Plan Ahead

Handout available for download on the YRRP website at:
www.yellowribbon.mil/cms/event-handout

For this exercise, write a letter to a deployed parent who will soon be returning home. The goal is to describe for that person 1) how you have changed since he or she has been gone; 2) how the family has changed during the deployment; and 3) what you expect will change again when he or she comes home. By planning ahead like this, all family members can be thinking of productive ways to handle these changes instead of getting overwhelmed by them as they occur.

Dear Deployed,

We are all so excited about you coming home. I want reintegration to go as smoothly for our family as possible, so I've outlined a few things that might be important for us to talk about.

Ways I've changed since you've been away:

Things that have been different at home while you've been gone:

Things that will probably change again when you come home:

Ways I plan to help things go smoothly:

Roll with Change

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Below are two scenarios involving teens whose deployed parents are about to return home. Things are likely to change a lot, and these kids need some strategies for rolling with it to make the transition smoother.

Mark is 15. While his dad was deployed, Mark had to step up and help out a lot around the house. He took over several of his dad's chores, including mowing the lawn, doing all the raking and snow-shoveling, and cooking dinner two nights per week when his mom had to work late. Mark has gotten into the groove of doing these jobs and feels he has matured a lot since his dad left. He is worried that when his dad returns, his dad will want to go back to the old way of doing things and that he will treat Mark like a kid.

What are some of the changes Mark is likely to experience when his dad returns?

How does Mark probably feel about these changes?

What are some ways that Mark and his family could make the transition go more smoothly for everyone?

Keisha is 17. Her dad is due back next month following a long deployment. While he was gone, Keisha and her mom got really tight. They also got used to doing things their own way. They often eat ready-to-eat dinners in front of the TV, and Keisha has a lot more freedom now to go off with her friends. Keisha is worried that when her dad gets home he won't go for any of this.

What are some of the changes that Keisha is likely to experience when her dad returns?

How will Keisha probably feel about these changes?

What are some ways that Keisha and her family could make this transition go more smoothly for everyone?

Positive Problem-Solving

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The scenarios below describe some difficult situations that teens are having with their parents who have just returned from deployment. After going through each scenario, answer the questions below.

Joe's mom returned from deployment a month ago. While she was gone, Joe did a lot of growing up and became pretty independent. Although Joe was really happy when his mom first got home, he was not too pleased that she immediately started meddling in his life and treating him like he was a little kid. One Saturday Joe was headed out the door to meet up with friends when his mom called him back. "Hey," she said, "You cannot just walk out of here. I need to know where you are going and who you are with." Joe turned around and he…

How is Joe feeling right now?

What are three things that Joe definitely should NOT do right now?

1.

2.

3.

What are three things that Joe could do that might help this situation?

1.

2.

3.

Kaylee's dad returned from Iraq a few weeks ago. While he was gone, Kaylee changed her hairstyle and started wearing more mature clothes, and her dad is having a hard time with this. In addition to being more short-tempered and withdrawn than he was before he left, he is now super critical of everything Kaylee says and does. One morning she comes down with a new shirt on that he does not like. "Get upstairs and change into something decent!" he shouts. "And while you are at it get rid of that stupid black nail polish!" Kaylee turns to her dad and…

How is Kaylee feeling right now?

What are three things that Kaylee definitely should NOT do?

1.

2.

3.

What are three things that Kaylee could do that might help keep this situation from escalating?

1.

2.

3.