YELLOW RIBBON REINTEGRATION PROGRAM®

Reintegration: How I See It

Facilitator Guide

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Reintegration: How I See It

Facilitator Note:

The following two symbols are used as indicators:
💻 (computer) indicates it is time to advance the slide on the associated PowerPoint;
✋ (hand) indicates there is an exercise associated with the content.

Essential class content is noted in ***bold****.*

All class handouts are available for download on the YRRP website at www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout. Unless otherwise specified as online only in the Materials section below, all handouts should be printed for distribution to class participants.

Class Description:

In this class, participants will compare and contrast feelings commonly experienced by Service members, family members, and coworkers during reintegration and discuss tips to facilitate successful reintegration.

Stage:

Post-deployment

DoDI:

1342.28 DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

The content of this class has been developed for the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State has reviewed the class and is responsible for content management.

Audience:

YRRP attendees

Time:

45 minutes

Equipment:

- Projector
- Laptop
- Pens

Materials:

- Facilitator Guide
- Core Material Checklist
- PowerPoint Presentation
  1. Reintegration: How I See It
  2. Objectives
  3. Goals of Reintegration
  4. Seeing Others' Perspectives
  5. Service Member Perspectives
  6. Single and Married Service Members
  7. Spouse and Partner Perspectives
  8. Extended Family and Friend Perspectives
  9. Child Perspectives
  10. Coworker Perspectives
  11. Tips for Successful Reintegration
  12. Review of Objectives
  13. Reintegration: How I See It
- Handout
  1. Reintegration Perspectives

Exercises:

1. Perspectives

Objectives:

After completing this class, participants will be able to do the following:

1. Compare and contrast feelings commonly experienced during reintegration.
2. Discuss tips for successful reintegration.

Introduction

SHOW Slide 1: Reintegration: How I See It

Facilitator Note:

Introduce yourself as the facilitator. State your name, military experience or affiliation, and perhaps one additional brief bit of relevant personal information that establishes your credibility (i.e., your professional training or experience).

Please limit your personal introduction to no more than 2 minutes to maximize the time attendees are able to engage with course content, practice skills, and participate in self-reflection activities.

First, let me say to our Service members, welcome home! I also want to welcome you to Reintegration: How I See It. Recognizing that everyone's reintegration experience is different and trying to see reintegration from other perspectives can make the reintegration process go more smoothly. **Trying to view the world through perspectives other than your own is a skill that helps you be more resilient as you reintegrate into your family and civilian workplace** (Sayers, 2011).

Let me ask some questions so we can get to know each other a little bit better. Raise your hand if the following questions apply to you.

PAUSE for a show of hands after each question.

How many of you have just returned from your first deployment?

Your second?

Your third?

How many of you came here today with your partner or spouse?

How many of you came with a parent or another family member?

SHOW Slide 2: Objectives

Let's review our objectives. After completing this class, you will be able to do the following:

1. **Compare and contrast feelings commonly experienced during reintegration.**

2. **Discuss tips for successful reintegration.**

SHOW Slide 3: Goals of Reintegration

A deployment can be an emotional experience for everyone involved – Service members and those at home. Now that the deployment is over, you may be thinking "It is done, we did it." That is true, but you may have some emotions regarding the deployment and your home life as you begin to adjust to the new normal. These feelings or emotions are normal and understanding what they are and how to deal with them can make reintegration easier for everyone.

Reintegration is the stage of the deployment cycle characterized by a Service member's reentry into civilian life, including reentering the civilian workforce. The reintegration stage encompasses the complexities of reentry into family, personal, and work life and the process of coping with individual physical or emotional changes.

Although many Service members, spouses, and children exhibit great strength and resiliency during the reintegration process, it is still common for individuals and families to have difficulties in this stage of deployment (Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015; Jensen et al., 1986).

Why do you think reintegration can be so challenging?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: people grow and change during deployment; everyone's expectations are different; everyone's experiences are different; need to get used to living together again)

In the past, **the reintegration stage** was believed to have lasted several weeks to months, but we have learned that this stage **can persist from months to years depending on the individual** (Peterson Air Force Base, n.d.). **To decrease the stress and facilitate a more successful transition for yourself, your spouse or partner, or other family members, you need a deeper understanding of the challenges that go along with you and your family's emotions or feelings; You will also need to talk about the changes, expectations, and experiences that come with reintegration** (Jensen et al., 1986).

Multiple Perspectives

SHOW Slide 4: Seeing Others' Perspectives

EXERCISE 1: Perspectives

Facilitator Note:

Handout 1 will be used. The purpose of this exercise is for participants to explore the range of feelings and perspectives likely to be experienced and/or expressed by others and to explore their own thoughts and emotions. This should take approximately 10 minutes.

Let's look at different people's perspective regarding reintegration to help us understand the reasons it can be challenging for everyone. For this exercise, we are going to divide into groups based on your affiliation. If you are a Service member, get into a small group with other Service members. If you are a family member or friend, please get into a group with other family members and friends. Go ahead and form your groups at this time.

