

THE USO PRESENTS



A MONTHLY SERIES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

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*You're Leaving... Again?*

WITH MATT & CORIE WEATHERS



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# You're Leaving... Again?

"RIPPING THE BAND-AID"

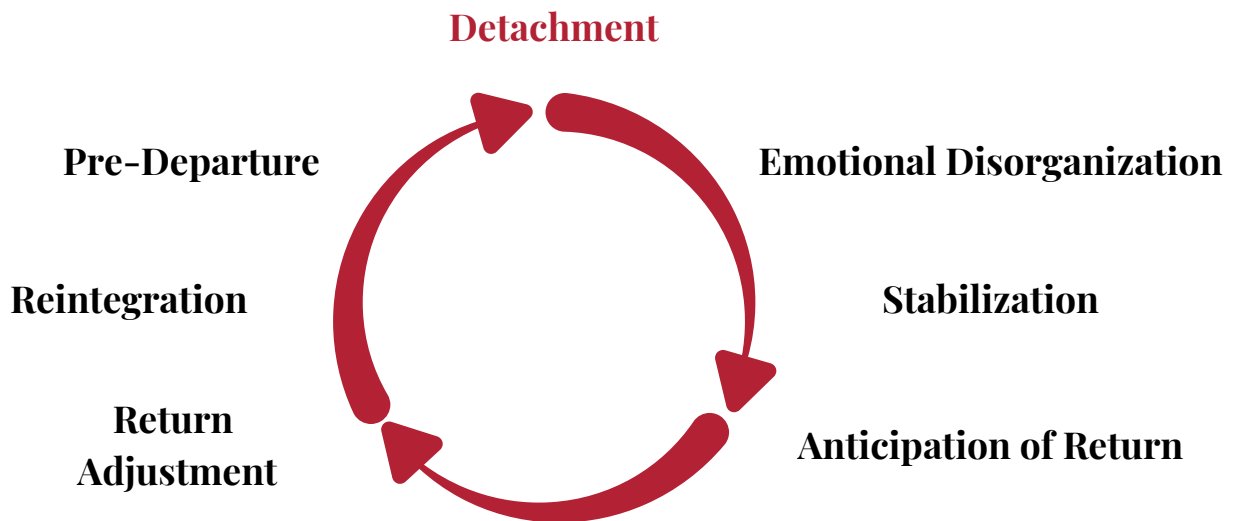
MATT & CORIE WEATHERS

Spending any time apart as a family can be difficult, but as a military family that happens more often than you would like. In fact, many military families spend almost half of their married time apart.

*How do you keep a marriage and family strong despite the distance?*

This series aims to answer that question. We believe that your relationship can not only stay connected, but it can actually grow and deepen even when you are apart. Whether you are going through a deployment, TDY, unaccompanied tour, temporary geo-batching situation, or other extended separation, this series is for you.

## SEPARATION CYCLE- The Detachment



## SAYING GOODBYE IS THE WORST.

Even if we have fully embraced the military lifestyle, that doesn't mean separations get easier each time we have to go through them. The very fact that it feels like a "ripping" reveals just how much we love and would not choose separation if it were up to us.

## TIPS FOR RIPPING THE BAND-AID:

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TAKE A MOMENT AND SEE IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY SIGNS THAT YOU ARE OVERWHELMED. LIST THEM HERE:

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IF YOU HAVE KIDS, WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS THEY MIGHT BE OVERWHELMED?

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## **PROACTIVELY PLANNING TO BE ON MISSION BEFORE THE SEPARATION:**

For the service member:

- Cast vision for the family by explaining where you are going and what you will be doing using maps, addresses, etc (this may not be possible for some groups).
- Talk about what you are excited about and ask the family what they are excited about.
- Make plans with the family (together) on goals you will work on with each family member while apart.
- Call to check in when possible during first week of travel. This allows for transition into communication at a distance rather than abrupt silence.

For the supporting spouse:

- Allow yourself to be excited about what you want to accomplish.
- Buy a new journal or a symbolic piece of jewelry that will be a daily reminder of your commitment to reach your own goals.
- Start EARLY- why wait until the week after to start doing what brings you joy?
- Build community PROACTIVELY- Invite a friend to provide accountability on a goal you can work on together.



