

Overcoming Barriers, Finding Resources and Thriving as a Military Spouse

REACH-S Session 1 Video

- **[Marie Osborn]** Welcome everyone, thank you for being here today. Before we get started, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Marie Osborn and I'm coming to you today from Tucson, Arizona. It's nice and sunny and warm here – I don't think that's the case for some of you. I live here with my husband, who's a former Army Ranger, and with our two children and a dog and four chickens. So, I have been working to help develop this for a while now and I'm really excited to be here today for you all.

So, you're probably wondering, what is REACH-S and what it's all about? Well, REACH-S stands for Resources Exist, Asking Can Help-Spouse, and it's about taking care of problems that we might be having before they get too overwhelming – and some of it's about self-care. So, I don't even like to use the word training; I like to talk about this as a conversation. I really want to hear from you today and I hope that you join in the discussion today. And the goal really, after you leave here today, is to feel empowered with new knowledge and maybe even leave with a new mindset about getting help and what that means. Because reaching out for help really is important, not just for you but everyone around you. Just like on airplanes when they say if the oxygen masks come down, what do they tell you to do first, right? They say put yours on first, then help the people around you if they need it.

So, we all have that duty to take care of ourselves and then you know that enables us to be able to help others down the road. So, I hope you come away from this session feeling like maybe it's not that hard as I thought to take that first step to get help when you have a problem. And we're going to talk a lot about different resources and options to get you through something. Some of them may or may not apply to you, but however the handout that we will distribute at the end has a lot of information that will be applicable to you.

And so, there are two REACH sessions. You're attending the first one today, and Session 2 runs after this one and they both have really unique and valuable information. So, you'll get the most out of it if you attend both of them. The one you'll see today, Session 1, focuses on overcoming barriers, finding resources and thriving as a military spouse.

So REACH-S was developed by the Defense Personnel and Security Research Center, or PERSEREC, which is part of the DOD's Office of People Analytics. It was developed to help familiarize military spouses like yourselves with available mental health resources and encourage them to use those resources when they need them. So the idea behind REACH-S is really simple. It's that if more of us reach out for help before our problems get out of control, early on, we can start to change that mindset around mental health and help-seeking. But creating this kind of culture change requires everyone's help and participation. So, with that, the main goal of this session is for you to help to build the confidence and skills that you might need in the future if something arises that you're struggling with.

So, we're going to start today talking about some of the unique challenges that military spouses like yourself might face. We're also going to talk about some of the barriers they encounter towards getting that help. We're going to then make a practice call to Military OneSource to get an idea of what it's like to reach out to a resource and learn about what they have to offer. Then we're going to talk about self-care and why it's important for our mental health. Then we're going to talk about our key takeaways, wrap up the session and we'll end our time together. It should take about an hour and a half. We might get out sooner than that and I really appreciate you participating that whole time.

Quick housekeeping stuff before we begin: I really want this to be a comfortable and safe environment for you to discuss whatever comes up or sharing of experiences. To that end, what we share in the group today stays in the group. We all need to feel comfortable to share, make some new connections while we'll here too maybe. If you need to step away from your computer or out of the room, just give a thumbs up or you can write in the chat that you'll be back or something like that just so that we know you're okay. And again, just feel free to speak up at any time. You can raise your hand, use the little hand icon feature, or even the chat box if you need to say something. So let's get on with it.

So, to start us off, I want to get your thoughts on something. Why do you think military spouses report having significantly more mental health concerns than spouses who are not in the military?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Well, I'll jump in on this one and from my perspective, you know, we're the glue that holds the family together. We know that our service members are out in, you know, training and long work days, and whether it's a just a couple or whether it's a family with children, we're the continuity. And along with that just comes an amazingly, often overwhelming, amount of stress to keep everything going.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Wow Eddy, I think you hit something really interesting and I haven't had people kind of frame it that way before and I really like it because you are the glue that keeps the family unit together. That's some really great insight. Did anyone else have any thoughts on this?

- **[Jena Moore]** I just wanted to add to what Eddy mentioned that, you know, the added stress that is there and sometimes having to, more so, maybe than those that might be outside of the spouses, outside of the military, to have to push that stress down and not let people see that you're experiencing that stress because you are trying to be that glue for your family.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, so keeping that appearance just a bit too for the others around you because that might be something that shows some weakness or that maybe you're not perfect and that's not always easy for some of us to kind of acknowledge or admit to. Well thank you both for sharing your thoughts. Did you have something to say, Shaunya?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I did, so I think they really, really captured what a military spouse goes through but also I think so many times that we just are so busy having to take care of the household, if we have children, the children, but then we also have this, I don't know, it's a unwritten rule, that we almost have to go and be self-sacrificial, meaning sometimes we don't even get to really go for our dreams and goals because we're so busy trying to hold the family together and the family up. And sometimes we get lost in all of the activities that we have to like organize and consistently coordinate, that we sometimes lose ourselves because we want to make sure that our spouses are supported. We know that they endure an enormous amount of

stress, often times because it's not necessarily a Monday through Friday work week, right? So it just may be continuous or whenever they're called to respond, they have to, so with that you have to all the time step up when he can't, in my case, and so then you have to sacrifice whatever you have going on professionally. So, that's a challenge because you feel like sometimes you lose yourself in it.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Wow, that's a powerful observation you have there, you know. You're not the military member and yet you're doing a lot of sacrificing and accommodating, and it's hard to feel like you're putting everyone else first, or the family mission almost, you know, before your own needs or goals. So, thank you for sharing that all of you. I think that's a really great place to start our conversation from today.

So as you're going gonna see here, on the box on the left hand side here, there are some general challenges that all spouses face. You have little time for self-care, relationship problems, unemployment. All spouses who are married are going to encounter some of these. But we've also identified here some additional challenges that military spouses often face – those responsibilities, those expectations, those frequent relocations. And for a military spouse that might mean changing your educational plan, changing your job. That's difficult to feel like you're starting over anytime you PCS. Being away from family and friends, being away from your social support is very difficult sometimes for sure, especially when you have young little ones, young family. That's going to be pretty hard. You know, that service member you said not a nine to five job. A lot of times now they're frequently gone until 10 at night or for three-week trainings or deployments. It can be a long time and you might feel alone or that there's a lot on your shoulders by yourself and then the reintegration part, right? Getting back to that family dynamic after they've been gone for a while can be pretty hard. And then worrying about your own military member's health and well-being. They go through things that you can only imagine sometimes, right? And when they're coming back, they might have some need for support that a civilian might not have encountered or had an issue with. And then access to care challenges, we're talking here about like changing your doctor every time you move or getting those prescriptions transferred over. Things like that can be pretty difficult when you're having to move so frequently. So, I definitely appreciate all of these additional factors that military spouses can face. Are there any on this list that you really identify with or that you would add to this list? Any of you.

