

Short Guide for Parents

This guide is from the book *Home Early... Now What?*

If I could tell you one thing:

Your missionaries will feel pressure from everyone around them. Counselors, friends, ward members, and bishops will ask questions and give advice. For now, your job is to gently support and protect your missionary until they are ready to stand on their own again. They do not need more pressure; they need unconditional love.

1. Tell your missionary immediately how much you love them and are proud of them.

Be proud of their willingness to serve the Lord. Be proud of the time they *did* serve. If they came home for transgression reasons, coming home is the first step forward and can be applauded.

2. Ask your missionary what they would prefer at the airport.

Some early-returned missionaries were grateful to return home to a full traditional welcome in the airport with balloons, posters, and extended family. Other missionaries were grateful to get off the plane and see just their parents there. Pray for sensitivity.

3. Let your missionary lead out when processing.

No matter what the technical reason is for coming home, a missionary may not feel ready to share about their experience for some time. Let them process on their own timetable. Pray to know when to be a listening ear and when to be a happy distraction. Recognize that they may need someone else besides you to process with, maybe even a fellow early RM.

4. Make healing the top priority of both you and your missionary.

Your number one priority must be to help them heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This experience may be more traumatic for them than you think, and healing will take time. Your missionary may experience unexpected emotional triggers for years afterward. Set questions related to returning to the mission or returning to college aside for a time. When it's time to address going back out, allow the missionary to receive their own answer from the Lord. Encourage those around your missionary to accept their answer fully.

5. Help them feel hope.

An early RM will most likely feel confused and lost upon their return home. Help them notice tender mercies every day. Help them find meaningful ways to serve. Help them laugh. (My family put on *I Love Lucy* every day to give me regular opportunities to smile.) Help them set post-mission goals rather than dwell on pre-mission goals. Help them identify successes. When it is appropriate, help them feel capable and ready to progress in their lives.