



Mental Health America of Franklin County

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Returning From War: Being a Couple Again

One of the first lessons learned by military spouses during a long separation is that coming home and being a couple again takes some getting used to. Through writing or phoning, you and your partner probably succeeded in staying close but, now that you're back, some fine-tuning may be needed for the relationship to run smoothly again.

Here are some tips on how to reconnect:

- **Expect everything to feel a little awkward at first.** It's entirely normal and can be part of the fun of reuniting.
- **Don't rush things.** Take some time to get to know each other again. To avoid disappointment, make intimacy – not sex – the focus of your reunion. Sex can resume immediately, but intimacy takes longer to re-establish.
- **Be sensitive to your spouse's needs.** Acknowledge the differences between men and women. Men tend to focus on the physical relationship while women may concentrate more on verbal communication and affection.
- **Communicate.** Talk with your spouse about your wartime experiences and what you're feeling. It will help relieve your stress as well as your spouse's.
- **Avoid power struggles.** It's very important to acknowledge the many responsibilities your spouse had to shoulder in your absence. Take time to ease back into your routine. This covers everything, from parenting to finances.
- **Check yourself emotionally to see if you've brought home any "extra baggage" (such as mood swings, or new bad habits) from the battlefield.** Encourage your partner to do the same and don't react negatively if he or she shares some observations about your behavior. Instead, do whatever is necessary to resolve the issues before they take a toll on your relationship.
- **Make the most of the homecoming opportunity.** This is your chance to address things about your relationship that you or your spouse didn't like before, or to build upon the intimacy you've always shared.

- **If the relationship becomes strained, get a “second opinion.”** All couples can benefit from the objective observations of another party. You have many options to choose from: your faith leader, a service chaplain, a family services counselor or a mental health professional. Keep your relationship strong by getting the help you need.

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.