



Family Based Discussion Guide

“This baseline of personal and family readiness is the most important resource for coping with sudden emergencies at home or while deployed. Personal and family readiness must be the daily norm If the Marine Corps is to remain the nation's force in readiness, it must be just that -- ready. Personal, family, and unit readiness are the key components of mission readiness, and without mission readiness, the Marine Corps cannot meet military objectives....PERSONAL READINESS + FAMILY READINESS + UNIT READINESS = MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT”

- *MCRP 6-11B. W/CH 1. Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders*

When discussing family issues, leaders need to be careful. Some think they know more about family issues than they really do. Some believe their opinions are facts, based on what was "normal" in their family of origin. When a leader becomes aware of a family issue in a subordinate, they need to be very careful about how much and how long they mentor the subordinate on the problem. It drifts into family therapy, which is something that only qualified, authorized to do.

Nonetheless, ensuring that the families of our Marines are well-taken care of is another responsibility of leaders. Marine Corps Order P1700.24B w/Ch 1, *Marine Corps Personnel Services Manual* asserts that "taking care of our own" through provision of services and programs is part of our vaunted traditions. It engenders satisfaction with the military lifestyle, and helps integrate families into the larger military community. Increased morale, effectiveness and efficiency is result.

Here are some open-ended questions you may ask your Marines:

- Are you married?
- If not, still in contact with parents and siblings?

This can give an indication about the support network the Marine has, and can also give insight to behavior patterns - isolation can be a predictor of suicide ideation. It can also give a leader some insight about what the Marine has had for a model concerning family relationships.

- How would the Marine describe his relationship with his family of origin?
- Was it a close relationship?
- Were family members absent during childhood (divorce, separation, death, abandonment)?

This can give a leader some insight into any self-esteem issues in the Marine, since much of how we feel about ourselves is influenced by the relationships we had with our families of origin.

- Is the Marine in a relationship that might lead to something more serious than just dating? Is an engagement for marriage being considered?

- If the Marine is engaged, how long has the Marine known the significant other? How did the Marine meet this person?

- Does the Marine know the family of their fiancé (fiancée)? What are they like?

Everyone, to some degree, will unconsciously work to recreate their family of origin in a new marriage. If the two are aware of each other's families, and the habits of the families, they can better predict and prepare for issues in their own marriage.

- When is the couple planning on being married?

- Have they sought out pre-marital counseling?

Refer to the resources below, as they are also applicable to premarital situations. If married, the questions about family of origin are still applicable, but you may also ask:

- Is this the Marine's first marriage? Is this the spouse's first marriage?

- Are there children from previous marriages?

- How are the relationships in this marriage if it is a blended family?

- How are the relationships with previous spouses?

- How did the Marine meet the present spouse?

- How long did they know each other before they married?

- How long have they been married?

- Plans for children?

- Does the Marine have a Family Care Plan?

- Where is the family of the Marine's spouse?

- What kind of relationship does the spouse have with the spouse's family?

- Any health issues within the family including EFM?

- Has the spouse attended LINKS?

This is a one day workshop that helps new Marine spouses better understand life as a Marine spouse, which helps reduce confusion and misunderstanding about why the Marine HAS to do what the Marine does.

See: LINKS <http://www.quantico.usmc-mccs.org/index.cfm/marine-family-programs/marine-corps-family-team-building-mcftb/links/>

- Has the Marine couple attended PREP?

One day workshop for couples about to marry, or who are already married, which helps improve and refine communication skills within the marriage.

Marry <http://www.quantico.usmc-mccs.org/index.cfm/marine-family-programs/marine-corps-family-team-building-mcftb/prevention-and-relationship-enhancement-program-prep/>

- Has the Marine couple taken advantage of FOCUS, available through MCCS?

See: *Resiliency Training for Military Families and Couples* <http://www.focusproject.org/>

- Is the Marine aware of CREDO retreats for marriage enrichment?

- Does the Marine have a FCP?

- What does the Marine expect the family situation to be in twelve months? In two years?

Family Events

Common risk factors for familial conflict:

- Isolation or geographic separation from friends and extended family.
- Peer group is either unmarried or unhappily married.
- Financial problems.
- New baby in the home.
- Differences in the level of commitment.
- Sexual problems.
- Child discipline problems or disagreements.
- Young age at the time of marriage.
- Different or unrealistic expectations of marriage.
- Short engagement or no premarital counseling.
- Cultural or religious and spiritual differences.
- Poor communication and problem solving skills.
- Chronic unresolved life stressors.
- Dual career demands.

Why Marines May Not Seek Help

- Fears negative response from peers, coworkers, or supervisors.
- Blames spouse for the marital difficulties.
- Does not know where or how to get help.
- Has little confidence in helping professionals or counseling services.
- Fears counseling will make things worse.
- Dual career demands, conflicting work schedules, or childcare responsibilities limit opportunities to get help or take advantage of prevention programs.
- Does not want anyone in personal business.
- Easier to end the relationship than to make changes.

