

Being a military family is hard

Elizabeth Reep ... one thing that I'm most proud of is being the daughter of a, a veteran, a spouse of a wounded warrior and ... a military parent. ... it's tough. Being a military family is hard.

Renee Foster He was deployed to one of the most dangerous areas. He was attached to 82nd Airborne.

John Foster My company lost 11 soldiers that deployment, all killed in action, and I had my hands on a great deal of them.

Renee Foster ...my husband was injured from an IED explosion that shattered his, uh, lower back and he was having left leg pain. He could barely walk...

John Foster I didn't exactly know how the war had affected me, but it definitely had...

Renee Foster ...The man that came home was not the man I married...

John Foster ...I was overly emotional, uh, to any kind of conflict, any kind of corrective criticism... It didn't matter if it was the grocery attendant, my son's school teacher, my wife, even my son...

Renee Foster He was just shut off from the world, no empathy, no sympathy... wasn't involved; didn't talk to me for days.

John Foster ... I was super paranoid, um, constantly checking the locks of the doors, the windows, calling the police for people that I thought were trying to harm me or my family...

Renee Foster ..my son was full of fear. My son was having nightmares; my son wasn't sleeping. My son would run and hide when we would argue and just scream...

Elizabeth Reep ...it's the aftermath, the reintegration period that's the hardest. And that doesn't end a year later. Sometimes it's ongoing forever...

John Foster ...Renee had had enough of the threats... It was definitely affecting our son, and definitely affecting our relationship. And so

she left, and I stayed in ...Tacoma... ...and ... I filed for divorce.

Kids Serve Too

Elizabeth Reep After my family stabilized through our experiences, I felt this incredible need to help other families to cope with the same struggles...

Renee Foster ...I got on this website and I ... found Camp Cope and it stated that...this was a camp where kids serve, too...

Sarah Bravo They are in a group at CAMP with kids their own age that understand what it's like to have a parent that has been gone, to have a parent that is struggling with PTSD or have a parent that has missed their birthdays, missed their preschool graduation, missed their prom...

Renee Foster ...And I thought, wow, this is a free weekend and... I knew where Mo Ranch was... So, in my mind, I think free. We're going.

Renee FosterI'll never forget, we went to breakfast at the dining hall that Saturday morning. He didn't want to go in. He had his head down and I said, "What's wrong, Austin?"

Austin Foster When I walked one step in there, everybody was staring at me and they're saying, "What's your name?"

Renee Foster ...He said, "Mom, I'm scared. I want my dad here... ...I bet all the other kids have their dads here."

Austin Foster ...Went to that camp thing after that, I felt better... Because I got to learn... Got some new friends and, um, have fun.

“(dad) it's a chance to get away from every day normal...(kid) yeah...”

Renee Foster ...And he said, "Mom, there is kids like me. There's dads that had been to Iraq and there's, they are hurting too.

Sarah Bravo They wear their teeshirt all weekend, and they wear it with pride, knowing that kids serve too.

Renee Foster ...the blinders just came off and I learned about ...family dynamics and a lot of learned behavior... they hit on the main points of post traumatic stress disorder, TBI, how people react and shouldn't react ...

Sarah Bravo ...We also do a really neat activity with a flower pot...

Austin Foster ... breaking that big flower pot.

Sarah Bravo ...The therapist wraps the flower pot in a towel and they break it with a hammer.

Austin Foster ...I learned why my dad went to the war and I learned ... why me and my mom went here ...

“(child) funnies...(dad) helps kids knows what it means to be military kids...”

Sarah Bravo ... We teach kids that their family is still intact and this flower pot, although it doesn't look like the flower pot that it once was, it's still a very functioning flower pot and their family still very functioning after.

“...it's one thing to know there are other military families going through the same thing... it's another thing to see it.”

“...it's not very often that people appreciate what the children have to go through and I just think it's wonderful...”

(Elizabeth's son) “...I know it's hard for the kids out there not knowing how to step up if you're a young man...having to play that role... so uh, don't be too hard on yourselves...if you have your parents still, appreciate that every day...whether you're grounded or whatever, just respect everything you have...”

(little girl) “...like about Camp COPE is the playground...”

Austin Foster When I went to camp, I learned that [kids serve too](#).

Courage, Optimism, Patience & Encouragement

Sarah Bravo Courage to accept your changes, Optimism that it will get better, Patience that it will take time and ...Encouragement. That you need encouragement and you also need to give it.

John Foster ... just talking to ... her over the phone I could tell that she was different...

Renee Foster ..I stopped reacting to my husband who would call and make threats and want to see my son and finally I said, "Okay, you can see him."

Sarah Bravo ...they walk away with an entire bag filled with tangible tools that they can take home with them.

“a good positive way for the kids to learn how to express themselves”

Austin Foster ... I brought my worry dolls and sometimes I told them my worries and I've had them under my pillow ...

John Foster ... he was looking people in the eye and he was talking to people and he was just a joy to be around... ... that overly emotional response that his dad had, around anybody and everybody ... was no longer a part of his... personality ...

Renee Foster ...I saw that my husband was in a lot of pain and he said, "I want what you have... "

John Foster ...to be around, you know, other veterans, other active duty soldiers, their families, in small groups, and, and talking about, you know, things that we struggle with and ways to cope and ways to solve those problems. It was incredible.

Austin Foster They didn't have arguments or disagreements anymore. I didn't have to do anything by myself anymore.

John Foster ... because of that weekend, we reconciled... And that is absolutely priceless...

Elizabeth Reep ...one thing that makes Camp C.O.P.E. stand apart, is that we're therapists. ...we have the training to help families deal with the struggles that they're going through in military life...

Renee Foster ...Camp C.O.P.E. changed me and it saved my family...

(mom) "...we have a daddy who's deployed, will be home in about three and a half weeks and it's just a nice break to relax before he comes home..."

Elizabeth Reep Military families give up so much already. It's important that we provide camps to them at no cost....

"thank you guys for letting us come...I'm so happy."

John Foster Camp C.O.P.E is an outstanding place where soldiers, families, active duty veterans can get tools that they need to better themselves, repair marriage, repair relationship, be a better parent, be a better child, be a better soldier... be a better civilian... ..

(mom/wife) "...it means fun, family and a really good time..." (spouse) "...just like being with her..."

(mom) "serenity, and taking a break from the crazy life that it is and just letting it all kinda float away..." (kid) "fun" (dad)
"reuniting"

"Camp COPE for us means togetherness...family bonding time, and the kids getting to enjoy a whole weekend without any cares in the world..."

(kid) "...it means awesomeness"

(biker) "...hey, great program...those of you who participated in it...you're AWESOME..."

"...there's just so much bonding going on in our family when we come here...it's just so peaceful."

(little girl) "...I could barely go to bed...(dissolve) ...because I was so excited..."

"...and how to be nice to your family members including your dad, your mom and your sisters and brothers..."

"Camp COPE means family fun coming together and the family serving as one unit"

Sarah Bravo ...What we're doing is reaching these kids and helping them cope.

Elizabeth Reep ...We've been so fortunate to have the support of private and corporate sponsorship... so far but we have a long way to go...

Sarah Bravo ...We can only do it with your support. Thank you.