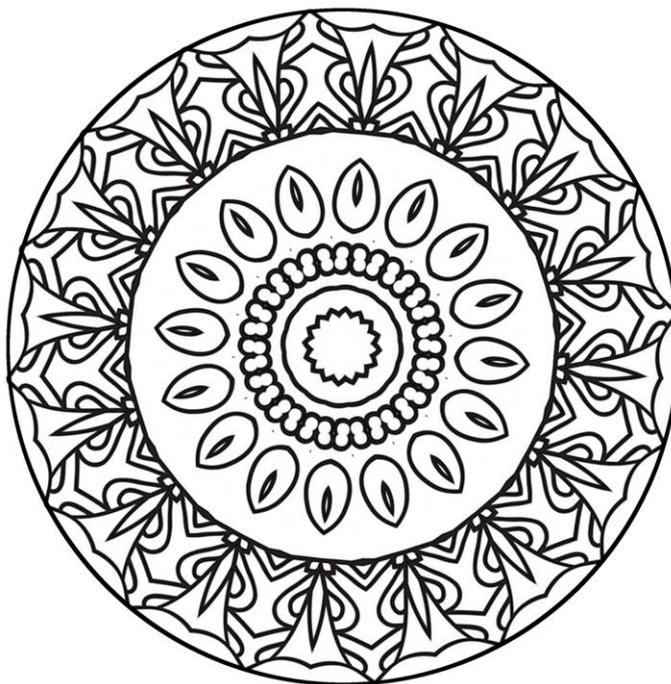


Beyond The Call

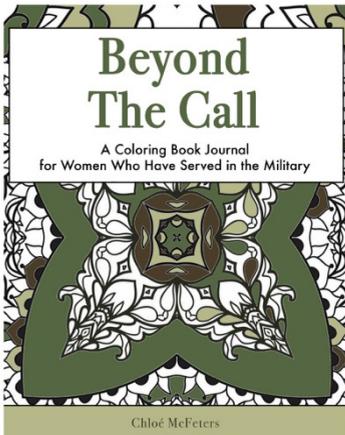
A Coloring Book Journal
for Women Who Have
Served in the Military



Chloé McFeters



SHERMAN POINT
P R E S S



Thank you for your interest in *Beyond the Call*. I hope you enjoy exploring the questions and images provided here.

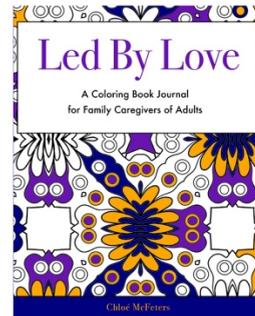
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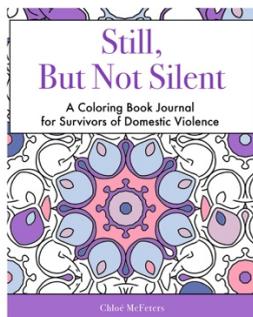
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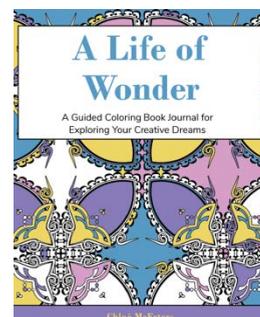
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FINDING MEANING

By Shavonne Broom

My inspiration to join the Air Force was quite clear. I was born and bred into a military family. My father was an electrician in the Navy and my brother was an Army logistician. The military culture was much more familiar to me. I was born on an Air Force base and moved up and down the east coast throughout my early life, settling in mostly military-friendly neighborhoods. The simplest reason for joining was that I had no immediate plans to enroll in college, so the military was the easiest transition out of high school. I was torn between the Army and Air Force for a split second, but in the end, I decided on the Air Force, and six months following high school graduation, I was packed and ready for basic training.

During my career as an Airman, I learned adaptation, perspective and acceptance. I traveled to both sides of the world, and was stationed in Germany and Okinawa. I traveled the majority of my career, as I received five overseas assignments during the ten years I served. I became very comfortable with change. I learned very quickly how to become a local in foreign spaces. I had the great experience of living in these communities and seeing the similarities and obvious differences among cultures. I learned how to appreciate the unfamiliar and to embrace change. I have since become a seeker of hidden treasures. I want to learn about a city and its culture beyond plain view.

I also learned the importance of individuality in a uniformed culture. The beast and the blessing of military service is uniformity. Standing out in a crowd of “sameness” was a constant challenge for me. I was born against the grain and the adaptive and unconventional side of me often collided with that aspect of military culture. I enjoyed the feeling of familiarity in unfamiliar spaces, but sometimes I felt trapped in the culture of “sameness.”

I recall a few instances where testing the grain felt much like the bullying effect I experienced in high school. I was called to First Sergeant’s office once (without a supervisor or comrade) to defend against extreme disciplinary action for “disobeying orders” that were not actually given. Hearsay had me in that office alone, feeling helpless, but courage and persistence carried me to a reversed summons.

