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Tips for Communicating in a Long-Distance Relationship

Long-distance relationships are a challenge that many military couples face at some point in their relationship. Being apart from your loved one can create anxiety, sadness, even trust issues. But the separation can also bring couples closer, particularly if both partners set expectations and find ways to stay connected. With planning and commitment, you and your partner can keep your relationship strong while apart.

Plan ahead for staying in touch

The best time to talk about how you will stay connected during your geographic separation is while you are still together.

- Set expectations about how you will stay in touch and how often. What works best for you as a couple? Phone calls, video chats, email, text, letters? A combination? How often will you call or write? Factor in your other commitments and activities so you don't overpromise and risk disappointing each other or adding stress to your lives.
- Agree on a time to speak with each other that works for both of you. Different time zones can make this tricky. One of you may be starting your day while the other is ending theirs.
- Prepare yourselves for the unknown. It's possible that you won't know much about your communication options ahead of time. Wi-Fi may be spotty or nonexistent in the area where the service member will be. Mail or email service may be limited. Mission requirements may make communication impossible for days or longer. Discuss these very real possibilities so you won't be caught off guard.
- Pick a time each day to focus your thoughts on the other. Play the same song, if possible – maybe as one of you is drifting off to sleep and the other is starting the day if you're in different time zones. This can be reassuring when communication isn't possible.
- Hide notes for each other to find during your geographic separation. Tuck little messages

into gear, books, clothing, or in unexpected places around the home.

Nurturing your long-distance relationship

It takes effort to maintain closeness when you are physically distant from each other. But gestures, small and large, can feel particularly meaningful when you are missing your loved one.

- Plan ahead for birthdays and anniversaries so cards or gifts arrive on time.
- Be there for each other emotionally. Keep track of what is happening in your partner's life so you can check in after a big day or send virtual, reassuring hugs when needed.
- Keep each other up to date on new developments in your lives. Talk about friends you've made, interests you've developed, new favorite foods. Passing along these types of details will make reintegration easier when you are together again.
- Try to keep your conversations positive. Don't hide your struggles, but don't let them dominate conversations either. Positive communication during deployment is linked to less anxiety among military couples on return.
- Deal with challenges constructively as they come up. Address issues right away before they become bigger problems down the road. Doing this also makes the adjustment smoother when you are back together.
- Know when to pull back a bit. There's such a thing as being in touch too often. If phone calls or video chats begin to feel burdensome or you are struggling to find things to talk about, speak less frequently. This will help keep your conversations fresh and your time reconnecting will feel more special.
- Have shared experiences. Read the same book or watch the same movie and compare notes later. Play an online game together. Listen to the same playlist. Having shared experiences brings couples closer together.

Resources for staying close while apart

The Department of Defense, through Military OneSource, offers resources for military couples coping with a geographic separation.

- Strengthen your relationship with the [Building Healthy Relationships Staying Connected While Away](#) specialty consultation. A consultant will meet with you by phone or video to help with emotional coping and staying connected.
- Get expert help with [non-medical counseling](#) when you need more support than friends and family can provide. Non-medical counseling is free and confidential and available wherever in the world you are.

- Tap into the [Love Every Day](#) app to practice your relationship communication skills and kindle your romance.
- Visit the [Re the We](#) page on Military OneSource for access to articles, tools and resources to rekindle, repair or reset your relationship.

Military OneSource is there for you 24/7 to help with relationship issues and other concerns. Call 800-342-9647 to connect with a consultant. OCONUS? Use these [international calling options](#).