

# Making Relationships Work

Real romance isn't all hearts and kissy-face emojis. Healthy relationships take work, and dating — or marriage — within the military is no exception. Everyone deserves to feel safe and nurtured by their partner.

Long-lasting relationships are built on trust, respect and communication. Every couple experiences problems. Couples who resolve conflicts respectfully — or "fight fairly" — can often work through them and come away even stronger. Sometimes conflict cannot be resolved and the relationship will end. No matter how difficult or hurtful the situation, resorting to violence will only make matters worse.

What do healthy relationships look like? Relationships should be safe, respectful and positive. Here are some ways to nurture a healthy relationship with your partner:

- **Commit to your relationship completely.** It takes two people working together to make a relationship work well.
- **Trust your partner.** Give each other the benefit of the doubt and accept your partner's word as true.
- **Be kind to one another.** When you talk to one another, watch your tone of voice and body language. Always speak positively about your partner to others.
- **Fight fair.** Use nonviolent conflict resolution. It's OK to feel angry and to share those feelings with your partner. Emotional and physical abuse is never OK. Listen to each other and really hear what your partner is feeling. Find common ground and work together for a solution you both find acceptable.
- **Forgive, own your mistakes and apologize.** Forgive your partner when he or she owns a mistake, and apologize in the same way you would want your partner to treat you. Every couple faces relationship problems at some point. Working through challenges in a healthy way can strengthen the relationship.
- **Respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries.** Your partner is an individual and has the right to decide how to be touched and how to feel. No one has the right to dismiss or disregard another person's boundaries and feelings.
- **Ask, don't expect.** Sometimes we take our partners for granted. Remember, your partner doesn't owe you servitude. Common courtesy goes a long way to making another person feel respected.

- **Support your partner.** Help each other toward life goals or dreams. Work as a team, just the two of you against the world. Relationships grow stronger when teamwork toward a common goal is involved.
- **Be a good example for your children.** Children learn about relationships by watching the people they know best. Set an example for your children by practicing healthy relationship skills with your spouse or partner.
- **Enjoy life together.** That's what this is all about, enjoying life with your favorite person. Continue to enjoy or rediscover the spark that brought you together. Keep that in the forefront of your mind. Find things to do together that bring out the fun in life.