



Insights

Veterans in the Workplace

Resources for Veterans in the Workplace

Veterans and active National Guard members face a unique set of challenges in the workplace. Your GuidanceResources Employee Assistance Program understands this and is available to help, not just in the workplace, but also at home or in your community. This resource guide explains how the EAP can assist with military service-related challenges and offers HelpSheets®, flyers and posters of varying length to help your workplace veterans and their colleagues understand and deal with these challenges. The first section is directed at helping those returning from military service at your workplace. The second section can help fellow employees understand issues veterans may face upon their return.

Resources Available Through Your ComPsych® GuidanceResources Program

Your GuidanceResources program has been designed to give you and your colleagues simple, fast, direct access to confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week by phone, online or via our mobile site. To help you better understand how your Employee Assistance Program works, below is an overview of typical services offered by an EAP.

Confidential Counseling

Life can be stressful. The EAP offers relief with short-term counseling services for employees and their dependents to help them handle concerns constructively, before they become issues. They can call anytime about marital, relationship and family problems; stress, anxiety and depression; grief and loss; job pressures or substance abuse. Their call will be answered by our highly trained GuidanceConsultantsSM, clinicians who will listen to their concerns and guide them to the resources they need.

Work-Life Solutions

Too much to do, and too little time to get it all done? Work-life specialists at ComPsych do the research and provide qualified referrals and customized resources for child and elder care, moving, pet care, college planning, home repair, buying a car, planning an event, selling a house and more.

Legal Support

With GuidanceResources, your employees have an attorney on call. They can speak with an expert about divorce, custody, adoption, real estate, debt and bankruptcy, landlord/tenant issues, civil and criminal actions and other legal issues. If they require representation, they can be referred to a qualified attorney for a free 30-minute consultation and will be given a 25 percent reduction in customary legal fees thereafter.

Financial Information

Everyone has financial questions. With GuidanceResources, your employees can get answers about budgeting, debt management, tax issues and other money concerns from on-staff CPAs, Certified Financial Planners® and other financial experts, simply by calling the toll-free number.

GuidanceResources® Online

Guidanceresources.com and the mobile app, GuidanceNowSM, allow anytime, anywhere access to expert information on thousands of topics, including relationships, work, school, children, wellness, legal, financial and free time. They can search for qualified child and elder care, attorneys and financial planners, as well as ask questions, take self-assessments and more.

How the GuidanceResources Program Can Help Veterans in the Workplace

Parenting Needs

- Getting reacquainted with children after deployment
- Child care concerns
- Step-parenting issues
- Special needs children
- Choosing schools and colleges
- Homework and study habits

Work-Life Balance

- Vacation planning
- Wedding and event planning
- Finding discounted services for veterans
- Pet sitting services
- College planning

Legal Concerns

- Veterans' benefits
- Divorce and child custody
- Wills and estate planning
- Real estate/landlord-tenant relations
- Legal protections for veterans

Financial Issues

- Credit card debt and liability
- Identity theft
- Retirement planning
- Income tax questions
- Budgeting help
- Insurance issues

Counseling Assistance

- Grief or depression
- Chronic illness
- Substance abuse/addictions
- Domestic violence
- Coping with traumatic injury
- PTSD support and services
- Parenting or relationship issues
- Finding Community Support Groups

Encouraging a Healthier, Happier, Better-educated Workforce

Your EAP is more than a response to crises or personal issues. It is a tool to promote a healthier, more productive and more cohesive workforce. As such, we regularly provide educational materials on thousands of health, well-being and life topics. These materials, along with the GuidanceResources Online website and GuidanceNow mobile site, are designed to encourage easy distribution.

The following verterans in the workplace materials are examples of what is provided and can be used to educate and inform your colleagues. New materials are produced regularly, so talk with your internal benefits manager about what else may be available to you.

