

Many Dreams, Many Paths **Army spouses offer some skills to help manage the military lifestyle**

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Arranging the details of a household move, enrolling children in a new school, interviewing for a new job – these are just a few of the practical responsibilities that spouses of military service members face while their loved ones serve the nation.

Ask any military spouse and he or she will tell you that managing family, home and work while being mindful of the flexibility that a military career requires can be daunting. The inherently transitory nature of the military lifestyle presents challenges that can sometimes be incompatible with spouses pursuing long-term goals and dreams.

According to authors Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer, military spouses can create their own niche, within the context of military culture, if they are willing to be creative, open minded and occasionally compromise. Hightower and Scherer, both married to Army Soldiers, proclaim in their new book, *Help! I'm a Military Spouse-I Want a Life Too!*, that military spouses have the tools to create the life they want for themselves while coping with the intricacies of military culture.

Bonded together by their mutual interest in empowering military spouses, Hightower and Scherer began sharing their message with the military community by creating "Joyful Living," a workshop they presented at various military installations. From its genesis in 1994, the workshop has evolved into what is now "Follow Your Dreams While You Follow the Military." The feedback and comments they received from military spouses attending the workshops inspired them to write their book.

A constant theme throughout their first-ever collaboration is to realize your dreams. They say that planning, though important, isn't enough. Hightower and Scherer strongly emphasize that taking action, even in small increments, is the key to success.

Whether your efforts are made alone or with the encouragement of a dream support team (as the authors suggest), making actual movement toward achieving your dream is the most important first step, according to Hightower and Scherer. To demonstrate that they practice what they preach, their book is laced with "journal pages" that offer readers experiences from the authors' own lives.

According to Hightower and Scherer, their book is designed for military spouses who are unsure of whether they really can pursue their dreams while living with the demands of a military lifestyle. Throughout the book, Hightower and Scherer present a very motivational and persuasive argument for not putting off creating a life for yourself while your service member spouse pursues his or her military career.

In times of uncertainty, Hightower and Scherer offer spouses a lifeline as they cope with the day-to-day challenges of military life. Perhaps, a better gift for our often-forgotten spouses cannot be found.