PREPARING FOR RE-ENTRY:
Helping RMs Transition

Most missionaries are excited about coming home, but they may also be filled with sadness at leaving the people and the life they’ve grown to love. These conflicting feelings may continue to grow as the initial excitement and homecoming have passed. Many report feeling emptiness, apathy and even guilt toward their new life. Major transitions can leave missionaries (and all of us) vulnerable to negative emotions. They may need help finding their new purpose. As parents, you’re the support team.

Keep in mind that the bar was not only raised for your missionary, it was also raised for you. We all share in the responsibility of sharing the gospel; we don’t want returned missionaries to “come home” from the burning desire to spread the gospel or change their high standards. They will need time to apply these standards in a new environment (home/college/work). While they transition, let them raise your family to a higher standard. Let them be the person they grew into on their mission in your home. The worst thing you can do is treat them as if they are still the teenager they were prior to their mission and expect them to be “normal” again.

### CREW MEMBERS PREPARE FOR LANDING
Before your missionary lands, be sure to prepare.

#### Mental Preparation
- Read *Preach My Gospel* before they return. This is the language your missionary has been studying and speaking for the past 18-24 months.
- You will be “on call” once your missionary returns, helping them transition can feel like a part-time job. If you work, consider taking time off or working from home the first 1-2 weeks after their arrival. (Your missionary has been with a companion constantly for the duration of their mission and being alone is one of the most difficult parts of early post-mission life.)
- Returned missionaries are happiest when they are serving. Plan ahead with easily adaptable service projects, maybe using their language skills. (Have options for them, but keep them tentative and not overly scheduled.)

#### Preparing the Crew
- Evaluate your home environment and the frequency and quality of essential family activities. Involve all family members, even the youngest children, in asking these questions:
  - Is our home a spiritual oasis from the world?
  - How can we improve our family prayers, scripture study and family home evenings?
  - Are there movies, books, magazines, video games, or other media in our home that might make our returned missionary feel uncomfortable and that we should remove to better follow the standards in *For the Strength of Youth*?
- Make it easy for them to continue their gospel studies. Prepare a desk or set aside a place where they can keep their study materials.
2. **TOUCHDOWN**  
*Their mission is complete. Now what?*

**Help them Navigate**
- Idleness is spiritual death for returned missionaries. Do encourage them to become anxiously engaged after a short rest (2-3 days). If you take a family vacation, stay busy.
- Do encourage daily gospel studies and goal setting. Your missionary is an expert goal setter. Find out what they need to continue the practice. Do they prefer digital tools or pen and paper? Do they need a desk?

- Do share Elder S. Gifford Nielsen’s winning game plan to finding our purpose. *(Hastening the Lord’s Game Plan! Oct. 2013 General Conference)*
  - Specifically pray to bring someone closer to the Savior/gospel everyday
  - Pray for the missionaries/investigators by name in your old and new area
  - Invite a friend to an activity in or out of your home.
  - In other words, become a friend and serve others just as you did on your mission.

**After the Homecoming Report**
- Spend time with your missionary. Be curious—they want to share what they learned. Be humble and allow them to teach you (and don’t be offended when they correct you).
- Do talk openly with them and be a good listener about the feelings they may be having.
- Do encourage their high standards. Don’t call them weird. Don’t encourage them to participate in worldly media, movies, or video games they missed.
- Your missionary knows that a new convert needs three things: a friend, a calling and nourishment by the word of God. Now your returned missionary has those same three needs. If they don’t receive a calling right away, encourage them to be proactive and talk to their bishop about how they can help.

3. **ADJUSTING TO GRAVITY & REFUELING FOR THE FUTURE**  
*Coming home to their new mission.*

**Once an Astronaut, Always an Astronaut: They are Still Needed!**
- Do encourage them to pick one ward to attend.
- Do encourage the bishop to call them as temple workers, ward missionaries, mentors etc. They may also be able to help with sharing time, teaching about baptism, or mission prep classes.
- Do hold daily family prayer, scripture study and weekly family home evening with them. Do ask them to teach and share their insights.

**Helping Them Find Purpose**
- Do encourage the use of Preach My Gospel and apply it to now (see link).
- Do encourage temple attendance and Institute classes.
- Do encourage getting quickly into school or a job. Do help them with resumes, applications, etc.
- Do be an example, not a critic.
- Do set regular interviews to check-in and follow-up with your child. This is a format with which they are both comfortable and familiar from their mission.
- Encourage your child to form a “board of directors” for their future. This could include bishops, parents, institute teachers or others who will give them good, gospel-centered counsel.
When there are two ground crews waiting

Advice for blended families

Keep the Focus on the Missionary, Not Your Past Issues

Coming home to a loving atmosphere is overwhelming on its own, but coming home to an atmosphere charged with tension is almost unbearable for a missionary. If you are divorced parents, keep your emotions and issues under lock and key. Discuss with each other ahead of time what you both need to do (or not do) to control outbursts and subtle negativity. Give your missionary the love and support they need, rather than expecting them to broker peace between your families. That's YOUR job as adults, not theirs.

- **Your most important job is to make your missionary feel loved and accepted.**
- Do ask them to share their missionary experiences with you.
- Do recognize that their service mattered--celebrate the service they gave.
- Do focus on healing and let them determine what is next.
- Do seek help if needed. LDS Family Services offers up to six free therapy sessions for early returned missionaries.
- Do let people know they are coming home. Be sensitive to what your missionary wants said.

Wounded Warriors

Of Helaman's 2,060 warriors, 200 "had fainted, because of loss of blood". Some were probably too wounded to return to battle. They came home to be healed. In the military, when a soldier is wounded and comes home, he is honored—whether it was his first battle or his fiftieth. Their wounds did not diminish their bravery and courage. Nor do they negate the success they had.

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More information on re-entry

Resources and citations

- Special thanks to Marianna and Steve Richardson for their permission to use their advice and words to help returned missionaries and their families. They have written *The Returned Missionary Handbook: Helping Missionaries & Parents Through the Postmission Transition*, and we highly recommend that you read it. All proceeds from the book are donated to the LDS Missionary Fund. They also hold a monthly fireside for parents on the fourth Sunday at 7:00 pm at the Canyon Road Pleasant Grove Chapel (2195 North 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah). A six-week course is also available for returned missionaries on Thursday nights at 7:00 pm at the Lone Peak High School Seminary in Highland, Utah.