

Fostering Understanding Between Veterans and Civilians for Workplace Success

Objectives

Discuss the basics on military demographics. Structure and common sacrifices made in order to serve.

Identify the unique needs of veterans and their common challenges with civilian workplace structure.

Identify valuable skills and attributes veterans bring to the civilian workforce.

Discuss key communication and workflow differences between civilian and military work culture and strategies to overcome.

Military Demographics

How many Americans join?

Branches

Officer versus enlisted

Men versus women

Age

Race/ethnicity

What does “military sacrifice” actually mean?

For families

Moving or PCSing to a whole different city and state every 3-4 years

Service members miss big milestones in their children’s lives

Families have to continually adjust to the SM leaving for months and then adjust to them returning and reintegrating into family life

Living with a service member who may be physically/emotionally injured

For service members

The mission comes first

Multiple deployments, often back to back

Physical Health/Mental Health

Being away from support systems

Losing “battle buddies” to war or suicide

Witnessing or being a part of extremely traumatic events

Why can this transition be challenging?

Common differences between Military Work Culture and Civilian Work Culture

Hours

Communication styles

Importance of orders

12% effort versus 80%

Military mental health

Healthcare/Appointments

Workplace friendship/comradery

Common Frustrations Veterans have in the “Civilian World”

Small talk

“Inefficient” and “lazy” co-workers

“Trivial” issues

Inefficiency in general

Timeline when things get done

Starting over

Military job certificates do not cross over to same civilian job

Physical and non-physical injuries

Appointments

Job loss and turnover

Sergeant T

Sergeant T has been in the military for 20 years and has just turned in the paperwork to retire. Sergeant T was part of an infantry unit that was deployed three times to Iraq and Afghanistan over his 20 years. His first job was to find Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and to dismantle them. During his 2nd deployment, Sergeant T was driving a vehicle when a young, Iraqi teenager stepped in front of them and his commander told him not to stop. After returning, one of the soldiers from his unit died by suicide. Sergeant T did recruitment his last seven years. He has never talked to anyone about his deployments but regularly shows signs of anxiety, depression and irritability. He rarely sleeps more than 3-4 hours a night and forgets things, even if they were just told to him.

What are some common struggles Sergeant T may have in a civilian environment?

Issues with authority figures

Anxiety/irritability issues

Depression

All of the above

Veteran Mental Health in a Civilian, Work Environment

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Anxiety

Depression

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

Bullying

Good Websites for Companies and Veterans in Regards to Mental Health

Click here for: [Veterans and the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\): A Guide for Employers](#)

Click here for: [Understanding Your Employment Rights Under the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\): A Guide for Veterans](#)

Valuable Skills

Veterans are:

Hard working

On Time

Efficient

Team Players

Leaders/mentors

Highly skilled

Dedicated

Great with logistics, protocols, policies and procedures

Unique Needs of Service Members and Veterans

Dealing with people may be hard for them. Anxiety is high and often comes out as irritability.

Allow veterans to have short breaks away from others if they say they need it, if possible

Understand that a big, group meeting in enclosed places may be hard for a veteran

Understand that a new veteran may have many appointments, especially if they just got out of the military

Strategies in Working with Veterans

Be very direct and let them know what is expected of them right off the bat

Do let them know of EAP resources and that they are **anonymous**

Do let them know the expectations for promotions and advancement

Do understand what “sacrifice” means to veterans

Do focus on how their military skills and attributes could translate to your company

Do take a longer course in military cultural competency

Pair them with other prior military employees if possible

Do appreciate how hard working veterans are and how much they want your agency to succeed and reward them

Encourage feedback

Be flexible with appointments they may need, especially in the beginning of employment if possible

And some don'ts

Don't assume veterans love the military

Don't ask personal details of combat or war

Don't ask if they have killed someone

Don't ask if they have a mental health diagnosis

Don't ask the characterization of their discharge

Don't purposely make loud noises to scare them

Reservists

Don't ask them if they will be deployed

Reservists go to drill once a month and for two weeks, usually in the summer

If a reservist is deployed, the agency must have their job or an equivalent job available upon their return for them to return to.

Your Employee Assistance Program

Call toll-free or visit us on the web

24 hours a day/7 days a week

Thank you!

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