

## 7 Preparing for the Return of a Loved One

If you have heard that your loved one is coming home after many months of being away, how do you handle it? This can be a stressful time and sometimes leads to what has been called the post-honeymoon blues. Preparing for the return of a loved one brings many fantasies about what life will be like once reunited. But, imagined life and real life may not match. Overwhelming disappointments may lead to anger or depression.

For the returning parent, expect that infants may not know the parent who has been away. Toddlers may be slow to warm-up, and preschoolers may feel guilty, scared, or angry over the separation. School-agers may vie for attention and teenagers will be moody, appearing disinterested.

*So what should you do?*

1. Be patient with partners and children of all ages.
2. Spend time getting to know one another again; even suggest that it is like dating again.
3. Go slow with decisions, even seemingly small ones (like picking a restaurant or what to have for dinner).
4. Lower your expectations so you are not disappointed.
5. Don't over schedule the first few weeks. Allow time to unwind, acquaint, and renew.
6. Schedule both parent time and family time. Tap your support system for child care to allow some alone time.
7. Avoid overspending and going out all the time. This serves as a postponement of becoming acquainted.
8. Know what community agencies can be supportive if you or someone in your family needs some support or a counselor then don't be afraid to reach out and get the extra help you need!

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