

FAMILY STRONG



LOVING HABITS

FOR

MILITARY FAMILIES

A CASUALTY OF WAR NO MORE!

Stop! Divorce Due to Duty

By Jacqueline Arnold

A Companion Guide for The Military Family:

A

Casualty of War *No More!*

The Keys to Military Family Health

Yes, military families are resilient, self-sufficient, and naturally, self-reliant but, deployments and extended periods of separation due to duty are not the times to withdraw into your own world and dig down into self-reliance, to the point of isolation. You will need a sea of 'Battle Buddies' to surround you, rely on, and trust in these times.

Military family members are strong and not weak, we know this to be true, but it is important to remember there are seasons of giving and seasons of receiving. Times of separation and service are times of receiving. When others don't know how to stand up and serve, it's okay to state your needs and simply ask. Recognize when the offers come, that it's a time to let down your guard and your pride, and simply say, "Yes!"

We need each other to stand strong. Family health is the number one factor to a successful soldier. Together, we can overcome the current statistic of the number two epidemic in the military today – divorce due to duty.

The First Key? Learn to say "Yes, Thank You!" Accept every offer of help and support.

By accepting the First Key, it allows us to focus on the **Second Key**, which is our Primary Mission.

FAMILY STRONG

As a military family, our primary task is to:

- Stay Healthy.
- Stay Strong.
- Wait in love.
- Stay in love.

It is part of our mission. You made a choice and a commitment when you said, "I do". You made a choice and a commitment when your soldier signed up. Wake up every day and recommit; stay focused and committed to your family and a life time of love.

Commitment is the starting point. Endurance is the fire that tests it. Love is the component that allows us to manage the endurance. Let love waft through your heart and your marriage, your family and your home. Receive the love that others have to offer you. It's their way of taking part in the service to our country and their contribution to freedom. We are one America. It takes everyone working together in community, united in harmony to finish the race, to win in this fight for freedom and in life. Let's team up as a labor of love for the

mission of military service. Love is #Mission Ready, #Family Strong. #Married for Life

Recommit to Each Other & Do It Daily

Today, I Re-commit my love to you. I honor you. I love you. I choose you. I support your choice to serve our country and as a soldier in the United States military. That is not who you are, or who we are, it is what we do in service to God and our country. This job is temporary. Our lives are temporary. Let's choose love, laughter, and life together. Unwrap the beautiful gift of love every day.

Let's work together, pray together, play together and do this life together. We are on the same team. I love you. I commit to our family. We are one family for life. We are #Family Strong.

♥Pray Together

♥Work Together

♥Play Together

- With God, All Things Are Possible.

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Matthew 19:26.

- I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me.

—

Philippians 4:13.

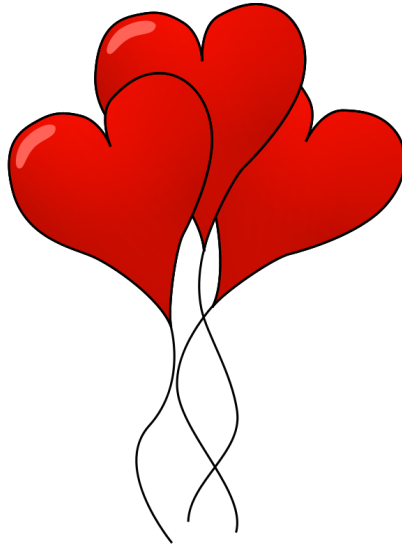
- A Cord of Three Strands is Not Easily Broken.

—
Ecclesiastes 4:12.



7 Loving Habits of Healthy Military Families

1. Make Love a Priority
2. Loving Acts of Kindness
3. Love & Honor Each Other
4. Honor Your Love – Recommit Everyday
5. Faith Will Never Fail
6. Financial Plan for Success
7. Together Habits Create Togetherness



HABIT 1. Make Love a Priority

♥SELF

You know the drill, laundry and dishes, play dates and family calls, volunteer service, welcome committee, baby showers and school projects, squeeze in a date night and there's almost no time left for you. A car can't run on empty and, neither can you.