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Section 1

Resources for Veterans, Service Members and Their Families

- Transitioning to Civilian Life
- Deployment Issues
- Helping Spouses Deal With a Loved One's Deployment
- Parenting as a Veteran or Active Duty Member
- Understanding PTSD and Its Treatment

For Veterans Returning From Active Duty

If you've recently returned from deployment, you may find that your transition to civilian life is more challenging than you expected. Once the joy and distraction of being back home subsides, a new struggle to adjust begins. While you probably won't ever go back to being the same person you were before deployment, there are things you can do to reach the point when you feel you're really home. The Department of Defense's Military OneSource program and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs offer the following advice.

Giving Yourself Time to Readjust

Every returning service member needs time to readjust. It's not possible to leave an environment where you've witnessed death, been exposed to life-threatening events or suffered personal losses without bringing intense feelings and memories home with you. Even if you didn't experience combat first hand, you're still making an extreme transition. After months of working long hours in high-stress conditions, you may find yourself bored with civilian life and missing the clear objectives of military duty.

It's important to recognize that the mental journey back to civilian life takes longer than the physical one. During this transition, experts suggest that you:

- Focus on your physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- Get back on a regular schedule, get plenty of rest and eat well.
- Keep active and fit.
- Talk about your experiences with fellow veterans, supportive family and friends or a professional counselor.
- Engage in activities that help you to reconnect with loved ones and co-workers.

Reestablishing Relationships

Service members returning from combat often find that their relationships present the greatest challenges. Reuniting with family and friends can seem like starting over rather than picking up where you left off. Not only did your experiences make you a different person, but changes occurred at home while you were gone.

At first, many service members feel disconnected or detached from their loved ones and friends. You may be unable to tell your family about what happened. You may not want to scare them, or you may think that no one will understand. You also may find it hard to express positive feelings. This can make loved ones feel like they did something wrong or are not wanted anymore. When reunited with family, you may also feel:

- **Mistrusting:** During your deployment you trusted only those closest to you. It can be difficult to begin to confide in your family and friends again.
- **Over-controlling or overprotective:** You might find that you're constantly telling the kids, "Don't do that!" or, "Be careful. It's not safe!"
- **Short tempered:** More conflicts with others may be due to poor communication or unreasonable expectations.

Reestablishing positive relationships after combat duty requires patience and understanding, as well as acceptance of changes in yourself and others. Remember, good communication is vital to your progress.

What you can do as a husband or wife

After taking care of the household single-handedly, your spouse may have newfound feelings of independence and self-reliance, and will have established some new routines. It will take time to return to comfortable daily life as a couple.

- Learn about your spouse's experiences on the home front.
- Try to adapt to new routines rather than expecting your spouse to start doing things your way.

- Share what you can about your combat duty.
- Watch for indications that stress reactions are affecting your relationship.
- Go slow. Reestablishing relationships takes time, even with a spouse.

What you can do as a parent

As a parent, you know that children learn and change quickly: The middle-schooler who was playing with dolls when you left may have moved on to softball or computer games. Again, you'll need to be patient and to listen.

- Recognize and accept your children's new stage of development.
- Understand that they may be angry about your absence.
- Give them time to reconnect and feel comfortable with you as their parent again.
- Discuss things. Let them know they can talk about how they feel.
- Accept how they feel and don't tell them they should not feel that way.
- Recognize that discipline, an essential in the military, can cause problems if applied too strictly with family.

What you can do as a single service member

You're likely to find that reestablishing a relationship with your parents and friends will take patience and work.

- Be understanding and respectful with your parents; it may be difficult for them to grasp how you've changed.
- Expect that people will make continuing demands for your time and attention.
- Accept that you may not have the same interests that you shared with friends before your deployment.
- Resist becoming isolated.

Finding a Place in Your Community

For many service members, getting connected to a larger community is an important step toward feeling at home. Community involvement provides a wider circle of friends and neighbors who can support you. Some people experience a sense of community by joining service organizations, clubs or civic groups. Many veterans find community through their faith and by participating in activities at their place of worship. Whatever your interests, there are opportunities for community where you live. At first, you may have to push yourself to get involved outside of work and family, but it will help you to readjust. Veterans often discover that focusing on needs beyond their own has a way of reducing the time it takes to feel like a whole civilian again.

