

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



**Focus:**  
Multiple  
Branches

## The Milspouse Battle Rhythm: Communicating Resilience Throughout the Deployment Cycle

Villagran, M., Canzona, M. R., & Ledford, C. J. (2013). The Milspouse Battle Rhythm: Communicating resilience throughout the deployment cycle. *Health Communication, 28*(8), 778-788. doi:10.1080/10410236.2013.800441

**SUMMARY:** With the stressors of deployments on military families, it is essential that military spouses find ways to promote resilience during the deployment cycle. Military spouses' view of resilience and coping during deployment were analyzed for overarching themes. Results suggest that military spouses have a shared narrative of being strong, resourceful, positive, and productive and of providing social support to one another to promote resilience.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Military spouses reported attempting to maintain regular routines and rituals throughout deployment in order to give themselves a sense of consistency and normalcy.
- Having a shared narrative between military spouses about personal sacrifice and quiet strength, as well as relying on other military spouses for support, was viewed as essential for resilience.
- Many of the military spouses indicated that they kept a positive outlook during deployment by distracting themselves and keeping busy rather than focusing on negative emotions.
- Spouses indicated that thinking about the difficulties and instability of military life as an adventure or finding humor in the situations was helpful to being resilient.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military families on benefits of healthy communication, both within the family and with other military families as sources of social support
- Provide mentorship programs that pair new and experienced military spouses during deployment
- Offer groups for military spouses to both discuss negative emotions related to deployment openly and share helpful ways to cope with deployment and related emotions

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs and services for families of deployed Service members
- Recommend professional development courses for providers working with Service members on healthy communication and social support among military families
- Promote the use of shared narratives about military spouses' resilience in existing programs for military families

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## METHODS

- Military spouses were recruited by two leaders of a military spouse organization in a southern U.S city close to two large military bases.
- Individual interviews with each participant regarding daily routines, emotions, and coping during deployment resulted in greater than 20 hours of audio data and 81 pages of transcripts.
- A four-phase, inductive coding process was used to categorize themes of spouses' statements.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 24 Active Duty Service members' spouses, with an average age of 32 years.
- Participants were 92% female, and no data regarding race/ethnicity were provided.
- Seven Service members of the participating spouses were deployed at the time of the study.

## LIMITATIONS

- The study provides valuable information regarding military spouses' views of resilience, but it cannot inform us about what strategies ultimately result in resilience and positive outcomes.
- The researchers, who were long-time military spouses, participated in data collection and analysis, and results may have been impacted by the researchers' own views.
- Participants were drawn from two military branches, which are not specified in the article, and from a single community, so results may not generalize to other military spouses.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine whether the extent to which military families prescribe to the shared narratives of military identity effects outcomes (e.g., well-being, quality of life) during and after deployments
- Explore what aspects of social support, such as sharing positive thoughts versus sharing concerns, are most beneficial for resilience during deployment
- Investigate how more or less available communication with the deployed spouse may affect the amount of social support military spouses seek from one another during deployment

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>