

Make Your Heart Sing

Making a difference and finding purpose as a military spouse.

by Krista Wells

Whether you are trying to find a meaningful profession, gratifying volunteer work, or make a significant life transition, it can be much more manageable with the support of a coach. Krista Wells, Ph.D. is The Military Spouse Coach® and Military Spouse Magazine's very own professional career and life coach. In this issue, she encourages spouses to weave together their values, interests and talents in order to find purpose.

We are all impressed when we meet a person who is doing what they love. Recently, I spoke with a military veteran from the Marine Corps who I know from church, and I was touched by the story he told. He was dressed in his military blues, looking radiant, and he explained why he was wearing his uniform adorned with symbols of his prior service. Years ago, when his parents passed away, his old military uniforms were discarded. Even though they didn't fit him any longer, he was still heartbroken.

He had recently celebrated his 70th birthday and his wife (in cahoots with the Marine Shop) surprised him with a brand new set of dress blues. He began seeking out opportunities to wear his "new" uniform, and he naturally pursued his passion for service. He attended church, local military events and military funerals in our state, which led him to visit and provide support for those families to whom he felt indebted.

As he spoke about visiting these families, it was amazing how naturally he stumbled upon creating purpose. It also reminded me of the common questions I hear from so many military spouses: "I want to fulfill my potential and make a difference, but I don't know how?" From the start, I make them aware of their service to this country and assure them they are already making a difference. However, I empathize with their need. So we work together to identify a starting point and craft an action plan.

I like to begin my coaching sessions



The Military Spouse Coach®

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with an exploration of values. I recently worked with a client who was an image consultant that was searching for volunteer work. Her top three values were "social contact," "community service," "beauty and aesthetics." She discovered that volunteering for Dress for Success, an organization that provides interview suits to low-income women, would be a way to live out these values.

To determine what you value most, think about where you naturally spend your time, energy and money. Identify several values and then narrow the list down to what you value most. For example, "meaningful work," "flexible schedule" and "comfortable income" may all be on your list. However, when push comes to shove, what can you not live without? Perhaps values such as "family," "health" and "helping others" will rank higher on your list, but remember to be honest with yourself.

After exploring values, move on to exploring your interests. Often, as military spouses, we are so busy taking care of others that we don't allow ourselves a quiet moment to actually ponder what it is that we simply love doing. Our hearts do so much that we're not sure how to focus our minds, so seeking "quiet" is a great tool to use in order to hear that small voice coming from your heart. Pay attention to those moments where you are "on a roll" and instinctively shut off the rest of the world. Ask yourself a question and then allow yourself to meditate throughout the day on your answer; or grab that journal and see what themes emerge regarding your true passions.

The next step is to identify strengths and gifts. We are often blind to our own talents. Get out there and ask friends and family what they perceive your strengths to be. You may be surprised at the group's consensus. Think back to what subjects in school came easiest or past job tasks seemed effortless. I had a client that despised the entirety of her job, but discovered that she loved the editing part, so we explored ways for her to make a new career choice that incorporated this skill.

As you discover your values, personal interests and talents, doing what you love will come naturally. Finding meaningful work and living out of your center is a large part of living out your dreams. Don't be hard on yourself if you are still unsure, but take actions that are aligned with your values. Trust that as you take a step forward, your aspirations take two steps toward you.

The Military Spouse Coach® Shares How to Explore These Ideas on Your Own...

- **What are your values?** Decide what is important to you (e.g. community, status, teamwork, helping others, etc.). Brainstorm a list and then determine your top five values. These are your personal motivators that direct you to your purpose.
- **What piques your interest?** Over the next several weeks, take note of when you lose track of time or when a task seems effortless. Write down what you are doing, your feelings and a complete description of the setting.
- **What are your talents?** Ask three people who know you well to identify your strengths. Couple this information with any significant accomplishments in your life and tease out your gifts.

Putting it all together... I know it's cliché, but take a moment, and think about what really makes your heart sing? Combine this thought with your list of values, interests, and skills and notice any themes that are emerging. List three or four tentative topics or career choices that can be further developed or even combined to put you on a path towards greater self-awareness and living out your purpose. **MSM**

If creating and working with this information has helped you pursue a particular passion, please write in and share your success. Contact Krista, The Military Spouse Coach® at MilSpouseCoach@milspousemag.com.