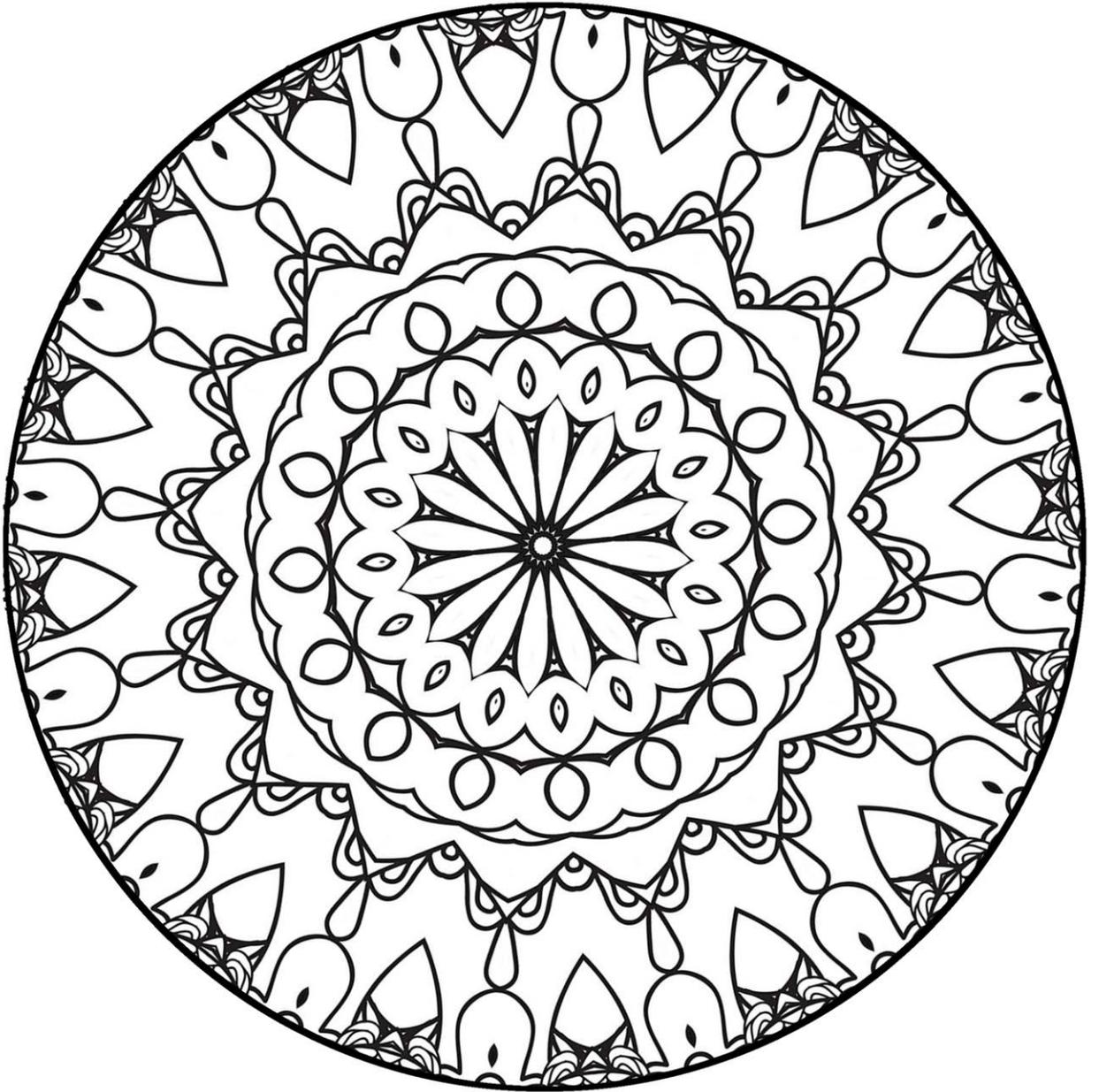
I had a great Air Force career and I would not trade it for the world. I have witnessed with my own transition, and that of others, how the military structure places an armor around us to keep us focused on the mission. The approach is quite successful while in the military, because we are trained to live and breathe the core values: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. The challenges arise after service, when the armor is removed, and we are left in a space of unfamiliarity: Who am I now?

My experience transitioning was seamless at the outset. My challenges were reflected in my nearly constant career changes, the result of wanting to create distance from my military service by going back to my creative roots. This didn’t seem like an identity crisis on the surface, but my search for that identity kept me from establishing roots at any one job. Now, almost 10 years following my departure from the Air Force, I have learned to embrace my “feel-good space” in service and have

since had various opportunities to support transitioning service members, spouses and Veterans in a new career path with a personal style that aligns with their individuality.

The challenges with self-acceptance vary for each service member. In large part, the transition from military service to the civilian world comes with a feeling of loss and loneliness. I witnessed many suffer because they didn't know how to *be* "beyond the call." It can be all too easy to lose our identity and our sense of self when the camaraderie is gone. We feel like strangers to our civilian counterparts—in language and lifestyle—and our connection to the mission is lost, which, for many Veterans, feels like a life without meaning. Therefore, it is imperative that we keep our members engaged as servant leaders within our communities. This connection can help shift the focus from loss to opportunities for continued service, and perhaps lead Veterans like myself toward paths that fuel our passions.

