



IMAGINE STEPPING INTO  
YOUR CHILD'S WORLD AND  
SEEING THINGS FROM HIS  
OR HER POINT OF VIEW.

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# Keeping routines during the return of a parent

Reunions create big changes for your whole family. During these changes, it is important that your children continue in many of their same routines. Knowing what to expect helps them to feel safer and more secure. Here are a few ideas to help you and your children maintain routines to help everyone cope during this time.

## Family Rituals

Rituals are activities that create a sense of family and feeling of bonding among family members. For example, family rituals or routines can provide a feeling of togetherness (*We belong together*), consistency (*We have a picnic in the park every Fourth of July*), identity (*We're a camping family*), and a way to teach values (*We join the Martin Luther King march each January*). When children take an active part in creating and practicing rituals, they feel connected and a part of something larger in their lives. In times of uncertainty and change, rituals can be the glue that holds a family together.

- Keep family routines (bedtime stories, mealtime chores, and Saturday morning pancakes) as normal as possible.
- Plan for changes in routine with the return of the deployed parent.
- Keep family rituals and celebrations (holiday celebrations, Saturday night at the movies, etc.).
- Help your children plan a special "Welcome Home" celebration.
- Include the returning parent in all family decisions.
- Remind your children that the same rules/limits apply now that the parent has returned.
- Give your children time to adjust to change at their own rate and in their own way.