- **[Jena Moore]** I really, and it was something I think I've just gotten used to, so didn't realize how frustrating it can be sometimes until I see it in front of me is being away from family, really far away from family, and not having that resource really to be supportive and to help out like with kiddos and when our family can't even drive here within a reasonable amount of time. It can be hard and I forget about it because you just sort of get used to it. So that's a big one for me.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh, thank you, Jena. That is a tough one. Shaunya?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I agree. Jena hit on some stuff but I will tell you that for me as my kids when they were smaller you can kind of pack them up and kind of restart but as my kids get older and we PCS – this last relocation was really more difficult for them because they had grown accustomed to their circle of friends and their network and the league that they were a part of and to give all of that up and their favorite coaches and so, those dynamics trying to then go and be established, get connected, make sure that they have friends. It's just a lot to navigate. And I agree, Jena, when I saw the list I'm like whoa, but we get so used to it. We build resiliency and

skills that we don't even know because we just have to. We're in survival mode half of the time. You don't even know what you're doing and navigating, but we just do it right? And it feels much like we really are serving our country, but we didn't volunteer but I guess we did when we said "I do," so I guess, yeah.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh, thank you Shaunya, for your perspective as well yeah, once we get used to something it changes doesn't it? And kids grow. We can't stop that no matter how long we'd like to keep them that cute little baby you know they grow up and things change so I really appreciate all of your perspectives. And really, that's why we're here today to talk about these challenges, how we might be able to overcome them, learn about some of the tools or resources that are out there for military spouses that are there when you need it down the line. So I really appreciate the discussion.

We talked about some of those challenges that military spouses face. Why do you think that spouses of service members would not seek help? What are some of their barriers?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** I'll start with one that I don't think we think about very often and it goes back to exactly what Jena and Shaunya were saying. Our focus, quite often, isn't on us. Our focus is on our children, our focus is on our service member, our focus is on fellow spouses and we quite often forget about ourselves. And I think that's one of those barriers that it's not talking, we don't talk about it very often, but it really we lose focus of ourselves is one of the barriers that I see more and more.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Right, thank you Eddy. That's a really, I think, relevant perspective. Any other thoughts from others? Anyone else?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Well for me, I think also, I've come into a lot of conversations with fellow spouses who feel like they don't want to trouble their spouse and they don't want a negative stigma placed against their spouse if they go to ask for help. I think we've moved a long way from that being so negative – asking for mental health therapy or having a session – but I think most of the time people think they can fix it by just coming to somebody who's another military spouse. I think that's one of our greatest weapons, we have each other, but some things really need to go to a professional therapist. I might not be the one to sit and help you process through because again, I'm carrying my own load, and it's not that I'm not willing to do it, it's just that maybe I don't have the capacity or the skillset to help you in a way in which you really need. And so sometimes I have even said, "hey, I've heard that this person is a good therapist," so for me, even when they were plugging, I don't know if you all remember how they were plugging the civilian therapists that were available, and the command group wouldn't know. First day I was helping and pushing that number out all the time because, you know, there are so many issues that folks are facing sometimes that are just complex and you really need somebody to help you process it consistently, not just when I'm available or have the time, so yeah.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Well, I'm so glad that you were able to share that information about that resource because it's just some really great self-awareness. You know your capabilities or your bandwidth and skills, and can pass on the information when you know it's not something you maybe can handle. But also, you know, like you just don't have the mental health capability right then. Maybe you're stressed out too and talking to someone who has problems can be, you know, make you feel overwhelmed, so knowing that about yourself is equally as important. Thank you both for sharing that.

What we're going to talk about here is some, you know, a barrier to care and I'm going to go through the definition. It's really just an obstacle, real or perceived, that prevents a person from accessing their needed help. And understanding what those barriers are for ourselves and for others can really help us understand why some people, some spouses, might be reluctant to seek help, especially for a mental health concern. So, what stands out about this definition for you when you look at it here?

- **[Jena Moore]** For me, it is the statement of real or perceived. Thinking about what are obstacles as I see them, you know, for me personally – is time. Is that real or is it perceived? And I think honestly, it may be a little of both. So that really stood out to me. You know if I say “well I really can't go to the doctor right now, because I don't have time,” is that the reality or is that me just not making time for it? I like that part of that because it sort of stood out for me.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Well, that's a really great explanation or kind of understanding of real or perceived with the idea of time because some people “might make the time” and others juggle things or prioritize other things other than themselves and feel like they don't have the time. But either way it's a barrier right – real or perceived – and that's going to be different for different people. But when we have this understanding for ourselves and for other people, it actually allows us to have a little bit more compassion when we see or hear what's going on. So, as we discussed, you know, it what this understanding, whether it's real or perceived, guides how we're going to interact with the world. So I want to get an idea from you.

What do you think are some barriers for military spouses that stop them from getting out for help? We've heard of time, right? What else might be some barriers? I think someone mentioned stigma or fear of what other people might think. Any others come to mind?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** So for me, I've heard over and over and over the cost associated with, you know, reaching out and actually accessing help. They always have the perception that it's really, really costly and I would tell you when you are new to a location, you're struggling and you haven't found employment yet, for you to add another bill, that's a real obstacle for you, and especially if you're managing the household and you kind of know what's coming in and what's going out, you just don't want to make an additional bill. So, I've heard that many times about the cost associated with help.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Thank you, yeah, I've heard that as well and I think it's a real one for many military spouses. Any other barriers come to mind for you all?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Yeah for me, it's not knowing where to go. How do I find that resource? I may recognize that I need help but I don't know where to go. I think this is especially important for our younger military spouses that are new to the military that don't have the experience and don't understand those resources. So to me, that's a huge barrier, just not knowing what's out there. On the flip side of that, I see a barrier in being an experienced spouse. There's a barrier and there's so much out there. How do I figure out which one is right for me? So it's kind of like both sides of the coin in what do I need but not being able to find what I need.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Exactly. I love how you see both ends of the spectrum and experiencing something very similar. What also comes to mind for me related to yours is the constant moving. You finally figured out what your resource, your local resource was, and then you moved to a new installation, right, and then you start right back over. And if you do that enough times you might have some fatigue about that, right? And so I appreciate all of you providing some thoughts about barriers.

Let's look at some research findings from literature and some interviews that were done with military spouses to see how some of these barriers we discussed might align with what we're showing here.

So, the first one you're going to see is that unaware of available resources, which really kind of hits with what Eddy was talking about. You may not know where to go to get help for mental health services or not know which type of resource or counselor is a best match for you. Second, you see there is that worry about stigma. Maybe someone is embarrassed to seek mental health help or worried about their confidentiality and privacy. That third one there is related to concerns that seeking mental health help might have some kind of effect on the service member's career in some way. So there might be a fear that your spouse's peers, co-workers or leaders find out that you are help-seeking, you know, and worries about how that might affect the service member's career. And then finally we have those practical concerns, you know, the time issue, figuring out how to schedule it, fit in cost or insurance issues, right, those all kind of fall into that practical concerns. So I feel like everything that we've talked about actually came up really in this research and interviews that we've kind of learned about here. So, now that we've identified some of these main areas for barriers to military spouses, let's discuss them in a little bit more in depth and talk about some solutions or strategies that we might be able to share to address each of them. So who would you call if you had a mental health concern for yourself?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Yes, so for me, I would call my "whoever I was assembled with" – the local pastor. That would be my first go-to, quite frankly, and then I would also call, I'm sure that everybody knows Military OneSource as a resource, so I would call them as well.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah. Wonderful, and that's actually the top one we have on the table here. You'll see that we are highlighting local religious leaders so that might be your own pastor that you identify with, or even the installation chaplain. How many of you know who the chaplain is associated with your service member's organization? I see Eddy does. You know I would suggest finding out who that is because chaplains are a really great resource, not only for service members but for military spouses as well. What's great about chaplains is that they really try to respect your confidentiality. They can meet with you in person or over the phone and you don't have to be religious to talk to a chaplain and I always like to point that out because a lot of people think that "oh, I'm not religious, I can't, that's not a resource for me," but that's actually not the case. They are a really great option for anybody who wants to talk about anything. They will talk to you about whatever you're interested in talking about.

