

THE USO PRESENTS



A MONTHLY SERIES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

You're Leaving... Again?

WITH MATT & CORIE WEATHERS



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You're Leaving... Again?

"HOLIDAY EDITION: BEING APART WAS NOT WHAT I WAS
EXPECTING"

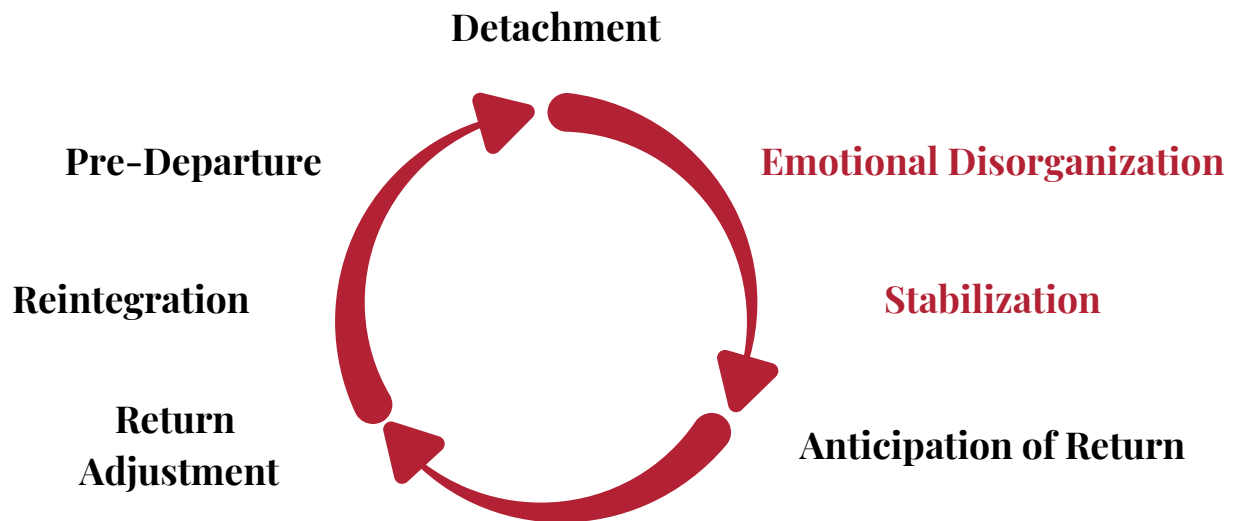
MATT & CORIE WEATHERS

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- Finding a new pattern while living apart.



STABILIZING NEW PATTERNS

Now that you are living apart, it is time to start new routines that will hopefully become new patterns. It is important to recognize, however, that both of you may have different schedules, energy, and availability. The timing, pace, and implementation of shared goals may be off at first.



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HOLIDAYS: MAKING THE MOST OF A DIFFICULT TIME... ESPECIALLY DURING COVID

It has been a year of living with conveniences stripped away. Living apart can also add stressors of living "without".

However, gratitude emerges when you focus on what you have- not taking for granted your relationships, closeness, and the options you *do have*.

*Our attitude going into this season of living in a constrained environment will dictate the _____
and _____ we will get from it.*

COUPLE GOALS

Carving out intentional time, rather than living accidentally, could mean the difference between reaching that goal or finishing your time apart with little growth.

Matt and Corie have the goal of intentionally writing to each other using the DayOne Journal App. While Matt talked about having extra time and energy to invest in writing, Corie struggled to find it herself. It was important that there was grace for the different environments and lifestyles they were in rather than taking it personally. However, Corie also acknowledged ways she could schedule a specific time to focus on their goal for better communication rather than just hoping to find energy at a random moment.

WHERE COULD YOU EXPERIMENT WITH SETTING ASIDE INTENTIONAL TIME TO FOCUS ON YOUR COUPLE/FAMILY GOAL?

DON'T BE AFRAID TO SHARE:

- The tough times.
- The challenges and how you are making decisions to get through it.
- How much you miss each other.

1. Adversity _____ people.
2. Feeling powerless reminds us to be _____ of the things we do feel power over.
3. Great marriages aren't only made during _____.