Prevention

Leaders can support Marines and their families by becoming familiar with the many programs on the installation and in the community that support marriages. Some programs:

- **Encourage participation in spouse support programs:**

While these programs target the civilian spouse and not the marital relationship, they can help to reduce the social isolation many young spouses experience and help to establish more realistic expectations of what marriage in the Marine Corps is all about.

 - L.I.N.K.S.: One of the Marine Corps Family Team Building within MCCS that enhances family readiness by offering an orientation to the Marine lifestyle for all spouses. The orientation includes spouse-to-spouse mentorship and small group discussion. The program provides a positive supportive environment for spouses of all ages to learn to manage the demands of Marine Corps life and to work together as team. Free childcare is provided.
 - Key Volunteer Network: This program is an integral part of the commander's official family readiness program and is the primary communication link between the Commanding Officer and unit families for the enhancement of mission readiness. The Network supports families on the home front when Marines are deployed. Not only does the Network provide information on local programs and services but also provides support through unit based activities.
 - Spouse Learning Series: One-day seminar provided by MCCS and hosted by Marine Corps Family Team Building to equip spouses with techniques and skills that help to develop leadership skills.
- **Encourage participation in marital support programs:**
 - The chaplain and Marine Corps Family Team Building offer Marriage Enrichment Workshops built on the very successful Personal Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). This program focuses on skill building in a fun and relaxed environment.
 - Military OneSource is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for anyone seeking to learn more about building a strong relationship that lasts. Face to face counseling support is available for couples that want short-term help. One Source can provide assistance through referrals to military and community resources,

online articles, newsletters, and workshops, prepaid booklets and audio recordings.

- Another option for couples is the Counseling Center at Marine and Family Services that provides individual, marriage, and family counseling as needed. Services are intended to be solution-focused on well-defined problem areas amenable to brief intervention and rehabilitation, such as adult adjustment issues, crisis intervention, academic and occupational problems, parent-child communication, grief and loss issues, and nonviolent marital problems. Licensed clinical providers assist clients to identify and clarify the nature and extent of problems based on an initial assessment, and to develop a collaborative plan for solving problems.
- Given many couples report that marital satisfaction decreases after the birth of the first child, the New Parent Support Program (NPSP) is another important prevention resource. This proactive home visitation program helps to prepare new parents for the changes they might experience with the arrival of a new baby. A wide range of services, to include home visitation by a nurse and social worker, are provided to expectant Marine families, or those who have young children up to the age of six.

Suggested Resources

<http://www.usmc-mccs.org/>

www.militaryonesource.com

<http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/>

www.smartmarriages.com

www.divorceabc.com

www.daads.com (Dads at a Distance)

www.sandcastlesprogram.com (children coping with separation and divorce)

<http://www.momsovermiles.com/>

Guidance

MCO 1754.6 Marine Corps Family Team Building

MCO P1700.24B Marine Corps Personal Services Manual

Key Terms

Counseling Center

Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB)

Marine and Family Services (MFS)

Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER)

Counseling Center:

Provides a variety of programs and services to military members and their families to enhance life skills and improve their quality of life. This mission is accomplished through a variety of seminars, workshops, treatment groups, counseling, and interventions services. Individual, marital and family counseling, provided by licensed professionals, is available by appointment. In addition to counseling services, the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) is dedicated to the prevention, education, reporting, intervention and treatment of domestic violence. For more information and to set up a counseling appointment please contact your installations Counseling Center at Marine and Family Services.

Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB):

MCFTB provides educational resources and services to foster personal growth and enhance the readiness of Marine Corps families. MCFTB is comprised of the following:

- Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.)
- Spouses' Learning Series (SLS)
- Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)
- Chaplains Religious Enrichment and Development Operation (CREDO)

These programs are supported at all major installations by Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) through a MCFTB office staffed with a MCFTB Director and MCFTB Coordinator or Key Volunteer Trainer. The L.I.N.K.S. and KVN programs are supported almost entirely by Marine Corps spouse volunteer effort.

Marine and Family Services (MFS):

Encompasses those programs focusing upon the needs of the individual concerning education, prevention and intervention /treatment programs. Departments housed in this area will include Retired Activities, Transition Assistance Program, Lifelong Learning Education Programs, Libraries, Child, Youth and Teen Programs, New Parent Support,

Exceptional Family Member Program, Information Referral, Suicide Awareness, Intervention and Treatment, and auxiliary programs such as the Armed Services YMCA and Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society. For more information please contact your installations Marine and Family Services Center.

Marriage Enrichment Retreat (MER):

A Chaplain developed CREDO program, the MER provides couples with the opportunity to explore ways to keep their marital relationship growing and to deal with the conflicts that occur in any intimate relationship. The MER enables participants to explore the emotional, physical and spiritual needs of marriage, and to grow closer as couples.

If the Marine does not feel the family situation is in distress, assist them in liaising with the experts to MCCS.

DO NOT ATTEMPT FAMILY COUNSELING.

Too many think they know the right answers and in attempting to fix a situation, only succeed in making things worse.

Leave counseling and therapy to those who are trained to do it.