And the next one down you'll see there is the Military and Veterans Crisis Line. I'd like to point this one out because it's actually available for spouses and military family members as well, not just military or veterans. It's a really great free, confidential resource and it's trained with staff who know how to help service members, spouses or their families. And they are great because they are available 24/7 and they're available even if you're not in immediate crisis. So, that's the other thing I'd like to point out is you don't have to be in crisis to use that line and it's a really great option. And they have some you can call but you can also do live chat, so if that's easier for you, that's another great way to contact them.

And I know that, Jena, you mentioned Military OneSource. Do you either of you others know about Military OneSource? I see some head nods, good. Military OneSource has a lot of great resources. The one we're highlighting here is their non-medical counseling, because it's a resource that can help you face a lot of different problems that you might be having and you can

do that in person, over the phone, or video, or chat. It's a really great place to start even if you don't know where to go. I often tell people, call them. They'll probably have a resource for you or know how to connect you with the resource. So, I think that's a great place to start, for not only their non-medical counseling program, but they can help you with financial stress, work issues or relationship issues. They really can help you get through some of those things. What's great is that you get 12 free sessions, they're free, and so that's a great thing. And then once you're done with those 12, if a new issue comes up, you can restart for another set of 12 sessions. So, it's a really great free resource. You'll see there, they have this duty to warn and that's just talking about a provider's duty to warn if there are concerns about self-harm or safety to others or if there's some kind of illegal activity involved, and then they would have to share that information with the relevant authorities.

Now, how many of you have heard of the Military and Family Life Counseling Program before? I see head nods. Eddy? Yeah, great, I see that. That's great. They are a wonderful resource. They support family members of service members and service members themselves and provide that similar non-medical counseling. A lot of people like them because they don't take notes. I've heard some people say there's no paper trail which some people appreciate when they're worried about confidentiality. They are going to have that duty to warn again, but what's really great about MFLCs, you'll see there, is that they can meet you on your installation, off your installation, out in the community. If you want to meet at a coffee shop, they will do that. So they are really flexible and I think often with their time, they're flexible as well. So, it's when time or scheduling is an issue, they're a really great resource to think about using.

Now we have that Family Readiness System. You know, it's really a system or a network of agencies, programs or people that all work together to support service members and their families, and the programs and roles you might be pretty familiar with. I'll go through a couple. What service branches are your spouses a part of? Just so that I can kind of highlight those groups for you.

- **[Jena Moore]** Army.

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Air Force.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Army.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Okay, Army and Air Force. Well for the Army, you'll probably be familiar with a term like Family Readiness Group or FRG right? And it's really a unit-specific group made up of family members, volunteers or soldiers to provide resources, share information and keep family informed about the different things that are coming up to really support the readiness and resilience. And for Air Force, you might have heard of the Key Spouse Program, right? Key spouses are commander-appointed and they establish the communication between the command, the service members and their families. They are a great connector and they can kind of pass on information for resources for you in those types of situations. So they're a really great resource if you don't know where to start or know who to have a specific question about taxes or do you know where I can get tax help? That type of group might be able to kind of be that connector for you if you're not knowing where to start. Have any of you actually interacted with the key spouse or the FRG?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Oh, absolutely I have. Yes.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Okay, great. I hope that you found them useful to work with.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Oh, they were dynamic, very resourceful I mean, and if they didn't have the information, they tracked it down and brought it back to me, so it was great.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Great, I like to hear that. That's so great. And then we have here our mental health clinics or our military treatment facilities that you kind of brought up, which are an available resource often times for spouses depending on your installation and sometimes the insurance you have. They again have that duty to warn and these are usually done in person or secure video, but what's really great about these if you are living on post or on base they're right there down the road and they're a great resource in that respect for you.

And then I always like to highlight the emergency room down at the bottom. Some people are concerned about going there because of cost or time. There's different reasons people try to avoid the emergency room but I always like to remind people if it's to the point where it's a life or death situation, that's where you want to go. That's where they're gonna make sure you're stabilized medically and mentally, and then they do a warm handoff to a provider that can get you through and talk you through some of your situation. The biggest takeaway I want you to get from this big table is that there are many options, so don't give up on your quest for mental health support. And even if you have a negative experience with one resource or one provider, the next one could really be the one that changes your life too. So, just keep that in mind as well. I know that was a lot of information I went over. Does anyone have any questions about the various resources available to you or when you might be able to use them?

Okay, great. Well, I have something else too. What if you don't feel comfortable reaching out to a counselor or a mental health resource?

You know there's apps that are mobile resources that can really be done from the privacy of your phone, right? And there's a lot of apps that have been developed for the military population and their families through the DOD or VA, and you're going to see some of them right here. This isn't even you know a small amount of what is available for you, but these ones here I really like to highlight because they're confidential and they really target some of the things that military spouses might truly benefit from. And the ones highlighted here are all free. You can get them in the Google Play Store or the iOS Apple Store. They focus on like stress reduction, you know, how mood learning, mindfulness and meditation, improving your sleep, all kinds of things like that. This one on the far left which is Breathe to Relax is really focused on managing stress, managing anxiety, through deep breathing exercises like belly breathing. And then you're gonna see there this Sesame Street for Military Families. Have any of you seen this one or heard of this one before? I see a little bit of head nodding and some.

Now, well let me tell you what this one is about, Shaunya. It's a great resource for military families that was developed by the makers of Sesame Street and they have really engaging videos, articles, storybooks, parent guides and more to help support your children as they encounter transitions that are common to military families. So it's some really great unique programming just for your specific military family.

And you'll see that one there with the cute heart logo called Couples Coach. That app is designed for partners who want to improve their relationship and explore ways to connect. So you have it on both your phones and you go through different aspects of the app together. I really like it because it's pretty dynamic and interactive, so I find it a really nice app for you.

Have any of you used these apps or maybe similar ones for yourself? Eddy, I see you're moving your head. What have you used?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Yeah, I used an app especially when my wife was deployed called Love Every Day and it was a great way to send affirmations back and forth and a different level of communication than we typically had, so that was one that we used.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh, that sounds really interesting and I love that you found a way to do that during a deployment. That's really nice to see. Anyone else have any apps that they've used either these or others?

- **[Jena Moore]** I've used Military OneSource – downloaded that on my phone, and then also FOCUS has an app that I've used with my kiddos that they really enjoyed.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Okay, wonderful. Thank you for sharing your experiences with some apps. I'm glad to hear of some new ones I hadn't heard of. I'll have to check those out and I'm glad to know that you found the Military OneSource one useful as well.

So, if you remember, stigma was one of the barriers identified at the beginning of our session. An example of a stigma is just that a worry that you might be seen as broken if you reach out for help. That's one way to think about it. And sometimes there's worry externally from people around us but also sometimes we have our own self-stigma that we judge ourselves. I should be able to handle this – we might have said that to ourselves over the years, right? But I want to ask you what do you think being broken means and maybe why is that not helpful?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** You know if when I when I think that for me it's very internal and you know that I don't look at myself as being capable of doing what needs to be done. I think this is challenging for everyone, but it may be even more challenging for male spouses. And so, you know, whether it's machismo or whatever it is, I have definitely over, you know, 20 years of being a military spouse, found missed opportunities in reaching out to get the support I need. And in the reflection, I find that it really was all about me and my perceptions. It wasn't about anybody else's perceptions

- **[Marie Osborn]** Wow, so you really identify with that self-stigma part. And I'm really glad that we do have the male perspective today, because it is equally valid and relevant. Thank you so much for sharing that, Eddy.

