



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Coming home

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

'Being away' often means that changes have occurred, both in the person coming home and in those who have remained at home.

In this age of modern technology, regular communication back home may have been taking place during separation. Sometimes however, this communication can be frustrating for all concerned because problems may be shared, but neither person can effectively help in the other location.

Therefore, it is important to realise that although you may have been e-mailing, messaging, video calling or talking on the phone, the type and quality of the communication is quite different to talking in person. Furthermore, although coming home is exciting and obviously something you, your loved ones and friends look forward to, it can also be stressful and will usually involve a period of readjustment. This period of readjustment doesn't have to be viewed as a 'roadblock' or 'stumbling block'; it can actually be used to build stronger relationships.

Expectations and tips

Some things may have changed at home such as taking on different roles, children have grown, and partners having become independent in new or different ways. You also may have changed in your outlook, your beliefs and your priorities. You may be looking forward to the 'perfect reunion', but remember that perfection (just like beauty) is in the eye of the beholder and your partner may have different hopes or expectations. Two tips to remember are:

'TAKE IT SLOWLY' and 'TALK AND REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER'

These tips are the building blocks for any relationship and they will help you get through the readjustment period.

Some other tips include:

- remember that people (including you) may have changed
- curb the desire to leap in and take over the reins
- acknowledge the good things your family and friends have done during your absence — limit any criticism
- go easy spending money — think and plan
- respect each other's personal/emotional space (including the children's) — you will need to get to know each other again
- sexual closeness may be awkward at first as your hopes and beliefs may be different from your partner's — talk openly and respectfully about this issue
- be patient with yourself, your family and your friends
- avoid using foul language
- previous problems may crop up again — do something about them this time
- include your family in any socialising
- be prepared to give and take
- with children, go slowly and adapt yourself to the new rules and routines that are now in place
- things that worked before may not work now; new strategies or techniques may be in place, so take the time to learn them
- schedule time to relax or unwind.

For those at home

The returning family member or friend may have changed, and they may now be more sensitive to a lot of things that were pretty normal before.

For example:

- they may be anxious or unsettled in crowds, in the rush and throng of a city or amongst the noise of family
- they may feel threatened by your new friends or supports and wonder how they can fit back into your life
- they may want to take back all previous responsibilities.

A few extra tips are — avoid scheduling too many things or activities, go slow and be patient. Remind the returning member that they are still needed and are still important to you. If you identify any readjustment problems, talk to someone early so that guidance or assistance can be provided to you and your family as soon as you need or want it. You can talk to your doctor, chaplain, or mental health professional — you and your family have a wide range of assistance available to you.



Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: www.defence.gov.au/dco

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises.

1800 801 026 or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WCS): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.