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## A SPACE OF THEIR OWN

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facility for injured veterans

## Cover Story

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

Participants pose outside of the Oscar Mike Compound.



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Celebrity designer Jennifer Bertrand knows all about life in the military—her father was an Air Force colonel who served in Vietnam, Desert Storm and the Bosnian/Serb conflict. So last year, when the call came for someone to work on a special *Designing Spaces* episode, Bertrand was prepared to go all out to assist the Oscar Mike Foundation in its work with injured veterans.

A designer for Lifetime's *Military Makeover with Montel Williams*, Bertrand teamed up with global leader DuPont Safety & Construction and the company's Corian design team to redesign the Oscar Mike Foundation's 9,000-square-foot training facility in Rockford, Ill., into a space for injured veterans to thrive. The nonprofit Oscar Mike Foundation was formed for the purpose of helping injured veterans, providing funding and facilities for life-changing adaptive sports including rugby, kayaking, water sports, sky diving and flight lessons.

Oscar Mike's facility features a warm home environment, and Bertrand and the DuPont Corian team redesigned the kitchen and bath areas to provide an environment for healing to occur, while at the same time, upgrading important functionality and ensuring ADA compliance. *Family* caught up with Bertrand to discuss the project.

### How did you become involved with the Oscar Mike Foundation and this project?

I never knew that growing up on military bases would one day serve me well. I have always had a passion for sincerely supporting our veterans, and when Brandstar Productions brought me in to be a part of *Military Makeover*, I knew this is what I was meant to do! This led to me being part of the *Designing Spaces* special and the Oscar Mike Foundation. And after meeting those guys, your life changes because they are an organization who truly gets it.



Jennifer Bertrand

As a designer, I am lucky to understand the life of a military family but I also understand the impact traumatic life moments can have on our wellness and how our environments can positively impact our mindsets. Our son, Winston, was born with two rare malformations and has had 20 surgeries and treatments. When the 'medical tsunami,' as I call it, happened, I had just won HGTV's *Design Star* show. In the midst of medical stuff, we lost our house, our cars, and, if it wasn't for family and friends, we would not have come out the other side. I share this because I want people to know that those moments in life do not have to define you.

### What was your key mission with the design?

The previous designs in the Oscar Mike home were unrealistic for these amazing veterans. The kitchen did not function for them in any way. By lowering the countertops and giving them these beautiful new surfaces, they now have so much workspace that fits their needs.

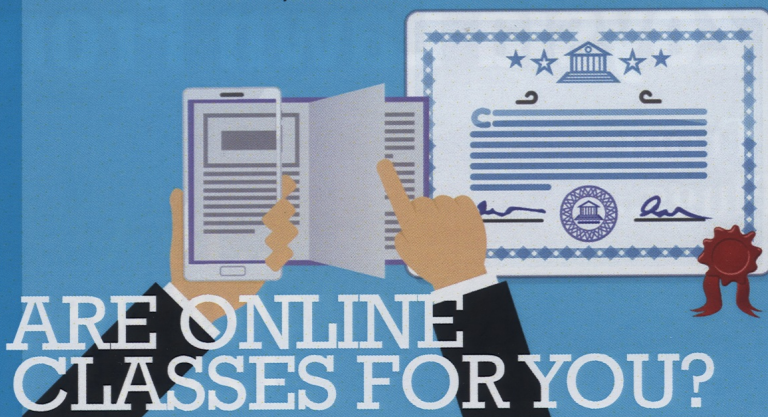
### What unique challenges do military troops and veterans face?

A lot of the veterans and troops have faced a lot of real life moments that some of us could never understand. In filming, we have worked with everything from PTSD, recovering addicts, the severely injured and more...Every single one of them needs to know "we see you in life." Wellness in your mind and home become problems that compound over time. Speaking from personal experience, you really have to find the way to focus on one home or life issue at a time.



## Education

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ



# ARE ONLINE CLASSES FOR YOU?

**A** college education is often seen as the “price of admission” to a better career, and increasing numbers of students are taking a non-traditional route to that vital degree: online learning.

More than 6.3 million students took at least one online course in fall 2016, a 5.6 percent increase from the previous year and the 14th consecutive year that online enrollment has grown, according to “Grade Increase: Tracking Distance Education in the United States,” an annual survey conducted by the Babson Survey Research Group at Babson College analyzing federal data from more than 4,700 colleges and universities.