So on a scale from one to 10, if you faced a mental health problem, how likely would you be to seek help? What would your numbers be?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** For me, I think I would say when I was a younger spouse it would probably be around three or four, only because when I think of brokenness, I think of being fragmented in some way so that you know self-perception of not being whole or able to do my part would really be like, you know, a no-go for me so I probably wouldn't. As I've matured though, I've learned that, you know, you really life brings you things that will make you stronger but you still necessarily might not have the tools to really get through them and even at a pace, you know how sometimes you're like, gosh I wish I knew that, you know that would have just helped me so much. And so now that I'm wiser and I think gosh there's so many people around me much smarter and have more wisdom and experience, I go and ask for help all the time. So now a person sitting in my seat now, I'm like at a nine. I'm going to call somebody and ask for help. I'm going to seek a resource, because for me, it's like there is somebody out there with that answer so I just need to make sure I tap in or call somebody to help me get to the right person with the answer.

- **[Marie Osborn]** I love that. Excuse me. You have this perspective as you've gone through your experience as a military spouse and that your number has increased. That's wonderful to hear. What would your numbers be, Eddy?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Almost exactly the same. You know, if I go back I'm talking two, three, very you know, lots of missed opportunities when I look at my past. Today, and it comes you know, Shaunya said matured, I say seasoned. As I've become more seasoned and you know it's just we have to take advantage of what's out there and part of that is having the realization of what's out there, but yeah, I put myself at an eight or a nine today.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Great, I'm glad Eddy, you've had a similar experience. Jena, what would your number be?

- **[Jena Moore:]** I would be more probably around a seven or an eight. I, again, agree as I've gotten older and even seen my kids grow up and look the older they get I can see them looking at me and what I do and knowing the importance of letting them know it's okay to reach out for help. I'm definitely, I don't think I'm out at a 10, but definitely higher than I was when I was younger and my kids were younger.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, well thank you for your honesty, Jena, and I'm glad you feel comfortable sharing your number a little bit different from theirs. But you know what I like is that it's past that five on the, on the slider scale, you know, and we all have different experiences right? Our where we got to in life is going to be different. I get you there, Jena, with the children thing. Sometimes I don't feel like eating my vegetables, but I do because I want to model that behavior for them and so maybe we need to be modeling help-seeking behaviors for them, right? And making them feel comfortable to ask for help so that one day when they're on their own, they can do that on their own. So thank you so much, all three of you, for sharing your experiences. I think that's really powerful to see how it progresses over time.

What I want to know is like how are we going to maybe overcome some of the stigma and this self-stigma, right? If we had a broken bone, we broke our ankle, what would we be doing? Where would we go, right?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Right to the hospital.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Exactly, right. So why don't we treat our mental health that same way, you know? Why do we think because, you know, it can't be seen, maybe we can just, you know, hide it away or try to deal with it internally? But as Shaunya has said, she doesn't have all the skills in the world, she hasn't gone to school, maybe, for this topic or that topic, let's say, and maybe we do need to reach out for the help.

You know, stigma is really just that. Instead of negative, often unfair beliefs, that a group of people or yourself might have about something and, you know, we have kind of these two columns here, you know, and thinking about how to cope with the stigma, how to like get past that or stop, you know, reduce that barrier and one of the best ways is to just educate yourself, learn about whatever you're struggling with. You've heard it before – knowledge is power, right? And sometimes that's the way it is here and that might be finding out which resource is the best one for you. Is it this type of therapy or that type of therapy? Maybe it's exercise, you know. Just learn what works for your situation and trust yourself, you know, don't doubt that your experience is valid and real and that it's something worth, you know, getting help for.

I like this one here – find your people because, you know, reach out to the people who make you feel better. Feel good about yourself and then talk to them. Don't be afraid to open up to them. Joining a support group can be really powerful for some people because you start to realize you're not the only one going through that situation, right. That can be really powerful so that can be a really great way to overcome some stigma. And then speaking about your experiences, just getting the bravery – the power – to go up and do it, you know, whether it's just a one-on-one conversation with someone that can be really empowering for people. Just remember, you're not going through life alone. There are many that might be going through very similar experiences as you that, you know, we all in ourselves are just really amazing people and very unique at the same time and that everyone deserves to get the help that they need.

I want to remind you that, you know, outcomes really show that getting help early, not avoiding a problem, is actually where you get some of the best growth and you avoid, you know, bigger things snowballing later on if you avoid it. And like I touched on before, don't avoid getting the help you need maybe because of a bad past experience. So I like to use the example of shoes. We all need shoes, right? So we're gonna go to the shoe store and we're gonna try on however many pairs of shoes it takes, right, to find the right match that feels good for us. And that's different for everyone and just, you know, think about it that way – just keep looking until you find the right match for you and your needs.

So I want to ask how many of you have heard of kintsugi? Any of you know what that is? No? Well, it's the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas that are broken, like you see in that picture there, with lacquer dust mixed with gold, with platinum or silver. And it's really a philosophy that treats, you know, breakage and repair as part of the history of that object and it's actually celebrating it rather than trying to hide it or disguise it. I mean it really just embraces the flaw as you look. It looks even more beautiful, at least it does to me, you know, and so I want us to think about our mental health that same way. That we're all on a journey and, you know, we're going to have our ups and downs, and that journey is what makes us stronger and more unique in the end.

All right, so on the bottom here you're going to see it says if you're still reluctant to reach out for help because of stigma, try some of the resources that offer total confidentiality because bottom line, we want you to get the help that you need. And don't let something like your self-belief or self-stigma stop you from getting that help because there are options that are confidential, that you can do from the privacy of your home, that you know can get you through whatever you're going through.

So I hope you learned about some of the options for resources that are there for you. Many really do respect privacy and confidentiality, and there are some really great options.

One of the next topics that we talked about was that military spouses worry about affecting their service member's career by seeking mental health help. So I want to hear from you actually, in your estimation, how likely is it that your mental health help-seeking would affect your military member's career?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Well, I would think it has to have an impact because, you know, when they fill out their clearance paperwork, they have to list our names and our information, so theoretically I would think there's an impact.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Okay, so from a clearance perspective, you think there is some kind of impact? Shaunya, I saw you nodding your head.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I absolutely do. In my participation in some of the soldier and family readiness groups that I've been in, you know, when someone has a big travesty and we know it's a travesty and accept it as that. When that person has gone out to seek therapy and you know still hadn't gotten through it per se and, you know, that's just so horrible for anyone to judge when you should get through something, but the conversation is about oh well, you don't think that that person is going to be ready to deploy because that spouse is really still not, you know, together or they're still having issues with the kids. So I really do think it really does impact, that we would want to say it doesn't. I think we're not where we used to be, you know, 10-15 years ago, but we still have some ways to go with that. It does impact – that's reality.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Thank you, thank you, for sharing that perspective, you know, and that's really important to weigh if you're thinking about mental health help, if that's something you worry about. It is going to kind of, you know, form the path you take and the resources you use potentially. And I would say and, you know, look for those confidential ones if that's a true concern for you. Find these other types of resources that still get you through your situation.

