

**DARE TO DREAM TEAMS...  
FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS GROUP...  
SUCCESS TEAMS...  
MASTERMIND GROUPS...**

**...WHATEVER YOU CALL THEM, THESE ARE SUPPORT GROUPS  
TO HELP YOU**

**CREATE THE LIFE YOU WANT TO HAVE**

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coauthors of

*Military Spouse Journey: Discover the Possibilities & Live Your Dreams*

[www.MilitarySpouseJourney.com](http://www.MilitarySpouseJourney.com)

## Creating the Life You Want to Have

### What are Dare to Dream Teams?

*A Dare to Dream Team is a small group of people whose only goal is to help every member of the team get what he or she wants and to help each member create the kind of life that works for them. Part of what a team does is help each person figure out what that kind of life is. Please note: We use the term Dare to Dream Team (Dream Team for short) but they are called all kinds of things from Mastermind groups to success teams.*

### Why do Groups Work?

#### **Accountability**

It's like the Weight Watchers concept: You have to weigh in. In a Dream Team everyone has to report on how they did toward accomplishing the mini-goal(s) they set during the last meeting. It is often easier to justify to ourselves why we don't do something that would move us toward our dreams and we easily keep putting it off. It is harder to keep facing a group of others and admitting you haven't done what you said you would do (what you know you want to do!).

#### **Report on Goals (the "Journal")**

Every member of the team writes down every other member's goals each meeting. That way:

1. We can all visualize success for each other.
2. We can all look for resources/contacts for each other.
3. No member can come in and say they forgot what they said they were going to do — because we can tell you—we have it written down!

#### **Expansion of Resources**

You are only one person with one set of ideas, experiences, and contacts. By joining with a team, you access all the ideas, experiences, contacts of the other members.

#### **Find the "Second Right Answer"**

My friend Sarah Richards says we tend to get into "mind ruts." A group can think outside the "rut" for you. Where one answer you can think of may not work in your situation, the group can help you out of the rut to find the Second Right Answer—and, if that won't work either, then the Third Right Answer... or however many right answers it takes.

#### **Additional "Antennae"**

Since they all know your dream, your team members bring in resources, articles, contacts, and information for you that they happen to run across—information you might never have run across yourself.

#### **Courage**

The team provides a sounding board for your doubts and fears. They support you in pushing past those fears, in both practical and concrete ways, and at an emotional level. Sometimes group members physically go along to provide moral support during an especially challenging task.

### ***Your Own Traffic Cop***

Your team members stop you from getting off track. Once they know your dreams, they sometimes see more clearly than you do when you are taking on opportunities that don't fit in. And they call you on it. In fact, in one of Kathie's teams, they had one woman who kept taking on way too much—and taking things that didn't fit her dreams. So, for a time, they made her run all new commitments by the team first. It worked!

### ***Your Own Personal Cheering Squad***

When you succeed at something, your team helps you celebrate. Mariah Burton Nelson, a former pro basketball player and author of *Victory: Life Lessons in Competition and Compassion*, says women need more “victory talk.” Your team helps you do that—to acknowledge and celebrate your successes—large and small. And, for the times you are feeling down, it helps to be around “up” people who can remind you that you won't always feel that way.

### ***The Chance for Deeper Life Exploration***

Doing various life exploration exercises and then discussing them with group members deepens your understanding of who you are and expands your experience of life.

### ***Possibility Thinking***

As you see others move toward what they want and succeed, you get inspired and motivated to take action yourself. There really are amazing opportunities all around for all of us. The group helps you see that, and helps you take action to move into new possibilities.

## **Okay...I Want a Team! How do I Get Started?**

### **Where do I Find my Team Members?**

Talk about the concept to people you know or people you meet. We've met team members through activities like calling up a local computer help line, at a chiropractor, at a book reading, in the gym.

### **What Should I Look for in Team Members?**

We each choose to look for people who are enthusiastic and positive, whose “energy” we like. Barbara Sher points out in her book *Teamworks* that you don't have to go through a big search procedure or screening process. Some of the best groups she knows started with people who just happened to be sitting next to each other at one of her seminars. The most important thing is to find people who want to figure out their goals and work toward them—people who want to be part of a Dream Team.