PAUSE for participants to form groups.

When I give you the signal to begin this exercise, you will have about 5 minutes to brainstorm possible perspectives of those in the opposite group. After you finish, you will have another 5 minutes to discuss your own perspectives with your group. For example, if you are in the Service member group, you will first brainstorm how your family members and friends may feel. Then, you will discuss how you, as a Service member, are feeling. Use **Handout 1: Reintegration Perspectives** to record anything that you or your group come up with during discussion. After this exercise, the remainder of the class will be spent exploring different perspectives by reviewing the handout and discussing the perspectives of children and coworkers.

Service members, go ahead and take about 5 minutes to discuss the positive and negative thoughts and feelings you think your family members and friends might be experiencing now that the deployment is over.

Family members and friends, go ahead and take about 5 minutes to discuss the positive and negative thoughts and feelings your Service members might be experiencing now that they are home.

STOP the exercise after 5 minutes to have participants begin discussing their own perspectives.

Now, begin to discuss positive and negative thoughts and feelings you are personally experiencing during this reintegration phase.

STOP the discussion after another 5 minutes.

SHOW Slide 5: Service Member Perspectives

Let's start the discussion by looking at the thoughts and feelings of Service members.

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Family members and friends, what kinds of positive thoughts and feelings did your group come up with for the Service members?

Service members, what are the actual positive thoughts and feelings you are experiencing?

CLICK to bring up possible positive feelings (relief; pride; happiness; contentment [Bowling & Sherman, 2008]).

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Family members and friends, what kinds of negative thoughts and feelings did your group come up with for the Service member?

Service members, what are the actual negative thoughts and feelings you are experiencing?

CLICK to bring up possible negative feelings (work reunion worries; financial worries; loss of freedom; irritable; guarded; resentment; feeling overwhelmed; frustration [Bowling & Sherman, 2008]).

SHOW Slide 6: Single and Married Service Members

PAUSE for responses after each question.

What similar thoughts and feelings do single and married Service members have?

What are some differences?

CLICK to bring up single/married thoughts.

Single Service members may experience the following (Sayers, 2011):

- **Desire to reestablish living situation**
- **Changes in relationship with significant other**

- **Changes in friends and social life**
- **Feeling overlooked**

Married Service members may experience the following (Sayers et al., 2009):

- **Concerns about how spouse may have changed**
- **Concerns about how the children will react**
- **Feeling less important to the family**

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Were you surprised by the different feelings and perspectives shared? Why or why not?

What stood out the most?

SHOW Slide 7: Spouse and Partner Perspectives

Now, let's talk about spouses and partners, in particular.

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Service members, what kind of positive thoughts and feelings did your group come up with for spouses and partners?

Spouses and partners, what positive feelings are you actually experiencing?

CLICK to bring up ***possible positive feelings*** *(****relief; pride; excitement; appreciation; support; comfort; elation*** *[Sahlstein et al., 2009]).*

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Service members, what kinds of negative thoughts and feelings did your group come up with for spouses and partners?

Spouses and partners, what negative thoughts and feelings are you actually experiencing?

CLICK to bring up ***possible negative feelings*** *(****role confusion; anxious; irritable; restless; nervous; resentment; loss of freedom; concern about stability of relationship; apprehension about children's reactions; apprehension about perceptions of returning spouse*** *[Sahlstein et al., 2009]).*

PAUSE for responses after each question.

What similarities did you observe between the emotions felt by the spouses, partners, and Service members?

What about the differences?

SHOW Slide 8: Extended Family and Friend Perspectives

Now, let's talk about extended family and friends.

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Service members, what kinds of positive thoughts and feelings do you think extended family members and friends may have?

Extended family members and friends, what positive thoughts and feelings are you actually experiencing?

CLICK to bring up possible positive feelings (relief; pride; excitement; appreciation; support; comfort; elation [Sahlstein et al., 2009]).

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Service members, what kinds of negative thoughts and feelings did your group come up with for extended family and friends?

Extended family and friends, what negative thoughts and feelings are you actually experiencing?

CLICK to bring up possible negative feelings (resentment; feeling overwhelmed; frustration; readjustment; nervous; anxious).

PAUSE for responses after each question.

What similarities did you observe between the emotions felt by extended family members and friends, and Service members?

What about the differences?

SHOW Slide 9: Child Perspectives

We do not have any young children in the room, but let's look at reintegration from their perspective.

What kinds of positive thoughts and feelings do you think a child might be having?

PAUSE for responses.

CLICK to bring up positive feelings.

Children may experience the following positive feelings (Sayers et al., 2009):

- **Relief**
- **Pride**
- **Happiness**
- **Excitement**
- **Anticipation**

What negative thoughts and feelings do you think a child might be having?

PAUSE for responses.

CLICK to bring up negative feelings.

Children may experience the following negative feelings (Sayers et al., 2009):

- **Resentment**
- **Hesitation**
- **Shyness**
- **Clinging behavior**
- **Overly talkative**
- **Anger**
- **Fear**
- **Confusion**
- **Wonder if Dad or Mom will leave again**
- **Worry about how things will change**

PAUSE for responses after each question.