Did you know that roughly 25% of military spouses reported that they fear this negatively affecting their military spouse's career and that it's a barrier for them to getting the help they need? I mean it actually stops them from getting the help they need. So, what's interesting is that research also shows that improvements to a spouse's mental health is often associated with positive changes in the service member's career and in their own mental health. If they aren't stressed or worried about a spouse at home and how they're doing, they can focus more maybe on the mission right, that kind of thing. So, I know it's something that is a concern, it's a true concern, that it's going to affect them, their career, but also think about if you do get the help and that improved mental health state or the reduction in stress that actually could have a positive effect on the military member's career. Does that surprise you or does that make sense to you?

- **[Jena Moore]** I think it surprises me a little bit, but what made sense to me and I was thinking before it would, you know, depending on the resource that I go to, you know, if I go to behavioral health, I think I, you know, I see everyone hey, hi, you know, as I'm walking into counseling, so I think it, you know, possibly depends on the resources that I would choose and where they are located.

- **[Marie Osborn]** That's definitely a thing that I have heard they are trying to work on. Not every location has done this, but they've tried to centralize health providers, so if you're in the waiting room they don't know who you're going. Are you going there for the medical doctor, are you going for the counseling, are you going to see a nurse practitioner? So they try to change the dynamic to kind of preserve the privacy of people when they are going to seek help, you know, at a maybe a mental health clinic or something like that. But thank you, Jena, for sharing that, that's really helpful to also be considering.

There's actually really many benefits to getting help early. Really the earlier that we can address something, the better outcomes we have, not just for ourselves but for our family and potentially even a military member's career. You know some of the other benefits to seeking help early versus putting it off, trying to handle it on your own when you don't have the skills or it's just getting worse and worse, you know, it's like there's actually lower relapsing symptoms. If, you know, something gets to the point where it's a really big issue and let's say you do improve the likelihood of going back to that same type of situation is increased versus if you address it from the early, early on, you're less likely to have those, you know, kind of what they

might call relapse or like going back to that same situation again. Also just work, being able to work consistently, let's say, instead of having to take time off or work you know to handle whatever you're working on there's less work disruption, less family disruption, you know, and long-lasting improvements if you can really tackle something early on.

So think about it this way. Let's say that you have been diagnosed with cancer. Isn't early treatment key to good outcomes, right, versus waiting to stage four to start treatment? And, you know, it's better, even better, if you try to start with prevention, right? And that's what we really should think about with mental health too. The earlier we do tackle this issue, whatever it is, the better outcomes we're going to have long term. So, when you're first starting to experience symptoms like, you know, difficulty sleeping, let's say, or feeling tired and you don't know why, feeling anxious, you know, – those can be signs for us that something's going on and if we start to do some self-reflection that helps us identify it and even you know head off, head it off before it gets worse and worse. So that's what the big takeaway I want you to think about, is just like the sooner you do it, the less likely you are probably to have a negative career impact if that's one of your concerns for the military spouse. And again, those confidential resources are an incredible option if this is something that you're worried about.

The last barrier that we talked about was the practical concerns and they're, you know, that's a big grab bag, right of practical concerns that we're gonna be facing as spouses. And you know, there are some that are gonna be a bigger issue for others. Are there some practical issues that you kind of identify with here, that you can see either has stopped you in the past or might in the future from getting the help you need?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Well for me, I go back to what Jena said very early on, it's just the time. It's the time management, it's the schedule, it's trying to make everything mesh up, can be very, very difficult for a lot of spouses.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Right, I hear you there, Eddy. And timing, the schedule too busy or working, you know, we have that here and we're talking, you know. Some suggestions we have are, you know, find a telehealth or a video-based one because that at least reduces maybe some of the driving time, right? So there are ways to kind of improve some of that aspect or tackle some of that. Finding different times, you know, 24/7 or weekend resources. There are those out there. They're a little few and far between, but they are there and I would suggest that could be something that might work for you. You know and coordinate with your spouse. I know they have long days but if you can really prioritize or figure out how to work it with your spouse to get the help you need, do that. And then don't put yourself last too, prioritize yourself, make that time, right? It's hard to do, but putting your oxygen mask on first in the end is going to have better outcomes. Thank you Eddy, for sharing that.

Shaunya or Jena, any others you really identify on the list?

- **[Jena Moore]** Child care has been one, and especially now, because there really isn't child care options with COVID. So, you know, that has been one for me. That has definitely been hard to overcome sometimes.

- **[Marie Osborn]** With COVID that's definitely an issue, you know. We pulled my child out of day care to keep him at home, you know, healthcare concerns, and so I really get that. Luckily, we live near my father and he's been able to watch. But you know, maybe those telehealth options are better options for you during this time so that you can just stay home, they're in the next room, and you can have that meeting with someone virtually like we are doing now or over the

phone. And there are some that are even doing just through texting or chat and you just go back and forth that way, so that's sometimes a nice option. But you know outside of, you know, COVID life, you know, some other things are just to work to build that social support network, you know. My sister-in-law is an Army wife and everywhere they PCS to, one of her top priorities is to find a church and start making those connections because she finds that for her, that ends up being like her new family, and they can really support her with child care when needed sometimes. And there are drop-in day cares. They can be a little expensive, I know, but, you know, sometimes that's an option just for a quick hour here or two there to handle that child care aspect so you can get the help that you need. Shaunya?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I would say yes. So I had a couple of friends who were having issues and, you know, they themselves were challenged about trying to get some help. So this was, I don't know, maybe seven or eight years ago, and so she did recruit a friend to go with her to a group session because she, you know, just felt some type of way meeting with someone she, you know, was very, very shy, introverted person and she met someone through a mutual friend. So I introduced her to a friend because I was just leaving that garrison and said oh, she's really good, so I kind of endorsed this person. And she said okay, she's really a real introvert, like I mean book case introvert, and she started going to the group sessions with her, and like a group meeting, you know. And that sort of gave her the confidence that she really needed to go and she wasn't the only person with that issue and then she found herself going into therapy about six months later. So that was sort of like almost like a gateway to her finding support and finding the courage to say I really need help. So, just don't give up, explore all options is what I'm saying, do whatever's necessary especially when you really can feel like somebody needs help. So, for me my trigger was "hey, I need you to really kind of give a little focus to her because she needs it," and so she was like okay, and then again in six months, she was kind of doing her own thing but she needed that support initially. And so it's really hard to kind of insert yourself into an environment where you feel totally alone and you really had a very sheltered, isolated life and then all of these people. And you know military spouses, we're like hey how's it going? And we're trying to connect and she's like whoa, what are you doing? So it was one of those times when you kind of had to base it on personality, but there was help for her.

- **[Marie Osborn]** I love that you share that. I mean that's a really powerful story of how friendship can really, you know, be the gateway to getting the help you need. Being that first person you talk to is often your friend and then connecting them and then even going with that person, that's, I mean, that's powerful. I mean that's time out of the other person's day and they did that for their friend. And you know practical concern, yes, like our own personalities can be a barrier sometimes to getting the help we need, right? But she found the courage with the supportive friend to get through that. That's a really nice story. Thanks for sharing that. And that was a really great strategy for overcoming that.

