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Newbies*Brides

Basic Training for Spouses

posted on January 05, 2008 14:40

By Pamela M. McBride



Pssst. Want to know a secret? Being a new military spouse requires a form of basic training that's quite different from the one your service member receives. It's not so physical, but some would argue it can be just as taxing. And not getting it, well that could make the transition into the military lifestyle just that more difficult.

"I remember that as a new Navy spouse coming from Nebraska, I knew nothing about the military," recalls Dayle Van der Werff. "Being unfamiliar with all the acronyms made it difficult to take care of the basics when I had to go on base to use facilities. I drove around and

around looking for the things I needed. I was told to go the exchange and had no idea that 'NEX' printed on the sign was what I needed. Then, looking for the child care center, no one told me the sign would say 'CDC.' When I went home frustrated and told my husband that I couldn't find these buildings, we realized that I just didn't know what the acronyms were."

When you are new to military life, not knowing what you don't know can be overwhelming. Equally overwhelming is not knowing where to look when you do know what you don't know. But new spouses can save themselves by connecting with their military branch's basic training — for spouses. Every service has them, and new spouses will benefit greatly from taking them.

"All you have to do is walk into your Family Service Center and say 'I am a new spouse, and I don't know anything about military life.' They will take you under their wings, get you enrolled into training that will teach you about those acronyms and lots of other useful things," Van der Werff said.

Spouses who live too far from a military installation or find it difficult to use these resources in person can do so online, too. By visiting www.militaryonesource.com, you can link up with service-specific training and resources, such as Army Family Team Building (AFTB), the Marine Corps' Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.), Navy Spouse Readiness Workshops, Navy COMPASS, and Air Force Crossroads.

Beyond learning about acronyms, these resources provide information on everything from military culture, protocol and benefits, to communication skills, group dynamics and family readiness groups.

Perhaps the most important reason to get hooked up with these resources is that when bigger issues or problems arise than just not understanding the lingo, you will know what to do or who to call to get them resolved.

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