



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

STRENGTHENING DUAL SERVICE COUPLES

Dual service couples have the benefit of a shared experience which can serve as a basis of strength in their relationship. They can also face unique challenges when it comes to their careers and home lives. With the right support and communications tools, these relationships can thrive and excel at balancing career and family duties.

RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Dual service couples understand the stressors their partner faces at work every day, and can help each other cope with the related challenges. Since each partner understands the realities of a military lifestyle, they can be a sounding board for one another during challenging career periods.

KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

Be prepared and keep realistic expectations to help you prepare for the future, including its uncertainty. As a dual service couple, you will likely face separation periods related to trainings, remote assignments, or deployments. This time apart may increase or coincide, as you will be juggling two careers and different assignments.

UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S CAREER PATHS

The key to a successful dual service military relationship is a consideration for each other's career goals and aspirations.

- Learn about each other's rank responsibilities, specific job requirements, and unique career paths.
- Understand each other's career expectations and pressures.
 - Consider how you will manage your careers, including related postings and relocations. Together, you may need to make complicated career decisions, like declining a career-enhancing assignment or training to stay together in the same location, or accepting a less desirable job so one spouse/partner can advance their career.
- Honour each other's career goals and take each other's career seriously.
- Look for postings in the same location where possible. Engage your career managers for a list of potential locations favorable to co-location or compile a list through Employee Member Access Application ([EMAA](#))
- Seek out career programs that cater to dual service couples.



BECOME COMFORTABLE SEEKING SUPPORT

You may need to ask for extra support from your family and friends, especially if you have children or elder care responsibilities. If you or your spouse/partner are on assignment or deployed at the same time, you will need additional support caring for your children and even your home or bills. Proactively seeking out various support will help you plan for the future.

- Develop and regularly update your [Family Care Plan](#)
 - Seek out relevant services and programs through the Base Chaplain Services or your [Military Family Resource Centre](#). You can access these services in person on your own or as a couple.
- Contact the [Family Information Line](#) at 1-800-866-4546 for program and service information, referrals and short-term or crisis counselling.
- Call the [Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program](#) (CFMAP) at 1-800-268-7708. CFMAP offers confidential, voluntary, short term counselling to assist with resolving many of today's stresses at home and in the work place.

BE FLEXIBLE AND OPEN

Focus on being flexible to accommodate both careers. Expect the balance of career responsibilities and family responsibilities, such as child care, to shift over time. Be open with each other, and consistently discuss and realign your priorities as needed.

- Have realistic contingency plans with different scenarios so you feel confident and secure that you can handle whatever comes your way.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Open communication is a fundamental for any healthy relationship and even more so for families trying to find a balance between two demanding careers. Make an effort to work around your schedules and to reserve time together to talk openly and honestly.

- Consider setting clear communications plans, such as discussing any potential significant expense or changes to a child's schooling or recreational programs.
- Discuss how you're going to stay in touch with each other while on assignment or deployment.

Recognize that depending on your location and assignments, your ability to communicate with your partner may be limited. The most important thing is to be realistic with how often you can stay in touch so that you do not disappoint or unnecessarily worry each other.

REMEMBER THE POSITIVES

As a dual service couple, you are more likely to understand each other's experiences and can relate to one another's career triumphs and challenges in ways non-military spouses cannot. Though it takes a lot of planning, flexibility, and mutual support, dual service relationships can and do thrive across the CAF. Take time to recognize that your experience with teamwork, shared commitments and sacrifice can make your relationship even stronger.

*Content inspired from MILITARY ONE SOURCE. 2019 "Military Couples: When Both Spouses Are Service Members."
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/spouse/getting-married-in-the-military/military-couples-when-both-spouses-are-service-members>

