

STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS



Relationships can be tough. Keeping your relationship strong takes dedication, patience, trust, and commitment. There are some keys to maintaining the romance, but both parties must be willing and determined to overcome any obstacle that arises, because the relationship matters. The following tips can help you and your partner work towards building and strengthening your relationship while apart.

1. HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Relationships in the context of Active Duty service can sometimes mean limited contact, different time zones, and months apart. Even normal garrison life is demanding. Shift work, extra duties, taskers, TDYs, and “mission first” can all contribute to role strain in your closest relationships. Don’t make permanent decision based on temporary circumstances. Discuss expectations, be honest, and remind your partner of your commitment to them.

2. STAY CONNECTED

Surround yourself with positive people, and encourage your significant other to do the same. Spend time with others who are coping with time apart in a healthy way. Participate in activities: recreation, fitness, movie nights, bingo, sports, chapel services, booster clubs, etc. Make sure that the individuals you are spending time around help you maintain your commitments and are not harmful.

3. COMMUNICATE

Technology has enabled nearly 24/7 connectivity, but managing expectations in an always-on world needs intention and planning. Be ready when you do connect – write down events so you’re ready to talk about them, send written mail or email. Keep the info positive, this helps reassure your partner and limit anxieties. Talk about past memories made together and dreams for the future. This helps couples stay connected. Consider mixing it up: use services like video-chat, phone calls, text messaging, etc. Express gratitude and their qualities you admire. This helps with trust and security in relationships.

4. DEVELOP VISION AND WORK TOWARDS YOUR GOALS

Read relationship strengthening books, and discuss what you’re reading with your partner. Together, develop a plan for your individual advancement (education, career, hobbies, and fitness). An improved *you* will be more attractive and able to contribute to the relationship. Expand your other social supports, as well. Volunteer, get involved, forge friendships where you can contribute and help others.

5. SUPPORT EACH OTHER

Listen for ways to support your significant other and utilize resources to make it happen. Look for things you can do, provide, resolve, coordinate, or plan in order to improve their life. Take opportunities to explore your partner’s daily struggles. Offer validation, encouragement, and positivity. As you hear them sharing, remind yourself that simply listening and validating their feelings may be more helpful than finding a solution. If needed, encourage and assist them in utilizing base services for spouses, such as Military OneSource, the Military Family Life Counselor (MFLC), Military Family Readiness Center (MFRC), Key Spouse, Financial Readiness, Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) Program, United through Reading, Family Advocacy Program (FAP), and the Mental Health Clinic at the JBER Hospital.