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BEFORE: Service members and support spouses handle the days and weeks prior to deployment in different ways. This can easily make the home and relationship ripe for conflict.

One of the things we can do is to shift our focus and leverage \_\_\_\_\_ instead of frustration. Instead of trying to force the other person to handle it the way we want them to, we can acknowledge our appreciation of what they are trying to accomplish.

Service members describe:

- Trying to set up the family or spend extra time with the family while also mentally preparing to leave.
- Feeling incredible guilt and anxiety prior to leaving.
- Fearing failure or success in the job and with the family.

Supporting spouses describe:

- Wanting to "Rip the Band-Aid" sooner.
- Starting to take on responsibilities around the home to gain confidence.

There are typically two ways of handling the emotions prior to leaving.

1. Those that skip over or avoid difficult emotions and only point out the positives.
2. Those that get stuck in the negativity of tough emotions and struggle to see the positive.

The tough feelings of saying goodbye are similar to grief and loss. You are losing the nearness of your person. Many people fear feeling overwhelmed if they allow themselves to "feel" the heartbreak of goodbye.

Grief, however, is rarely a constant feeling of loss and is more like \_\_\_\_\_ hitting a toddler. The emotions will surface and then subside. They are worth feeling and sharing.

Tips for communicating how you feel before you "Rip the Band-Aid":

- Express and communicate the push and pull as well as the anxiety you are feeling with your family.
- Sit in the pocket and process your feelings rather than skipping over them or avoiding them. Allow emotions to come up- they represent connection and love in the relationship.

**The key is remembering that we each process our feelings differently. We must "sit in the \_\_\_\_\_ of our feelings" and then pull ourselves out to turn mission focused.**



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## GRATITUDE & EMPATHY

Robert Emmons, a leading expert in gratitude, found that you cannot hold \_\_\_\_\_ and gratitude at the same time. This means that gratitude can be the tool that helps pull us out of the negative feelings and into a better place where we can become more mission-minded.

Tips to help you becoming "Mission-Minded"

- Write down what are you excited about.
- Begin with the end in \_\_\_\_\_. Think about who you want to be at the end of this separation and backwards plan.
- Remember that shifting your focus looks different for the service member versus the spouse at home. Service members can typically shift their mind to their mission immediately, while spouses at home usually take a couple of days or weeks.
- Consider trying some of the activities you are looking forward to during the separation prior to the separation. For example, if you plan to take up running, go for a few runs during the most stressful week before the separation rather than waiting until after.

What are some ways your mission-mindedness can be sabotaged?

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Phases of LIVING "Mission-Minded"

Phase One: Ripping the Band-Aid

Phase Two: 24-48 hours to grieve and refocus

Phase Three: Taking first steps on new goals

Phase Four: Allow time for momentum to build

**Gratitude has been proven to make individuals more stress resistant, meaning they recover from stress and trauma more quickly. Gratitude, then, can help us cope and focus on areas we want to be more mission-focused.**



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WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT MISSION, OR GOAL, THAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STAY CONNECTED IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WHILE ALSO FOCUSING ON YOUR OWN PERSONAL MISSION OR GOAL?

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WHAT "TOGETHER GOAL" CAN YOU MAKE AS A COUPLE OR FAMILY?

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WHAT ARE SOME ADDITIONAL IDEAS YOU HEARD FROM THE WEBINAR THAT MIGHT HELP YOU FACE FORWARD AND FIND YOUR MISSION?

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## **RESOURCES MENTIONED:**

### **USO PROGRAMS:**

Bob Hope Legacy Reading Program

Coffee Connection

Discovering Your Spark, Brittany Boccher

**DEPLOYMENT MASTERCLASS**, Lizanne Lightfoot

### **RESOURCES :**

My Many Colored Days, Dr. Seuss

<https://www.collage.como-> Custom photo puzzles

<https://bravecrates.com/> Brave Crates- Care packages for spouses at home.

### **COUNSELING:**

The Lifegiver Directory: (Military spouse, veteran, or culturally competent clinicians)

Lifegiver: Breathe life into your service family [www.life-giver.org](http://www.life-giver.org)

Military OneSource

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

Sacred Spaces: My Journey to the Heart of Military Marriage (Corie Weathers)

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No. (Townsend and Cloud)

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance (Duckworth)

Lifegiver Podcast with Corie Weathers

