

# VETERAN PARENTS WITH INFANTS

(BIRTH – 1 YEAR)



**VETERAN PARENTING TOOLKIT:  
TOGETHER BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES**



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*Note:* This booklet is intended to provide general information only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for individualized mental health services. If you have concerns about a specific situation, contact your health professional directly.

**If you feel depressed for more than a couple of days, are unable to care for your child, or have thoughts of hurting your baby or yourself, please call your doctor or pediatrician immediately.**



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## WELCOME

Congratulations on the new addition to your family! Having a new baby can be incredibly exciting yet also stressful. Everything in your family life has probably changed—even basic things like your sleep schedule, your couple and “personal” time, and your other relationships.

As you well know, newborns don’t come with instruction manuals, and all new parents have lots of questions. This is normal. This guide is designed to help Veterans and their families better understand and relate to their infant child, especially following deployment.

Having a new baby challenges parents to work together as a team, as you need to discuss and negotiate many daily decisions. New parents have to figure out who does what, when, and how—everything from nighttime feeding, changing diapers, walking the dog, unloading the dishwasher, paying the bills, and even basic things like when each parent gets to sleep and eat. As you share and juggle the household and baby duties, don’t be surprised if you sometimes have different opinions about how to perform these tasks. That’s common and ok. There’s no one “right” way, so respect each other’s approach. When families are welcoming a parent back into the family after a deployment, parenting an infant can be extra challenging.

We created this booklet to remind you that

- You are not alone.
- Many families are experiencing similar challenges.
- Resources are available to support you in being the best parent you can be.

Congratulations on your commitment to parenting and your interest in learning more about your child.

## DID YOU KNOW?

At birth, infants cannot see very far away. In fact, they can see objects only about 1 foot away. So, if you want them to see you clearly, you have to get close.

Babies 3 months and younger tend to sleep 16–20 hours per day, and they may wake up one or two times during the night. But, sleepless nights for parents don't last forever! Babies six months and older usually can sleep about seven straight hours—almost a whole night—before they need a feeding. Hang in there!

Infant brains take up a lot of their total body weight. In fact, their brains compose 12% of their total weight (while adult brains are only 2% of their total weight). This means babies are “top heavy,” and it's important that you support your baby's head and neck while these muscles develop.

Ever wonder why babies are always touching stuff? The sense of touch is the first sense to develop. They begin by using their lips and cheeks to explore the world.

Crying is the primary way that infants communicate. It's not a sign that they are “bad babies”—crying is their way of letting you know their needs. Research has found that babies whose parents quickly respond to their cries end up being less fussy.



Infants, even at birth, know their mom's smell and can recognize her voice. Babies quickly attach to the important people in their environment, such as parents, caregivers, brothers and sisters.

Babies will have around 2,000 or more diaper changes during the first year. So take some time to thank your parents for all the diaper changes they did for you!



## WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT IN YOUR BABY'S FIRST YEAR?

As a parent, it can be helpful to know what to expect and when your baby will begin certain new behaviors. Let's review the major changes that occur in a child's first year of life. We will look at the physical, social, and intellectual development in this section.

*Please note:*

No child follows exactly these milestones. The timetables are just a guide for what "average development" looks like. Remember that development is not a competition, and it's usually not helpful to compare your baby to other babies. If you have any concerns about your child's development, please talk to your doctor.

### Physical Development

Babies change more during the first year than any other time in their lives. What an exciting time to watch your baby grow!

#### Birth – 1 Month

Moves head from side to side

Sees objects up to 10-12 inches away

#### 1 – 4 Months

Grasps objects with fingers

Lifts head for short periods of time

Smiles more in responding to you

#### 4 – 6 Months

Visually recognizes people from a distance

Recognizes voices and sounds

Shows interest in "new" things, such as new colors, shapes, and sounds

Sits with some support

#### 6 – 12 Months

Moves objects from one hand to the other

Rolls over in both directions

Sits on own

Crawls

Can stand and may do some walking





## Social and Intellectual Development

Your baby isn't just growing bigger. Newborns are learning every day about the world and people in it. By playing with your baby and responding to his/her needs, you are helping your baby learn and develop.

