Separated and Suffering?[©]

Many geographically separated couples don't know where to look for information about these unique relationships. An expert on long distance relationships discusses his top 100 resources!

Millions of couples worldwide are in long distance relationships (LDRs), says Dr. Gregory Guldner, the Director of the *Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships* and the author of *Long Distance Relationships: The Complete Guide* (JFMilne, 2003). "One of the most frustrating problems for people in LDRs seems to be the lack of information about these types of relationships," says Dr. Guldner. However, over the past decade the *Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships* located in southern California, has amassed a great deal of information which they share with us here.

Most of the sources are studies published in professional journals for therapists, relationship experts, psychologists, or sociologists. A few are books written for people actually in LDRs. Go to the bibliography at the end of the article under the referenced number to find the full citation of any book or article mentioned here. Many of the journals will be available at your local library. Some may require a trip to a university library or even a medical school or graduate school. Librarians can assist you in finding any particular journal, and many places will order copies of articles through a system called *interlibrary loan*.

Other than the books written for laypeople in LDRs, most of the research may seem fairly technical, as it addresses some particular theoretical concerns related to separated relationships.

Here are Dr. Guldner's suggestions for more information on LDRs:

Sources Written for Couples in LDRs

Books

Long Distance Relationships: The Complete Guide, by Dr. Gregory Guldner. JF Milne, 2003. Obviously, I'll have to mention our book. Long Distance Relationships is the first book for couples in

Doubtiously, I'll have to mention our book. Long Distance Relationships is the first book for couples in LDRs produced by the Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships. Based on ground-breaking research it will teach you the little-known but critical secrets to a happy and healthy long distance relationships. It is available from www.atlasbooks.com and fine bookstores everywhere.

At the Heart of Your Long Distance Relationship, by Catherine Day. Writers Club Press, 2002.175

A short paperback, this is one of the newest additions to the sparse literature on LDRs. The author, a corporate manager and a participant in an LDR herself, provides several lists of helpful tips and workbook-type projects for those in separated relationships. While there is no research cited for the suggestions made, they all seem to have utility for most LDRs.

The Long Distance Romance Guide, by Leslie Karsner. Writers Club Press, 2001.94

Written by a self-proclaimed "romance coach," this 140-page paperback has good tips to help you through your LDR. It's one of the most recent books and

helps fill the void. The scientist in me would like to see some reference to research; however, her expert opinions are very helpful.

How to Stay Together When You Have to Be Apart, by Karen Shanor. Warner Books, 1987.61

A therapist who also is personally in an LDR wrote this 213–page book, one of the more complete paperbacks. Though this is a helpful book, it can be hard to find. She mentions a couple of studies, but the majority of the book seems to be based on expert advice. In a couple of spots I'm concerned about some advice that isn't well supported by research, but use Dr. Shanor's book in conjunction with this one and you'll find it a good resource.

Loving Your Long-Distance Relationship, by Stephen Blake. Anton Publishing, 1996.121

A self-proclaimed personal experience, this short 93–page paperback carries the reader along the journey of an LDR as experienced by the author. For those who would like to see that others share the same experiences, this is a helpful text. The author doesn't cite any research, as the book is more of a description of his relationship, with some personal suggestions, rather than a scientific work. Ahelpful edition to what little is available.

Still Loving Your Long-Distance Relationship, by Stephen Blake and Kimberli Bryan. Anton Publishing, 1998.122

In this sequel to the first book, Blake and Bryan provide the reader with a collection of letters written by those in LDRs in response to reading *Loving Your Long-Distance Relationship*. Again, this is a nice resource to see the range of experiences that people report during their separation.

Loving Your Long-Distance Relationship for Women, by Kimberli Bryan. Anton Publishing, 1998.123

Essentially the third in this series, this 93-page paperback describes the LDR from a woman's perspective. Although no research is cited, the author has some very good suggestions that generally seem to fit with more rigorous studies. The format follows the original book in the series with the author describing her own experiences and elaborating on coping strategies that seem to work for her. Personally, this is my favorite of this three-book series.

