

## Military OneSource Podcast — Helping Families Navigate Geo-Baching

### Episode transcript

#### **Bruce Moody:**

Hi, I'm Bruce Moody. Living apart during a military assignment is commonly known as geo-baching. Leslie Gould is our guest today. She's a Navy spouse and has experienced five geo-baching assignments, so she knows a thing or two about this subject. During our conversation she shares her stories and some honest insights into keeping a family strong during a geo-bachelor tour. Leslie Gould is also a senior executive and the director of the Navy's Fleet and Family Readiness Program. Before we get started, I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department with personalized support, tools and resources for every step of military life. If you have any questions or comments about today's conversation, send us a note using the link in the program notes. Final reminder, you can subscribe to this podcast to wherever you listen, so please do. All right, let's jump into today's conversation. Leslie Gould, welcome to the podcast.

#### **Leslie Gould:**

Thank you, Bruce. I'm so excited to be here and talk with you guys tonight.

#### **Bruce Moody:**

We are so happy to have you with us. We're going to be talking about taking care of families and we thought, "Well, you are a military family, and you take care of military families." So go ahead and introduce yourself and tell us about yourself.

#### **Leslie Gould:**

My name is Leslie Gould. I am a Navy spouse of 22 years. Happily married. Have been in quality of life programs since I got on an airplane and PCSed to Sigonella, Sicily, with my husband Jacob Gould in 2003. At the time, before I met my husband, I was actually a banker for a period of about eight years. And I'm from Memphis, Tennessee, originally, and have a finance background and had worked in banking during college. And I met my husband on a girl's trip to Florida and lo and behold, three weeks later we were married.

**Bruce Moody:**

Three weeks?

**Leslie Gould:**

Three weeks, yeah. A lot of people don't know that. That's a fun fact.

**Bruce Moody:**

Are we breaking news to some of your friends?

**Leslie Gould:**

No. So I think everybody knows. We met on April the 12th, and we got married on May the 5th.

**Bruce Moody:**

Good grief.

**Leslie Gould:**

And he bought me a book, because my dad wasn't in the Navy. My grandfathers both served in the Navy, but I had not grown up in a Navy household. And so my husband bought me a book called "Today's Military Wives." That is so funny. But he bought me that in 2003.

**Bruce Moody:**

Wow, that aged well.

**Leslie Gould:**

And I read it cover to cover before we got on an airplane on September 15th, 2003. And I left my hometown of Memphis behind on that military bird from Norfolk and flew into Sicily, Italy. And I started my journey into quality of life about three months after I arrived in Sicily. But I really started my journey as a military spouse on May the 5th, 2003. And I was actually thinking about this Bruce just in preparation for talking to you, and I'm saying I wouldn't change one moment of that. One moment of the last 22 years, I wouldn't change it. I walked into the MWR office in Sicily. I was going to get my master's degree when I was overseas, focused on my next level education at the time, which I was going to get my MBA.

And my husband was gone on det [temporary assignment or deployment] all the time. Even right when we landed in September, we got an apartment and then we started our life together and he was always kind of on det. He was two weeks here, two weeks there. I mean I had made friends locally with other military spouses that were new, because we went through INDOC [Indoctrination Phase], and I met people in my INDOC class. But I said, "I got to work." I really

wanted to work. And I walked in the MWR, the Human Resources HR office, and I had my business suit on. And I had my resume and I said, “I need a job. Is there something I can do?” And lo and behold, they hired me as a NAF-2. And if you don’t know what a NAF-2 is, it’s a non-appropriated funds. I was a payroll clerk, so I had gone from being a vice president at National Bank of Commerce before I met my husband, an officer of a big bank in the southeast, and here I am now, I’m starting a whole new career and I’m a payroll clerk.