### Before 6 Months

### 6-12 Months

Identifies familiar adults

Recognizes him/herself in a mirror

Recognizes his/her parents

Responds to his/her name

Shows basic emotions like happiness, sadness, or anger

Prefers known caregivers

Communicates needs and feelings

Imitates others and enjoys positive responses

Explores objects with the mouth and hands

Uses hands to communicate

Calms down when comforted

Understands simple language (and may say first words)

Adapted from: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-development](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-development)  
[www.nccc.org/Child.Dev/todd.dev.html](http://www.nccc.org/Child.Dev/todd.dev.html)

## RECONNECTING WITH YOUR INFANT AFTER DEPLOYMENT

So, you get off the plane, run into the arms of your family, enjoy all the homecoming festivities, greet your beautiful baby, and suddenly have this amazingly close connection to your infant, know everything about your baby's unique routines and needs, and are ready to jump into 24/7 parenting (dirty diapers, middle of the night feeding and all), right?

Typically, NOT! This may feel like a culture shock for you, and it's important to give it time. For some families, the adjustments go smoothly, while it takes longer for others. With time and some effort, you and your baby can create a strong, happy relationship.

Just like adults and children, each infant is unique and will vary in how they react to their returning parent. It may help to know that

- Your infant may not recognize you at first. Don't worry, as babies learn quickly and respond well to people who love them and meet their needs.
- Don't be surprised if your baby is fussy, pulls away, or clings to the person who cared for him/her while you were deployed. This can be tough, but know that it has nothing to do with you. Babies need some time to adjust to new people and situations. Strive to be patient and understanding.
- The strong emotions surrounding homecoming can be both exciting and confusing for young children. Your baby may temporarily show changes in eating or sleeping routines.

“The homecoming was amazing. But then it's the day after and the day after that, and this feeling of what now?”

Sergeant Major Jason Peach quoted in *The Guardian* (2007, December 1) by Dave Hill.  
“We won't know for a long time what this has done to us.”



## TIPS FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR INFANT

Although some parents instantly feel close to their babies, it can take time for other parents to feel connected. Developing a close bond with your baby takes time and effort. The energy is well worth it, as doing so usually helps you feel happier and closer. Research also shows that bonding with babies helps increase their brain development, helps them sleep and eat better, and even improves their immune system.

### How Can You Develop a Strong Connection With Your Baby?

Some parents struggle with how to go about feeling close to their babies—after all, you cannot carry on a verbal conversation or ask your infant how his/her day was. But there are many great ways you can connect with your child. Consider these:

#### Be Close and Touch

- Hold and cuddle your baby close enough so he/she can see your face. Remember, newborns can see only about 6-12 inches away.
- Talk to your new baby in a soothing voice. Repeat the child's sounds.
- Always hold your baby during feeding.
- Hold your baby in just a diaper to give skin-to-skin contact.
- Use slings or carriers. You can get a lot done with your hands free, and your baby is close to you.
- Give your baby a massage.
- Have some time when you give your baby 100% of your attention, without distractions like the TV, phone, or computer. Even a few minutes a day makes a big difference.



## Play

- Play games with your baby, such as peek-a-boo, patty cake, and “this little piggy.”
- Play with your child using soft toys that are not small or sharp. An infant feels objects with his/her lips, cheeks, and mouth.
- While playing with toys, move them far enough away to encourage your child to stretch and strengthen muscles.
- Introduce new objects that vary in color, texture, taste, and size (nothing small enough to fit in your child’s mouth).
- Give your child opportunities to socialize with other infants, children, and adults.
- Get outside! Take your baby for a walk or sit on a blanket outside.



Overall, you are teaching and showing your baby that he/she matters to you. Try to respond to your baby’s needs (feeding, diaper change) in a timely manner. When you do so, your child learns that you are dependable, trustworthy, and caring.