Long Distance Couples: An Activities Handbook for Strengthening Long Distance Relationships. Developed by The National Institute for Building Long Distance Relationships, 2000.124

This 28-page handbook provides several lists of activities to help strengthen and build your relationship while separated. Explanations are relatively limited, but the handbook does not attempt to be an extensive work on LDRs. This is a nice edition to help churn up creative ways of coping with the distance.

Commuter Marriage: Living Together, Apart, by Farlie Winfield. Columbia University Press, 1985.29

A slightly older book directed toward separated marriages but still useful for dating couples. Difficult to find but fairly helpful.

Commuter Marriages, by Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Gross. Sage, 1984.14

Written by two experts in the field of separated couples, this was one of the first well-researched reviews. The work stems from several articles that these two authored and incorporates a great deal of information about commuter marriages. The flavor is slightly more academic than the other books listed. If you can find it, it is a good resource (though its focus is primarily toward dual-career marriages).

Today's Military Wife (5th Edition), by Lydia Sloan Cline. Stackpole Books, 2003.125

Written for wives of servicemen in general, there is a chapter on dealing with deployments that contains both tips on emotional issues (dealing with anger, stress, etc.) and dealing with military paperwork and procedures. An excellent guide for all military couples and it also has some good tips and suggestions from those experienced in military deployments.

When Duty Calls, by Carol Vandesteeg. Winepress, 2001.179

A very well written 262-page resource for military couples focusing primarily on the emotional struggle of separation. An excellent resource from someone who has survived many military separations.

Married to the Military, by Meredith Leyva. Simon & Schuster, 2003.180

A 200-page paperback that discusses not only separation but also the more routine aspects of military couples such as military etiquette, military pay, health care, etc. It is less focused on separation than *When Duty Calls*, but is certainly a nice resource.

Heroes at Home, by Ellie Kay. Bethany House, 2003.181

Another resource for separated military couples, this 205-page book covers issues relating to separation, but it does so with some wonderful touching stories. An inspiring work that provides not only information for separated couples but also a strong morale boost.

Articles and Stories

"Long-Distance Relationships and Emergency Medicine Residency," by Gregory Guldner, MD, MS. 2001.126

Abrief article I wrote discussing the basics of LDRs. Although the focus is on couples separated due to training in emergency medicine, the bulk of the article simply reviews the data on LDRs in general. It's a brief summary ideal for handing out to skeptical friends and coworkers.

"Commuter Marriage," by Joan Wickersham.127

An entertaining story discussing one couple's attempt at an LDR.

Sources Written Primarily for Research and Academics

For those of you who truly want to read everything out there, refer to the complete bibliography at the end of the book, where you'll find almost every piece of written work that I used in researching this book. For the rest, I've put together a collection of articles that most directly address the issue of separated relationships. You may find some that sound interesting to you and your own situation. They are divided into groups based on the types of separations. In fairness, I've included some studies that make conclusions with which I don't personally agree. Generally, I've discussed the details of these elsewhere in this book.

Separated Marriages and Families (Nonmilitary)

"The Corporate Executive Wife's Coping Patterns in Response to Routine Husband-Father Absence," by Pauline Grossenbacher-Boss, Hamilton McCubbin, and Gary Lester.128

A pilot study examining the ways families and wives deal with work-related separations.

"Commuting Married Faculty Women and the Traditional Academic Community," by Irving Allen and Jane Wilkie.129

Reviews the difficulties associated with women in academics and the choice to maintain a long-distance marriage.

"Children's Reactions to Temporary Loss of the Father," by Frank Crumley and Ronald Blumenthal.130

An older article that may be helpful to those with children.

"Ending the Commute: Communication Strategies of Couples During Reintegration (Doctoral Thesis)," by Pamela Dunkin.131

A difficult to find source (write to the University of Oregon), but a good example of the difficulties that come with reunion after an LDR.

"So Near Yet So Far: The Non-Resident Father," by Carol Michaels.132

Aninteresting review, useful for those fathers involved in a separated marriage.