The military opened my eyes to a broader worldview and I am deeply grateful for that. I feel this journal, *Beyond the Call*, provides a way to reflect on our journey through service and to gain new perspective on who we are now and how we want to continue serving in the future. Like the intro says, start with your favorite coloring tool and allow yourself to be free again. Let our new journey begin. Hoorah!



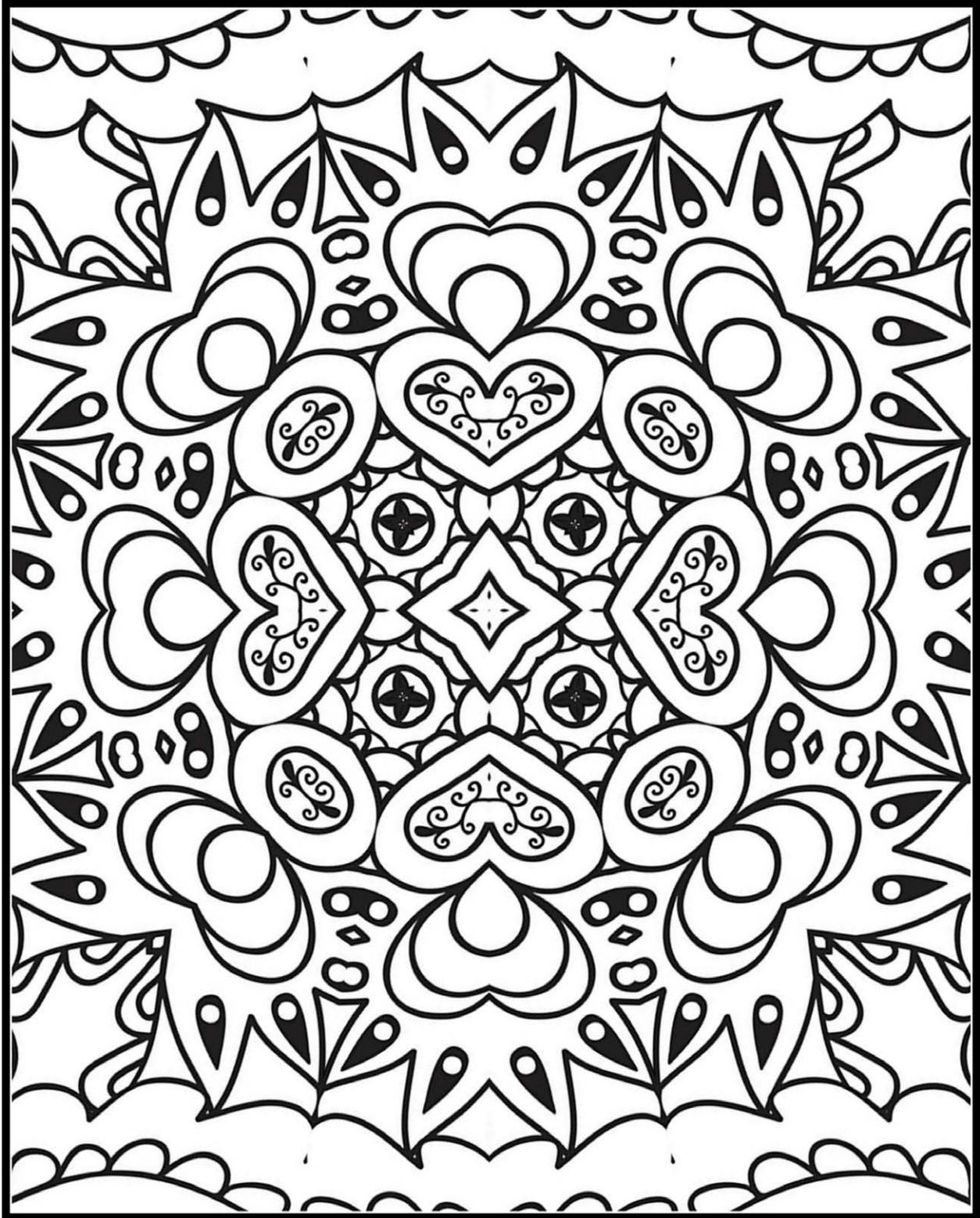
What are some of the biggest struggles you faced or are facing during your transition from the military to the civilian world?

If you chose to attend a college/university or other school following your separation from the military, what has that experience been like?



What did you learn about the role of women in military history during your time in service? How did that affect the way you think and feel about women in service? How does the history of women in the armed services influence the way you view yourself and your contribution to that history?

What are some other positive things that you learned about during your time in service?



Write about the word “possibility” and what that word means to you. What are the possibilities for your life?

In the military, your mission, and your role within that mission, was clear. What is your mission today? Write your new mission statement in the space below.
