ways

• A ‘perfect’ reunion may not occur

• Partners may be more independent and have learned new coping skills

• Friends/partners may have new friends, jobs, support systems

• You may have changed in your outlook and priorities in life

• Previous problems may resurface
**Tips for coming home**

- Talk AND listen to others (partners, family, friends, children)
- Be supportive of the good things your family/friends have done
- Be prepared to make some adjustments
- Go slowly when re-establishing your place among family/friends
- Curb the desire to take control
- Go easy on stories about where you’ve been and what you’ve done (expect a little envy)
- Give each other a little space
- Reaffirm bonds with children
- Make individual time for your partner/children/family/friends
- Be patient with yourself/partner/children/family/friends
- Discuss openly how the family chores will be reallocated
- Avoid jumping to conclusions
- Avoid spending your savings too quickly
- Do not ignore problems readjusting - talk to someone
- Remember that separation was difficult for both those at home and abroad
Good luck. Prepare well for your homecoming. Take things slowly and be prepared for changes to your loved ones and situation. There may be some resentment or other problems that will have to be worked through. Be sensitive to stress reactions in yourself and be prepared to seek assistance in dealing with stress. Remember that if you need assistance, it is best to seek it early. The reintegration phase takes time, patience and considerable effort.
SUPPORT SERVICES

National Welfare Coordination Centre:

- A 24 hour point of contact and information service for families of all Defence personnel away from their home locations.
- Can pass urgent information to deployed personnel.
- Provides mailing addresses and postal regulations for overseas deployments
- Ph: 1800 801 026

All Hours Support Line:

- Available within Australia and overseas
- Confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families in crisis
- Available services include: psychology, medical, social work, and chaplain services.
- Within Australia - Ph: 1800 628 036
- Outside Australia - Ph: +61 2 9425 3878
Mental Health & Psychology Section:

- Make assessments and treat members experiencing psychological issues
- Conduct Post Operational Psychology Screens (POPS)
- Situated in health centres in most barracks

Chaplains:

- Attached to all levels of ADF
- Provide assistance at any time during and after a deployment, to the member in the AO and their family in Australia

Defence Community Organisation:

- Provide assistance to members and their families in all regional areas
- 24 hour crisis support in all military locations
- This support can be accessed through your local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day
Family Information Network for Defence:

- Phone service which provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern
- Confidential service available to members and their families
- Ph: 1800 020 031

Lifeline:

- Non-Defence organisation
- Provides access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services
- Ph: 13 11 14
- http://www.lifeline.org.au

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service:

- Available to veterans of all deployments and their families
- Provide services including individual counselling, group programs, psycho-education and alcohol reduction programs
- VVCS also have a 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046)