

## 7 Truths That Exist in Solid Marriages

By Morgan Slade

**EIGHTEEN, 1-8, 10 PLUS 8, OR OTHERWISE KNOWN AS MY AGE WHEN I CHANGED MY STATUS TO "MARRIED."**

I didn't quite fit the average mold for the stereotype of girl-plays-house, and to be frank I never really even considered the negative onslaught of judgment against my decision ... until I dove head first into the military spouse pool.

Now, I'm not going to write another article aimed at shaming the shamers, addressing the D-word that is too often addressed in cowardly social media groups, or even decoding statistics. I'm going to dive into the argument **FOR** "us," the gals and guys who entered this realm as mere puppies — because some of us made it through. Some of us defied the odds and dodged the finger pointing. Our marriages are still intact and we are surviving, learning and thriving. Our advice, learn these truths:

### 1. Humility is essential.

You can read all the manuals, comb through blog post after Instagram hashtag and yet end up more confused about this lifestyle than when you began. Acronyms everywhere, rules about everything, as well as grasp new ideas and practices that

are most often estranged (excluding to the few and proud military brats). As young spouses we had no choice but to navigate through the confusion by asking questions, finding mentors and listening to advice. In short, we were humble enough to admit

we didn't understand and we loved our service members enough to seek understanding.

### 2. Sacrifice isn't a bad thing.

Sacrifice is probably the most overused word in the military community.

It is understandable that the notion of sacrifice triggers a chain reaction of emotion. "Well, you chose to marry young, deal with it." What the naysayers won't tell you, however, is that sacrifice is required in every-single-relationship since forever.

**Sacrifice teaches us to take a personal inventory and prioritize based on what we deem most important to us.** As we sacrifice we learn which elements of our lives give us the most meaning, love, and drive, all while finding other elements that do not yield a superior return.

### 3. Finding ourselves doesn't require being by ourselves.

Once I was chatting with a group of spouses about a new woman who had moved into our neighborhood. We were setting up a date to invite her to a get together when one spouse piped in and mentioned that she was merely 20. The roars of doom, of "She'll never get to discover who she really is!" erupted. There is a negative notion regarding marriage that everyone has probably referred to at least once in their lifetime, "the ole' ball and chain."

Sure marriage requires us to take on new responsibility but it by no means imprisons us — at least if we're doing it right. **Marriage is the utmost confidence of our character.** For someone to willfully want to spend life joined with us should empower our self-worth. This confidence can lead to a new level of self-discovery, and a myriad of hidden talents we may possess. >>

#### 4. If you don't work nothing else will.

Successful marriages take work regardless of age. Marrying young may present a different array of obstacles but different does not mean impossible. Military marriage is far from a fairy tale. There are deployments, TDYs and missions that cause temporary separations. Reintegration can be extremely difficult. Moving frequently is not a walk in the park. Military marriage is hard, and it takes work regardless of our age. Maturity in dealing with such hardships is not always determined by a number but by how we choose to deal with adversity.

#### 5. Pay attention.

I'm not just talking about paying attention to conversation period but pay attention to the intricate details of conversation. Learn about military life by paying attention to it and your spouse's navigation through it. Remember the commander's name and your spouse's company name. According to a study done in the 2013 Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, **remembering simple details about even seemingly mundane conversation tends to contribute to the satisfaction of respected partners in a relationship.**

#### 6. Listening comes before fixing.

Marrying young into the military actually gives us a valuable perspective. We have little to no advice to give. When issues arise that affect our partner or even our peers we need to understand that solving the problem is not the best strategy. Practicing empathy is the most priceless step in working toward a resolution. **When we seek to understand we allow the other party to walk into a sacred space of safety.** When you and your spouse can abide in a safe atmosphere discussion becomes easier which often leads to a more in depth conversation and innovative problem solving TOGETHER.



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#### 7. Find a tribe and love them hard.

Stephanie Coontz suggests in her book, *Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (<http://bit.do/How-Love-Conquered-Marriage>) that too much togetherness can actually hinder a marriage. We need outlets, we need people. Finding friendships outside our partnerships can sustain our marriage. Friends provide us with outward perspective, and multi-dimensional sounding boards. We need all the support we can get.

That old saying, "strength in numbers," is completely relevant. Finding friends within the military community is not always easy, especially when we are inexperienced in meeting new people, new to an area or especially shy, but it is absolutely essential. Friendships help us thrive in our partnerships as well as individually. ★



#### Show up.

Military marriage is unlike any other. Likewise young military marriage is ever challenging. **You will be tired, beaten down and broken at times.** Show up anyway. Realize that change is inevitable and will be a constant part of life. Realize that loving a service member means loving them when they come home tired, beaten down and broken. Show up for them. Be the constant in the camouflaged world of transition, chaos and unknown.

When you show up for your spouse, it triggers your spouse to want to show up for you. A supportive team that supports one another when the seas are calm AND during the storms provides us with an invaluable harbor, shield and place of peace.

Entering the military spouse world at a young age is not for everyone. You don't need to look far to find personal accounts of destruction and woe, but this does not have to be the plot line for your story. Chin up my young friends, we are cheering for you. We were you. We made it and so can you if you and your partner are equally invested in making success your story line. It won't be easy but then again nothing ever worthwhile was obtained with ease.