You are certainly as much as a priority as classroom cupcakes and commander's cakes, Bunco night with the girls and commissary runs. But, when? Where? How? If only! Calgon take me away! Failing to take time to refresh, replenish, and fill 'er up, will lead to cracked engine blocks and frazzle you! If the

Lord can make THE WORLD in six days, so too, can you manage your world in six. A Sabbath Day means a day of Rest, to worship, to reflect, to refresh, to give thanks. It's part of the formula to recommit. Picnics bring families tighter, church and worship cleanse our hearts and conscious and draws us nearer to the power Who can forgive and heal and open our hearts for love, time to read and enjoy the hobbies that interest you, can fill us up with gratitude and give us strength for the six month rotations that are surely ahead. Bring your "me" list and remember to schedule time for prayer, fitness, quiet walks, coffee with a friend, and long-term goals and dreams. Don't get lost in the military mission, that you forget that God has a destiny for you, too. Doing this will not only fulfill your dreams, help you maintain your identity, but, also, bring a healthy, satisfied, and whole partner to your marriage. **That's a gift to yourself, your spouse for life, and to your family for life, to which you can commit for life!**

♥FAMILY

Family planning can take the stress and guilt out of 'me' time, when it's scheduled. Why not have a monthly calendar planning meeting to decide what will go on your family calendar – time for bedtime stories, family visits, picnics and new adventures; time for laundry and life chores; me time, Date Night time, Pray time, Feast time, and Free time, and then, volunteer time – learn to give from the overflow of

your life. Remember, to fill up first. **That's a gift to yourself, your spouse for life, and to your family for life, to which you can commit for life!**

♥SOLDIER

The Rucksack of the warrior is a heavy load. Unpack some of it and give it to Him.

Come to me all who are weary, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

-Matthew 11:30

The military is your career. It's a place for your skills, talents, leadership, and willingness to serve others. It is not your identity. Take caution to keep the two separate. Your identity is in Christ alone. You are a son of the living God. He made you a Warrior – a warrior for Christ. He created you in love. When you deploy, you must go into the terror of the night, yet, He goes before you. The battle is not yours, but His. You are a warrior taking territory for Him. When you return to your home front, lay your weapons down. The home you step in to is holy – it's a home where heaven reigns. The battlefield is behind you. The steps you take through the door are ordered by the Lord. Leave your mission in His hands and run into your family's arms with love. Invite the Lord to cover you, guard your mouth and your heart, and to take your pain and your battle wounds. Make time to be still before the Lord and make peace with your past, then, run with joy to

unwrap the gift that has been waiting for you – your family for life.

This is the gift of love your father has for you. **This is a gift to yourself, your spouse for life to your family for life, and to which you can commit to for life!**

♥FAMILY

Recommit to one another. Show gratitude the Lord Himself has protected this family and cared for them. Reccommit your love to one another, remember your why, and enjoy – life, laughter, and love of your family. Be ready, be open, be patient, be kind; love, honor and respect, means going slow in the transition, giving your pain, cares, expectations, and even those unmet, to the Lord.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

– Ephesians 4:26.

This means, time for conversation and connection, not sweeping things under the rug. Dirty boots stay at the door; dirty hearts are brought to the one who can clean, heal and purify the pain. Reccommit to the vision – you are a family for life. Joy in the moment, even if the moment is a few days in coming. Transitions can be messy. Post assignment charts, schedules and family plans where ever member can be a part of the family rhythm. Let everyone share their transition memories and pains around the table or on a family outing. We lay our burdens at our Father's feet – He is the burden bearer and the

provider of all our needs. He is the solution giver. We share only to stay connected, not to burden one another. Family is Love. Family is a safe place. Family is king. Family is where honor and respect flow. Family is a safe place. To the military branch we serve, to the Family, we are committed. In God we Trust. **This is a gift to yourself, your spouse for life to your family for life, and to which you can commit to for life!**

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” –Colossians 3:18-21.

♥FRIENDS

Friends for a season. Friends for life. There are friends of every kind. In the military community, friends are family. These friends you call upon during wars and deployments, training and drills, for runny noses, trips to the hospital in the middle of the night and as mid-wives in the delivery room when Daddy is deployed. The Key to life success here is Friends for Life, but Family First.

This means family commitments before friends on your calendar. This means family secrets are not meant to be shared. Having a friend to vent to or a sounding board, where God's grace abounds, can give us strength in the waiting, but, Family First. A friend has you in mind; you must have your Family First in mind. A friend, who meddles or takes sides, is a friend who has the potential to divide. Stand guard – a little yeast spoils the batch and, the devil is waiting in the darkness, prowling, to see your demise. If there's a check in your spirit, heed the warning. Remember the priority is:

God first, then spouse, you, kids, the military, parents, extended family, friends and then community - schools, volunteer service, neighbors, military community, brothers and sisters in Christ, to whom we are obligated to disciple and serve.

It's easy to get these out of order.

*You should be taking care of yourself as a given and a priority - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, and your needs as a person, however, married in Christ, means becoming one flesh and then submitting to your spouse first, thus, the order for your goals and plans follow his.