### **How Many Teammates do I Need?**

Five to six members is the best number. That size gives enough synergy, energy, and variety of ideas. If someone has to miss a meeting, you still have enough to meet. More than six and meetings can take too long. But you may need to start with eight. For whatever reasons, a few people will drop out after a few meetings, usually because they can't manage to make the commitment of regular meetings.

## Should they be Friends or Strangers?

You may well be able to form an effective group from all of your already-close friends. But one thing to consider: our friends sometimes, without meaning to, can limit us in our thinking. They already have an idea of who we are and what we are capable of accomplishing. Strangers don't have any of those preconceived ideas. We think it's great to have a mix. It's also important to have a real mix of backgrounds and experiences to really expand the brainstorming. We don't think it's a good idea to have members who have too close a connection through the office or your spouse's office—that can limit how open you feel comfortable being. (Oh, and as to those “strangers,” you'd be surprised how quickly and deeply you get to know one another when you are sharing life dreams.)

## What Kind of Goals Would I Work on with My Team?

### Three Questions to Start

Start by asking yourself these three questions:

1. “What do you do as naturally as breathing?”
2. “What did you love to do as a child?”
3. “Is there somebody doing something you really admire?”

### The Magic Wand Test

If we could wave a magic wand and grant you any wish, what would that wish be? Some of your goals might show up in the answer.

### The Bottom Line

The bottom line is, it doesn't matter what your dreams or goals are—they can be personal, parenting, spiritual, physical, financial, and educational. You might want to start a Bed & Breakfast, write a book, lose weight, or get your closets organized. Your goals can be small or large, short-term or long-term. The group is just a means to get—and keep—you moving toward what you want. And you have a lot of fun, laughter, and great conversations in the process.

The best thing about going for your dreams is what happens along the way. You grow into your best self as you stretch and grow and learn new things. By taking risks and experiencing success—and, yes, sometimes failure—you grow as a person. You become more fully engaged in this wonderful life. You live a conscious purposeful life rather than just letting life happen to you.

### Note about Failure

We've had group members, ourselves included, go after goals and reach them, just to discover that those particular goals aren't really a good fit. Is that a failure? We don't think so. At least you don't spend your life in “I wish I had tried...” thinking. Often, that “failure” leads you to find out about something else that really is important to you. The joy is in the journey, in the process.

So many of us (especially women) feel our dreams have to stay on the back burner until we live in the place we desire, the kids are grown and out of the house, we get a certain assignment, until deployment is over, or until we become motivated. But this isn't true. We can all move toward what we want—with help. Your group is the best vehicle for receiving that help.

## How Do We Run an Effective Meeting?

Each group decides how they want to have their meetings work. Your group will evolve. These are just ideas based on research about groups as well as our own experiences. You can use them as a starting point or for discussion at your first meeting.

### Frequency

It's a good idea to meet at least every other week for momentum and so you don't have to always be "catching up" with everyone. It is best to keep it the same day and time so that everyone can plan ahead and schedule other things around the meetings (e.g., first and third Thursday of each month from 9-11 a.m. or 7-9 p.m. if you work outside the home).

### Location

You can alternate homes, go to a restaurant, use a club room or a church meeting room. Public places are the easiest (as long as you have enough privacy, such as a separate room). When you choose a place that is open (restaurant, library or church meeting room), no one individual is responsible for it being open, for cleaning up, etc. But it's fun to meet in everyone's home at least once because you get to know them better. We've been part of groups that have met at a Denny's type restaurant with a separate meeting room. We didn't have to pay for it; we each just got tea or coffee and occasionally something to eat. We've been in groups that met at a cafe with a separate room. The separate room is important so you can laugh and cry and be loud and feel safe saying whatever you want to say without fear that others are listening in. We've been in groups that alternated between member homes (harder to coordinate but we wanted the intimacy and comfort). We've been in groups that always met at the same person's home that was the most central. Figure out what works best for your group.

