



Work–Life Balance For Military Spouses

As a military spouse, I believe that one of the best ways to take care of our loved ones is to take care of ourselves. I used to think of taking time for myself as selfish; soaking in a warm bath, taking a brisk walk, or getting a manicure while my husband is working. When my daughter is playing I like to take advantage and curl up on the nearby sofa and quietly look through a magazine. Times like these refresh and refuel me for the rest of the day. But there is more to taking time for yourself than these acts, it is an outlook that includes contemplating what you cherish most in life, and aligning your daily actions with what you value.

Nicole Alcorn and Karie Darga, the co-creators of the association charged with creating a monument to honor all Military Spouses and their families probably don't feel "balanced" on most days; and that is OK. Their life isn't about being balanced right now, it is about spending an extraordinary amount of energy into a worthwhile project, one that we should all be grateful. They are focusing on work that has meaning; this creates a centeredness so they can deal with the ebbs and flows as they strive towards this collective vision.

Krista Wells is a professional career coach; she ensures that her military spouse clients consistently reap the benefits of her proven expertise in dealing with career and life transitions. Through powerful support and encouragement, her clients achieve greater balance and fulfillment, and embrace military life with passion!

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Spouses often share that they are looking for more balance in their lives, and I explain that balance is not a matter of equilibrium; it is an attitude or an approach to addressing complexity in life. It is not realistic to compartmentalize life challenges into career, family, or leisure and then pressure ourselves to spend equal amounts of time on each. Rather, I suggest allowing our values to be the underlying factor in determining the drive in particular areas of life. This strengthens our integrity and allows us to make decisions that are aligned with our morals and promotes a fully engaged life. Numerous examples of pursuing joy are presented by authors Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer in *Help! I'm a Military Spouse; I Want A Life Too!*

Recently, I worked with a group of Army spouse volunteers. One of the lead volunteers mentioned that she put in long hours and dealt with numerous trials and tribulations, yet ultimately profited from the experience. It was through this daunting experience that she ultimately realized that she wanted more in her life. She said, "I want to roll up my sleeves and do more for people than I am allowed to do as a volunteer." She was troubled with particular aspects of her volunteer experience, but we focused on what she could control; consequently she was able to embrace the occasion. She decided to take action with respect to her desires and made an appointment with an academic advisor on base in order to explore her options for pursuing a formal degree in counseling. I suspect that there will be times during her educational endeavors where she will be off-balance; however, if she acknowledges this as in line with her ideals, she will flourish.

Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., author of *Emotional Intelligence* explains a similar concept which he calls "delayed gratification" and found that this skill leads to better health, healthier marriages, and more life satisfaction which is good news, because today's spouses are experts at making sacrifices for a larger purpose. Contemplate on that which moves you and think of a few steps that you need to take that will lead you to where you ultimately want to be.