All other professions come after extended family. 1 Timothy speaks about our obligation to our family and the Ten Commandments makes honoring our mother and father first very clear. We know the role and seriousness of commitment to the military, or any other first responder's role in service, is set apart and, perhaps conflicting to the needs and desires of parents and family, and, for this reason only, I believe duty to military service follows our primary family unit, in order to have peace and maintain the unique nucleus of the military family. We know when you sign up for duty, 'you sign your life away,' and they always rank first in order of priority. I challenge you to remember in all things, you belong to Christ and, so does your family. When you stay committed to one another and family for life – there is never a competition, and things do not get out of order; it has already been agreed that the call of service is first in time, but the family remains first in commitment and heart and in God's order. In all things, Biblical balance is required for proper order. The word of God and spiritual discernment is valuable for decision making in all situations. Keep the heart surrendered to God. Trust Him in all His ways and you will walk through the valleys, survive the missions, and move forward into the goodness of God. **This is a gift yourself, your spouse for

life to your family for life, and to which you can commit to for life!

HABIT 2. Loving Acts of Kindness

GIVE

Give daily. Offer Random Acts of Kindness to your spouse, your children and others. These thoughtful acts – notes, fresh flowers, a single flower picked from the garden, hot tea on the counter, warm jammies straight from the dryer, a note under the pillow, a photo taped to the mirror, speaks volumes of love and connects hearts forever.

RECEIVE

It is better to give than receive, but oh what a gift to enjoy the love and expression of another when they receive. Be a gracious receiver of gifts. Don't steal the joy or the blessing from the giver. Let them be used to lavish God's love on you and to receive the blessing for themselves later. Giving and Receiving gifts of time, talent, treasure, service, words and simple acts of love, cements love forever.

GROUPS – RECEIVE

Receive freely from neighbors or groups that wish to give. It is a sign of honor and love. More importantly, it gives others an avenue of expression for their

feelings, engages them for a purpose, and ties them to the mission. Don't rob them of the blessing to be used by God and to be of service to your family. It is not charity. It is service that is sent straight from Heaven. It is God-honoring to receive the blessings He has for you and your family. One day, it will be your day to do a good turn. This day, it might be your day to receive. To receive graciously is an act of love.

FUNDRAISERS – SERVICE TO OTHERS

When planning events, community gatherings or even birthday celebrations, it is a good time to include service to others, sharing a donation or sponsoring an act of service to support the military. There are many, many organizations that serve to support military families, military soldiers, veterans and those who fight for our freedom. Seek out these groups. Receive. Then roll up your sleeves and join the effort. A family that prays together, serves together, loves together, stays together. Stay connected with other military families – the compassion you share will return to your family.



HABIT 3.



Love & Honor Each Other WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is Kind. Love is Honor. Love is Respect. Love is Unconditional. Love is Self-less.

Love is a Choice. Love is a Gift from God.



If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophesy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I

possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ^{but} when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me...

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. -1 Corinthians 13.

DECISION

Love is a Choice; a simple decision. Love is a decision to keep your heart opened and healed, to let go of offense and to allow the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through you that you might love another, imperfect soul through Christ.

COMMITMENT

Make a decision to love for life. Make a decision to let God do what you could never do on your own. Choose Love. Decide once. Decide for life. Commit to recommit

every day. Commit to make love the highest priority, not your priorities, not someone else's burden or invasion of your commitment, or pulling or tugging, not temptations or addictions or weakness or woes. Commit to love. Commit to Family for Life. Allow the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

CLARITY

Be clear on your vision. What will keep you together when countries and wars separate you? Be clear on your vision of Family for Life, A God-centered Family, without room for division or separation. Be clear on your mission. The mission is to serve God and your country, for a space of time. Be clear what that is. Then create a family vision for the next. What's next after service? Be open to opportunities that may come, but in all things, visualize your family unit as one, enjoying life after service – talk about it, dream about it, pray about it and walk toward that vision with clarity. This is Family Strong, Family for Life. Mission Ready, Future focused. Love is for life, military service is for a time.

CHOICES

Every day, every moment is full of choices. You can make the choice for anger or forgiveness, love or hate, bitterness or forgiveness, prayer or the TV remote; you can make the choice for four years of service or career, the choice to trade your future or commit to your life. Life is full of choices the fast car now or a car for less to build

your savings and comfortable retirement years. Every little choice has a consequence and impact on your life. To work out, to take a walk, to be healthy; to pray, to journal, to worship, to wake up early for church – to walk in peace; to save, to spend, to invest for the future or to walk in the moment and carry the burden of stress that accompanies those choices; to drink beer all day or water and enjoy vitality and health. Life is full of choices. Choose life. This is Mission Ready, God-honoring, and Family Strong - for life.