Additionally, technological advancements make the process of online learning easier, faster, less expensive and more interactive. Still, online learning is not for everyone. Here are some of the main pros and cons of taking online courses:

### **Pro: Flexibility, Flexibility, Flexibility**

A flexible schedule is one of the main benefits of pursuing an online education, which does not require you to be present in a specific physical location. This is highly suitable to military life, allowing you to perform coursework at any time and in any way that is convenient for you—all you need is an Internet connection.

### **Con: Self-Discipline**

All of that flexibility can come with a price: it can be hard to keep motivated and organized. Without the structure of a traditional class schedule, staying on top of coursework and completing assignments on time requires tremendous discipline, and time-management and organizational skills.

### **Pro: Speed & Pacing**

Learning at your own speed can be a huge plus for many people, and in some cases, an online degree program can be completed much faster than a traditional four-year college experience.

### **Con: Not All Degree Programs Are Available**

Not all degree programs and specific fields of study are available through online courses, although the number of accredited programs is growing rapidly. Currently an estimated 40 percent of public universities offer online degrees in business, the liberal arts, social sciences, science, education and health care. Additionally, many traditional colleges and universities also offer a combination of online and classroom learning.

### **Pro: Cost**

Typically, online courses and degree programs cost less than enrolling in a traditional college or university. Various studies place the cost savings of online courses over on-campus classes from 3 percent to 50 percent, depending on the degree program. Online courses offered through colleges and universities with a physical campus are typically more expensive than studies with online-only institutions. Students taking online courses also save money on room and board, or commuting costs.

### **Con: Reputation**

In certain industries, there is a lingering stigma associated with online learning—that it is “easier” than a conventional college education. However, this misconception is rapidly fading away as more traditional colleges and universities offer online courses and degree programs.



# FACE TIME

How to Ace that Job Interview.



**L**anding an interview often seems like the biggest achievement in any job search, but there is still a big hurdle between you and your next career move: the interview itself. Preparing for it can be a nerve-wracking experience, but with a few tips and some careful groundwork, you should be able to impress even the most difficult and demanding employer.

## Personal Appearance Counts.

The old adage “you never get a second chance to make a first impression” holds doubly true for job interviews. You don’t necessarily have to wear a suit, but you should look neat, well-groomed and professional, with clean clothing and minimal accessories. Avoid wild hairdos, excessive jewelry, strong body sprays, ragged or dirty fingernails and revealing or inappropriate clothing. Also, try not to fidget during the interview—sit up straight, make eye contact with the interviewer and avoid tapping your

feet, cracking your knuckles, picking your teeth, chewing your fingernails, twirling your hair or other nervous habits. Most important of all? Put away and silence your cell phone.

## Be Friendly, not Familiar.

Establish rapport with interviewers by greeting them with an engaging smile and a firm handshake. Small talk should be confined to “safe” subjects, including the weather, local sports, light news items or traffic; avoid politics, religion, and personal topics. Take your cues from the interviewer—don’t sit until they invite you to, don’t be overly casual, and don’t eat, drink or chew gum. If you are being interviewed over a meal, order conservatively and avoid ordering alcohol.

## Be On Time.

Punctuality is perhaps one of today’s most overlooked virtues, but being on time plays a huge role in the success or failure of a job interview. Plan on arriving 30 minutes prior to your scheduled time—allow for traffic, getting lost or other unexpected circumstances. If you are too early, take a walk around the building to familiarize yourself with the neighborhood. Or use the extra time to review your resume and summarize the key points you want to address in the interview. Make sure you are actually in the office 10 minutes before your appointment.

## Knowledge Is Power.

Doing your homework is the cornerstone of interview preparation. Carefully research the company and its current business. Study the job description and tailor your resume and answers to interview questions accordingly. Make sure to bring up examples from previous jobs that indicate you are good “fit” for the company and the job. Know your resume and be able to relate any and all prior job or volunteer experience to the company. Make sure that you have extra copies of your resume and any examples of your work that you would like to share. Come prepared with intelligent questions for the interviewer that reveal the fact that you’ve studied the company—questions might address the company’s strategic vision, career development, handling of competition or upcoming projects.

## Close the Deal.

At the end of the interview, once again make eye contact, smile and end with a firm handshake. Express your genuine thanks for the interviewer’s time and consideration, ask what the next steps will be, and, finally, declare your sincere interest in the company and the job opportunity. In other words, if you want the job, don’t be shy about asking for it. 