And you know what? I loved that job. And then I did pursue my master’s while I was in Sig, and I actually worked my way up there locally. I applied for the next job, and then I applied for the next job. And I left there as a GS-11 when I left Sicily, Italy, in 2007. And then we started another PCS to another location. And I had a break in service when we took orders to Florida in the Pensacola, Panama City area. And then after that I had a break in service for three years. I was back in banking. I couldn’t get a job in quality of life programs at the time that would’ve paid me what banking was going to pay me as a military spouse. And so I had to do that for my family even though my call was to quality of life. I loved it. I loved serving families. I loved the fact that we employed military spouses. I loved learning about the programs. I loved learning recreation. I’d never worked in recreation.

I kind of grew up in it in Sicily, learning the ropes, learning about what morale, welfare and recreation was. And then lo and behold we’re up for orders again. And we took orders to Guam this time, and I did the same thing I did in Sicily. I literally got there, PCS, got a house, did the whole military move thing. And got there, and I put on my business suit, and I got my resume and I walked into the MWR director’s office and I said, “I need a job. Do you need someone to hand out popcorn or work at the movie theater or do events?” And that was in 2010, Bruce. So I worked in entertainment at that point. I was the entertainment director. And then when I left Guam, I was the MWR director and that was a lot of fun.

And then I left Guam to come to headquarters in 2014 in D.C. as a program manager. And then fast forward a few years after that, we got orders again. And I ended up in a remote and isolated base at China Lake, California. I was back where I needed a job again. And I became the quality of life director in China Lake. Then my journey just continued from there. And I ended up back in D.C. in December of 2021 as the deputy quality of life programs director for the whole Navy. And then I took this job as a senior executive on August 1st, 2022, and here I am.

**Bruce Moody:**

Here you are.

**Leslie Gould:**

It could be 22 years to get here with some bumps along the way. But I love what I do, and I really love the fact that military families can be a part of our story. You know, when we’re taking care of sailors and families through quality of life programs, that they help shape our story. They’re why we do what we do, but they help us do what we do. And it’s amazing to be a part of it.

**Bruce Moody:**

It's so interesting that you say military families help service members do what they do. And this is kind of the conversation we're having today. A lot of what they do is come around to making really important, heavy decisions for the family. One of them being geo-batching. I think everybody just calls it geo-batching, but is there another term for it?

**Leslie Gould:**

Well, sometimes we call that slang term is geo-batching, but a lot of times service members go on what's called an individual assignment. And that's a little bit kind of a formal term, typically when they're going to take an overseas assignment while the spouse remains in the states. And my husband and I have actually done that. This was about 2017. I was here in D.C. I was the program manager for Navy Recreation at the time. And absolutely loved my job.

Jake is an explosive ordnance technician. And the Navy needed him to go be in Bahrain. And I loved my job so much, and I knew that my career had gotten to the point where I was a program manager now. I was in D.C. I was making a lot of changes for the better for families. And he and I really had the conversation, like, "Do I want to start over again and push the reset button where I have to walk into somebody's office with my resume and my business suit again?" Or does he want to take this assignment in Bahrain at the time and I stay in D.C. with our cat and he goes there. And that was a choice we made.

Financially, I would say that it was very beneficial for us because Jake was going to an overseas assignment and I was CONUS. So there was ability for you as a dependent to continue to receive your Basic Allowance for Housing, what we call as BA. We were getting BA, and then Jake was in Bahrain as an IA. And we were getting family separation allotment, and he was able to afford an apartment there. I would go visit. And I actually ended up having to go a couple times for work for the Navy to go to Bahrain because of some recreation thing or accreditation visits or something like that. So I actually ended up having to go there for my job a couple of times, which is kind of weird that he was in the same place where I had to go. That usually doesn't happen when I'm on travel.

But it was actually a beneficial decision for us, I think financially. I think mentally it's a hard call. It's hard, Bruce, to make that choice. But what Jake and I learned after many, many deployments — Jake probably did in the first four years that we were married, and we were in Sicily, in Sigonella. Jake was gone. I'm a statistics finance nerd, so I had the number of days that he was gone during that four-year tour. And he was literally gone 88% of the time. And so I really had become familiar with deployments. And it's a lot of stuff where he was going on det. He'd go be gone for a month, two months, then come back for a week. And then he did two, I believe six-month deployments while we were there. And then he did two back-to-back combat tours in Iraq at the time as an EOD. And so I had done deployments. I had many deployments.