SAFE HABITS

Jumping from perfectly good planes, bungee jumping from cliffs, dumpster diving and artillery drills – life is full of risks for military personnel, practicing a few safe habits will keep you Military Strong, Family Strong for life.

Safe habits - pray daily, meditate in the morning as your first fruit to honor God.

Cover your family in prayer and, with Psalm 91. Pray a blessing aloud over each child and over your spouse as a loving act, face to face. What could be more honoring than looking into the eyes of the one whom your soul loves? (-Song of Songs).

Have a financial plan, with a financial advisor, who can help you make a financial plan during service and post-retirement. This is a great gift of love and will keep the

burden of financial stress from attacking your family and making you vulnerable.

Don't let outsiders into your decision making or intrude on the safety of your home.

Walk in love but, family first. Create a well barricaded family unit. Barricade yourself in love. Loose lips sink ships; keep gossip and disparaging remarks from leaving your lips. Once extended family hears a thing, it cannot be retracted. Bring every care to God and let Him untie the knots. Family friend's should serve only in advisory capacity and, never be given the rank of family member with decision-making input. Trust your gut, Trust God and Trust God to work all things out.

VISION OF LOVE

Keep your vision of Love, Family Love, and Love for Life always in your mind, your heart, and in the forefront of your mind's eye. Don't let alcohol, temptations of this world, sports, technical devices, TV remotes, gambling, buddy time, hobbies, volunteering, church obligations, friends or extended family rob you of your gift of love and Family for Life. Choose to make a decision for love and not laziness, forgiveness and not grudge, selflessness and not selfish pride, ego or agenda. Love is precious. Die to self daily. Keep the mission in perspective; it's for a season soldier. Keep the Vision of Love as your motivation every day; marriage is a covenant for life. Give all the glory to God. He will walk you through the valleys, rescue you on the seas, send the angels on the front lines, and, He will rescue you. He will

love you through every battle, every scrimmage, and every lying thing from the enemy. He will allow you to make the decision for the counterfeit, or to accept His free gift of love and goodness with it- the real thing. He will allow love to take root, and blossom and flourish when you give your heart to Him and commit to your Family for life. Keep your gaze on the one whom your heart loves and your ways committed to the One who loves you first. The vision for love comes from the Creator of Love. Fall in love with Him first, receive the love He has for you and then, enjoy the love of the one He created especially for you. And the Greatest of These is Love. -1 Corinthians 13.



HABIT 4. Honor Your Love

♥**LOVE LANGUAGES** - Discover yours, theirs, and your children's! Live them out.

♥**RESPECT** -In Words, Action, Small Acts, Keeping Promises, Time & Public Testimony

♥**REMEMBER** - Promises, What's Important, Favorite Things, Songs, Dates, Your Future Vision, Your Decision to Commit.

♥**RECONNECT** - Daily with Your Love♥

- ♥HEART CHECK - What Are You Holding on To?
- ♥FORGIVENESS OVER OFFENSE – It's A Choice!
- ♥MEDITATE ON YOUR LOVE - WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
- ♥EXPRESS YOUR LOVE – GIFTS Matter, Everyday, Anyway
- ♥GIVE TIME TO YOUR LOVE – QUALITY TIME
- ♥GRATITUDE – APPRECIATION/ACTS OF SERVICE
- ♥TAMING THE TONGUE - At All Times. Words Can Never Be Retracted.
- ♥CLEANING THE HEART – Take Every Thought, Offense, Disappointment & Pain Captive to the Lord
- ♥GET PHYSICAL –Hugs, Hands, Express Your Love – It's a Gift from God

♥Never Take it For Granted.
Unwrap the Gift of Love Daily. ♥

HABIT 5. Faith Will Never Fail

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

-1 Corinthians 13.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters; He refreshes my soul.

-23 Psalm.

A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

-Ecclesiastes 4:12.

Pray. Ask. Fast. Do Faith Together.
Let the Lord envelope you with His love.



It's a Love for Life!



HABIT 6.

Financial Plan for Success

- Love is a Balanced Budget
- Taxes are a Team Effort
- Purchase Agreements Make them Mutual or Set a Limit to Buy
- Credit is a Love Crusher

- Set Aside Financial Resources for Military Families
- Avoid Financial Pitfalls of Frequent Military Moves
- Solvent Stewardship Strategies Include Giving, Generosity to Others, Saving for the Future, Insuring and Planning Ahead
- Emergency Cash Stashed Will Keep the Blues Away
- Life is Full of Emergencies, Plan for Them
- 10, 10, 80 (Giving, Investing/Saving and Living) is One Formula that works. The Military isn't your Bread and Butter for Life.
- Use Money as the Tool it is. Let it Make Money for You and Serve You.
- The Borrower is Slave to the Lender. Don't be a Slave.
- Live Free. Pray on it. Learn where you Can. Dave Ramsey offers sage advice in this area.

