Commanding Officer Spouse Scenario

An XO Spouse Wants To Be The CO Spouse

Scenario
You are very excited to begin your first tour as a CO spouse of Point North Naval Air Squadron.

Background
The current CO, Captain Jack, is single. The role and responsibility of "CO spouse" was passed onto a very willing XO spouse – Emily Eager. She is halfway through their two-year tour and has been very active in all CO spouse roles and responsibilities. She organizes all wardroom functions, advises the FRG, works closely with the base ombudsman, and maintains communication with all spouses.

Current Situation
After the Change of Command you are ready and willing to assume all roles of CO spouse.

Actions Taken To Date
You thank Emily for her role as the CO spouse and then gently explain that you are now ready to begin your role as CO spouse. No change – Emily continues her leadership role as CO spouse.

You share your concerns with your spouse, who talks to the XO. Again, no change – Emily continues her leadership role as CO spouse.

Issue
You realize that Emily Eager is not willing to relinquish her role. What can you do you take back the reigns of the CO Spouse responsibility?
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A Difficult Person In Your Command

Background
Two months ago, your spouse became the CO of USS GREATSHIP. At the time, the ship was already a month and a half into the deployment. Your spouse’s Change of Command is at sea. You arrive solo to your new homeport. You are enthusiastic about your role as an active CO spouse.

Current Situation
Your immediate priority is to help develop a stronger FRG. At the first meeting, you introduce yourself and give some ideas of future meetings. You would like to move from business-oriented classroom gatherings to fun adventures. Wanda Wontdo, a Senior Chief spouse and a strong presence in the FRG, immediately expresses her unwillingness to change the meeting location. She feels it has been a consistent meeting place for the last 4 years. Others have expressed that it is not a convenient location, a bit sterile, and parking is difficult.

You decide to move forward and schedule a bonfire. You bring finger foods and some beverages, including wine. It was a small gathering but a terrific success. Nearly all participants were happy to have a chance to gather and chat, especially junior and senior spouses new to the command. It was evident on the face of one spouse that clearly objected... Wanda. The next day, she is on the phone to other senior enlisted spouses complaining of the changes. She also contacts her husband expressing concern that wine was served and that the gathering did not focus on the ship. She encourages other spouses to no longer attend the FRG functions to demonstrate solidarity against the new changes.

Issue
How do you breakdown the barrier while continuing efforts that support your spouse's command vision?
Commanding Officer Spouse Scenario

Encouraging JO Spouses to Take Leadership Roles and Gaining Spouse Participation

Background
Your spouse just took command of the USS AMERICA. It is a Littoral Combat Ship with a small crew. The ship is readying for deployment in six weeks. You attend all meetings in preparation for their six-month deployment.

Current Situation
You quickly note that the wardroom is small and spouse cohesiveness lacking throughout the command. The XO is single and the CMC spouse is unwilling to participate. Your ombudsman is very eager but is also new and does not know where to begin. You have three JO spouses who have young children. The total number of officer & enlisted spouses is 16. The spouses don't really know each other because this is a newly commissioned ship arriving in San Diego.

A contact list for spouses does not exist and you have been told that the alpha roster/recall list is for official use only and cannot be used for social purposes.

Issue
You and your spouse are striving to have 80% spouse participation before the ship returns from deployment. What steps do you take to reach your goal?
Commanding Officer Spouse Scenario

The Overly Passionate Ombudsman Inadvertently Discloses Sensitive Information

**Background**
Your spouse has recently taken command while on deployment. Shortly after, an FRG meeting convenes but a scheduling conflict prevents you from attending and the Ombudsman was ill with the flu.

**Current Situation**
As always, your wonderful FRG president, Polly Passionate, managed to get great attendance at the FRG meeting. But you later find out, through an attendee's post on the ship's FRG Facebook page, that Polly was giving out erroneous information about the ship's schedule to the family members in attendance.

Furthermore, you learn from a JO spouse in attendance that Polly was sharing information about a ship’s family in crisis that she’d heard about in confidence from her best friend, the Ombudsman. She wanted to rally the troops around the family in crisis, though that family had asked for privacy.