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THE "5 MINUTE CHECK-IN©"

The 5 Minute Check-in© can help you communicate quickly and clearly how you are and what has been on your mind. It also gives you a way to express your needs in a way your spouse can hear them and know what you need. This can lead to new ways to "gift" each other with our time and attention.

WHAT ARE YOU PHYSICALLY FEELING IN YOUR BODY?

WHAT HAVE YOUR THOUGHTS BEEN LATELY?

WHAT EMOTIONS HAVE YOU BEEN FEELING?

WHAT DO YOU NEED THE MOST RIGHT NOW?

TRADITIONS & HOLIDAYS

What we do for the holidays and how we celebrate them are steeped in tradition. These traditions are often based on our experiences and memories growing up. It is in these memories that we get our definition of "family" and "holidays". They have, in essence, been *imprinted* on us.

WHAT HAS BEEN IMPRINTED ON YOU THAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO GO THROUGH THE
HOLIDAYS AWAY FROM THOSE YOU LOVE?

**This can be a time to re-solidify what family and closeness really mean to you and if there are
"empty" traditions that you are ready to let go of.**



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GIVING GIFTS WHEN APART:

Gift-giving around the holidays has more to do with communication and connection than we realize. In essence, we are trying to communicate:

I _____ you. I _____ you.

The 5 Minute Check-in© can help clarify where your spouse is at and what their needs are. The best gift may be communicating well, feeling heard, and serving each other even from a distance.

Thoughtfully chosen words of _____ and _____ will always outweigh anything you can buy for someone.

UNIQUE WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AND CELEBRATE HOLIDAYS WHILE APART:

- Celebrate traditions that are important to you virtually over Zoom.
- Video games and building creative virtual worlds together (video games, virtual family games)
- Communicate the alternative to your normal tradition to those around you so they can get excited too.

Going through the Holidays apart is going to be difficult. It is hard because we love each other and don't want to be apart. However, you only have control of you. You don't have control of your spouse or family members' feelings or what they choose to do with them. Sometimes the best influence you have is managing your own emotions and choosing to grow in the difficulty.

Give yourself permission to still enjoy the Holidays.

Give your spouse permission to enjoy the Holiday as well.

Make it Count.

Make the time you have to be apart count for something by filling your time with joy.



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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 :

"The Lifegiver 5 Minute Check-in©" www.life-giver.org

Day One Journal App <https://dayoneapp.com/>

Esther Perel: Mating in Captivity

<https://www.collage.com>- 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

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





LIFEGIVER
5 MINUTES TO BREATHE LIFE INTO YOUR
SERVICE FAMILY

The 5- minute Check-In

1. What are you **PHYSICALLY** feeling?

BODY, SENSATIONS & PHYSICAL WELLBEING

We often don't communicate what we are physically feeling. Maybe you haven't slept well, are physically anxious, or have a lot of energy building in your body. In one sentence or less, describe what you are physically feeling.

2. What are your **THOUGHTS**?

THOUGHTS, WORRIES, & MINDFULNESS

Often confused with emotions, thoughts are what you are (or have been lately) thinking. Share your thoughts about the day, or concerns that have been lingering. For example, "I have been anxious about my job." (Remember, keep it to one sentence or less!)

3. What are your **EMOTIONS** about that?

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Often confused with thoughts. Share your emotions about your thoughts, or generally how you have felt emotionally. This is a great time to pull out a feeling chart! For example, "I have been scared and confused that I might lose my job"

4. What do you **NEED**?

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR YOURSELF OR ASK SOMEONE ELSE?

Rarely do we communicate what we need. In one sentence or less, what do you need to move forward? Is it something you can do for yourself or can the person you are communicating do something to help you? For example, "I think I need time to talk about it or go for a run to clear my mind."

They can't **WIN** if they don't **KNOW**

EVERYONE WANTS TO WIN

The point of the Check-in is to learn effective communication by clearing up assumptions, talking "straight" and taking ownership of your thoughts and emotions. Don't assume the other person knows what you need. Everyone wants to do well in their relationship and have it succeed. Communicate clearly so everyone **WINS**.