REUNION & REINTEGRATION WITH CHILDREN

Infants/Toddlers (Ages 0-3)

Infancy is a time of rapid growth and development (both physically and cognitively). Attachment is the major developmental milestone during this stage.

Homecoming Reactions

- "Stranger Reaction"
- Increased sensitivity
- Crying, clinginess, disrupted schedule
- Delayed milestones
- Temper tantrums
- Nightmares
- Regression in skills

Fostering Reintegration

- Realistic expectations
- Direct contact
- Consistency
- Opportunities for connection
- Take things slowly
- Expect regression

Pre-schoolers (Ages 3-6)

During the pre-school stage, growth and development continue at a rapid pace. Children perceive that everything revolves around them and magical thinking predominates.

Homecoming Reactions

- Personalize stress
- Regression in skills
- Acting out
- Time to warm up

Fostering Reintegration

- Ignore regressive behaviors
- Listen & answer questions
- Opportunities for connection
- Take things slowly

School Age Children *(Ages 6-12)*

During the school years physical development slows. Children begin to find their place in the world, and they show increases in organization, responsibility, and cognitive and moral development.

Homecoming Reactions

- Whiny, aggressive, irritable
- Need time to talk
- Need physical attention
- Rapid mood shifts
- Excitement
- Fear

Fostering Reintegration

- Slowly transition roles/ responsibilities
- Include Service member in routines
- One-on-one time
- Connect to school/ community resources

Adolescents *(Ages 12-18)*

Adolescence is the time when children prepare for adulthood. Puberty occurs and there is an increased reliance on the peer group to determine norms. Adolescents are now capable of abstract thinking. It is very common for there to be parent/child tension during this time.

Homecoming Reactions

- Emotionally guarded
- Acting out
- Lower grades
- Relief
- Concern about roles/ responsibilities
- Sensitivity

Fostering Reintegration

- Open communication
- Consistency
- Transition roles/ responsibilities
- One-on-one time
- Respect privacy

Barnett et al. (2012), Derenne (2008); Photos: http://www.morgeufile.com