

# CHOOSE TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE A PRIORITY

Due to our military lifestyle and our unique marriage, making us a priority is crucial. We know the importance of staying connected. We know the importance of growth in marriage. We know how hard marriage can be when sometimes it feels like you are in completely different worlds and are separated more than you're together. Tips to making your marriage a priority may seem like common sense when you read them, but trust me, it is easier said than done and it is work. No one said marriage was easy though, right? Especially not a military marriage! My husband and I have implemented a few rules in our marriage to make sure we are making each other a priority.

## 01 PLAN

Schedule time together with your spouse. Spend quality time together without distractions. Be present. And for the love of coffee, please turn off your phone! It is really imperative to have quality time together. It's something to look forward to and it is fun. When you plan for it, you are less likely to cancel or forget.

## 02 HIERARCHY

Establish one. If you have children, make some family rules. Your marriage is important and it is equally important for children to know that. Adults are allowed to talk without being interrupted. Adults are allowed to have date nights and time alone. This teaches and demonstrates what a healthy marriage looks like. Be a role model. In our household is, if mommy and daddy are having a conversation, the child places a hand on one of the parent's hands. The parent will then place a hand on top of the child's hand. This shows the child our acknowledgment and we will respond as soon as we finish our conversation. Find something that works for your family and set your boundaries sooner rather than later.

## 03 IMPROVE

There is always room for improvement, but both people must be willing to do the work. Each person has to be intentional about growing. You must also take care of yourself. Self-development and self-care can happen simultaneously with marriage enhancement. Have hobbies, work out, eat well, learn

something new, volunteer. If you're happy and growing, guess what? Your marriage will be too! There are military resources you can take advantage of, such as Military One Source and Strong Bonds retreats.

## 04 HONESTY

This is a biggie. This goes with communication, trust, and being non-judgmental. This is where you wear your heart on your sleeve, lay it all out on the line, and know that your spouse will support you. And vice versa. Honesty can make or break marriages. Little things can add up to big things and have a snowball effect. Having honest communication without judgement within a military marriage is a necessity. Long hours, separations, and the constant unknown of this lifestyle are tough. Making sure you are open and honest will help aid in all aspects of marriage.

## 05 THE LITTLE THINGS

The little things are huge and if you can put your spouse's wants, needs, and desires on the top of your priority list, I can almost guarantee he or she will return the favor. Do little things for your spouse like match socks, make lunch, leave love notes in the car, etc. Do something to make life a little easier or happier.

## 06 PLAN A FUTURE

It is so important to be in the moment and be present with your spouse, especially when he or she is home, but it is equally important to plan a future together. I mean, after all, you do want to spend the rest of your life with this person, right? Discuss goals and have a budget. Have a plan A, B, C, and D. Talk about worst case scenarios, best case scenarios, and what will most likely happen. Be flexible and organized. Work as a team to create and plan for the future you want together.

Service member family life can be hectic and unpredictable. You chose your spouse and it is crucial to choose to make your marriage a priority. These tips can help you stay connected, grow, and sustain a happy, healthy, long marriage. Work together, have fun, and enjoy this unique life we have!