### Timing

Start and end on time, so people can plan and everyone gets a chance for input to their dreams. We use a kitchen timer and give everyone a certain amount of time to report on what they've done since the last meeting, present anything they want ideas/help on—and then a set time for brainstorming that issue. That may be too structured for some, but we found it keeps any one person from "hogging" the whole meeting, something we otherwise might all be guilty of without meaning to.

### Leadership

It's a good idea to have a leader facilitate each meeting to keep things on track. Some groups have natural leaders. For most of ours, we rotate that responsibility. It's the responsibility of the leader to send an email/text reminder about the meeting, facilitate the meeting to keep it on track and on time, and bring in a new life exploration exercise to assign at the end of the meeting.

### Team Name

You don't have to call your group a Dare to Dream Team. The group can choose whatever name you want to. Kathie's group in Corvallis called themselves Big Group because they wanted to learn to live BIG! So create a name. That makes it your group!

## Potential Problems

1. **Pleasure vs. business.** You get to be close friends almost immediately, even with complete strangers. The tendency after a few meetings is to spend a lot of time socializing. We found it best to plan purely social events with the group outside the set meeting times so we could keep the meetings for really working toward our goals. The reality for us has always been that the first half hour is spent in getting tea or coffee and catching up a bit. At that point, the leader steps in to get going and use the timer to keep on task.
2. **Infrequent meetings.** If you don't meet frequently enough, you lose the energy, synergy, and forward momentum. That said, we also know groups who have met quarterly for years, for a half or full day, and it works for them.
3. **Absenteeism.** If someone misses meetings regularly and you have other people who want to join (you'll find others will want to join when they start seeing how excited you are about your group), it is important to approach the person who keeps missing. Tell her you want her to be part of the team, but part of that is being there to share ideas and resources and support. If she can't commit to doing that, maybe it just isn't right for her at this time.
4. **Losing/adding members.** As military spouses, and with part of our groups sometimes consisting of other military spouses, many of our groups have had frequent turnovers. Each time someone had to leave the group due to a move, we would have group members (often the one leaving) suggest someone they would like to bring in as a replacement. We would all discuss each new person and agree as a group before bringing her in. That might sound elitist or exclusionary, but it's important to decide as a group. If one member has an issue from previous interactions, that would limit how open they feel they can be.
5. **Emotional problems.** This is not a therapy group. None of us are counselors qualified to handle severe emotional problems. If an individual has problems that are beyond the scope of working toward goals, we might help them find resources to go to, but we would have to ask them to take those problems elsewhere. That is not the purpose of this kind of group.
6. **Confidentiality.** You should agree up front that everything discussed is confidential unless you get permission to share the information outside the group. You want people to feel comfortable being as open as possible.
7. **Distance.** One of Kathie's groups finally disbanded, not because they wanted to, but because they all lived too far apart to get together as regularly as they had wanted. "We all wanted to make the meetings and we did at first in the initial excitement of the group," says Kathie, "but the extra travel distance and time just made it too difficult to sustain in our already full lives." You might consider that as you form your group.

## What do We Do at Our First Meeting?

### Ideal Life Exercise

An easy way to start is to ask everyone to complete the Ideal Life Exercise (see [MilitarySpouseJourney.com](http://MilitarySpouseJourney.com)). Invite each member to read their response to the exercise. As you hear people's dreams, you'll be able to pull out goals for them to work on, and when you hear

others dream big, you'll feel encouraged to dream big yourself. We often limit ourselves in the possibilities we think of by ourselves.

With three different-colored highlighters,

1. Highlight what's in your Ideal Life description that you already have in your life. And take steps to keep those things in your life. Spell these out to your group so they can help keep you accountable.
2. Highlight descriptions of your ideal environment. Get your group's help to figure out how you can add pieces of that environment into where you live right now. Change your daily experience of life right away.
3. Highlight goals that are important to you. Break them down into steps and a plan. This is where your group can really help you with brainstorming and accountability.