What similarities do you think there might be between the emotions felt by a child and Service members?

What about the differences?

SHOW Slide 10: Coworker Perspectives

Not only do you have to reintegrate with your family, you also have to reintegrate into the civilian workplace. Let's talk about your coworkers' perspectives. Do any of you work with Service members in your civilian workplace?

What kinds of positive thoughts and feelings might coworkers have as you return to work?

PAUSE for responses.

CLICK to bring up positive feelings.

Coworkers may experience the following positive feelings (Bull Schaefer et al., 2013; Riviere et al., 2011):

- **Happiness**
- **Relief due to more help**
- **Excitement**
- **Anticipation**
- **Elation**

What negative thoughts and feelings might coworkers have as you return to work?

PAUSE for responses.

CLICK to bring up negative feelings.

Coworkers may experience the following negative emotions (Bull Schaefer et al., 2013; Riviere et al., 2011):

- **Resentment**
- **Feeling under appreciated**
- **Upset about changes in work roles or personnel**
- **Readjustment**

PAUSE for responses after each question.

What similarities did you observe between the emotions felt by coworkers and Service members?

What about the differences?

ASK the following questions to wrap up the discussion on perspectives; PAUSE for responses after each question.

How helpful was it to look at the different perspectives?

Were you surprised at some of the similarities between Service members and other individuals?

What about the differences?

What were some areas you had not thought about?

How will this help you as you reintegrate?

How will this help you help one another as you reintegrate?

Tips for Successful Reintegration

SHOW Slide 11: Tips for Successful Reintegration

Now that you have thought about reintegration from different perspectives, here are some important points to remember.

Each of you has an idea in your head about how reintegration should go. Communicate those thoughts with each other to make sure the ideas are realistic, and that you and others are on the same page. **Remember to be patient**; **Service members may have many family members, friends, and coworkers with whom to reintegrate. Communication helps manage expectations which can lead to a smoother transition and reintegration for everyone** (Sayers, 2011).

What are some things you can do to show appreciation for each other?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answers: say thank you; write a letter of gratitude; give a card or gift)

Has anyone heard of writing a letter of gratitude?

PAUSE for responses.

A letter of gratitude is a letter to someone who has exerted a positive influence in your life, but whom you have not properly thanked. The letter does not have to be long, but **try to make it specific about what the person did and how his or her actions affected you. Creating a foundation of gratitude and positive feelings with a friend, family member, or coworker who supported you during the deployment may help with successful reintegration.**

Let's take 5 minutes now to **draft a letter of gratitude** to someone who is important to you. Use the back of your handout to complete this activity.

During the deployment, life continued, people changed, circumstances changed, and things are different from when the Service member left. That is normal. **Accepting that things are different and working with the changes, rather than against them, may help ease the reintegration process** (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Service members, dedicating one-on-one time with each important person in your life can help you recognize and understand some of those changes and give you the opportunity to communicate and reconnect.

Reestablishing intimacy is different for each relationship. For some it comes quickly, and, for others, it takes time. Either way is normal, but **you must dedicate time and energy to reestablish your relationships in a positive way** (Sayers, 2011).

Finally, it does not matter if you are the Service member who deployed or the family member who stayed home, deployment sometimes stinks! Experiences may have been very different, but the separation was probably challenging for all. **Avoid playing the "who had it worse" game; no one wins that game** (Sahlstein et al., 2009).

PAUSE for responses after each question.

Are there any tips you would add that you have found helpful?

How can these tips help you cope with or decrease some of the negative thoughts and feelings we discussed before?

Which points do you think are especially important for each group?

Summary

SHOW Slide 12: Review of Objectives

Communication and patience are important for successful reintegration! Keep in mind, your perception of someone else's reintegration experience may or may not be accurate (Sayers, 2011). How can you find out how someone is feeling?

PAUSE for responses. (Possible answer: ask him or her)

If you remember to periodically look at reintegration through the eyes of your family members, friends, and coworkers, keep in mind the reintegration tips we discussed and communicate; it is likely that you are well on your way to successful reintegration (Sayers, 2011)!

Let's see if we met our objectives:

1. **What are some of the similar thoughts and feelings Service members and family members are experiencing about reintegration?** *PAUSE for responses.*
   (Possible answers: relief; pride; happiness; resentment; irritable; loss of freedom)

2. **What are some of the different thoughts and feelings?** *PAUSE for responses.*
   (Possible answers: Service member may be worried about work reunion, feel guarded, overwhelmed, and frustrated; family members may feel apprehension about perception of returning spouse)

3. **What are some tips to keep in mind during reintegration?** *PAUSE for responses.*
   (Possible answers: be realistic; show appreciation; respect changes; one-on-one

time; reestablish intimacy; avoid "who had it worse"; be patient; communicate)

SHOW Slide 13: Reintegration: How I See It

What questions do you have about anything we discussed today?

PAUSE for responses.

Thank you, and please complete your evaluation for this class.

References

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