

Quotes from Karen Pavlicin, author of *Surviving Deployment and Life After Deployment*

"When I began to talk with military families about a book on reunions, I quickly realized that the most powerful part of the book idea was the stories themselves. Each person I interviewed eagerly told his or her story for just that reason: *maybe my experience will help another military family.*"

"The time you were separated from your loved one in this deployment can seem like a long time, but no matter how long this deployment was and no matter what your relationship is to the person deployed, this deployment was a very short time compared to spending your life together. You might compare it to a pregnancy, the toddler years of your life, one job out of a career. It is one experience. An important one, but still just one aspect."

"During deployment most of us have a hard time taking care of ourselves first when there is so much else to do and worry about. And during reunion, we may feel guilty for spending time on ourselves instead of giving each moment to our loved ones. When your family is back together again, it can seem selfish to take time for yourself, but taking time to renew your own well being will give you more energy, a clearer mind, and much more patience as you contribute to your reunion."

"Communication is the number one thing families say keeps them together during deployment and makes reunion transitions easier. Letters, love notes, phone calls, email, care packages, whatever type of communication works best for you, do it frequently and make it part of your daily life. And then maintain that time to communicate when you are together again."

"Children have little control over their environment and most of the time feel they have no say in anything. During a deployment, they have a heightened awareness that they can't control world events and the dangerous situations their deployed parent may be in. They had no control over their parent leaving for the deployment and no say in when their parent will return home. They may resent changes that affect them and have mixed emotions about the future. Whenever possible, give them a choice. They can help plan a menu, have a say in rewards or consequences for broken rules, or choose from a short list of fun activities. Explain directions. If they know the steps, they'll be more confident in the outcome. Plan ahead. Kids often act out when they are stressed, in a rush, or surprised. Allow extra time to get to places so you are all less stressed when you get there."

"During the first few days at home, there are physical adjustments to time zone differences, jet lag, and a completely new schedule. The intensity of the deployment (especially for those in humanitarian efforts or dangerous situations) is suddenly replaced with the routine of life at home. Their entire surroundings have changed, from a sleeping bag on the ground or a cramped bunk to a comfortable bed and quiet house at night, from taking orders to answering family questions. The service person may have trouble communicating, eating, sleeping, or being intimate."

"Most couples and families adjust positively within a few weeks or months depending on the circumstances of the deployment and reunion. However, it's important to recognize signs that you are not getting back in sync or that you're doing so in a negative way. Danger signs include depression, social isolation, substance abuse, excessive anger, and violence."

"There are many military family reunions that have a happy ending, as well as many that go through serious challenges. I wrote this book to let military family members know that no matter how difficult the journey, they are not alone."

"When we have faith and a sense of humor, we help each other get through whatever else comes."