"Commuter Marriages: Personal, Family and Career Issues," by Melissa Groves and Diane Horm-Wingerd.43

A study of issues surrounding separated marriages including ways of coping with the distance.

"... Until Careers Do Us Part: Vocational and Marital Satisfaction in the Dual-Career Commuter Marriage," by Kathrijn Govaerts and David Dixon.13

A nicely done study comparing dual-career couples who live together with those that have geographically separated. Factors that predict satisfaction with the relationship are also explored.

"Commuting," by Agnes Farris.32

Asmaller study of intense interviews with couples in long-distance marriages. Easy reading that may generate good conversation with your partner.

"Dual-Career Couples Who Live Apart: Two Types," by Harriet Gross.133

Discusses the results of interviews with separated couples and compares younger couples who are still adjusting to those who are more established.

"Commuter Marriage: Couples Who Live Apart," by Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Gross.134

A review of separated marriages with an entertaining description of the commuting experience.

"Living Apart: A Comparison of Merchant Marine and Commuter Couples," by Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Gross.135

One of the very few articles looking at marriages separated for reasons other than academic or military reasons.

"Commuter Marriages: AReview," by Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Gross.34
Another good review from these two researchers.

"Two-Location Families: Married Singles," by Betty Kirschner and Laurel Walum.52

Adiscussion of separated marriages with a focus on how career development issues now affect women's decisions to undertake an LDR.

"Effects of Work-Related Separation on Children and Families," by Chaya Piotrkowski and Lisa Gornick.41

Areview of the literature examining the effect of work-related separations on the family, along with a few hints on coping strategies.

"Marital Non-Cohabitation: Separation Does Not Make the Heart Grow Fonder," by Ronald Rindfuss and Elizabeth Stephen.1

A large intriguing study looking at census data to determine if couples living apart later divorce. Unfortunately, the study cannot differentiate between marriages that were physically separated because they were having relationship problems, and those that were simply long-distance. The study's conclusions, that LDRs are associated with divorce, is likely a result of including many couples whose relationships were already on the rocks.

"Attachment Theory as Applied to Wartime and Job-Related Marital Separation," by Julia Vormbrock.136

An outstanding, albeit technical, review of the process of attachment and separation for marriages.

"Dual-Career Couples and Geographic Transfers: Executives' Reactions to Commuter Marriage and Attitude Toward the Move," by Ann Taylor and John Lounsbury.137

An interesting study designed primarily for executives and human relations administrators, looking at how managers integrate issues of commuter marriage into geographical transfer decisions.

Miscellaneous Relationship Issues

The Psychology of Separation and Loss: Perspectives on Development, Life Transitions, and Clinical Practice, by Jonathan Bloom-Feshbach, Sally Bloom-Feshbach, and Associates. 138

Although it does not focus on LDRs, this book provides a good framework for understanding all sorts of various stresses related to separation.

"'Secret Tests' Social Strategies for Acquiring Information About the State of the Relationship," by Leslie Baxter and William Wilmot.139

A fascinating study of the ways people test their relationships. The article briefly discusses how physical separation is sometimes used as a test to determine the importance of the relationship.

"Separation as Support," by Elizabeth Douvan and Joseph Pleck.31

An uplifting article focusing on the advantages of LDRs.

"Prisoner's Families," by Donald Schneller.140

Asomewhat older article examining the effect of prison separation on families.

"Flying Apart: Separation Distress in Female Flight Attendants," by Jim Jupp and Paul Mayne.141

Astudy of 36 flight attendants and how even short separations can cause problems, especially during reunion.

"Doesn't Anybody Stay in One Place Anymore? An Exploration of the Under-Studied Phenomenon of Long-Distance Relationships," by Mary E. Rohlfing.174

An excellent review of the literature on long-distance romantic relationships and long-distance friendships.

"Love at First Byte? Building Personal Relationships over Computer Networks," by Martin Lea and Russell Spears.173

This is a detailed but easily read review of relationships that take place predominantly via the Internet. Probably the best place to start if you're looking to untangle the mysteries of online LDRs.