**Bruce Moody:**

Overseas as well.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yes.

**Bruce Moody:**

I mean for people who have not experienced that, that just brings it to a whole new level.

**Leslie Gould:**

It does. Especially just little things that you don't think about. I remember taking Jake to the airport to go on deployment. Literally I was driving our truck, we had a Z-71 extended cab pickup. And I was driving him to the airport, and I dropped him off the airport. I'm crying, bawling my eyes out. He was leaving on deployment. I'm driving back to housing. I lived in housing at the time in Sig, and our truck broke down from the airport. And I was like, "How can I do this?" I was so devastated. Oh my gosh, I've now got to find an Italian car repair to repair a Z-71 extended cap pickup, OK. This was a Chevy, so it was...and then my dad had to help me get parts for that car.

**Bruce Moody:**

I was going to say, not likely to have a lot of parts back at the shop.

**Leslie Gould:**

Correct. And that happened on the way home from dropping him off to go on deployment. I was literally driving back from the airport. I was already a basket case, calling my mom, calling my family. And now my car breaks down. And that was back in the time when we didn't have FaceTime.

**Bruce Moody:**

Oh, it's totally different, yeah.

**Leslie Gould:**

It's totally different. But I tell you, it is a hard choice to geo-bach, but it can be very beneficial. I think one thing that helped us over the years and we've geo-bached at least five times.

**Bruce Moody:**

Yeah, I was hoping you would mention that. That's a huge number. So you've learned a thing or two.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yes. Because Jake and I had come to the point, I guess I had been about maybe 15 years into my career. And I was really loving what I do, and I really love what I do today in quality of life programs. And I'm going to tell you, he was getting towards the end of his military service, and I'm in the heat of my career. I am progressing. I can see that we're making organizational change. I have a wonderful team. And that was even before this job. But I had a great team. I loved who I worked with. I loved what we did. And I was like, "Jake, you're coming to the twilight of your career, and I'm in the moment." So we made a choice for me to stick with my career, and I could stay in my job, and he could go and do what he needed to do for the Navy and support the warfighter effort, support what the Navy needed, support was the Department of Defense needed to be honest with you.

And they needed him. They needed that EOD component. They needed his expertise. And so it was good for our family and financially to have that, but it was also good for our family because it provided stability for me and my job to continue with my career. And now Jake's retired, and I'm still working. I've got to work for a little bit more. Just a little bit. But he's retired, and he's a 100% disabled veteran right now. But by us choosing to geo-bach, I was able to continue with my career and my education too. I'm pursuing my Ph.D. in organizational management right now. And Jake was in China Lake when I took the deputy job here back in DC. And he stayed in China Lake to continue to serve the Navy. The Navy needed him. We knew that. I loved my people in China Lake, and I loved that tour of duty. And then I went to Ventura in Point Magoos and took a position there for the Navy Region Southwest in quality of life.

But then I applied for this deputy job here back in D.C. And I said, "I'm going to go. I'm going to go ahead and go." Because he had to finish out his tour. And we made that choice as a family, but it takes a lot of commitment. It takes a lot of communication. And we've used services. I don't know if I've told you this, but I've used Military OneSource just to find moving resources. and I called them about my dad and my mom. We're looking for long-term respite care for my parents right now. And so I've gone to Military OneSource myself as a spouse to go, "OK, what's available in respite care?" And the people on the phone have helped me with that. I have used Fleet and Family. I've actually used it. I got trained on how to write a resume from a Fleet and Family support person. Early on I used Navy Marine Corps Relief Society to get a loan from them when that car broke down that I told you about because I needed money to fix my car and I didn't have it.

So the services that I believe in, I've actually utilized those services. And my husband got injured pretty significantly through his Navy service. He blew his back out. He messed up his shoulder. I mean all this other stuff like his hearing. But he was really, really injured at one point when he was serving on employment. On one of our Navy ships, he got really, really injured. And he actually used the Wounded Warrior program. And they helped him navigate the surgery he needed. He had a regional care coordinator. He uses our program, and I've used our programs, and I believe in it. And I believe in what we do because I've used all those things.