Have any of you found ways to get through or through some of these practical concerns that you know might be helpful to share with the others here?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** I think some of the ways to overcome relate to the child care that Jena brought up but just other aspects. It's creating our family, we call it our network of support, and you know it's wherever we are, wherever we go, we immediately key in to the neighbors – people that have similar interests, kids that are the same age – so that when we need it, we can call on them for support, but on the flip side we're there to provide the support when they need it. And that's been a great strategy for us throughout our military career.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, that's wonderful. When I walk through my neighborhood, I keep an eye out for like jungle gyms and things like that and I'm like oh they have a kid, you know, and I try to spot those potential, you know, neighborhood resources that can be a great help. Thank you, Eddy, for sharing that. But I think that we all have different practical concerns that, you know, are for us and hopefully we have some ideas here that might spark something in you that might be helpful for you down the line. And in the handout that I'll be distributing later, we have a lot of links to some of these resources, so you can just check some of them out that might be beneficial to you.

All right, so next, I know we've kind of touched on Military OneSource a little bit over time. Have you interacted much with Military OneSource? Have you called them? What kinds of programs have maybe you used over the years?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Taxes.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Taxes, yeah, that we're coming up on that, and I know it's their busy season but they give a lot of great support for taxes, with help in filing and all of that. So it's a really great resource. Thanks for bringing that up, Eddy. Any others that come to mind or ones that you didn't even know they offered that you want to know more about?

- **[Jena Moore]** I've utilized them actually for finding child care before. Giving them a call they were very helpful with that and taxes too.

- **[Marie Osborn]** That's great. That's great to hear. Yeah, what I, what I've heard that they can support with is like they can do some of that legwork for you. They'll do the search for you. They'll gather the phone numbers for you. And you know, that frees up an hour of your time right? And then they can pass on information to you which can be super helpful. So thank you, Jena. And Shaunya, have you interacted with them?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Oh absolutely, so taxes of course, the spouse education and career opportunities, and then the, I've looked into their education when I was trying to, when I was like thinking about okay, I'm going to pursue my Ph.D., you know. I was looking at, you know, opportunities for maybe scholarships or any type of grants and all that stuff. So, I've used them a lot, and I always, you know, refer out because they're 24/7, multilingual – I mean it's just a great resource to have.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Wow, great. I'm glad that you found some benefit in a couple different realms in that you highlight one of the things, which is 24/7, so whether you are CONUS or OCONUS, you know, stationed somewhere abroad, they have someone who will answer the phone when you call them, which is like a relief. You don't have to worry. Because a lot of times I'll think at ten o'clock in the morning, "oh, I gotta call this number," and then I'm like, "wait, I'm working, okay, I'll do it later," and then I forget, you know, until it's too late or after business hours. So, having a resource that's 24/7 can be really helpful for a lot of different reasons.

You know they have some really great programs here. If you, if you're not too familiar with them, definitely look into them. That peer-to-peer support, that's actually for military spouses as well, not just the service members. So if you want to talk to another spouse about the situation you're going through or dealing with, that's something you can call into and get, you know, someone's perspective on it, in that sense, you know, we're all getting older. Yeah, question?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I was going to ask you how does that work? So do you call in and you have a topic and you just somebody's just there to kind of add another spouse on the phone to talk or do they make a connection and follow up with you?

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, so you'll call in and their triage consultant kind of gathers some information about your situation. They'll try to see which of these programs would work for your situation. One might be peer-to-peer support and then they will just connect you to someone else. And you can even, you know, make specific requests – someone who can talk, you know, later in the day or you know, the type of person you might connect with and then they will just talk with you about, you know, military life and just kind of be that other person who has gone through what you're going through. They may or may not be on the realm of non-medical counseling and if that kind of ends up being where you need to go, they'd probably suggest that you pick up or take on that type of option as well. They are a really great resource in that sense. And I was going to say, you know, as you all I think have been military spouses for a while, it sounds like, you know, they have some really great programming for transitioning veterans, kind of just the preplanning that happens ahead of time. And then, you know, their Military OneSource is available as a resource for a whole year after someone transitions to civilian life, which, so, they really try to be that warm handoff and stable resource over time, which is a really great thing to think about.

And then, I'd also like to point out the elder care. We all have parents that are getting older and they, that's a really great resource, because they try to do the research for you, find the local resources for seniors in your area and maybe provide guidance on what to consider for parents or older people who need that long-term care. So, it's a really great place to start or get connected with stuff when you're maybe moving your parent into your home because some that happens over time right? So, definitely follow up if you have any questions about these later on with me, or of course call Military OneSource because they are the authority, and they could explain all of these to you as well. So, I hope that you continue to see them as a really great resource for you.

And what we're actually gonna do next is demonstrate how easy it is to make a call to Military OneSource. And so the way I like to do this is actually have one of the spouses here in the group help me make the call to Military OneSource. Let's first pick a topic that we might want to call about – maybe something we've touched on today. Is there anything that maybe you have a question about or want to learn more about through Military OneSource?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Maybe spouse education, that's always a key one for military spouses.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Great, okay, so let's call about finding out what options are for a military spouse who's just getting started on maybe their educational path, okay? So we're like a new one haven't, don't have any kind of knowledge or experience about education. All right. So the way I'll do it is I'll kind of start the call and then I'll hand it off to one of you – I haven't had a volunteer yet – maybe to ask some questions related to education, and then after we go through about five minutes, we can kind of wrap it up and go on with our time. Do I have a volunteer?

- **[Jena Moore]** I'll volunteer.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh Jena, thank you for saving me, thank you so much. All right so I'm gonna pull them up on my phone and we're gonna make that call to them, okay?

- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** Thank you for calling Military OneSource. My name is Precious. This call is being recorded for quality assurance purposes. Is this okay with you?
- **[Marie Osborn]** Yes, it is.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** Can I have your first and last name please?
- **[Marie Osborn]** My name is Marie Osborn. I'm actually a REACH-Spouse facilitator doing a group call for demonstration purposes.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** Thank you. And how may I assist you today?
- **[Marie Osborn]** Yes, I just have a spouse here with me and she has a couple questions about educational programs or guidance. She doesn't really know where to start so I'm just gonna hand it over to her so she can ask a couple questions.
- **[Jena Moore]** Thank you. I currently have a master's degree which I finished some time ago but I am interested in going back to school and wondering how Military OneSource would be able to help me with that, with understanding what resources or scholarships might be available as a military spouse and then also, you know, getting connected to the right school for my needs, you know, because it most likely would have to be online. I wouldn't have the time to go to a school in person to, you know, continue my education.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** Okay, so hi, well thank you so much for your support as a military spouse. I'll let you know this call is being recorded for quality assurance purposes. Is this okay with you?
- **[Jena Moore]** Yes it is, thank you.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** No problem. Okay, so we do have a spouse education career opportunities program and for short it's called the SECO program. For spouses that are interested in returning to school, we do have a scholarship called the MyCAA scholarship for eligible spouses and we have spouse advisors that can actually assist with that, with those resources. Now normally, we would gather some demographic information about yourself, as well as your spouse, and then get you connected with one of the spouse advisors to assist you further. So I'm not a spouse advisor – they would know a little bit more about it, but they would assist with like whether it's for career or obviously for school. They do like resume skill building, they can assist with creating an educational career plan, how to upload your courses and everything – they walk you through the process. But they will know a lot more information about the program itself because I'm a triage consultant, I'm not a spouse advisor.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Well, thank you so much. I think that's all we needed to do today for our little session here. I appreciate your time. Thank you for sharing some knowledge with us.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** No problem, and if you have any other questions, feel free to give us a call. We are available 24/7 and our website is www.militaryonesource.mil.
- **[Marie Osborn]** All right, thank you very much, bye-bye.
- **[Military One Source Triage Consultant]** Thank you, bye-bye.
- **[Marie Osborn]** All right, Jena. Thank you so much for being our caller with me today. I really appreciate that.
- **[Jena Moore]** Sure.

