



**Military Families Learning Network - Family Development & Family Transitions
Project In Sight: The Joys and Challenges of Reintegration after Deployment
Transcript for Military Spouse Insights
October 27, 2016**

In preparing for *Project In Sight: The Joys and Challenges of Reintegration after Deployment* we wanted to collect information and insights from military families on their experiences around reintegration after a deployment. To do this, we put out a call to military Service members, spouses and family members and asked them to record a short video about their specific joys and challenges of reintegration using Flip Grid technology. All of the responses came from military spouses. We compiled and edited these responses into a short video that was used at the beginning of our Project Insight event. This is the transcript from the final compiled video.

To view the archived conversation held on October 27, 2016, go to <https://learn.extension.org/events/2719>.

Spouse # 1 (Katie, Army): We're happy to have him home, uh, happy to get to spend time and love on daddy that's been pretty virtual for the last few months. Um, so I think the overwhelming excitement, um, lasts for a good while in our house. Um, I'll say the challenges really have more to do with, um, communication and I think that, uh, for us, it was I was excited to have somebody home that would help with the garbage and the dishwasher, and I never voiced those things... I just assumed that they would be done. Um, and it didn't happen and then that got really frustrating. Uh, so I think throughout lots of integration time, we figured out that I need to make sure that I verbalize my expectations, um, and the things that will make things, life easier for all of us. Um, I make sure to give specific, um, places for my husband to have things to do with the children specifically. Like, he'll start doing the nighttime, the bedtime story or he'll pray with the kids at night. I mean we all do that as a family, but I just try and be very specific... YOU give everybody a bath or YOU, um, just something that they can look forward that daddy's gonna be doing, um, with them. Um, and that just seems to make it easier for us.

Spouse # 2 (Jenny, Army): I get a sense of pride out of maintaining our household and thriving while he's gone, not just surviving. I, we find joy in little things, um, and not having to be apart for dinner or, you know, going for walks in the neighborhood; just the little things that we didn't have before. Some of the obstacles are pretty obvious. You know, I've maintained the household for nine months to a year and I have my routine and I have my way of doing things.

Having him fit in our lifestyle, having the kids go to him when they get a boo-boo or having the kids ask him to do things with them, those are things that are really hard for us. Um, and he has trouble, because he forgets that he has more than one person to take care of; that he's got two kids that have to eat supper and not just a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for himself.

Spouse # 3 (*Lindsey, Army*): Your spouse is home and that they get to share in your life again. And, some of the challenges are, um, letting go of some of the things that you have just been holding on to so tightly while they were gone. And, you have to be everything, do everything for your family and just releasing some of those. Um, asking for help, even, can be a challenge. And just letting them, uh, back into your life.

Spouse # 4 (*Amy, Air National Guard*): Just the, um, the newness, the fact that they are back in your life for the first time after, you know, anywhere from a few months to a year. And, there's this kind of acquaintance period that's maybe sparking some new things and bringing some energy to your relationship. Um, because you haven't been connected, you know physically, uh, maybe, uh, there's been an emotional, um, kind of, uh, lull as well. So, there's this, uh, kind of spark of newness. I think with that also comes this, uh, you know, period of time, uh, where you are trying to figure each other out again. And that definitely brings about challenges of how do you, um, learn to let go of the things that you have owned for the time period. Um, and, how do you, you know, help your spouse know that they are needed again and they're trying to navigate the idea of being needed by a family and where they fit in.

Spouse # 5 (*Jenny, Marines*): The return of your spouse who has come back into your arms after, um you know, months of being gone for so long and, talking virtually like this or through snail mail. So, those things can be very exciting, um, a very exciting time for both, um, partners in the relationship. Um, some of the biggest challenges are definitely just readjusting and shifting the roles that you have been doing for so long and having your spouse kind of take over, um, some of those new roles and so I think a lot of it is about communication.

Spouse # 6 (*Kelly, Army*): Obviously we were really excited to have my husband back from deployment. But, my husband had left for deployment when our son was about, um, one and a half. And, just getting him reintegrated with our son and with our daily life was really, really challenging. Um, and we were not in the best place before he left; so just trying to work through our issues that we had basically put on a shelf was extremely difficult.