Separated Students

"Relationship Maintenance of College Students Separated During Courtship," by David Carpenter and David Knox.17

A study that attempts to find out what factors help maintain college LDRs. I discuss a couple of the issues with the study design earlier in the book, as I disagree with some of their conclusions. They also report on some interesting gender differences that may prompt discussion with your partner.

"Does Distance Make the Heart Grow Fonder? A Comparison of Long-Distance and Geographically Close Dating Relationships," by Mary Dellmann-Jenkins, Teresa Bernard-Paolucci, and Beth Rushing.16

One of the larger studies of separated college students, and relatively well designed.

"Long-Distance Romantic Relationships: Prevalence and Separation-Related Symptoms in College Students," by Gregory Guldner.2

The largest study of college students, designed to estimate how common LDRs are in the college setting, and to quantify the types of stress and hassles related to separation.

"Time Spent Together and Relationship Quality: Long-Distance Relationships as a Test Case," by Gregory Guldner.11

Another large study comparing relationship qualities of those in LDRs with those in geographically close relationships.

"Long-Distance Romantic Relationships: Sex Differences in Adjustment and Break-up," by Vicki Helgeson.57

Astudy of 97 students in LDRs followed over three months focusing on gender differences related to the separation. A useful addition to the dearth of quantitative research on LDRs.

"The Effects of Self-Beliefs and Relationship Beliefs on Adjustment to a Relationship Stressor," by Vicki Helgeson.142

A study of college students in LDRs and how their beliefs about themselves, and their relationships, impact their ability to cope with the separation. A good study to show the utility of positive attitude.

"Needs, Coping Strategies, and Coping Outcomes Associated with Long-Distance Relationships," by Paul Holt and Gerald Stone.18

Astudy of college students in LDRs that tries to look at the differences between visualizers and verbalizers. There are a few problems with the study design (that I discussed in the text) but this is still one of earliest studies on students in LDRs.

"Coping with Moral Commitment to Long-Distance Dating Relationships," by John Lydon, Tamarha Pierce, and Shannon O'Regan.143

Asomewhat technical article examining types of commitment in relationships that are undergoing the stress of geographical separation.

"The Medical-Student Spouse Syndrome: Grief Reactions to the Clinical Years," by David Robinson.144

Adiscussion of the emotional processes that occur when one partner becomes intensely committed to work at the expense of the relationship. Although not technically examining LDRs, this paper describes several of the common reactions to separation.

"Factors Associated with Relationship Stability in Geographically Separated Couples," by Andrew Schwebel, Ryan Dunn, Barry Moss, and Maureena Renner.82

A study of 89 college freshmen in LDRs examining how intimacy, satisfaction, self-esteem, frequency of contact, and other variables interact.

"Communication and Interdependence in Geographically Separated Relationships," by Timothy Stephen.15

An interesting study looking at university LDRs as a test of a theory of relationship dynamics. Much of the information is technical, but the author describes a great deal of information about separated couples that may prove helpful.

"Idealization and Communication in Long-Distance Premarital Relationships," by Laura Stafford and James Reske.s

A fascinating examination of the process of unrealistic expectations within LDRs.

"Physical Distance and Interpersonal Characteristics in College Students' Romantic Relationships," by Roger Van Horn and Colleagues.4

This study, comparing roughly 80 people in LDRs to 80 people in geographically close relationships, found that the two are more similar than different. Anice review and discussion.

"Coping with Long-Distance Relationships," by John Westefeld and Debora Liddell.145

A very brief discussion of the author's experience with a mini-workshop for college students in LDRs.

"Communicative Strategies Used to Terminate Romantic Relationships," by William Wilmot, Donald Carbaugh, and Leslie Baxter.ss

These researchers wanted to study the process that occurs during relationships that end, so they chose LDRs, thinking they would break up more so than others. A somewhat technical paper, but still important given the dearth of research available.

