

MSOF QUICK-GUIDE GOAL-SETTING

LIVING INTENTIONALLY

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FAMILIES & GOAL-SETTING

Special Operations families often struggle to know and pursue their own interests because of persistent routine change brought on by repeated deployments, training, and moves. When you set goals, you are more likely to manage stress better, pursue your interests and establish life-long friendships. Military life can make these things especially challenging, but living intentionally can help keep you on track and thriving despite obstacles and adversity.

Here are some simple tips that can help you live intentionally and goal set despite any obstacle military life throws your way.

EVALUATE & SET GOALS EACH MOVE & DEPLOYMENT

Create and evaluate your goals (personal, family, professional) before each PCS move or deployment. Each duty station and deployment is unique. Duty stations have similarities, but each post/base will present new opportunities, job markets, people, and possibly new climate or geography. No two deployments are exactly alike. There may be a new mission, different duration or location, or a change in accessibility/ability to communicate. Whatever the new situation is, considering your goals and what is important to you in advance will help you consider how to plug in and quickly adjust to new routines during a time of transition.

BRAINSTORM NEW GOALS

We all have things we hope to achieve or experience. Do not stress if you are not sure where to start or what you want to focus on. Important goals do not have to be big or significant. Living well (eating well, exercise/movement, nourishing family and friendships, getting good rest, establishing routines) is filled with hard, but seemingly mundane, goals. As you brainstorm goals, think about what brings you joy and contentment. Consider things you want to improve at or experience. Consider your unique talents, the causes that compel you, and the topics you are curious to learn more about.

You may have dreams of learning to scuba dive, returning to school, becoming an author, or simply living a more healthy life. Maybe you might want to be intentional about investing/managing/saving money, cooking healthy, or spending quality time with people you care about. Spend time brainstorming, and don't rush. You are more likely to succeed if you are aware, excited, or inspired about approaching opportunities. Do not craft a goals list for the sake of having a list.

SET GOALS AND GET STARTED

After you brainstorm, organize your goals. Check to make sure that your goals are not “to-do list” items. Those tasks will always be on your “plate,” and they may limit what you can accomplish. Account for these necessary tasks, but invest in yourself and identify your goals. Be thoughtful and consider if your goals **(1)** connect you with people, **(2)** add to/improve your education, skills, or quality of life, and **(3)** respond to your interests. These are three **healthy checkpoints** that will help you thrive, live intentionally, and stick to your goals.

Narrow your list down to **2 or 3 goals**. It is important to consider which goals you can realistically accomplish because even small goals require discipline and planning. It may not be the right time or place in life to tackle something you want to achieve. Studies show you are more likely to succeed if you only focus on 2 or 3 goals/new habits every 4-6 months. If you have a “full plate” and little time, consider only setting one goal. It is important to be realistic and sometimes gentle with yourself.

NEXT STEPS

Begin breaking down the necessary next-steps of your 1-3 goals. For example, if you want to go/return to college, you will: decide what/where to study, study for and take a required test, write an essay, create a resume, complete an application, collect letters of recommendation, and identify funding sources. Maybe you want to learn to sew or decorate cakes. For these goals, you likely need to purchase supplies, identify resources to help you learn new techniques, free-up time, find childcare, and just simply begin. Each step is a small goal itself. Breaking down the process to achieve a goal is important. It helps you understand how and where to start, and it gives you a list of manageable tasks in the short term.

GET SPECIFIC & SET TIMEFRAMES

Next, set a realistic time-frame for accomplishing each task. Is it a smaller goal (feasible in 2-8 months), or will it take longer to achieve? Don't be discouraged if some of your goals require a significant time commitment. Some goals will carry through multiple military moves and/or deployments. The time/route you take to get there does not matter. Be realistic with yourself, know your constraints, and focus on the smaller, incremental steps to make progress.

STAY MOTIVATED & FIND ENCOURAGEMENT

Keep yourself accountable and encouraged by writing out and displaying your next steps. Place lists and visual reminders in a prominent place in your house so you regularly encounter them and stay motivated. (A whiteboard, chalkboard, post-its, and inspirational quotes are great options.) Take pride in what you accomplish and consider posting pictures that celebrate or recognize your efforts. For extra inspiration, look to people around you or google stories of spouses who overcame challenges and accomplished similar goals. You may even seek out a mentor to help you.

Continue to periodically reevaluate your goals (PCS move, deployment, or every 6-12 months).

For More Goal-Setting Resources

If you are interested in learning more about goal setting, these are great resources.

- Book: "Succeed: How we can Reach our Goals" by Heidi Grant Halvorson
- Website: Mind Tools: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_90.htm
- Article: Micro Habits: https://www.nbcnews.com/better/wellness/how-use-micro-habits-tackle-big-health-goals-n766691?cid=sm_npd_nn_ot_nn

The Military Special Operations Family Collaborative is a 501(c)3 organization founded in 2018 to enable all Special Operations families to live well. To learn more about the work of MSOF, please subscribe to our newsletter, visit our website, or find us on social media.

