



# Icebreaker for a National Guard Audience: Best and Worst

## Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Distribute an index card and marker to each participant.
2. Explain to the group that a common family dinnertime tradition is for family members to voice their “bests and worsts” of the day. It is a good and safe way for family members to talk about good and bad things that have happened to them. Families can use this opportunity to collectively celebrate the “bests,” and also find ways to assist with or comfort each other on the “worsts.”
3. Discuss that there are good and bad things with just about everything in life. It can be very helpful to consistently acknowledge the good things in each day and very healthy to also recognize the tough things we face.
4. Tell the participants that during this workshop or session, we hope to create a sense of “family” so that we can share in each others’ National Guard experiences. So, as a “National Guard family,” we will discuss our “bests and worsts.”
5. Explain that on one side of their index card they will write the top one, two, or three best things about their experience in the National Guard. (These could be anything positive such as the sense of pride they might feel, or the pay and benefits, or the closeness that being part of the guard might bring to the family.) Write “BEST” on the left side of the flipchart or board.
6. Explain that on the other side of their card, they can write the top one, two, or three worst things about being part of the Guard. Write “WORST” on the right side of the flipchart or board.  
  
Note: You may want to provide guidance that the number of worsts on their card cannot exceed the number of bests. This generally helps keep the tone positive.
7. Give the participants three to five minutes to complete their cards.

**Group Size:** 10 to 20 participants

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes

**Goal:** To allow participants to celebrate the benefits of and vent about some of the challenges of being in a National Guard family

**Audience:** National Guard couples, service members (without the family member) or family members (with or without the service member).

**Special Considerations:** None

## Resources Needed:

- ✓ One 3x5 index card for each participant
- ✓ Something to write with
- ✓ Flipchart/writing board
- ✓ Markers

8. Once everyone has finished, ask for volunteers to share something they wrote on their card. Capture what is being said on the flipchart or board. Continue until everyone who wants to share has contributed. Those who do not want to share should not feel pressured to do so.

### **Process:**

Point out the similarities in the answers given for both “bests” and “worsts.” Explain that there can be relief in knowing that others are having similar experiences or going through similar emotions pertaining to in their National Guard life. Point out any differences in responses. Were there any responses that were on one participant’s best list and another person’s worst list? Discuss that it is okay for there to be differences because people perceive and respond to experiences in very personal ways. It is not the experience itself that is important, but how we feel about it.

### **Conclude:**

Explain that now that the “bests” and “worsts” are on the table, we can celebrate with each other, as well as support each other as we get into the other topics of this workshop/session. We can also relate to each other better knowing that we have many similarities, as well as valid differences. Thank the group for their participation.

Note: Consider collecting the index cards and reviewing them later. This might help you to adapt your programming to meet some specific needs of the group. You can also refer to them in subsequent sessions to remind the group of some of the things they brought “to the table.”