Military Separations

"Depression in the Wives of Nuclear Submarine Personnel," by Karen Beckman, Anthony Marsella, and Ruth Finney. 146

One of a handful of studies looking at the wives of Navy submariners, who are a somewhat unique type of LDR, given the long-stretches with very little contact.

"The Returning Veteran Syndrome," by Douglas Bey.111

A psychiatrist discusses the symptoms related to wartime reunion. A slightly less technical article than many, with a psychodynamic bent.

"Personal Transitions and Interpersonal Communication Among Submariners' Wives," by Kathleen Boynton and W. Barnett Pearce. 147

An excellent, although somewhat outdated, review of separation in general, and the additional stress that comes with submarine deployment.

"Waiting Wives: Women Under Stress," by Douglas Bey and Jean Lange.65

This paper discusses the normal range of reactions that the wives of servicemen report during their separations. Most of these are applicable to nonmilitary LDRs as well.

"Family Readjustment of Veterans," by John Cuber.112

A post–World War II article discussing the problems of reunion.

"Coping with Sea Duty: Problems Encountered and Resources Utilized During Periods of Family Separation," by Kathryn Decker.36

A fairly extensive review of Navy families separated during non-wartime deployments.

"Navy Families in Distress," by William Dickerson and Ransom Arthur.37 An older article discussing Navy separations.

"Persian Gulf Sojourn: Stereotypes of Family Separation," by Richard Dukes and Janice Naylor.148

A study of how society perceives separation. Participants describe how they would react to several different vignettes. The only study of this kind to date. Very interesting with regards to the stereotypes that those in LDRs face.

"Loneliness and the Serviceman's Wife," by Evelyn Duvall.35

AWorld War II article that still is pertinent to many military separations.

"The Psychological Adjustments of Returned Servicemen and Their Families," by Coleman Griffith.149

Another post–World War II paper discussing the difficulties of reunion.

"Families of Prisoners of War Held in Vietnam: A Seven-Year Study," by Edna Hunter.51

This study focuses on families in crises examining the emotional processes and coping techniques over 7 years. Although it's based on a very specific type of LDR, many of the conclusions are applicable to all.

Families Under Stress, by Rubin Hill.45

An extremely detailed early study of families separated due to World War II.

"The Submariners' Wives Syndrome," by Richard Isay.150

One of the earlier studies that looked at the range of severe depression and anxiety connected with wives separated from their husbands on submarines.

- "American Families and the Vietnam War," by E. James Lieberman. 151
 Adetailed discussion of the impact of wartime separation on military families.
 "The Returned Prisoner of War: Factors in Family Reintegration," by
 Hamilton McCubbin, Barbara Dahl, Gary Lester, and Beverly Ross. 152
 An in-depth study, by this prolific research group, of families trying to adjust after prolonged separation.
- "Coping Repertoires of Families Adapting to Prolonged War-Induced Separations," by Hamilton McCubbin, Barbara Dahl, Gary Lester, Dorothy Benson, and Marilyn Robertson.153

Another well-done study by McCubbin's group looking at styles of coping with catastrophic war-related separation.

- "Adaptation of the Family to the POW/MIA Experience: An Overview," by Hamilton McCubbin, Edna Hunter, and Philip Meters, Jr.154
- Adetailed study of over 200 families dealing with prolonged separation from military family members. There is a great deal of information about symptoms during separation, how people coped with the stress, and wives' perceptions of their marriages.
- "Family Separation in the Army: AStudy of the Problems Encountered and the Care Taking Resources Used by Career Army Families Undergoing Military Separations," by Frank Montalvo.40

Another good review of the issues facing military couples during separation. "Prolonged Family Separation in the Military: A Longitudinal Study," by Hamilton McCubbin and Barbara Dahl.155

A review of military separations focusing on changes over time as the family and couple adapts to the distance and reunion.

- "Separation Problems in Military Wives," by Houston MacIntosh.24
 An early study of psychiatric symptoms in military wives separated from their husbands.
- "The Families of U.S. Navy Prisoners of War from Vietnam Five Years after Reunion," by D. Stephen Nice, Barbara McDonald, and Tom McMillian.156 A fascinating study of couples as they attempt to adjust to reunion. This has one of the longest periods of observation, looking five years after the separation had ended.
- "World War II and Divorce: A Life Course Perspective," by Eliza Pavalko and Glen Elder, Jr. 120

A well-designed study examining the effect of World War II on marriages looking at several factors and following the relationships over time.

