

# RightSideUp ★ Book Club

## GETTING STARTED GUIDE

For additional support starting your Right Side Up Book Club, please contact Elva Resa Publishing: [pr@elvaresa.com](mailto:pr@elvaresa.com), 651-357-8770

### SETTING UP YOUR BOOK CLUB

Book clubs and discussion groups are a valuable way to foster friendships, share ideas, and create a sense of community. Whether you are in an existing group or creating a new one, here are a few suggestions to consider.

- **Who do you want in your group?** How many members do you want? How will you invite others to join? You might start by inviting people you already know and ask them to invite someone new. Post a flyer on the community board at your local bookstore, library, or housing office. Bring an invitation to your family readiness group meeting or use social media to promote upcoming events.
- **Where will you meet?** You might meet in members' homes, at a local school, church, bookstore, coffee shop, or restaurant. Choose a relaxing place that will encourage discussion with few distractions.
- **How frequently will you meet?** Select a time period that allows members to read the material and reflect before your next meeting. Once a month or every other month is a common frequency to fit into busy lives.
- **Who will moderate the discussions?** Asking members to volunteer ahead of time helps to include everyone in the group. Having different facilitators or discussion leaders each meeting gives you different perspectives and helps keep the responsibilities manageable for members. Consider asking a gentle time keeper to help your group stick to the time you've allotted for the discussion. Create an environment where everyone has a chance to contribute and feels comfortable sharing insights.
- **Consider offering food and beverages.** Take turns hosting and providing snacks. Make it more interesting by matching the snack to the ideas presented in the book.
- **Choose a discussion format that works best for your group.** Based on how often your group plans to meet and how much reading and the participants can accomplish between meetings, decide ahead of time how many sessions you can devote to this book. *Right Side Up* may be a shorter book, but there is a lot to talk about. A few format options to consider:
  - » Assign one or two chapters for each meeting. Meet as many times as it takes to finish the book.
  - » Discuss the entire book in one sitting. Give yourself at least 3-4 hours. Ask participants to complete some or all of the exercises from each chapter before the meeting.
  - » Select chapters that appeal to your group, and meet once for each chapter selected.
  - » Meet seven times. Discuss the introduction, then one of each of the five chapters, and Your Right Side Up Plan at the last meeting.
- **Get to know each other.** Before the first book discussion, share with each other about your military life, family life, hobbies, and interests.



The **RightSideUp Book Club** can help you:

- » Define your role as a military spouse and tweak your expectations of military life.
- » Identify situations that cause you stress and create strategies to calm chaos, deal with drama, and respond to change.
- » Find ways to cut the yuck from your life, make yourself a priority, and fully embrace military life.
- » Complete reflections and exercises to help you apply the information to your unique situation.
- » Create your own personalized Right Side Up Plan with the tips and techniques that you find most helpful for your life.
- » Build valuable friendships and support systems along the way.
- » Have fun sharing with other military spouses!

**Find the book at:**

**[MilitaryFamilyBooks.com](http://MilitaryFamilyBooks.com)**

# RightSideUp ★ Book Club

## RIGHT SIDE UP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Based on the book *Right Side Up: Find Your Way When Military Life Turns You Upside Down* by Judy Davis

### OVERVIEW

This discussion guide is for the book *Right Side Up: Find Your Way When Military Life Turns You Upside Down* by Judy Davis, published by Elva Resa. These questions are just a guide; we encourage you to explore others based on your group's interests.

Use the helpful tips from *Right Side Up* to improve your life right now. By talking about each chapter and sharing your personal experiences, you'll benefit even more from the book's key messages and exercises.

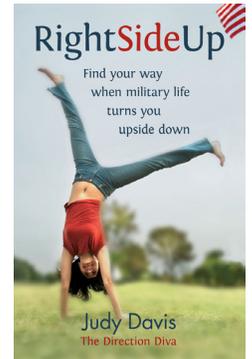
### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Introduction

1. Everyone in the military has the experience of being the new kid on the block. Share a funny story from your newbie days.
2. Throughout the book, Judy gives a glimpse of her own life. She talks about waiting in line at the local Starbucks and how great it felt to be around people who understood her life. When is a time in your military experience that you have had that type of camaraderie? If you haven't experienced it yet, why do you think it would be helpful? What steps can you take to make that a bigger part of your life?

#### Chapter 1: Establish a Firm Footing

1. Judy describes functioning as a military spouse as "feeling about as grounded and insecure as a teenager in the midst of puberty" (p. 14). Would you consider this an accurate description? Why or why not? How has your experience as a military spouse made you feel similar? What experience does Judy share that portrays this feeling she expressed?
2. "It wasn't until I wrote it out that I grasped the fact I had accepted the role of a lifetime..." (p. 16). Write your own military spouse creed. Create it together as a group or individually.
3. In one of the exercises in this chapter, you had the opportunity to describe your opinion of your role and ask your spouse his or her opinion. What surprised you about the differences and similarities in the two opinions?
4. Judy described how important it was to have a group of battle buddies in her life. Why did she feel this way? What do you think about battle buddies and other personal support systems?