## Special Tips for Partners/Family Members

- Give your returning partner support in getting to know your baby again. This can be a special time for the two of you as you “ooh” and “aah” over your beautiful baby.
- Your Veteran may have some great ideas about how to parent. Your baby may respond to these new techniques well, so be creative and try them out! As long as the baby is safe, it’s ok for your Veteran to do things differently than you.
- Work together with your Veteran to include him/her in your child’s daily routines. For example, you may decide that the Veteran always reads books to the children before bed. Tricky as it may be for you, try to let your Veteran create his/her own routines and ways of doing the task instead of jumping in with “No, that’s not the way I do it. . . .”

Adapted from: [www.welcomebackparenting.org](http://www.welcomebackparenting.org)

## SPECIFIC ISSUES WITH INFANTS

Parenting an infant can be both challenging and rewarding. This section contains suggestions on how to deal with some of the most common issues faced by parents of infants, including: crying, sleep, and worries about spoiling your child. If you have concerns about other issues, talk to your child's healthcare provider or look at some of the resources listed in the back of this booklet.

### Crying

For many parents, dealing with their baby's crying can be stressful. Check out these interesting facts about crying:

- Crying is one of the first ways an infant learns to communicate his/her needs.
- Crying can mean that your baby is tired, hungry, unhappy, or upset, but sometimes it's hard to figure out what he/she is trying to tell you. Remember that it gets easier with time and as you learn your child's signals.
- Babies normally cry one to three hours a day. Excessive crying is more than 20 straight minutes or more than three hours a day.

It can be helpful to create and maintain a daily routine. Keeping a daily log of mealtimes, sleep, and your baby's mood can also help you identify the message behind the crying.

When your child is crying you may:



1. Experiment with the following ideas to discover what works best for your baby.
  - Swaddle your baby.
  - Rock your baby.
  - Make loud "Shssing" noise.
  - Hold your baby in a sling or carrier.
  - Take your baby for a walk.
  - Give your baby a bath.
  - Change your baby's position.
  - Turn on a fan.
  - Play calming music.
  - Give your baby a pacifier.
  - Sing to your baby.
  - Run the vacuum cleaner.
  - Use a baby swing or bouncy seat.
  - Take your baby for a ride in the car.
  - Massage your baby with lotion.
  - Take your baby to a dark, quiet room.
  - Pat your baby's back.
  - Snuggle by using skin-to-skin contact.

- 
2. If you become overwhelmed by your child's crying, **do not shake your baby**. Instead, place him/her in a safe place such as the crib, remove yourself from the area (go to another room or the porch), and call someone to listen and get support for yourself. Shaking your baby can cause brain damage and serious injury. So, even if you are very frustrated, it's very important that you never shake him/her.

To learn more about crying, you may want to check out these websites:

**Mayo Clinic:** [www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-baby/PR00037](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-baby/PR00037)

**University of California Children's Hospital:**

[www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/edu/wellBaby/crying.html](http://www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/edu/wellBaby/crying.html)

**Cleveland Clinic:** [http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/Colic/hic\\_Colic.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/Colic/hic_Colic.aspx)



## Sleep

Whoever coined the phrase “sleeps like a baby” clearly never had one! Adjusting to your infant’s sleep schedule and helping him/her learn to sleep longer periods of time can be very challenging. Remember: Eventually your baby will learn to sleep through the night.

### The Facts About Babies’ Sleeping Patterns

- Newborns (0-3 months) sleep 16 –20 hours of the day but often in chunks of 1-3 hours at a time.
- As babies get older, they can sleep longer. At 3-6 months, most babies can sleep up to 5 hours at a time. Nighttime feedings become less frequent.
- Older infants (6-12 months) usually can sleep up to 9-12 hours at a time, and many don’t need a middle-of-the night feeding. Yippee!

### Helpful Tips

#### During the day

- Try to keep your baby active during the day (in hopes he/she will sleep for longer periods of time at night).
- Try to keep daytime naps under two hours.
- Have your baby take naps in the same location as he/she sleeps at night. Put him/her down for naps while he/she is still awake but tired. This will help your baby learn where and how to fall asleep.

