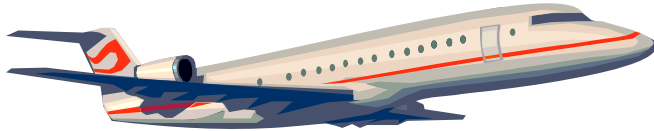
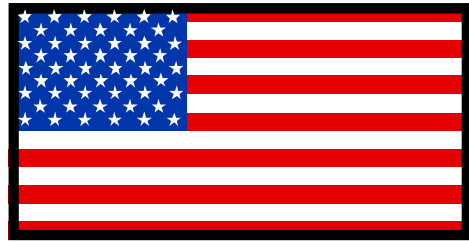
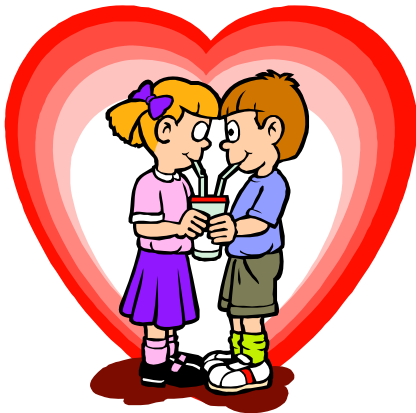


Heart's Apart



Part 1



Heart's Rejoined



REUNION

"A Handbook For Going Home"



HEARTS APART – HEARTS REJOINED

It goes without saying that everyone will have a reunion in some sense after Afghanistan and Iraq, and these reunions can be like the proverbial Chinese dish: it can be sweet, it can be sour, or it can be a mixture.

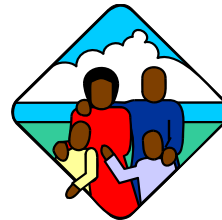
Part 1 of this booklet, “Hearts Apart—Hearts Rejoined”, will help assist you during transition. It addresses common issues for a successful reunion from an unaccompanied tour. The truth about leaving Afghanistan or Iraq is that there is more at stake in going home than having a celebration and clearing CIF.

The common thread in returning home is the realization that changes take place in individuals and in relationships. Nothing stays the same, and yet most people think that going home means returning to things the way they used to be. Life is, however, a process which keeps on happening even when a very special person is absent.

The reality is that we return as changed individuals to families that have grown in many ways. Healthy families and relationships recognize this and assist each other with continuing the growth process.

Golden Rule for Reunion:

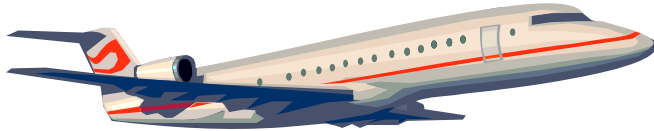
**“Always Respect Each Other
& Emphasize the Positive!”**



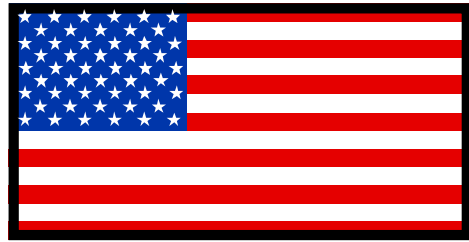
Going Home—from an unaccompanied tour always means change. You’ve changed, and your family has changed. And believe it or not, the changes may mean improvements! Here are some changes to expect and think about:

- **New Independence:** People pick up the slack when other family members are gone. It’s called compensation. Family members take on new responsibilities, make their own decisions, and set their own schedule. Be proud of their accomplishments and their growth!
- **New Rules:** Okay, so the family changed some rules while you were gone! There were probably good reasons to do so, and maybe they’re just “temporary amendments” to compensate for your absence. In any case, respect what they have done before moving in to bulldoze the way things are now running.
- **New Roles:** Sometimes mothers pick up the responsibility normally shouldered by fathers, and vice versa. Taking on somebody else’s role isn’t easy, and neither is it easy for people to give up those roles when the absent service member returns. The important thing is to negotiate changes when changes are necessary!

Heart's Apart



Part 2



Heart's Rejoined



REUNION

"A Handbook For Going Home"



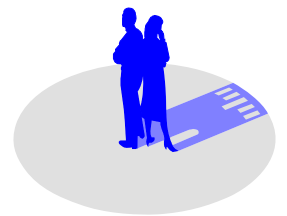
HEARTS APART – HEARTS REJOINED

Part 2 of this booklet, “Hearts Apart—Hearts Rejoined”, will help assist you during transition. It addresses common issues for a successful reunion from a deployment or an unaccompanied tour. The truth about leaving Afghanistan or Iraq is that there is more at stake in going home than having a celebration and clearing CIF.