- **[Marie Osborn]** It's great to hear that there are some scholarships for military spouses and some nice aspects like the resume building and that kind of thing. I like that. Thank you so much. I hope that you took something away from this. I really like how she, how friendly she was, and how easy it is to get started. When some of the stuff you will need to know offhand when you do call Military OneSource, is to know your service member's service branch, of course, what their pay grade is, and the installation they are affiliated with. And then they'll also want your personal email address so that they can provide any information that way or documents in to you through email. But otherwise, that's all you really need to know to get started to build out some of that demographic information. So it goes pretty quickly and then they do that warm handoff like she said she'd connect you with one of their spouse advisors or consultants to kind of really get you connected further on. So, I'm glad that that went so well. Do you think that you could make a call similar in the future, Jena?

- **[Jena Moore]** I definitely would. I mean the piece that I like too is that they had, you know, she was the triage consultant but she sort of had the information right there about the other resources that they had, and you know honestly an interest in, you know, learning more about, you know, how they could establish a further education plan for me. That would be great.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh, that's great. I'm glad you found some benefit and maybe you would want to call later on. And Shaunya, I saw you nod your head too, so I'm glad you feel comfortable potentially calling in the future.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** So, for military spouses a lot, it's just that for somebody to just answer the phone and help them navigate – they're just trying to figure it out. So, that's the most brilliant part about it being 24/7, for somebody just kind to walk you through it. So, it's great.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, I agree. Sometimes when you don't know where to start or you're kind of anxious maybe about starting school again, you know, it's nice to have someone there who can be really patient and guides you through the topics.

What you see here on the other side of the slide is I want to ask if you will put these phone numbers into your phone or maybe write them down on a piece of paper. And I'm asking you to put these in because I want you to have them on hand. So the first one is Military OneSource, that's 800-342-9647, and then again that Veterans and Military Crisis Line, which is 800-273-8255. And I, really, I'm asking you to take these numbers down because I want you to be prepared. They will be there if something pops up, you have a question or you're talking to someone, and you want to pass that information on to them, you're going to have it right there on you on the phone. So if you yourself, your family member, or you know, another military spouse you talk to is struggling, you can pull out your phone and share the resources with them and also tell them how easy it is to call because now you've seen what it's like to call and how easy it is. All right, thank you so much for doing that.

And our last part that we're going to be focusing on today is self-care and its importance. So, I really just want to start the conversation here about, you know, what is self-care to you and why do you think it might be important for our mental health and our overall well-being?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** I just throw out putting yourself first, go ahead Shaunya.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I'm sorry, Eddy. No problem. I guess for me it's taking time to consider what are my needs? Because again sometimes, we're so tunneled and so focused on everyone else we kind of have to step back and say what do I really need and try to incorporate that and make it a priority for the next day's activity or the next week. Because again, sometimes if we're in

survival mode because of deployments or a very hectic work schedule for them and us, it's really about just trying to say what do I need now and how do I get it? So.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah. Thank you, Shaunya. Prioritizing yourself – making that time. I actually have to put it on my Outlook calendar sometimes, so I don't forget and because I will, you know, prioritize something if it's on my schedule for sure. So sometimes, that's how I get myself to do something and not put it off till it's too late in the day, let's say. What is self-care for you, Eddy?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** I agree completely with Shaunya and I was really going down the line of, you know, putting myself first for once and making sure that I'm getting what I need to be able to thrive. But I agree completely with what Shaunya said.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh great, that's wonderful to hear. What about you, Jena? What does self-care mean for you?

- **[Jena Moore]** For me, it means, you know, taking that, you know, piece of the day for myself, you know, because I hit those times with my kiddos where like I need to walk away and manage myself right now so I can be better at helping everyone around me and be a better employee and, you know, a wife and a mom. And sometimes, it's really hard to do that, but I know it's important, really important.

- **[Marie Osborn]** And you know, along with just making the time, sometimes, it's also, you know, worrying that we are being selfish by taking the time to do that. It's taking away time and attention from my kids if I'm focusing on myself sometimes, right? It's a tough balance, but it is important to focus on ourselves. So the definition of self-care really is, you know, any activity that we do deliberately. I like that word, like we purposefully do, to take care of our mental emotional and physical health, you know. But we've talked about some of the barriers to practicing self-care, like time or child care or other things like that and even kind of things that are more practical or that stigma-related potentially. But it's hard but we really need to try to make the time for self-care. I want to know what would you estimate is the amount of time a military spouse might spend on self-care each day? 10 minutes? An hour? Like where do you think we stand?

- **[Jena Moore]** Less than 30 minutes.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Hello.

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** One hour.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, so there's a range right? And that's okay, some days are busier than others, right? And the time we can take for ourselves is a little bit different every day probably. But what are some things that we can do daily, weekly or monthly for self-care? I like to frame it that way because those are different time slots or different ways and, you know, if we think about it that way, we can start to build it into our lives. Shaunya, what's something you do every day maybe that's self-care?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** I get up a little bit earlier and just have no one calling my name. And no one's speaking, texting, I'm not getting emails or phone calls, no one's calling mom or honey, so I just take that moment to kind of sit for a second and I'll have like my favorite cup of tea. And I wasn't doing that. Usually I'm jumping up, I'm praying as I'm jumping in the shower. And I don't even take the time to kind of settle myself because so many people, you know, three different kids and traumas, all that good stuff, and then you get homeschooling, now virtual schooling. It's just been even more complex even though we're staying in, it seems like someone's internet

drops. So I just take that few minutes before anyone needs to call me for anything and just enjoy peace. So, that has been my daily that I've been, I've actually introduced every day during the pandemic.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh, wonderful. I'm glad you make that time to find that quiet, peaceful moment to hear yourself think, to hear yourself pray, like you said without interruption. So, I'm glad that you find something you can do every day to get you through that. Eddy, what is something you do monthly maybe for self-care?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Monthly, man, you threw me through a loop on the monthly. I thought we were gonna go to weekly next. No, no, monthly, I think it's to get away from everything and when I say that, I mean it's disconnecting from the phone and disconnecting from pretty much everybody. And I mean even from the immediate family. And it might just be for an hour, but it's something that it really helps me to recharge. But then as a family, we set a goal for ourselves to do some type of trip, away from where we're at. Which even during the pandemic, we've been able to do and still be safe. And it might be a day trip, it might be an overnighter someplace where we camp someplace, but it's another aspect of just disconnecting from everyday life.

- **[Marie Osborn]** That's great to hear. I really appreciate you sharing what you do. Because what I hope that, you know, from some of our conversations is that it sparks some ideas for others in our group today. On a scale from one to 10, how likely are you to try to practice or continue your daily self-care ritual?

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Oh yeah, I'm definitely going to continue. And like, for weekly for me, I listen to a book or audiobook or podcast – something that kind of inspires me or motivates me or educates me or something that I've always been so interested in. And so I just, I started off with TED talks, which are, you know, are short. And then I kind of made it to like a podcast, so I have to do it because I feel like I'm treating myself. I just feel like that's my treat and so I'm gonna continue.

- **[Marie Osborn]** That's great, so you sound like you're a 10.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Yeah, I'm there.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Eddy and Jena, what would your numbers be?