**Issue**
How do you handle this matter without squashing Polly’s enthusiasm? After all, she volunteered for this position over a year ago when no one else would come forward. What do you do with the FRG spouses if anything at all?
Mission: Impossible Scenarios

Participants are asked to draw from their experiences and knowledge to create a complete event for each for the following scenarios. Here are the Event Options they came up with. We hope you will be able to pick up an idea or two in a pinch.

Since there were two tables for each scenario, there is some repetition in the details – these must have worked well previously for some participants.

Note: Some details have been added by the Committee to complete the Event Options, and overall notes to this type of scenario have been collected as “Additional Notes.”

SCENARIO: Impossible Babies

Description
Three babies in your group are due next month; the spouses have no family or outside friends here in Hawaii. One mom-to-be is new to the island, one has been an active participant in command events, and one has not been involved.

The Mission: to celebrate these blessed events

Event Option 1: A surprise Baby Shower
Setup: Each believes the event to be for the other two moms-to-be – therefore enlisting everyone’s help.
Venue: A brunch buffet at a restaurant.
Invitations: Say it is a surprise shower for three.
Gifts: Bring a laundry basket for each mom-to-be so that everyone can contribute as they arrive to the shower. Include personalized layette items from the Dolphin Store.

Event Option 2: A group baby shower
Venue: Use a neutral site – not necessarily to CO/CMC spouse’s house.
Invitations: Use stamps or computer and include a wish list for the moms-to-be.
Food: Have everyone bring an appetizer. Create a diaper or bootie cake.
Gifts: Get call lists for what the Moms need; make gift baskets.
Additional Notes: Consistency for this type of venue is important – you are setting a precedent. If you are going to do it for one, you must do it for all.
**SCENARIO: Impossible Schedules**

**Description**
A deployment has just been extended by three months, and spouse moral is down.

**The Mission:** to create an event to boost morale.

**Event Option 1: Pity Party Picnic**
- **Venue:** Luau at Honeymoon Beach; everyone wears black to mourn the change of schedule.
- **Invitations:** Evite to FRG list; Careline message.
- **Food:** Everyone brings a dish beginning with “P” (i.e. pulled pork, poi, pasta, paper products, pina coladas, etc.).
- **Entertainment:** Boo Hoo Baskets as door prizes that include items in “3s” – one for each month of extension: bath salts, popcorn, candles, movie coupons, sparkling wine. Candy leis for kids.

**Event Option 2: Body/Mind/Soul Night**
- **Timing:** Late afternoon/early evening on a Saturday.
- **Location:** Use Command Letter to rent an on-base Community Center.
- **Invitations:** Use FRG list.
- **Food:** Have everyone bring finger foods, drinks to share, juice for the kids.
- **Childcare:** Use FRG to defray cost. Hire teenagers to watch the kids. Have only the people using the babysitters contribute to the cost of having them.
- **Entertainment:** Use Command Letter to rent movies, popcorn machine, bounce house, offer Bunko, hire student massage therapists and have a massage area.

**SCENARIO: Impossible Spouses**

**Description**
You hear that the spouses are interested in getting together. The group is a mix of ages, interests, and numbers of children or no children.

**The Mission:** to create an event for a diverse crowd.

**Event Option 1: Summer Break Beach Party**
- **Venue:** Bellows or another beach.
- **Invitations:** Write on small beach balls (size of softballs).
- **Food:** Bring your own food to grill; have someone man the grill.
- **Entertainment:** Check MWR options, offer gift certificates as door prizes.
- **Services:** Offer free childcare on-site (if budget allows), or have invitees buy tickets to attend.

**Event Option 2: Potluck Beach Party**
- **Invitations:** Use Evite and have it be an afternoon venue.
- **Entertainment:** Leis, beach toys, face painting, have kids make greeting cards for service members, magician, balloon artist, horseshoes.
1. You are either a CO or XO spouse. At a wardroom function, a spouse complains that during the last deployment she thinks her husband cheated on her.

Do you:
- a) Say nothing at the function but tell your spouse as soon as possible;
- b) Pull the spouse to the side and inform her counseling is available at the Fleet and Family Support Center and suggest she and her spouse may want to consider counseling;
- c) Call the spouse the next day and tell her you heard what she said and you must report it to the command, or
- d) Do nothing and assume she was probably just being paranoid.