Understandable Anger

It is normal to feel angry or keyed up after returning from combat duty. The vast majority of service members who experience war-zone stress reactions recover. For some, however, it may take as long as a year to feel normal again. Department of Defense experts recommend that veterans seek outside assistance if they continue to experience reactions more often than not for longer than six to eight weeks after their return home. They also should seek help if stress reactions begin to interfere with family, work or social life to the extent that they can't function effectively. Remember, you are not alone. Seeking help is a sign of strength.

Recognize and control your emotions

Returning service members don't always realize how angry they may be. In fact, you may only recognize your emotions when someone close to you points them out. You can help control your anger by:

- Counting to 10 or 20 before reacting
- Figuring out the cues or situations that trigger your anger so you can be better prepared
- Learning relaxation techniques (breathing, yoga, meditation)
- Learning ways to deal with irritation and frustration and how not to be provoked into aggressive behavior

- Walking away
- Thinking about the ultimate consequences of your responses
- Writing things down

Your EAP Can Help

Your GuidanceResources Employee Assistance Program can provide the support you need as you transition to civilian life. This no-cost counseling service offers expertise on how to address stress, relationship troubles and other personal issues you and your family may face. It is staffed by GuidanceConsultants, highly trained master's- and doctoral-level clinicians who will listen to your concerns and, if needed, quickly refer you to in-person counseling. The support, resources and information are free, confidential and available all day, every day for you and your family.

Other Resources

- **The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Health care: 877.222.VETS (8387)

Benefits: 800.827.1000

www.va.gov

- **Veterans Transition Assistance Program**

A collaboration of government agencies that helps with transition from military to civilian life.

www.turbotap.org

Counseling Services

- **Vet Centers**

Toll-free: 800.905.4675

www.vetcenter.va.gov

- **Military OneSource**

Toll-free (in the U.S.): 800.342.9647

International toll-free: 800.464.8107.

www.militaryonesource.com

Employment and Financial Services

- **U.S. Department of Labor**

www.dol.gov/vets, www.americasheroesatwork.gov

- **Vet Success**

<http://vetsuccess.gov>

- **Work Adjustment**

www.afterdeployment.org

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Practical Deployment Issues for Military Reservists

Civilians in the United States Armed Forces Reserves are required to be available for military deployment, sometimes on very short notice. Preparation for any deployment can be less stressful if you understand the laws and services that affect reservists.

There are two major federal laws that apply to service members who are being deployed: the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act (SSCRA). Each law speaks to a specific issue: USERRA applies only to employment-related issues, and the SSCRA applies to various financial transactions and court proceedings.

The Law and Your Job

All uniformed service members have the right to employment protection as stated in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. USERRA provides for military leave of absence and subsequent reemployment of eligible employees. It applies to both voluntary and involuntary service.

The uniformed services that USERRA covers include:

- The Army National Guard or Air National Guard
- Civilians who are full-time or reserve components of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard
- The Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service
- Any other category of persons that the president of the United States designates as a uniformed service during times of war or national emergency

While all states also provide laws regulating military leave, USERRA supersedes less restrictive state laws, but does not displace state laws that are more stringent than federal law. Check with your installation for more information specific to your state.

Job-related Checklist

You may have questions concerning your current job and what to expect when you return from deployment. The following addresses specific employment-related information; for specific exceptions or more information, contact your installation or the USERRA rules.