**Bruce Moody:**

And this is beautiful, because you've been on both sides of it. You've been the one providing the services. And you've been the one reaching out to use these services. And you've been a geo-bachelorette.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yes.

**Bruce Moody:**

What's the term?

**Leslie Gould:**

I guess a geo-bachelorette. Yeah, maybe.

**Bruce Moody:**

OK. All right, let's go with that. Five times and jumped right into it with a breakdown on the side of an Italian highway. Again, you've learned a thing or two. And so with all of that, let's talk to the families out there that maybe have a geo-batching an option coming their way.

**Leslie Gould:**

It is an option.

**Bruce Moody:**

It's an option. The military can create a scenario for a family where this seems like the best option, or a family can decide on their own that this is what the family needs. There's a lot of reasons why. But let's focus on the kind of things that people need to think about when they say, "Is geo-batching right for us?" There's a lot of things they have to think about. Money and the kids and the house and the job and all of that stuff. Can you go through some of those things that families ought to be thinking about?

**Leslie Gould:**

Absolutely. And what's interesting is my husband was the Navy senior chief. And I've had a lot of admirals call me right now and say, "Leslie, I'm going to be taking orders to Guam," or "I'm going to be taking orders to Bahrain," or "I'm going to be stationed in a remote and isolated location." And they'll say, "Hey, I have a child that has special needs." And I'll say, "OK, well let's talk through what your resources are at the local level. Let's talk about what support you need and where that's going to be." And I've been to about 60 out of 70 of our installations, so I'm very familiar with our installations. I've been on the ground either visited, accredited or I've been

stationed there at some point. So a lot of people call and ask us for that type of advice. Like, “What do I do if I have a special needs or an EFMP? I’m an EFMP family, and I need resources. Do I take orders to this location?”

And I think what Fleet and Family can help them do, or even Military OneSource, they can help them talk through that because they have to map that out. Some things that Jake and I always did every single time. And we were conditioned to do this. Our captain at the time, incredible human that he really cared about the military families. All our captains are super focused on this. But our EOD captain at the time in Sig, before they went on any deployment, they would bring all the spouses and the ombudsman — which ombudsman is our resource, to reach back to the command and the families — and they would bring us together, and then they would walk us through the steps of what you have to do if you’re going to be separated for a long time.

And what those steps involve is I had to make sure every time before Jake would leave, whether we were geo-batching or whether it was a deployment or whether it was him going on det. I always made sure that our will was updated. He had one, I had one. And I do this right now today. I actually went over this with him two weeks ago. It’s so funny. He was heading to Florida to work on our house down there and I’m here in D.C. And I said, “OK, is our living will up to date? Well, let’s just check that. I want you to know where all the resources are, because if something happens to me or something happens to you while you’re on this trip, I just want to make sure that you know what to do.” And so we made sure our wills were up to date. The Navy Legal Service actually helped us with our first will, our first living will. They helped us craft that document.

And then we always made sure that we had visibility of our resources. Because I needed to make sure that he knew what his account number was, what bills I was going to pay, what bills he was going to pay. We would do a budget together. How much is he going to bring in while he’s on this thing, and how much am I going to bring in? What are the mortgages? What’s his rent going to be? What’s my rent going to be? We actually used Navy Marine Corps Relief Society at one point to do massive budget planning when we first got married. And then we actually consulted with a PFM from Fleet and Family. I have done that before multiple times. And even though I’m at anchor, I just want someone to help me guide me through the steps so I’m not missing anything.

And as we’ve gone through this multiple geo-bach sessions in life, now we’re dealing with aging parents. And I have a step-grandson. And I have a godson. And I have family members that I actually need to think about too from this perspective. And so we would talk about not only all those kind of legal documents you need to do, and what your budget is going to be, and how much money do you want to save every month, and how much money are we spending on XYZ expenses? Like he has food, I have food, right? Those are split household expenses. But we would also talk about, “Hey, let’s talk about communication with our families.” Since 2014, when everybody’s using smartphones and things like that, we actually would set aside our own private call time. And that was every Sunday. No matter where he was or no matter where I was, every Sunday we set aside two hours just to be together virtually.

