

## Reintegration Is Hard

He packs his bags and you say your goodbyes. You and the kids see him off. You return home. Three weeks go by and you're getting into your natural rhythm of deployment. Three months and you're well on your way. Six months, nine months, and then the day he is scheduled to re-deploy draws nearer and you are on pins and needles awaiting his arrival. You can't wait to have him home. It's so exciting. You love him so much. He arrives. You greet him, the kids greet him, and you all return home as one big happy family.

In the next few weeks everything is supposed to be blissfully wonderful but you've started to realize that things aren't exactly the way you expected them to be. There are big differences like your children's reactions to having him home, you both parent differently. The effects of your budget and spending once you realize there is no more "deployment" check. Then there are small differences, like when you realize on Tuesday night you don't want the same television show. You find this person in the bed next to you when you are used to sleeping sideways. Your laundry is now full of ACU bottoms and sweaty brown t-shirts. Or even the funny differences like let's face it, cereal is not going to cut it for family dinner night anymore.

You're not a complainer. You really did miss him. You love this man. You know many other women out there would love to be in your shoes and have their husband home right now. So why on Earth are you not happy?

Relax. You're normal. Redeployment is hard. That's all there is to it. We military wives are beating ourselves up thinking we're not normal. Wondering what is wrong with us and why this is happening. For some reason we think that the first ninety days our husband is gone it is ok for us to be sad. But when he returns we think we're supposed to immediately snap back into our old rhythm again. We need to cut ourselves (and each other) some slack. The fact of the matter is that we have been functioning without our spouses as a completely different family unit. Just like when we married our husband, or when we brought our children into the picture our lives have to go through a period of adjustment during reintegration.

We've been stressed, overworked and overtired for many months during his absence, and so has he. We automatically assume having help around the house and with our family will immediately make things better. Ironically, we've had no choice but to take control of our family's life and so relinquishing that control can be just as stressful as it was when it was required of us. Some husbands might automatically assume being home means they do not have to be constantly "on" and can take a break. If you were looking for some time off this can be a serious source of frustration.

Your husband's return can be both joyful and challenging (and sometimes both at the same time). [Military One Source](#) offers some tips to help ease the transition back into "normal". Those tips include planning a special homecoming, understanding that it's normal to feel out of sync with your spouse, easing into intimacy, being patient with

yourself and your spouse, spending time talking about both of your experiences during the separation, expecting your children to test the rules now that both parents are at home, making time to spend as a couple and as a family without all the distractions, and most importantly knowing when to seek help.

The best way to make sense out of what we're feeling is to recognize that we are normal, allow these feelings to take place and work through them, and to realize that stress, whether it be good or bad stress, all takes a toll on our bodies and emotions. Having your husband home is a blessing, but no one said adjusting back into your life was going to be easy.