- Giving notice is your responsibility. There is no designated length of time in which you must give notice prior to leaving; however, you are required to do so to qualify for USERRA protection. You can give notice verbally or in writing; in writing is best if you need written proof later on.
- Under law, military leave cannot be denied to you, you must be reemployed upon completion of leave, and you are not required to find a replacement for your position while you are gone.
- Pay and benefits depend on your employer: civilian employers are not required to pay reservists while they are on leave. If you are gone for less than 30 days, your employer must provide continued medical coverage. If you are gone for more than 30 days, a coverage plan must be offered to you. Typically it will be a COBRA-like plan that continues your previous coverage, only at a higher deductible. Benefits such as sick days and vacation days are up to your employer, as well; contact your HR department for more information on their benefit coverage.
- Reemployment must be offered upon your return from deployment. There are exceptions, however, including if you have exceeded a cumulative total of five years leave. Yet this exception has its own exceptions. For instance, in a time of war or national emergency, leave time does not count toward the five-year total.
- When returning, be prepared to provide documentation of your leave (especially if you were gone for more than 30 days), and contact your employer as soon as your leave is over. There are time limits as to

how soon you must report back to work based on the length of your deployment; be sure to familiarize yourself with them prior to leaving.

- Even if your employer hired a temporary replacement during your absence, you should expect to have your same title (or one of equal seniority) reinstated when you return to work.

Responsibility and Liability Information

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act (SSCRA) is a federal law covering all 50 states. It affords many protections to service members who are called up to duty, as well as those who are either primarily or secondarily responsible for the service member's liabilities (such as spouses, domestic partners or co-signers). However, the SSCRA does not apply in certain situations: to administrative or criminal proceedings or to agreements entered into after the service member has been called up for duty.

To qualify for protections under the SSCRA, service members must provide some form of written notice to assert these rights. Banks, landlords and courts have no way of knowing a service member has been called up for active duty unless they are notified. The following is a breakdown of specific instances when the SSCRA applies.

- **Ending a lease:** The SSCRA allows you to legally break a lease, whether residential, agricultural, professional or commercial. However, to break a residential lease you must have resided at the premises and provide advance written notice. Termination will then become effective 30 days after the next payment is due. Also, the landlord must refund any monies that you prepaid
- **Reducing a loan rate:** Except for student loans, you can reduce the interest rate of any loan to six percent per year during active duty. If the creditor sues you in court, however, you must be able to prove that your military service seriously hampered your ability to pay the higher interest rate.
- **Preventing mortgage foreclosure:** As with other protections under this law, you should immediately notify the mortgage company of your call to active duty. For this protection to apply, you must have entered the mortgage prior to your call to active duty; therefore, proof of military service is required. In these instances the court can: delay the foreclosure proceeding or extend the length of time you have to pay the mortgage; extend the time you have to redeem property that has already been foreclosed upon; or reconsider a previous foreclosure order.
- **Preventing repossession:** This applies only if you entered the installment contract prior to active-duty call and you (or a joint account holder) have made either a deposit or at least one payment. In these instances a court can: order the creditor to return the property if it has already been repossessed; postpone any creditor action during the entire military operation plus three months; or order any other action that is fair to both you and the creditor. Similarly, you will not have to pay fines or late fees if payments are missed. Please note: you (or someone responsible for your matters) can petition for SSCRA protection before a payment is missed or a repossession proceeding is commenced. This must be done either during your actual military service or within the immediate six months after your active service has terminated.
- **Paying property taxes:** Your property cannot be sold for back taxes if you lived on the property at the time you entered into active duty. Contact both the federal and local taxing authorities for further information and forms regarding property taxation.
- **Paying life-insurance premiums:** You may request that the Veteran's Affairs Administration pay commercial life-insurance premiums during your active duty. This applies to life-insurance policies of \$10,000 or less. However, this provision of the SSCRA works like a loan: you must make up the payments. Contact your life-insurance company for the forms you will need to complete and forward to the Veteran's Administration.
- **Handling judicial action:** If you are sued after leaving the state or country for active military duty, the SSCRA has provisions to protect you. Here's a brief summary of each provision:
 - To prevent the court from issuing a default judgment for your failure to appear, you must provide notice to the suing party and the court that your failure to appear is due to active military status. You may request a postponement from the court during the active military status. Similarly, within 90 days from active-duty discharge, you may reopen a case in which a judgment has been entered against you and you can prove that the active status precluded you from appearing on the court date.