And we started that kind of tempo in I would say 2014 when we both had smartphones and it was a little bit easier to do. And we committed to that as a family. I won’t lie to you guys. I will say that geo-batching puts a lot of strain on the relationship if you’re not organized. Because you’ve got to have the communication lines open. Jake and I, when he came back, what I like to call reintegration, or when we were reintegrating together in a household that’s kind of a weird



time. “Oh wait, you’re in my space. You haven’t been here for a year and now you’re back,” kind of thing. We’ve gone through couples counseling together to reintegrate. We always use those resources. That was really helpful for us, especially with a high pressure job from both sides of the house. I mean his job, high tempo, high pressure. My job, high tempo, high pressure. And so we’ve used couples counseling for reintegration and that was really helpful for us.

I think some other things that families need to consider, especially if they have kids in school. A lot of choices that you would make in elementary school for your kids may not be the same choices you would make if you had teenagers because they’ve developed their support network, their sports, their community programs that they’re involved in, all these things. And so a lot of families, especially when you’ve been in the military 15 or more years, you’ve seen more families with teenagers. And a lot of times the family will choose to geo-bach, because they’re doing that for their kids, right?

**Bruce Moody:**

Especially senior year.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yes, they’re doing that for their kids. So their kids do not have to change schools or change friends right midstream. Especially when they get to that high school point. Because they’re thinking about college, you’re thinking about what school are they going to go to, what are they going to apply to, what are their extracurricular activities? So I would say a lot of admirals and a lot of my chief buddies or enlisted folks, they give me a call and they say, “What would you do if this was you and you had four kids and they were all in school? Would you move on to this location or would you stay where you are?” And I say, “Well, you’ve got to look at what your support system is.” For me being in D.C., I don’t have any family in D.C., but my work family has always been kind of my family. I’ve just grown up in that with Navy life and just leaning into...my work family has become my family. But what is my support system?

I’ve had to consider, OK, think about all the things that possibly could go right during a geo-bach. OK, I’m going to work on my degree and I’m going to work on this promotion, or I’m going to work on this new program that I’m doing, but also think about my support system. What happens if something happens with my mom or my dad while my husband is living overseas or he’s living in another state and I’m here? So it’s been a journey, but it’s been great for us because our communication improved. We were using resources that were available to us as a military family. I’m not going to lie, Bruce, we lean into a lot of our Military OneSource resources like phone calls, moving assistance, just...

**Bruce Moody:**

Oh, go on.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yeah, I’m serious.

**Bruce Moody:**

Well, no, I wanted to ask you about that. Because you and I kind of represent two aspects of support to families. So you are in the business of ensuring that there is on a Navy installation a Fleet and Family Support Center. It's the same with every single branch. So if somebody is attached to an installation, there is a family support center of some name depending on the branch that they're with. And then in addition to that there's what we offer, which is Military OneSource. This is a great opportunity to ask this question. How do the two complement each other?

**Leslie Gould:**

So that is a great question. So the one thing I love about Military OneSource is I could get someone almost 24/7 to call me back and answer a question, especially on the weekend if Fleet Family was closed or it was after hours, a random question. A lot of times it's dealt with moving, transportation, like weird questions that Fleet and Family may not always have the answer to. But I feel like I could always find something on Military OneSource either on the website or someone would always call me back. I could send a message or leave a message and someone would call me back from that group. And it was a concierge basically to answer random questions that maybe I didn't have the answer to. Because I don't have every answer. I know quality of life programs is so expansive. I mean, we have more than 184 different programs that we offer just from the Navy perspective.

But there are some questions that I didn't know to ask Fleet and Family at that moment or maybe it was a stressful time and I need access to a resource for another military member. A lot of people Facebook message me, ask me random questions on the weekend at night and just reach out because they know I'm a military spouse. So they also know I work in this world. But I think the two complement each other because you will find that OSD provides services like our military and family life counselors. And then we offer virtual clinical counseling. We have our own counselors on staff. But Military OneSource can pair you up with an MFLC program. It's additional, it's a complementary...it's like a basket available to you that if you can't seem to find the answer, you can find it somewhere.