#### At bedtime

- Create a soothing bedtime routine and follow it **at the same time** and **in the same order** every night. You may choose to include: bath, story time, massage, rocking, songs, and/or prayers. You may also want to dim the lights, reduce loud noises, and play soothing music.
- For sleep safety, always place your baby on his/her back on a firm mattress with no pillows, blankets, stuffed animals or other soft items in the crib. Even crib bumper pads can be dangerous for babies. Remember “Back to Sleep!”
- Consider swaddling your baby. Swaddling is a way to wrap a baby in a blanket that is calming for many infants. For information on how to swaddle, check out the American Academy of Pediatrics website:  
[www.aap.org/practicingsafety/Toolkit\\_Resources/Module1/swaddling.pdf](http://www.aap.org/practicingsafety/Toolkit_Resources/Module1/swaddling.pdf)
- As with naps, put your baby in the sleeping area while he/she is tired but still awake. This

will help your baby connect the bed with sleep.

- If your baby is fussy when put in bed, try touching/rubbing him/her while talking in a soothing voice.

#### In the middle of the night

- When you feed or comfort your baby at night, do so as calmly and quietly as possible, with minimal light, noise, or conversation.
- Babies will move and make noise at night; it is ok to wait a few minutes before going in to comfort him/her. You want your infant to eventually learn how to fall back asleep on his/her own.



To learn more about your infant's sleep, you may want to check out these websites:

**Sleep Foundation:** [www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep)

**Kid's Health:** <http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/sleep/sleepnewborn.html>

**American Academy of Pediatrics:** [www.aap.org/healthtopics/Sleep.cfm](http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/Sleep.cfm)

## Spoiling

One goal of parenting is to raise children who are well behaved and respectful. Some parents fear that they may spoil their baby if they respond to their baby's cries or hold him/her too much. Research is clear; **you cannot spoil a baby**. In fact, the more you comfort a small baby, the less likely he/she will be fussy down the road. Also, meeting a baby's need is a great way to help raise a confident child.

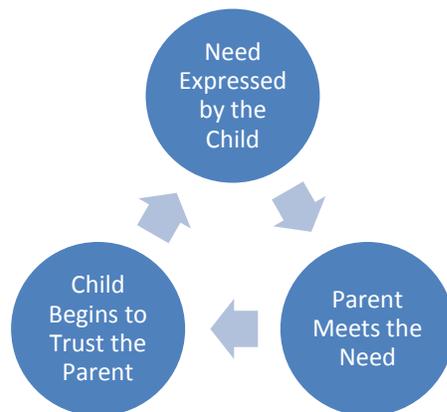
Eventually you will learn to tell the difference between your child's wants and needs, and you will say "no" to some of his/her wants. However, in the first few months of life, a baby's wants and needs are the same. When your baby cries – for food, sleep, or simply to be held – the best thing you can do is to respond to his/her need quickly.

The major task of infancy is learning about the world and about the people the baby can depend on in his/her environment. When you feed your hungry baby or change a dirty diaper, you are sending the following messages:

“I notice your need.  
I care about you.  
I will help you when you need me.  
You can count on me.”

Basically, as you see in the Cycle of Trust (below), you are teaching your baby that he/she can trust and depend on you. On the other hand, if you consistently ignore your baby's needs, he/she will lose confidence that you (and others) are trustworthy.

### Cycle of Trust



This cycle of trust is not formed by one interaction. Rather, it's formed and shaped by repeated interactions over time. No parent responds immediately to every single need expressed by his or her child, but striving to respond kindly and in a timely way will have lifelong positive outcomes for the child.

## WHAT ARE RED FLAGS FOR CONCERN WITH YOUR BABY?

Sometimes it's really tough to know if your baby's behavior is "normal" or if you should call the doctor. You know your baby the best, and you know when his/her behavior has changed from what is "normal" for him/her.

