



*Always Ready  
Always There*

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## Strong Bonds, strong Soldier

By Sgt. Christian Duplessie

A Soldier with a strong support system at home is a more effective Soldier in the field. This is the concept behind the Army's Strong Bonds program that helps Soldiers create and maintain a healthy relationship with their spouse.

The Idaho Army National Guard hosts Strong Bonds events about every other month in order to serve Idaho Soldiers around the state. Strong Bonds is run by the Chaplains and allows IDARNG couples to learn how to come together and remember why they fell in love.

These events are set over three days, Friday thru Sunday with the military paying for lodging and meals. Chaplains conduct several workshops throughout the weekend teaching couples new skills for communicating, showing love and dealing with issues. The weekend also has time built in to allow couples to connect and spend some quality time away from home and all the distractions that come with it.

"These events are designed to build resiliency in relationships," says Chaplain Lt. Col. Rob Morris. "We aren't the experts," he stresses, "but we use a research-based curriculum that has been validated time and again," Morris says. "Every event takes on its own personality, so it's good for couples to attend multiple events over the years...there's always something new to learn."

Strong Bonds weekend events consist of various classroom and practical exercises that focus on how men and women communicate and think differently. "We get AAR's that say 'I never realized how differently my spouse and I approach



A group photo of the participants from the February 2015 Strong Bonds Event in front of the Ashley Inn in Cascade, Idaho. Photo by Spc. Christian Duplessie

problems' all the time," says Morris.

Spc. Jared Lau and his wife of 11 years Topaz, recently attended a Strong Bonds event in Cascade, Idaho because they wanted to try something new. "We have a great marriage already," says Topaz, "but any marriage can get better and this weekend is helping us remember what's important." Spc. Lau agrees saying, "My marriage strengthens my ability to perform for the Guard, and this weekend helps strengthen my marriage."

"These events won't 'fix' your marriage but it will point it in the right direction," says Morris. He offers a heartwarming testimonial about a Soldier who was struggling after returning from deployment as an example; "I was approached by a Soldier who said they were done with their marriage, and after attending a Strong Bonds weekend at the final request of their spouse, the Soldier found hope to continue trying and make things work," Morris says. "That Soldier is in a stronger marriage then ever a

that's enough for me to know these events work."

If you are interested in attending an event or would like more information about strong bonds please visit [www.strongbonds.org](http://www.strongbonds.org) or contact the Chapel on Gowen Field at (208) 272-4311.

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