COPING STRATEGIES:

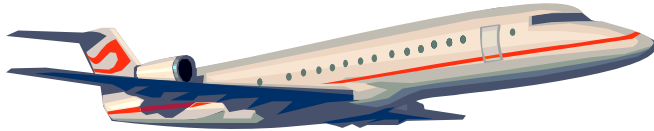
Coping strategies are important in any transition. There are tips and ideas on how to make the process work even when the going may be tough. Remember that families are unique, but there are some common coping strategies to ease the period of transition. Here are some good ones:

- **Communicate Openly:** Sounds easier than it is! The hard part is to listen to each person’s experiences. And here feelings are more important than words! This may come easier for females than males in that they are more accustomed to communicate feelings, but both partners need to be aware of the feelings. Remember, that even though it may be hard to listen to the feelings, it can be done. Pick up on the excitement and joys as well as the hurts & disappointments.
- **Remember Equality:** Avoid playing games like, “I had it harder than you did,” or “I’m here now and I’ll take charge.” Focus on what you can do together.
- **Learn New Skills:** Find out what new skills everyone has learned. You may be pleasantly surprised!
- **Practice Patience:** Go slow before reasserting yourself!
- **Solitude:** Arrange quiet time when it is convenient for the family.
- **Positive Attitude:** Eliminate the criticism. If given a choice, always, always look for the positive!

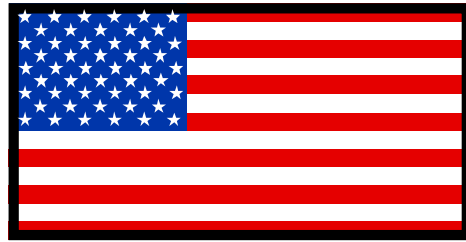


Don’t expect the old problems to have disappeared while you were gone. Now is a good time to think about the changes that you must face when returning home. Think also about the ways that you have changed. What coping strategies will work for you when you get home again? Think about it now!

Hearts Apart



Part 3



Hearts Rejoined



REUNION

"A Handbook For Going Home"



HEARTS APART – HEARTS REJOINED

Part 3 of this booklet, “Hearts Apart—Hearts Rejoined”, will help assist you during transition. It addresses common issues for a successful reunion from deployment or an unaccompanied tour.

CHILDREN AND REUNIONS:

A challenge for all soldiers is the reunion with their children. In most cases the parent will have a more difficult time adjusting than the child will. Children adapt quite well and quite easily—have you ever noticed when you PCS how the children first out the door to make friends? Of course this general rule doesn't apply all of the time. Sometimes children do have difficulty cope with the changes brought about by a deployment. Here are some things to consider:

- **Stay in Touch:** Keeping in touch is difficult and necessary during a deployment or separation. Sometimes keeping the communication up is extremely hard to do, and sometimes in spite of all we do, there are still problems. Realization of this will help you cope with the challenges better.
- **Appreciate Uniqueness:** Remember that every person and family member is unique with his or her own strengths and weaknesses. What works for one child; may not for another. Take some time to think about what will work best.
- **Make an Effort:** We will see the results of our efforts to stay connected with our children while we were gone. Positive efforts will produce a better reunion. Neglect of effort may produce bigger challenges, but now is not the time for regrets. Now is the time for action to improve our relationships.
- **Expect Reactions:** OK, so how will it be when you see the children again? Will they be excited, well behaved, well adjusted or can you expect an initial display of happiness followed by sulky, withdrawn, or even hostile behavior? Maybe both? Remember, children do adapt well, and their reactions to a parent's absence will depend on personality, past experiences, and relationships with other family members.
- **Set the Standard:** Key is the reaction of the parents to the absence. You set the standard. If a parent is comfortable with the absence and the reunion the child will be more secure about their own feelings.

HOW TO REDUCE CHILDREN'S BARRIERS:



- **Give Acceptance:** Children have the same confusing feelings that adults have, but at the same time they are not miniature adults. Treat them with love and respect even when they do “childish things.” Make sure they know how happy you are to see them again.
- **Give Accolades:** Children may be unsure what to expect. Will the returning parent be a stranger to them? Will they fear being punished for 12 months worth of bad behavior? Put their minds at ease by praising them for helping out while you were away.
- **Give Attention:** Change is just as stressful for children as it is for adults—probably more so because they have so little experience in coping with it. They may exhibit unacceptable behavior, so remember this before you punish a child for acting out. A good rule of thumb is to ask, “What is this behavior?” Most of the time it is an attempt to gain the parent’s attention.
- **Gain Understanding:** The children have grown physically, emotionally, and socially while you were gone; this is not the same child you left, so don’t expect the same behavior.
- **Get Involved:** There will be a readjustment period [typically 4-6 weeks] for the whole family. You can make this easier by reviewing schoolwork, family scrapbooks, or by asking about their activities and adventures.

If you bring gifts home; make sure that you have one of similar value for each child. What you give does not matter, but to forget a child could cause deep hurt. The memory of not receiving a gift when everyone else in the home did, can linger for a lifetime. Remember, that it is not always necessary to give a gift, because the greatest gift is to offer your attention, time and love to your children.

Your attitude and expectations will set the tone for the whole family when you get home. It’s important that your reunion be a good one for everyone concerned.