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“The type of support battle buddies provide has saved my sanity more than any other resource and has become my go-to strategy when life gets crazy.”  
—Chapter 1, p. 29

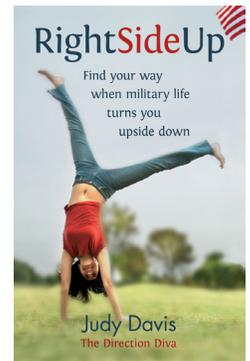
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## Chapter 2: Calm the Chaos

1. We all let stress get to us in one way or another. Judy talks about watching our dogs and learning from them. Share your go-to stress reliever (that you've learned from a dog or a person). Why do you find it helpful?
2. Drama, drama, drama. We all try to avoid it, but it's not always possible. At Judy's first installation, she had the experience of getting in with the wrong crowd—a bunch of drama spouses. Have you had a similar experience? How did it affect your attitude toward military life? How will you handle things differently to ensure you don't fall into the same patterns?
3. Short fuses are only necessary if you want to light up the sky with fireworks. In one of the glimpses provided in this chapter, you see Judy react to the situation instead of communicate. Describe a time when you reacted first and thought last. What have you done to manage your reactions to the unexpected things that you have no control over?
4. Judy shared an experience where she saw someone reaching out for help only to be shot down by the “one-uppers.” How often have you personally experienced this feeling that your problem isn't significant enough? What did you do in that situation?

## Chapter 3: Flush the Stress

1. Many of us think that we are invincible and can do everything. Judy was not immune to this thinking. You've seen through her experiences that stress has broken that invincibility and caused some serious health issues both for her and her son. What are some of the ways your family effectively deals with stress? What are some tips and techniques your family uses to keep your life feeling in balance?
2. Listening helps you become aware of the situations that need your attention. Practice your listening skills by playing a game of telephone with your group. Have the group leader start by telling one strategy for being a better listener to the person next to her. That person then tells another, and so on, until the last person repeats the strategy back to the leader. How close is the last version to the first?
3. Cutting the yuck from your life is a big part of Judy's recommendations for flushing stress. What was the first thought that popped into your mind when you read that section? Share your favorite way to unwind and escape. What do you think will be the hardest yuck to cut from your life?
4. Share a few ideas that help you keep up the physical activity and spiritual enrichment you need to feel your best.




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“I came to realize that my reactions, not the actual situations themselves, were responsible for causing my life to spiral out of control in the first place.”  
—Chapter 2, p. 49

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“Through the art of listening, I began to make myself a priority once again.”  
—Chapter 3, p. 71

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### Chapter 4: Respond to Change

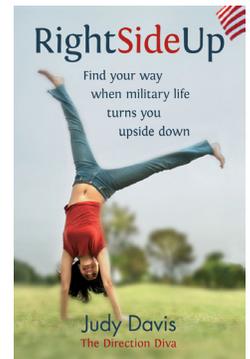
1. It's hard to plan for the future when the present is ever-changing. This is something that is a constant experience in the military. Judy mentions that she "felt that if I planned for the future, I might jinx my husband's safety" (p. 98). How often have you felt this way? What are some strategies you use to move past the fear and plan your future?
2. Many people see change as one of the worst things in the world. Judy believes change is an opportunity for a fresh start. Which one of these philosophies do you believe and why?
3. Service members as well as spouses have to adjust to unexpected circumstances. Group challenge: Stacy has just been promoted in her job. This new promotion is her dream job and what she has worked so hard for over the last two years. On the same day as her promotion, her husband comes home with orders to Fort Drum. There is no opportunity for Stacy to have this same dream job in that area of the country. As one of her battle buddies, how do you help her deal with this change? What are some words of encouragement you can provide her with to keep her spirits up?
4. Often civilian family and friends don't understand all that military families go through. What is the one thing you wish the civilian community could better understand about military life? What is the funniest or most ridiculous comment you have ever received from a well-meaning family member or friend? What are some strategies you could employ to give them a better understanding of this life?

### Chapter 5: Find Your Way

1. Judy shares her experience of trying to prioritize her busy life. Everything on her list seemed important. How often do you feel this way? What are some strategies you have used to discern the higher-priority items?
2. Part of finding your way includes your life as a couple. Being a couple in the military is hard work. How do you reconnect after a TDY, deployment, or other separation? What can you do to help your spouse understand your challenges amidst daily military life?
3. Briefly describe what you learned from thinking about your direction moments.
4. What is the biggest comedy of errors you have experienced as a result of being part of the military community? How did it help you embrace your role as a military spouse?

### End of the Book Thoughts

1. Why did you choose to read this book? What intrigued you about it?
2. Describe why you feel *Right Side Up* is an appropriate title for this book.
3. What are your favorite ideas from this book? How has your perspective changed?
4. What else can you focus on to help you embrace military life today?




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“Endless possibilities come when we learn to explore new situations and allow ourselves to grow into them.”  
—Chapter 4, p. 107

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“The journey is the best part of military life ... and taking action is what sets that journey in motion.”  
—Chapter 5, p. 128

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