

National VA/DoD Women's Mental Health Mini-Residency

Gender Roles of Women during Deployment,
Multiple Juggling, to include Single Parents

Colonel Cheryl Blackstone, USMCR
Deputy Director



FORCE PRESERVATION DIRECTORATE (G-10)



Legal Disclaimer



- The content presented in the following slides is drawn from many sources, to include my personal experience(s). Any opinions shared are mine and not for attribution as reflective of the US Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy or the Department of Defense.



Objective



- To consider the gender roles of women during deployment, to include professional/personal juggling and (single) parenting demands.



Plethora of Current Books



- Shoot Like a Girl, Mary Jennings Hegar
- Danger Close, Amber Smith
- Ashley's War, Gayle Tzemach Lemmons
- Band of Sisters, Kirsten Holmstedt
- Undaunted, Tanya Biank
- Fight Like a Girl, Kate Germano



“Gender” Roles



- Working professional
- Mother/Father
- Plumber/Electrician
- Boss
- Caregiver
- Spouse
- Logistician
- Doctor
- Chauffeur
- Seamstress
- Artist
- Advocate
- Travel Agent
- Chanteuse/Musician
- Cook
- Barista
- Housekeeper
- Laundress
- Shopper
- Teacher
- Breadwinner
- Athlete
- Handyman
- Gardener
- Disciplinarian
- Party planner



“Factoids, Thoughts, Wisdom”



- Unprecedented # of women exiting service
- “Either/Or Phenomenon (I can either have a career or a family, but not both)
- Leadership: needs to support the person (and not just the uniform)**
- Seek out a mentor(s)! Doesn't have to be the same gender
- Be a Role Model for your own kids: sometimes the Marine Corps wins/Sometimes the family wins
- Make people uncomfortable...because uncomfortable people move forward (or backward) but rarely do they stay stationary!
- Collectively push for change by building power alliances
- Leverage the media: make it an ‘American issue’ not just a womens issue or military issue....civilian counterparts face the same challenges
- Inside game and Outside game: play both simultaneously



“Factoids, Thoughts, Wisdom”



- Work/Life Balance: not a balance but a teeter totter
- Reach out to your mil(work)family: ASK FOR HELP
- One-Day-At-A-Time: chip away at the big problems...
- Be Deliberate, choose your spouse well
- Suzie Welch: 10x10x10 (hours/months/years) when making decisions—provides perspective
- You can have it all, just not all at the same time!



“Factoids, Thoughts, Wisdom”



- Understand and recognize your people and what is the ‘truth’ for them
- Start conversation about what the individual brings to the fight...give your team the opportunity to be heard...especially if you are breaking new ground...collaborate with leaders not about rank but who has the best idea
- Create an environment where people can be their authentic self and they will give you their BEST work
- Unconscious bias: know yourself and work to guard against your biases
- Be Assertive: women are too humble
- Women tend to cover for others and lose themselves in the process
- Know the rules of the road...and then work to find your place within them
- Generational understanding



Generational Understanding



| | Gen X'ers | Millenials | NetGens/iGens |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Born* | 1961/64 to 1978/80 | 1978/87 to 1996/2005 | 1997/2005 to 2017/2025 |
| Typical ranks** | E-8/E-9 O-5/O-10 | E-1/E-9 O-1/O-5 | E-1/E-4 N/A |
| Values | -Autonomy -Job security -Belonging -Work/life balance | -Work/life balance -Humanitarian -Personal fulfillment -Teamwork | -Teamwork -Conformity -Accuracy -Connectedness |
| Characteristics | -Wary of authority -Independent -Pragmatic -Flexible -Risk-takers | -Idealistic -Empowered -Stressed out -Think "globally" -Parental/coach reliant -Expect rapid advancement | -Empathetic -Impatient -Independent/pragmatic -Egalitarian -Risk-averse -Tech savvy/hyper awareness |
| Military | -Culture pragmatism, decentralized decision making -Marine identity | -Structure/order -Question why? -Risk Averse -VFR direct/skip chain of command | -Lead by example in all things -Ethically focused -Intuitive -People centric -Propaganda savvy |

* General estimates; ranges vary

** As of 2018



(Insights from) The Real Women of the DoD



- Role models/mentors: Senior women either aren't married-- or if they are-- have no kids
- “I am setting the example for others to follow... career and family can be achievable...I owe that to them.” LtCol Jane Marine, Battalion Commander
- Michele Flournoy: “I will work my butt off for you, but I need flexibility to be home with my kids more often than not...AWS. Work is important, but life is bigger...”



(Insights from) The Real Women of the DoD



- “I just came down here to participate in this panel. 5 minutes ago, I was in my room, nursing my 6 week old. It’s not really about balance...some days the Army wins. Other days, my family wins. Rarely, do they both win in the same day.” -US Army BG



Other Insights from DoD



- Epiphany from (male) 3 star: “I never really thought about all the things my spouse does at home. All I have ever worried about is going to work and taking care of my Marines.”



Survival tips from successful women (trying to balance it all)



- Outsource as much as possible
 - Childcare: mother’s helper, nanny, au pair, day care, before/after care
 - (House)Cleaning
 - Laundry service
 - Grocery/Meal delivery
 - *Doody Calls*
 - Lawn Care
- Limit extracurricular activities
- Unplug! Turnoff cellphones, tablets, computers, etc.
- “Down” time – kids, spouse, self
- Take care of yourself...the hardest part of all.



Reference



- Heger, MJ. Shoot Like a Girl. (2014). Penguin Random House.
- Sandberg, S. Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead. (2013). Alfred Knopf
- Schulte, Brigid. Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love and Play when No One has the Time. (2014). Picador.
- Joint Women's Leadership Symposium, various presentations. June 2017.
- Officer Women's Leadership Symposium, various presentations. April 2018.
- Booz Allen Hamilton. "Navy Gender Integration Strategy". (2015).
- McCarthy, E. *She famously said that women can't have it all. Now she realizes that no one can*. (August 2016). Washington Post.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/she-famously-said-that-women-cant-have-it-all-now-she-realizes-that-no-one-can/2016/08/26/889944e4-5bf3-11e6-831d-0324760ca856_story.html?utm_term=.fcc71829b99c
- Reid, KC. *Understanding your Audience*. March 2018.
- Slaughter, A. *Why Women Still Can't Have it All*. (2012). The Atlantic.
- Yeung, D., Steiner, C., Hardison, C. et. al. *Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field*. (2017). Rand Corporation.