

COMING TOGETHER AROUND MILITARY FAMILIES:®

SUPPORTING OUR BABIES AND TODDLERS

REUNIFICATION

“More changes?
Are you kidding me?”
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Babies and toddlers often need even more
time and patience as they adjust
to a parent's return from deployment.



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www.zerotothree.org/military

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REUNIFICATION

A post-deployment reunion can be hard on babies and toddlers... everything is changing again!

- Keep in mind that as exciting as the reunion might be, it can seem confusing, even overwhelming, for a young child.
- A child may not go running into her returning parent's arms... she might need time. This is **not** a rejection of the returning parent, but a child's way of asking to go at her pace while everyone gets reacquainted.
- If a child is behaving in a way that's different than was expected, it could be for many different reasons. Individual temperament (his unique way of approaching the world), age, and stage of development are just some of the things that will influence a child's response to the homecoming.
- As the returning parent resumes his role in the family's daily activities, the parent-child relationship **can** be made stronger than ever!
- It is hard to think about, but babies and toddlers have a range of memory when it comes to the returning parent. What's important to consider is how the parent left "an impression" on her child prior to the deployment. These shared experiences are invaluable and helped make the child who he is today!

Here are some ways that the returning parent can reconnect with his baby or toddler:

- Read up on your child's stage of development. This will help you to better understand what your child is experiencing and how he might show it through his behavior. For information on early child development, you can visit the ZERO TO THREE Website at www.zerotothree.org.
- Remember to go at your child's pace. Be sensitive to your child's needs and signals. Perhaps your child needs to get used to having you around before he begins to enjoy the piggy-back rides and bear hugs. Every child is different.
- Talk to whoever cared for your child during your deployment. Find out what your child has been doing, what her routines are, what she enjoys and doesn't enjoy. If you are coparenting, it is important that you and your partner talk about **how** you would like to parent together.
- Enjoy your child and he will surely enjoy you! Play with him, sing to him, tell him stories, read books to him, take walks and go exploring with him. These are the everyday moments that will allow you to gradually recreate and even deepen your relationship.