**Bruce Moody:**

I want to clean up some of the acronyms that you've dropped along the way to OSD's Office of Secretary of Defense. In other words, what you're saying is that Military OneSource is actually part of the Department of Defense. We're actually part of the military. And you guys are on installations. And I would even encourage people to call both with the exact same set of questions, because we're not in competition with what the installations are offering. We're both serving families each with our own set of expertise and resources.

**Leslie Gould:**

That's exactly right.

**Bruce Moody:**

And furthermore, I would say that for a family member who is looking to deal with something, the amount of research they need to have before they call is zero. You were listing off certain things like financial considerations and child care and housing and all of this. You can simply show up to the local family support center or simply call Military OneSource and say, “Hey, the family is considering a geo-bachelor tour. What are the sort of things that I should be thinking about? What are the things I don’t know about? And what are the tools that you have available to me?” If you go to the installation and you ask those questions and then you go to Military OneSource and you ask those questions, you’re going to find that you have not only a lot of help, but a lot of tools.

But here’s the other thing. You mentioned your work family. By the way, folks, I used to work in her office. I used to work in Leslie’s office. Not for Leslie directly, but I was in that office. And so I know what it means to have a work family. You are in such a wonderful environment with people who truly care about the work that they do. They truly care about the military families that they support. So what I’m getting to is that in addition to the tools and the resources and the stuff that we provide through our various programs, having a community helps. And so just speak very, very briefly. Now, let’s just assume maybe it’s just somebody who needs to go knocking on doors, going to a local event, checking in with their local community, finding fellow spouses. Talk briefly about the value that you have experienced of having fellow spouses that you can reach out to.

**Leslie Gould:**

Oh my gosh, this is so important for our families to have what we call our Navy family framework, but it’s reaching our families through connection. And what a lot of people got to think about is we only house about 25% of our families, [those who] actually live on the installation. Most of our families, more than 80%, live off-base, so they’re embedded in the community. But I will tell you, knowing who my ombudsman was in my command, oh my gosh, that was such a resource to me because I could call her and ask her questions about things that...especially when I was a brand new military spouse, it was so helpful to me. She just knew everybody at the command. She knew what struggles I was probably going through. She knew my husband’s det and that they were going to be deployed. She knew that the families were going through that. I met other spouses because my ombudsman made the connection for me. And then there’s become this whole other network.

We have the My Navy Family app that’s available and a lot of spouses use that now. That wasn’t there back in 2003, but we have this growing group of FRGs, that’s family Readiness groups. And they would do deployment homecomings. And I always had someone from my command that was calling me and saying, “Hey, can you volunteer? Can you help us? We had a ship plan. Can you come help us do XYZ event? We’re going to get all these families together to do a welcome reunion.” And we did that for even our single sailors. We would coordinate with our other spouses that were with the command, male or female, it didn’t matter. And we would do holiday invites for sailors that were maybe coming back from deployment and they were geo-batching, or maybe they were single sailors and they needed somewhere to go for Thanksgiving or they needed somewhere to go for Easter. And we would be able to have those kind of moments when your sailor is serving alongside another sailor, getting to know that other family too. Because they’re going through the same thing you’re going through.

**Bruce Moody:**

Same thing.

**Leslie Gould:**

Yeah. It's just one more thing where you like, "Hey, I got to have someone come and help me let the dogs out," or "I need someone to watch my child for 30 minutes so I can mow the lawn or I can go to the doctor." But that military spouse, by you making that network and making those connections, you can call them and they understand what you're going through because they're going through it too. And you find that you have this organic family that evolves in this network. And I think that that is something that from families that live off-installation that's why it's critical for them to get to know who their ombudsman are, get to know us.

Come on the base and introduce yourself at MWR or come meet us at Fleet and Family. Come meet your quality of life director, because they're going to know other people. They're going to know the networks that you need to go to, the apps you need to use. They're going to have those resources. And then you're going to meet people. You're going to meet people by going to the MWR spin class on-base or taking a yoga class with your base folks. Because you just get to meet your family, and you just kind of have to put yourself out there. Your military spouses, if they get to know you and you put yourself out there to get to know them, it is a family that you discover.