Research has found that the following behaviors may indicate some difficulties in infants:

- Crying for more than 4 hours/day or for more than 20 minutes at a time
- Having difficulty calming down and being comforted by you
- Showing considerable changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Having significant delays in milestones discussed in the development section of this pamphlet

Remember: Babies (like adults) have bad days—this is normal! You may see more difficulties during times of higher family stress such as when a Veteran returns after a deployment; these short-term reactions usually go away with time. However, if problems last more than a couple of months, your child and family may benefit from talking to a healthcare professional.

Adapted from: [www.welcomebackparenting.org](http://www.welcomebackparenting.org)

*Note:* If you find yourself struggling with anger, substance abuse, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, parenting a newborn will likely be more challenging. One of the most important things you can do for your baby is get support for yourself. It may be valuable to seek professional help if you find yourself reacting poorly to or feeling overwhelmed by your baby.



## WHO SHOULD YOU CALL IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS?

If you need moral support or a “listening ear” about parenting, you may want to contact

- A friend (especially one who has children!)
- A relative
- Someone from a community organization (such as your church, book club, etc.)

If you want to gather more information about a specific issue, you can

- Check out a book at the library.
- Look online at the helpful websites in our resource list.
- Ask your pediatrician for information on the topic.
- Talk to your childcare providers.

Other helpful resources include your

- Pediatrician or child’s doctor
- Nurse line
- Mental health professional
- Department of Human Services
- Community/county health department
- WIC (Women, Infants and Children) office





## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AS A PARENT

Being a parent is probably one of the most difficult jobs you will ever have, but also one of the most rewarding. You are truly one of the most important people in your baby's life—an amazing opportunity, but a big responsibility, too.

It's easy to glamorize the job of parenting when you see pictures or watch movies of happy families, with everyone smiling, a beautiful baby bouncing in someone's arms, and the family off for a fun day at the zoo. Those special times are great—but you usually don't see the parents struggling with loads of dirty laundry, their exhaustion due to middle-of-the-night feedings, the dozens of dirty diapers, their worry about their child's first ear infection, and the decreased patience they have with their partner. All those parts of parenting don't look quite as exciting, but are very real, and can be stressful for all parents.

So, it's incredibly important that you as a parent take good care of yourself. What energizes one parent may not work well for another, so you may experiment with different options. Remember that you're being a good parent by taking time for you! Here are some suggestions that many parents find helpful:

- Remember that this is a phase of your life. You will eventually have more time for yourself. Try to enjoy this time with your baby!
- Remember to do the little things that help you feel good, such as showering and brushing your teeth.
- Make time for regular physical exercise. You can be creative and include your baby (like walks with the stroller), or explore childcare options (like Mom's Day Out) for a solo workout at the local gym. Physical exercise is the very best technique for managing your stress.
- Try to get enough sleep. Sleep when your baby is sleeping.
- Work to create some "alone" time every day. Perhaps your family or friends can help with childcare to allow for this time in your schedule. Getting the baby to bed in the early evening can give you several hours to spend by yourself or to share with your partner.
- Connect with supportive friends and family members. Although exchanging text messages and chatting on Facebook can be great, there's nothing like spending quality time together, even if it's just a short chat over coffee.
- Be creative about ways you can include your baby in the activities you love or enjoy. Enjoy gardening? Bring your baby out to watch. Enjoy reading? Take your infant with you to the coffee shop or library. You don't have to change your entire life for your baby, and there are hundreds of ways to include your children in the things you love.

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- Practice regular relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, prayer/meditation, and muscle relaxation. You may find relaxation audio CDs to be calming as well.
  - Lower your expectations for yourself. Napping may be more important than cleaning, and sandwiches for dinner are just fine.

Part of being a good parent involves knowing when you feel overwhelmed and need a break. What can you do when your stress level is high?

- Ensure that your child is safe, and go into another room for a few minutes to calm down.
- Find someone to care for the baby, or put him/her in the stroller and take a walk or a jog.
- Take several deep breaths.
- Schedule a pleasant activity (for you alone or with your partner or friend)
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member. Ask for help!





