

This is the portion of our (Fort Knox) Newcomers/Inprocessing Briefing that covers Reentry. This was the best way we could determine to make sure incoming soldiers were provided this info. Doing it as an additional briefing would have had to be voluntary participation and incorporating it into the Inprocessing, which is mandatory for E-4 and below, ensures that at least some soldiers hear it. Hopefully, this will be sufficient for accreditation. This was a hard one!

III. REENTRY. I want to take a few minutes to discuss the issue of reentry into the states by those of you coming from OCONUS. When you went overseas, you probably experienced what is known as "Culture Shock". What you may not realize is that you may be experiencing it again now that you're home. That is known as "Reverse Culture Shock". The stages of culture shock are:

a. Excitement. Even if you thoroughly enjoyed your tour of duty overseas, you were probably excited about returning home. You experienced feelings of anticipation in seeing family or having access to fast food and sources of entertainment that weren't accessible there. You couldn't wait to get back "home."

b. Disappointment. When you arrive, you suddenly realize that you are giving things up that you depended upon or enjoyed. You loved the beautiful countryside or the shopping. You don't remember the problems you faced overseas, only the good things you miss. Feelings of excitement turn to feelings of anxiety and disappointment.

c. Adjustment. You become accustomed to the changes and learn to adjust accordingly. You may do this in a positive way or a negative way. The choice is yours.

Individuals are often surprised to discover that the adjustment in returning to the states is as traumatic or even more traumatic than the adjustment they experienced in going overseas. It often strikes earlier and can be more intense simply because it was unexpected. Many times the individual has changed just from the experience of being in a foreign country for an extended period of time. Things may not affect them in the same way as before. Also, expectations of returning home have been inflated. This can lead to depression, disappointment, boredom, anger and other negative feelings. These can affect a person's judgment and ability to communicate. Some of the stresses of moving back to the states are:

a. Leaving your tightknit community. Unless you lived on the economy in the overseas country, you lived on the installation with other individuals with whom you shared a common bond. Family members depend upon each other for help and friendship. Leaving that comfort zone can be difficult.

b. Financial problems. Just the stress of moving is enough, because it always costs you money over and above what you are reimbursed. You have unexpected expenses, such as sales tax on the vehicle you bought overseas or you can't get into

housing right away and you are paying temporary lodging. And you will miss the COLA or other extra allowances you may have received overseas.

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c. Schools. Coming from overseas, your children probably attended DODs schools. Fortunately for you, Fort Knox has one of the few DODs systems in CONUS. But if you live off post, your children will attend public schools and for some individuals, that is a negative. They may look into private schools, which can be very expensive.

d. Reunions with Family. Hopefully, this is a positive experience. But, even so, there are stresses involved. Trying to see both sides of the family in the little bit of leave time you have before reporting can be tiring, especially after the preparations for the move and the long flight.

e. Little Things, like driving. If you have been in Germany, you are accustomed to driving with no speed limits. Or if you have been in Korea, you haven't driven at all. It takes a while to adjust. A combination of little things can become a big thing if they aren't handled properly.

Coping with Reverse Culture Shock can be accomplished with time, understanding, and help from resources. Some things you can do are:

a. Be patient. All things pass with time.

b. Let other family members know what's going on so they can help and understand. Also, listen to their concerns.

c. Eat properly.

d. Try to adjust your sleep patterns as soon as possible. The time difference may mess you up for a while, but rest is very important.

e. Be organized.

f. Seek help from resources on or off post. ACS can refer you to the agency you need.

Reverse Culture Shock is real. Don't be upset with yourself if you are experiencing it. Just take steps to deal with it so you can move on.