Financial Freedom is a Choice.

Be Wise.

Don't let the love of money kill the love of your life.

Family Strong. Family for Life.



HABIT 7.
Together Habits Create
Togetherness

♥ Start Together/End Together

- ♥ Eat Together
- ♥ Pray Together
- ♥ Study the Word Together
- ♥ Serve Together
- ♥ Dream Together
- ♥ Travel Together
- ♥ Do Life Together



NEVER HABITS

NEVER...

- ♥ Give the Enemy Access to your Home

- ♥ Create a Triangle Relationship with Others
- ♥ Act Like You are Single If You Want to Stay Married
- ♥ Resist the Opportunity to Feed the Dragon
- ♥ Be Filled with So Much Pride You Can't Forgive
- ♥ Take Moments for Granted
- ♥ Be Ungrateful
- ♥ Miss An Opportunity to Capture the Moment
- ♥ Miss a Moment to Express Your Love or Say I Love You ♥



♥♥ Good To Remember ♥♥

♥♥ Pride Comes Before a Fall

♥♥ A House Divided Will Not Stand

♥♥ Work Hard, Play Hard, Pray Hard, Love Always

♥♥ When in Doubt, Err on the Side of Love

♥♥ Paper Plates are Disposable, Marriages are Not



Warfare at Home is Real

♥ Devise a Battle Plan to Stay

Combat Ready ♥

Moving is a given in duty to country. Moving is also one of the most stressful life events. Moving in the military is compounded by children to manage, lack of family support due to duty stations far from home and family support, moves during separation from your spouse while he or she is engaged in duty, no authority in some military facilities due to the

soldier's rank, duty or authority; a myriad of variables affect military families and their moves.

Life Events that are Top Stressors include:

- Death of a Family Member
- Divorce
- Moving
- Personal Injury or Loss
- Marital Separation

Military Families experience nearly every one of these Top Stressors in the course of their military service. Let's work to reduce the stress and eliminate Separation and Divorce Due to Duty!

The best Battle Plan is a Strategy Plan for Success and a mindset to be prepared to maneuver through the events that military life may throw your way.

The Military Community provides multiple resources to help and support military families, make yourself aware and, actively seek and receive these support resources.

Make your Family Health, the Top Priority during these Life Events. Stay connected to each other. Ask for help from family. Lean on your military community. Talk it out. Share the load. Love through the Storms. Stay focused on your vision.

♥Family for Life.♥



Create A Battle Plan for Love & Life

What's Your ♥Prescription for Love♥

- Family Declaration of Values, Motto and Vision
- Church and Faith Habits
- Family Calendar Planning

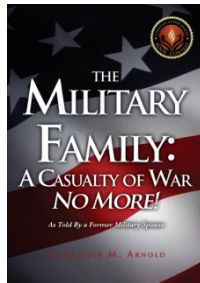
- Child Growth Plan, Raise With Love
 - Child Rearing
 - Child Responsibility
 - Child Support/not financial, helpers
- Anger Management Tools
- House Work Assignments
- Finances
 - Monthly Budget
 - Buying/Spending
 - Replacement Plan for Large Items
 - Duty Transfer Plan
 - Homesick Travel Plan
 - Giving Plan/Financial Stewardship
- Extended Deployments/Training Plan
- Who has the Reins – Authority and Submission/Reversal of Roles, Transition Times, Authority and Assignments for Household Management.

KNOW YOUR TEAM. HAVE A VISION.

- Family Support/How Long/How Often/When
- Neighbor Network
- Vision for Retirement
- Personal Goals – School/travel/Life Goals

#Military Strong # Family Strong
Family for Life

The Military Family: *A Casualty of War No More!*



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More!**

OR

Invite Jacqueline Arnold to speak at your next event,

OR

To Join the Mission as a Battle Buddy,

Visit:

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About the Author/Speaker

The Author is a former Army Spouse of 23 years, supporting her soldier through deployments, moves, training assignments, classes, and multiple active campaigns, including Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom. She is a mother of five children. Her mission is to help other families stay strong through the battles of career military service.

Her family was a casualty of war, but with education, love, and community support, your family can be Family Strong and Married for Life!