## RECONNECTING WITH YOUR PARTNER AFTER DEPLOYMENT

Just as it's important for parents to take a break from the stress of parenting for "alone" time, it's also vital that you take time to nurture your relationships. As you are adjusting to having your family back together, your relationship with your spouse/partner will need attention, time, and energy. Keeping a relationship strong takes work, and the well-being of your relationship is important for you and your children. That's true whether you and your partner are currently married, single or divorced.

"I'm just excited...I'm ready to start the next chapter of our lives."

Joy Lindgren (whose husband was returning from his third deployment) quoted in *The Oklahoman* (2010, January 10) by Darla Slipke. "Soldiers rejoin their families, lives."

When you're exhausted from caring for your child(ren), it can be easy to neglect these relationships. However, research shows that having people you can count on is important for your physical and mental health.

When encouraged to make time for adult relationships, parents often say, "But we don't have time...we can't afford it...we're too busy!" Guess what? We understand—but we challenge you to be creative. For example, some couples have found these ideas helpful:

- Try Mother's Day Out and meet your partner for lunch
- Get a babysitter and have an evening out (or maybe try to trade babysitting with another family you know)
- Ask extended family to watch your child(ren) for an evening, or maybe even for a get-away weekend for the two of you!
- Commit to spending 10 minutes as a couple every night after you put the kids to bed. Focus this time only on the two of you (not on the kids, bills, schedule, etc.) and use it as a time to re-connect.
- Join a couples Sunday School class at your church / synagogue / house of worship.
- Join a gym/YWCA (pick one that has good child care!) and regularly exercise together.



## Tips for Communicating With Your Partner

When a service member comes home, most families are filled with excitement and have high expectations. Often partners have very different expectations of what life will be like. Sometimes, the reality of a homecoming does not exactly meet both partners' expectations.

It is important to talk about the changes that have taken place during this time apart. Spend time talking with each other – you've both been through a lot during the deployment, and you both have changed. Talking openly can help you get to know each other again, gain a sense of intimacy, and rebuild family routines. If you struggled with issues of closeness and communication before the relationship, this can be an incredible opportunity to strengthen and develop those skills.

Some Veterans quickly figure out that the way they talked to others in the military doesn't work very well in family life!

Military communication is often marked by:

- Giving orders
  - Requiring obedience without question
  - Avoiding emotions (other than anger)
  - Expecting an immediate response.

Such communication does not encourage skills that are essential elements of intimate relationships, such as:

- Listening
  - Give and take
  - Compromise
  - Negotiation
  - Consideration of the other's feelings
  - Expression of vulnerability (such as sadness or fear)
  - Comforting your partner

Therefore, you, as a Veteran, may want to think about using “home-front” communication skills instead of “military” communication. We expect those close to you will greatly appreciate your efforts, and your relationships will grow closer. Of course, these changes do not happen overnight—you've been gone for many months. However, if you keep these ideas in your mind and work with them, you can improve your communication quite quickly.

You both may find some of these communication skills to be helpful reminders:

- Take turns talking and sharing thoughts and feelings.
- Take responsibility for your own feelings and actions by describing specifically how you feel (such as, “I feel . . .”, “I’m concerned about . . .”).

For example, instead of yelling, “*You never listen to me!*” you could say, “*I feel frustrated when you text message other people when I’m trying to talk to you.*”

- Listen and avoid interrupting when your partner shares his/her feelings and opinions.
- Don’t assume you know what your partner is thinking or feeling or that he/she knows what you are thinking and feeling.
- Always show respect! If either of you is feeling out of control, take a time-out and return to the discussion at a later, calmer time.





## Helpful Strategies for Couples during the Reintegration Process

- Go slowly - don't try to make up for lost time. Be patient with yourself, your partner, and your children. You cannot rush this process.
- Accept that your partner has changed during the time apart. Take time to get to know each other again!
- Keep talking. Talking can help you reconnect as a couple and as a family.
- Discuss openly what you expect and how you want to handle household responsibilities, parenting responsibilities, and other matters that changed during the deployment(s). Now may be a time to get rid of a chore that you really hate (maybe your partner wouldn't mind mowing the lawn), and you can take over balancing the checkbook. Be flexible!
- Understand that your partner may not take on all his/her old responsibilities immediately.
- Work on skills to deal with painful feelings rather than lashing out. You both may have developed some strong feelings during the deployment, and these may emerge now that the Veteran is home. Check in with yourself if you see this happening. Use healthy ways of managing strong feelings (exercise, journaling, prayer/meditation, etc.), and share your emotions with your partner when both of you are calm.
- Tell your partner how he/she can help you. Be specific. Then, be sure to say THANKS when you notice him/her being supportive.

