

COMING TOGETHER AROUND VETERAN FAMILIES : TM

SUPPORTING OUR BABIES AND TODDLERS

TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE

“More changes?
I’m so confused!”



Babies and toddlers often need time and patience as they adjust to a Veteran’s return to their civilian home and lifestyle.



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TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE

As Veterans and their families transition from military to civilian life, they may experience many changes. These transitions can be hard on babies and toddlers...everything is changing again!

- Keep in mind that each family and family member may have different feelings about the change from active duty to Veteran status. Young children may pick up on family members' mixed emotions and feel confused or uncertain.
- If there is a move associated with the transition to Veteran status, your child may be feeling confused about the pack-up; missing family, friends, or neighbors; adjusting to changes in child care; dealing with changes in daily routines; and getting used to his new surroundings. The move can be tough on everyone! Try to be patient as your child makes sense of the flurry of activity and changes that are happening around him.
- If the Veteran has just returned from a deployment, try to remember that your child may need time to become reacquainted with his parent, as well as adjust to all of the changes in family roles and routines.
- If your child is behaving in a way that's different than was expected, it could be for many different reasons. Individual temperament (his unique way of approaching the world), age, and stage of development are just some of the things that will influence a child's response to

changes at home.

- As the Veteran resumes his role in the family's daily activities, the parent-child relationship can grow stronger than ever! Here are some ways that the Veteran parent can reconnect with his baby or toddler as the whole family transitions to civilian life:
 - Read up on your child's stage of development to get a better sense of what he is experiencing and how he might show it through his behavior. For information on early child development, visit www.zerotothree.org.
 - Remember to go at your child's pace. Be sensitive to your child's needs and signals.
 - Perhaps your child needs to get used to having you around before he begins to enjoy the piggyback rides and bear hugs. Every child is different.
 - Talk with your partner about how you would like to parent together. Even if you and your child's co-parent do not live together, it is important that you talk about how to be consistent with, and meet the needs of, your child.
 - Enjoy your child and he will surely enjoy you! Play with him, sing to him, tell him stories, read books to him, take walks, and go exploring with him. These are the everyday moments that will allow you to gradually recreate and even deepen your relationship.

Photo credit: Debbie Rappaport



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

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