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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