Once you've done the Ideal Life exercise, you are well on your way to knowing each other's dreams and helping each other work toward them. Some groups use that as a base and spend each meeting working toward the dreams by: having each person report on the mini-goals they set the meeting before, getting help with brainstorming an issue or something they want to do but don't know how to move forward, setting new goals for the next meeting.

### Life Exploration Exercises

Some groups use life exploration exercises to help members figure out their dreams and how they want to live their life. You gain a lot from hearing how others respond to exercises and to the discussions that evolve as a result. In some cases, we've made up exercises, but we've also had groups use exercises from books like

- *The Artist's Way* and *The Vein of Gold*, both by Julia Cameron
- *The Path* by Laurie Beth Jones
- Barbara Sher's *Wishcraft* and her many other books
- Cheryl Richardson's *Take Time for Your Life* and *Life Makeovers*

### Creative Exercises

Some groups choose to add in creative exercises, such as making masks, treasure maps (described in depth in our book *Military Spouse Journey*), or happiness/gratitude jars.

Once again, each group evolves differently. Kathie's Big group focused on spirituality issues. They were also committed to helping each other stay on their chosen path toward simplicity, away from a central focus on materialism. We've been in other groups where the focus was on professional accomplishment. Groups evolve by what the members need most at the time.

### Moving Forward

Groups may also disband due to moves or distance or changing lives, but the connection continues in some way. We continue to connect periodically and bring in ideas or resources or encouragement. We feel like we have all these supporters out there all over, so we aren't living this life alone.

We've learned we don't ever want to be without a current group. Emails, texts, social media, and phone calls don't make up for the need for hugs and looking in someone's face when they

describe something. Our group members can see when we are getting off track by the way our faces and body language look, and they can hear it in our voices.

We guess you can figure out this life on your own; some people are disciplined enough to do so. We aren't. We know that. We want the support—and the fun—of a group.

## Poem: The BIG Group

By Kathie Hightower

Walking into comfort  
Smiles, hugs, open faces,  
chatting happily as we get coffee and tea,  
Settling in, Checking in,  
Going deeper.  
I feel most “seen” at my weekly Women’s group  
The BIG Group,  
We all want to live BIG.  
We’re all supporting each other  
Listening to dreams,  
Providing feedback and inspiration,  
Ideas and resources and courage,  
Cheering, laughing, crying  
They immediately see in my face,  
hear in my voice when I’m getting off track,  
Listening respectfully  
And then calling my bluff—in one voice  
In many voices,  
Different views and perceptions  
Creative solutions to impossible obstacles  
Pushing me right out of my comfort zone.  
Holding the net  
Expanding my vision  
Supporting my growth  
Holding my disappointments and setbacks,  
Pushing me out once again.  
Debating, discussing, dissecting options.  
They hold me accountable.  
And they hold me  
My woman’s group is juicy & playful & artsy  
My woman’s group is powerful magic.  
How do you do your life without one?  
How would you open your heart and find your soul?  
Maybe there is another way...  
But it can’t be as much fun.

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## What Others are Saying

*“All those years I thought I needed a character transplant, when what I really needed was a team. I needed buddies, I needed mentors, I needed loyal defenders—people to run interference for me when I couldn’t do it for myself. I needed clear heads to think for me when mine was cloudy with discouragement and doubt. I needed somebody to hold my hand when I was caving in. I needed somebody to drive me across town. I needed somebody to steer me toward the right information. I needed somebody who would teach me skills, who’d sit down and get me ready to talk to whoever I had to talk to. I needed someone who believed in my dreams.*

*I needed real help. And so do you. Everybody does. (At least everybody I’d want to have coffee with).”* —Barbara Sher, *Teamworks!* (coauthored with Annie Gottlieb)

## Contact Us

Do you have questions or would you like help brainstorming dreams for your group members? Email us:

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Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer lead workshops and are the coauthors of *Military Spouse Journey: Discover the Possibilities & Live Your Dreams*.

## More Information

Visit: [www.MilitarySpouseJourney.com](http://www.MilitarySpouseJourney.com)