- "Separation Reactions of Married Women," by Chester Pearlman, Jr.28 Apsychiatrist discusses his experience with 485 women separated from their military partners.
- "Social Support, Family Separation, and Well-Being Among Military Wives," by Leora Rosen and Linda Moghadam.39

A large study examining military couples and the role of social support during separations.

"Stressors, Stress Mediators, and Emotional Well-Being Among Spouses of Soldiers Deployed to the Persian Gulf During Operation Desert Shield/Storm," by Leora Rosen, Joel Teitelbaum, and David Westhuis.44

Astudy of 981 families of Gulf War veterans exploring issues related to military separation. Avery important piece of research showing the critical importance of social support.

"Marital Adjustment of Army Spouses One Year After Operation Desert Storm," by Leora Rosen, Doris Durand, David Westhuis, and Joel Teitelbaum. 157 Alarge study of families of GulfWar veterans andhowthey coped with reunion. Also includes a good discussion of the literature on military separation and reunion.

"The Dynamics of Grief of Wives and Families of Military Personnel Missing in Action," by Ludwig Spolyar.158

A psychologist discusses the emotional processes of wives dealing not only with separation, but also the uncertainty associated with a husband missing in action.

"The Homecomer," by Alfred Schuetz.159

Written in 1945, this discussion makes excellent reading, and provides great material to discuss with your partner prior to or just after reunion from deployment.

"Intensive Case Studies of Attachment Utilizing a Naturally-Occurring Separation in Marital Relationships (Doctoral Thesis)," by Stephen Stratton.27 A difficult to find thesis (write to Auburn University) that interviews five

Army wives about their coping with separation. The material highlights several of the concepts I discussed in this book and reads very well.

"Children's Single-Session Briefings: Group Work with Military Families Experiencing Parents' Deployment," by Jane Waldron, Ronaele Whittington, and Steve Jensen. 106

A rare look at methods of integrating children into coping strategies during deployments.

"Marital Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, and Retention in the Army," by John Woelfel and Joel Savell.12

A somewhat technical article looking at how separation impacts career satisfaction in the military.

Internet Websites Dedicated to Long-Distance Relationships

Along with the advantages of email, the Internet provides a fantastic source of information for those in LDRs. The difficulty comes in locating the best sites without having to dredge through the volumes of irrelevant pages. A search for "long-distance relationships" tends to bring a barrage of sites for long-distance telephone service, Internet dating, and sexually explicit pages.

The next list provides a few of the sites that focus on long-distance relationships.

The best resource is the website for the *Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships* at

Internet sites are constantly evolving with new pages born everyday and older sites routinely vanishing. Therefore, some of the sites listed may no longer be maintained or accessible.

Just as some of the books and articles give opinions regarding LDRs that are not supported by the research, websites can often have the same drawback. Be wary of taking too seriously some of the claims you may read about on their pages.

- www.longdistancerelationships.net
- www.longdistancecouples.com
- www.theromantic.com/stories/longdistance/main.htm
- www.etoile.co.uk/Love/Long.html

www.longdistancerelationships.net.

- www.marriage.about.com/c/ht/01/04/How_Maintain_Long_ Distance0986863563.htm
- www.marriage.about.com/cs/militarymarriages/index.htm
- www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/long distance romance
- www.sblake.com/
- www.wineberry.net/ltw/
- $\bullet \ www.umr.edu/\sim counsel/long.htm$
- www.groups.yahoo.com/group/a-special-love/

If you'd like to learn more about long distance relationships you can go to the website for the *Center for the Study of Long Distance Relationships* at www.longdistancerelationships.net or you can read *Long Distance Relationships: The Complete Guide* available from www.atlasbooks.com and fine bookstores everywhere.

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