“Lt. Col John Zenker told the soldiers their mission was almost complete, but first they needed to finish one more step: Reintegrate with their families, friends and jobs... You need to be patient with yourselves and your loved ones.”

*The Oklahoman* (2010, January 10) by Darla Slipke.  
“Soldiers rejoin their families, lives.”

For example,

*“I need to talk about some things. Do you have some time now to listen?”*

*“I know you’re trying to be helpful when you give me advice, but I really don’t need that right now. If you could just listen for now, it would mean a lot to me.”*

*“Thanks so much for taking the kids to the park this afternoon. I really needed some time to myself, and it was great to have some peace and quiet. I enjoyed this evening with you and the kids a lot more because of it!”*

- Seek professional help if you need to do so. If your relationship is not improving after a couple of months, you may need some help from a professional, preferably one with experience in working with families dealing with deployment.

*Special note for family members/friends:* Don't force your Veteran to talk about the experience of war, but be open to it if/when the time is right.

If your Veteran does not want to talk about his/her experiences in Iraq/Afghanistan, don't push him/her! It may be helpful for him/her to discuss tough experiences first with a mental health professional or chaplain.

If your Veteran wants to share his/her painful experiences with you, try to listen without judging. The key is to gain his/her trust, so he/she feels that it is safe to talk with you. However, if you become overwhelmed yourself, gently and lovingly tell him/her that you need a break. It may be best for him/her to seek professional assistance at that time.

Adapted from: [www.welcomebackparenting.org](http://www.welcomebackparenting.org)





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON ISSUES WITH INFANTS

### Books

#### General Issues

*Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know about Your Baby from Birth to Age Two*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2003). W. Sears & M. Sears. Little, Brown & Company.

*Becoming the Parent You Want To Be: A Sourcebook of Strategies for the First Five Years*. (1997). L. Davis. Broadway.

*What to Expect the First Year*. (2008). H. Murkoff. Workman Publishing.

*Your Baby's First Year*, 3rd ed. (2010). American Academy of Pediatrics. Bantam Books.

#### Crying

*Colic Solved: The Essential Guide to Infant Reflux and the Care of Your Crying, Difficult-to-Soothe Baby*. (2007). B. Vartabedian. Ballantine Books.

*The Fussy Baby Book: Parenting Your High-need Child from Birth to Five*. (2005). W. Sears & M. Sears. Harper Thorsons.

*The Happiest Baby on the Block: The New Way to Calm Crying and Help Your Newborn Baby Sleep Longer*. (2005). H. Karp. Bantum.

#### Sleep

*The No-Cry Sleep Solution: Gentle Ways to Help Your Baby Sleep Through the Night*. (2002). E. Pantley. McGraw Hill.

*Sleeping Through the Night, Revised Edition: How Infants, Toddlers, and Their Parents Can Get a Good Night's Sleep*. (2005). J. Mindell. Harper Collins.

*Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*. (Rev). (2005). R. Ferber. Fireside.



## Connecting With Your Baby

*Baby Days: Activities, Ideas, and Games for Enjoying Daily Life with a Child Under Three.* (2000). B. Rowley. Hyperion.

*Gymboree Play and Learn: 1001 Fun Activities for Your Baby and Child.* (2008). R.C. Leiderman & W. Masi. Key Porter Books.

*What'll I Do with the Baby-o? Nursery Rhymes, Songs, and Stories for Babies.* (2007). J. Cobb. Black Sheep Press.

## Websites

American Academy of Pediatrics: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

Zero to Three Organization: [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:  
[www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/facts\\_for\\_families](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Child Development: [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/)