**Bruce Moody:**

You've got to put yourself out there. You just got to. And I really want to emphasize this to people who are new to the military, you're in a totally new world here. And the world is one of change. But I'm telling you the experiences that you're going to have, people have had it before, so it is not the first time it has happened. You got to just show up and introduce yourself. That is just how it is in a military community.

**Leslie Gould:**

That's right.

**Bruce Moody:**

When you're back home and maybe you don't know your neighbors, it's very, very different on a military base or in a military community, if you're off-installation. Just got to show up, introduce yourself. That's just the way it is. And they will respond to it. And there's nothing awkward about it, I promise you. It seems awkward the first time, but you just got to get and put yourself out there, and people will respond. They will. I got to wrap this up. I really do. And I'm so sorry. I'm realizing through this conversation that we could break this up into so many different categories and just...

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**Leslie Gould:**

Oh my gosh, I know.

**Bruce Moody:**

This is so much fun. But I just want to let people...especially people who are new to the military, just know that not only is the community, the neighbors around you available to you emotionally, but they will understand that there is no such thing as a small favor. You mentioned mowing the lawn and stuff. Let me just tell you, you may think that the people around you have real problems and you need to make room for them. No, you have just as much of a claim as anybody else. And when you take care of the little problems, when you make sure that a neighbor comes and looks over the kids while you mow the lawn or something like that, you're taking care of the little problems and you're preventing the big problems. So you have as much of a claim as anybody else. And I don't care what their situation looks like, speak up and there will be somebody to reach out to you.

**Leslie Gould:**

Well, one thing I wanted to say is that sometimes you may be at the point, especially if your service member is over that 10-year mark in their career and they're at that decision, "Do I stay, do I go? Do I get out? Do I stay in? Do I get out?" And everybody talks about it at 10 years. Being able to go through these various deployments, go through these geo-bach sessions, it allowed us to have a flexibility. And it also allowed my husband to do 28 years total in the Navy. And he wanted to do that. And he needed to do that, for not only his own self, his own career, but his commitment to making sure...it allowed him to have flexibility to take assignments that maybe he wouldn't otherwise have had. If he said, "Oh no, I only want to stay in Norfolk," or "Oh, I only want to stay in Florida." He was able to have experiences.

Jake has seen over, I would say, 60 countries in his lifetime. I've seen over 51 countries in my lifetime. Those opportunities existed because we chose sometimes to make these geo-bach decisions. And I wouldn't change it for a minute, because it gave him value and wholeness in his commitment to serving his country. And he loved doing that. But it also gave me the opportunity to do the same thing and to give back to the families that had supported me so much. And that means a lot to us as a family. And I know it means a lot to other military families.

**Bruce Moody:**

All right, Leslie, we have to continue this conversation another time.

**Leslie Gould:**

I know. I can't wait to talk.

**Bruce Moody:**

I just have so much I want to say on this topic because it really does touch on everything, and we can give it more time. But I want to wrap this up by just saying thank you so much. I just feel so full of joy after having this conversation, so thank you so much for joining us today.

**Leslie Gould:**

Thank you. Well, and thank you for going down memory lane with me.

**Bruce Moody:**

I know. I didn't even mention that I'm a retired Navy chief, so I'll mention that next time at the top of the conversation. And folks who are listening, if you have any questions or suggestions, we have a link in the program notes, so I hope that you'll use that. And we really do love all the feedback that we get from you. Leslie Gould, thank you so much for joining us today. Really enjoyed the conversation.

**Leslie Gould:**

Well, thank you, Bruce.

**Bruce Moody:**

All right, let me do my readout here and say goodbye. I want to let everybody know that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We are the real deal. We are part of the Department of Defense. Our office is in the Pentagon. That's how military we are. Be sure to subscribe to this podcast to wherever you listen to your podcasts. We cover a wide range of topics to help military families navigate military life. I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.