2. You are the CO's spouse. While your spouse's ship/boat is deployed, you start getting calls from spouses in the command complaining about the ombudsman. You hear that the ombudsman doesn't return calls and isn't as supportive to other spouses as they would like. On occasion, you have heard her speak poorly about the command at FRG meetings.

Do you:
- a) Encourage the people who call you to confront the ombudsman and discourage them from talking to you about this;
- b) Encourage the people who call you to confront the ombudsman and discourage them from talking to you about this;
- c) Talk to the ombudsman and let her know what you've been hearing;
- d) Talk to the ombudsman in a very general way asking if things are okay for her and if you can do anything to help or support her, or
- e) Call your spouse and tell them what you know and let him/her handle it.

3. You are either a CO or XO spouse. You arrive at your new command and find there is no operating FRG (Family Readiness Group). When you ask why, people tell you there was a lot of fighting among members and the FRG board felt attacked by many of the spouses.

Do you:
- a) Approach some of the old board members and ask why they disbanded;
- b) Call an FRG meeting yourself and try to get a new board going;
- c) Ask the command for help in establishing a new board; or
- d) Not do anything and see how things go without an FRG for a while.
4. You are either a CO or XO spouse. Things had been going well with the XO's spouse for the first few months but now things are very tense and you don't know why. The XO’s spouse talks to you only briefly and doesn't return calls. You suspect his/her spouse might not have received a good Fitness Report and wonder if this has anything to do with the problems.

Do you:

a) Ask your spouse if something has happened on the ship which might have contributed to this tension;

b) Invite your XO's spouse over for coffee and then ask point blank if something is wrong;

c) Ask other spouses in the wardroom if they have noticed anything different about the XO's spouse, or

d) Ignore the situation. If your XO's spouse has a problem and doesn't want to talk about it, there is nothing you can do.

5. You are an XO's spouse in a command where the CO is either single or does not have a spouse in the area. The ombudsman and the FRG board ask you to stand in and “be” the CO's spouse so they have an official advisor.

Do you:

a) Say “no,” after all, you haven't been to the Command Spouse Leadership School and don't want to do anything wrong;

b) Ask your spouse what he/she thinks you should do;

c) Ask if the CO would like you to take on any official duties, or

d) Say “yes.” Someone has to do it.

6. You're a CO's spouse. You have many commitments besides your spouse's command (either with your children, your job, etc). You aren't able to attend as many official functions as you would like (such as wardroom functions, spouse dinners out or parties at the admiral's house). People are starting to complain about your unwillingness to “play the game” and you're concerned this may have an impact on your spouse's career.

Do you:

a) Make more of an effort to attend functions either by hiring a part-time sitter or cutting back on your hours at work;

b) Approach the XO and his/her spouse and ask if they can pick up some of your slack and attend more functions in your absence;

c) Ask your spouse to ask his/her supervisor if it matters if you attend things, or

d) Keep going with your life the way that it is and figure people will have to deal without you.
7. You are a CO's spouse. You try to get the wardroom spouses together at least once per month for dinners and nights out. Even though there are 12 spouses in your wardroom, you routinely only receive 2-3 responses to your emails and 2-3 RSVPs to social invitations.

Do you:
  a) Have your spouse ask the active duty service members if their spouse will be attending functions;
  b) Send out an email instructing spouses on the importance of responding to invitations;
  c) Invite your spouses to the next JO spouses' seminar and hope they address the importance of RSVPs. Do your best to stay motivated. Continue communicating, passing information and inviting the spouses to events. You will eventually get through to some of them; or
  d) Assume no one wants to get together.

8. You are a CO or XO spouse. One of the spouses from your wardroom calls crying. She says she wants to tell you what’s wrong but you have to promise not to tell your spouse whatever she tells you.

Do you:
  a) Promise you won't tell so she will tell you what is wrong;
  b) Tell her you can't promise anything but also tell her you will keep the conversation confidential as long as it doesn't involve child abuse or suicide;
  c) Tell her you can't promise anything but want to listen if she still wants to confide in you, or
  d) Tell her you'll think about it and call her back.