- **[Jena Moore]** I'm definitely close to a nine or a 10. I've started working like a workout schedule into my daily routine and I've noticed when I don't get it, like you know, it's almost like my day wasn't complete. So, but when I do get just even that little bit of time to work out and, you know, get out of my workspace and do something physical, it has a huge impact on my day. And so, I will definitely try my best to continue to do that.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Oh good, I'm glad that you find benefit from that routine, that daily aspect – that's really helpful. Eddy, what would your number be?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Yeah, you know, I think on the try, I'm on the nine-10; succeed I'm on the six-seven. And you know physical fitness is one for me just like with Jena where you know I try to set aside a period of time every day that I can do something physical fitness wise. You know something I love to read and I think that's where I fail quite often, because I'd love to sit, you know 30 minutes, just give me 30 minutes to read a book and not have any interruptions and that's probably where, you know, I want to do a lot better and need to force it.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Eddy, I'm right there with you on the try and actual aspect. It's hard for me to truly make the time for myself some days. I really like this quote here by Brené Brown, which is "Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day." It's that, you know, how closely are we aligned to our true selves? Right? And if we're just doing for others, you know, what makes us, us? What are our hobbies, what are our interests if we're not making the time for them? So I really like that quote.

On the next slide, we're just going to kind of review quickly just some of the self-care and mental-wellness strategies that are out there. So, what you're going to see listed here are some of the other many options that we have to incorporate into our daily, weekly and monthly routine. So, there are some here you're gonna see that are really useful and we've talked about some of our self-care aspects, but I'm gonna give you some ideas for some other ones that you might be able to do. So finding that relaxation time as meditation, physically unwinding, you know, laughter. You know there's actual research showing that laughter can be really powerful physiologically sending the endorphins, sending some of the serotonin through our bodies that will help us feel relaxed and feel better. Mindfulness is a whole new kind of just being present in the moment type of mindset where you don't judge yourself, don't judge others and just try to focus on your breathing and having a nice, calm time. And Shaunya, when you talked about your morning earliness, that made me think of being present in the moment with that quietness; it made me think of mindfulness. Making time for those hobbies – that's where I've kind of been focusing some of my self-care practices lately. It's just the crafting, the sewing and the hiking aspect of things.

Eddy, you mentioned reading and listening to audio books. I think falls in that realm too because you find it a treat. I like this next one – five-minute breaks – like literally we, you know, we often discount what we can do in five minutes that could really improve our life. At my desk, I'll do arm stretches, just arm stretches, for a little bit can really release the tension in my shoulders from sitting at my desk all day. You know, no more wandering down the office hall and chatting to people, you know. I tend to like to sit right here, so doing those quick little things can be really helpful. That physical fitness that everyone was talking about. I'm working on my sleep too, you know, trying to get to bed earlier because right before bedtime is often my "me" time but by then I'm tired – I don't have the energy for much so I'm inspired by you, Shaunya, to think about maybe switching my "me" time to the morning. And then knowing your limits – saying no. Who struggles with saying no? I, me, I'm definitely a people pleaser. I want to be helpful, I want to jump in there but saying no doesn't mean that you're not engaged with a group. It just means no, not right now, and that can be really empowering to kind of put those boundaries up sometimes.

So I'm just gonna give us, you know, about 30 seconds. I'm going to ask you to do something with me and it might feel a little strange or uncomfortable, but let's give it a shot. So, just for really quickly, let's just close our eyes and breathe, focus on our breath and just when you breathe in – think in, when you breathe out – think out. Don't just, don't force your breath, just do it naturally – in and out – and just observe your breath. And I know that was really quick and we're wrapping up here, but I want to know what that was for you – just that quick 30 seconds. What did you observe? Did you notice anything?

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** No. I'm saying it just it slowed down, everything slowed down for just that brief 30-second period, and just, you know, it's great right now because everything's quiet, you know. My son is locked in his room and, you know, it was a nice 30-second break.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Thanks Eddy. Shaunya, what did you notice?
- **[Shaunya Murrill]** The same thing as Eddy, it just to me it's kind of even steals the, the, the, I guess all the thoughts that I'm processing you know for the day you know because you're always going and you're always thinking about what's next it just kind of made me, you know, just kind of be still in the moment so that was kind of refreshing.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, I noticed myself that I had some stress release going on, like taking the breath, relaxing just a little bit, that I even feel the effects right now. I still feel a little bit better than I did before we did that little practice. Thank you both for sharing your experiences. Jena, was there anything that you noticed?
- **[Jena Moore]** Even though it wasn't necessarily quiet around me, it sort of got quiet because I was you know closing my eyes and just thinking internally and it was very helpful.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Yeah, thank you so much for doing that with me. And I just, it's just, a quick little, you know, flashlight – a highlight showing like how quickly we can have an effect if we just, you know, zero in on our breathing and close our eyes – how that alone can be some kind of self-care and wellness strategy sometimes. There's a lot of different options out there for us, so I hope that our last part of our discussion here has really inspired you to think about self-care in a new way or like think about what you can do on that week, daily or monthly focus on yourself and your needs and your interests. So, we're just gonna wrap up here. We've almost reached the end of our session. There's a few key takeaways here and I hope you carry with you as we leave this room. I'm gonna try something a little different. I'm gonna have each of you read one of the squares and I'll read the last one. Do you mind? We'll start with you, Shaunya.
- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Okay, military life is demanding that I have the strength and the resources to rise above.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Thank you. Eddy?
- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Reaching out early will help me and my family thrive.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Thank you. Jena?
- **[Jena Moore]** I know what to expect when I call a resource line.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Thank you. And lastly, self-care is important for my own and my family's mental and physical health. So we have these here, did anyone come away with other takeaways that you want to share?
- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Well, I would say that there's a lot more resources out there than, you know, I ever thought I would need, but that's a great thing and it is just to me great. I always encourage folks to go to Military OneSource because it's like a one-stop shop. So you don't need it until you need it, but when you do it's probably there is what I would say. So that's a good thing.
- **[Marie Osborn]** Great, I'm glad you're taking some things away. Eddy or Jena, anything else that really stuck in your mind that you'll take away, maybe share, or at least make a change in your life?
- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Yeah, you know, for me it's ownership, you know. The resources are there but they're just gonna sit there if I don't take an opportunity to reach out and use them. So you know, deliberate ownership of and taking care of myself – realizing that that's gonna let me show up better for my family.

- **[Marie Osborn]** Wow, that's a powerful word. Ownership. Thanks for bringing that in. I'd like to end on that note because I think you said it really nicely. I really want to thank you all for attending today's session, making the time to in your day. We talked about fitting things in, so I'm really glad that you came today. I know it's not easy, especially when you have children in school and different things going on and work of course. I'm gonna send out that handout to you that lists a wide variety of the resources – way more than we even talk about today that are DoD-wide and service-specific. Take a chance and look at that. Maybe something will work for you.

The next session, REACH-S Session 2, focuses on military members' barriers to care. So what are your spouses going through? What are barriers for them? And they're a little bit different actually. And then also we'll review some suicide prevention strategies in that session, so I really hope that you make the time to sit in on that one as well.

Again, thanks for attending, thanks for sharing your thoughts and experiences. I hope we made some good connections today and that we learned from each other a little bit. I'm going to stick around if you have any questions for me after, but otherwise have a great day. Thank you.

- **[Shaunya Murrill]** Thank you so much.

- **[Eddy Mentzer]** Thank you.