

What Comes First: Army or Family

I can remember at four years in the Army when Kevin and I were making that “big decision” whether or not we were going to continue on this journey. I can’t begin to tell you how many times I repeated, “I just want to be on the front burner of your life for once.” The funny thing is that though he understood what I was saying, he didn’t understand or comprehend how to make it happen. It wasn’t that he was choosing to have me play second, it was his commitment, desire, and passion and he just couldn’t ignore it.

In my personal situation, we did make the decision to stay in. It was a joint decision, but in that decision I have found some acceptance. I had to learn how to incorporate Tara into this lifestyle and find a balance between Tara, her family, and the Army. That acceptance started with realizing that I married a soldier, not an executive. I had to accept this lifestyle, this commitment, this mission as my own. For my personal happiness, I had to agree to love and to serve not just my soldier, but the Army as well.

Amy McEntire says, “I used to get so irritated with my husband because he wasn’t home on time, or the phone would ring and he’d have to leave. Finally, after several years of fighting it I realized that in our life the mission had to come first. Accepting it made my life a whole lot easier.” Army spouses everywhere know exactly how Amy feels.

“My husband is wonderful, even though the mission comes first, he always finds a way to make it up to me, and make me feel special.” Jenny Roland says. “Sometimes it’s a scheduled night out, sometimes it’s just lunch. It might even be a simple email telling me he loves me.” I’m personally sending kudos out to Jenny’s soldier for trying to help her with finding balance in this life. Knowing you are special and important in your husband’s life despite the Army or the mission can certainly help you accept his desire to serve.

From my point of view, you can spend time upset and fight the uphill battle that you’re never going to win or you can accept, mold, and adjust. To help you preserve your sanity, find *your* place on this journey. It’s not always easy, not always fair, and it’s not instantaneous! You have to learn to be self-reliant, independent, and successful for you, and not just for your soldier. You have to learn to make moments last a lifetime, connect across the miles, keep hope alive, and bridge the gaps that the Army’s mission creates in your life.

Simply put, you love your soldier, your soldier loves you. He also loves serving his country. It’s a passion and a calling. Most can’t just change the way they feel about their service. Life can be a whole lot peachier if you find ways to make this military lifestyle work for you and your family.