

Finding Your Battle Buddy

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Some things are just easier with a friend by your side. Navigating the military journey is definitely one of them. I'm sure you've heard your soldier talk about his "battle buddies" that he has bonded with through his service. He doesn't have to be the only one that has someone who understands what he does all day or that will "have his back" should he ever need protecting. The same can be true for you. You can find your very own battle buddy with whom to share your journey. I'll tell you how.

Right now it may seem impossible. Finding friends takes effort, time, and it's like dating – necessary but not always something you look forward to doing. Yes, I know, you have a life to live and the Army is a whole new world with plenty of red tape and complications of its own. Putting yourself out into the mix of the social scene of your post does take some guts, even for the most outgoing and seasoned spouse. The good news is that you can learn to put yourself out there. I've got some tried and true suggestions for ways to meet people and get involved. Some you can even do in your pajamas! You might not believe me now, but I guarantee once you find your battle buddy life will seem so much easier and you'll wonder how you ever made it on your own without someone who understands this crazy life you lead.

The most basic advice has two main components; 1) Visit the welcome center. It is most likely in the Army Community Services (ACS) building on your post. 2) Ask a lot of questions, but mainly ask for a post and community phone book and map.

That's pretty easy advice to get you started. There are a lot of things that you can do with that information you just gathered.

Neighbors

Don't underestimate the power of an instant community and a great neighbor. The Army as a whole is its own community; most likely you'll have something instantly in common with those that live around you.

The Unit

Every unit has a Family Readiness Group (FRG). Admittedly, some are more functional than others. Ask your husband if he has turned in your information, and ask him to get you the name and phone number of the leader. Call him/her and ask to be added to their distribution list.

Spouse Organizations

Check to see if there are any spouse organizations available on your post or in your community. Most locations have an Enlisted Spouses Club (ESC) or Officers' Spouses Club (OSC) at the very least. Read your local newspaper's calendar of events. If you live near or on an Army post, local support groups may list their events in the paper.

Religious Organizations

Check the Yellow Pages for your new area to find locations and phone numbers. Call the group for information about meeting times and activities for you and your children.

Volunteer

All Army posts have a volunteer coordinator. Usually this person is located in the Family Readiness Center (FRC) or ACS building. They have tons of opportunities available. If you do not want to volunteer on post or are in a civilian community, volunteer at hospitals, churches, or for local organizations. You can find those with a simple www.Google.com search of volunteer opportunities in your area.

Professional Development

One place you're guaranteed to be in the presence of other people is at work or school. Check out the local job listings even if it's just to find temporary or part time work. You could also see if there are any local colleges that offer classes in which you might be interested.

Online

Personal connections can't be beat, but you can always find support online. Who knows you might find someone that is actually local to you. Visit military message boards and blogs to find out more about this life and how others are integrating themselves into Army life.

Live Life

Believe it or not, there are normal everyday things you can do and meet people in the process. I've heard some pretty bazaar stories of how people met, and I've had some pretty interesting experiences myself. Work on your to do list by grocery shopping or taking your dogs to the vet. You never know who you might meet. Check out the YMCA for sports or search for a pottery class in your area. Go out for a night on the town and do some sight seeing and shopping. Go for a cup of coffee at the local coffee shop.

On post ask where you can find the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Building (MWR). There you can find out about children's groups/classes, hobby or craft classes, or even scope out the post bowling alley. I've even heard of people meeting someone while they were at a doctor's appointment.

Once you've made a friend you'll have someone to attend events with, ask questions of, and generally feel like you're not alone in your new surroundings. Even if this person is as new to the Army as you, you'll still have a battle buddy to trek the journey with you. Remember, some things are just easier with a friend by your side.