- A judgment that has been entered against you can be halted (postponed) if military duty will interfere with your ability to comply with the court's order.
- Any statute of limitation that otherwise might preclude you from filing a lawsuit is "stopped" during the time your military duty is in effect.
- In addition to the above-mentioned federal laws, various state laws cover active service members. For example, Illinois allows service members up to 45 days after their return from active duty outside the United States to renew driver's licenses.

Pre-deployment Guidelines

If you are called up for service, you can take steps to prepare your administrative, financial and legal assets.

- **Secure medical care for your family.** The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System ensures family members have access to medical care during your deployment, if COBRA-like benefits do not apply. It is your responsibility to confirm enrollment.
- **Verify your service record.** Contact numbers and emergency information should be correct and current.
- **Update your military ID card.** Expiration dates for dependent cards should not expire prior to the end of your deployment; if they do, be sure to have them updated.
- **Check your vehicle registration.** If it will expire during deployment, either renew the registration prior to leaving or have someone renew it while you are gone. You may also want to contact your insurance company: often they offer reduced rates for vehicles not in use.
- **Execute a power of attorney.** You can designate a family member or other competent person to legally act on your behalf on financial, family and property-related issues during your absence. You have control over what issues the power of attorney covers, as well as when the power of attorney expires. Contact the legal office at your installation for more information on power of attorney restrictions.
- **Arrange for bill payments.** Timely payment of bills is your responsibility; ensure that an arrangement is in place prior to your departure. You may appoint a family member with power of attorney or opt to have bills paid via direct deposit on a timely schedule. Contact your creditors and bank for more information. Direct deposit is also a convenient way to have your paychecks deposited; contact your bank for information on this as well.
- **Arrange for income tax filing.** If you will be deployed during the April 15 filing deadline, you can either file for an extension before your departure or arrange for someone else with power of attorney to prepare your forms and send them in.
- **Verify that your insurance is up to date.** Active-duty service members can be insured under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. Verify that your beneficiaries are correct. If you want to make changes, you must complete the SGLI Election Form. Contact the Department of Veterans Affairs for more information.
- **Create or update your will.** A legally executed will is extremely helpful, as it ensures that your personal and real property are distributed according to your wishes.

Resources

For more information on military deployment, contact the Office of Medical Readiness and Military Deployments.

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Tips for Spouses of Service Members

The spouse of any active member of the military learns when their loved one is deployed that he or she is very different from a civilian spouse. Day-to-day concerns are different, and responsibilities increase. Here are some tips to help spouses of military personnel during deployment times.

Before Deployment

Deployment is an emotional time for military personnel and their families. To help each other cope, become educated on appropriate military procedures, and keep an open line of communication between each other. Consider these tips:

- Do not avoid important discussions: Before departing, schedule a time to discuss concerns and risks of deployment. Have a clear plan of how household finances and other responsibilities will be handled during the deployment. Both spouses are filled with pressures and emotions during this time, so try not to have spur-of-the-moment talks. Set aside specific times to address everything, and do not allow emotions to take over.
- Pay attention: Attend mobilization meetings, and take notes. Keep notes on the exact name of the unit, names and ranks of the chain of command, the travel itinerary and orders.
- Name, rank, serial number: It is important to memorize your spouse's full information. This information is necessary for numerous forms and paperwork.
- Do the important paperwork: Get a copy of your marriage certificate, and keep it with other important documents. Have your spouse enroll you in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), which allows for medical and other benefits. Obtain a military identification card; it is needed to receive military spouse benefits and to gain admission to installations, exchanges and commissaries. Also, discuss becoming a beneficiary on your spouse's Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) policy. Your spouse should also update his or her Record of Emergency Data sheet (DD Form 93). Make sure wills and power of attorney paperwork is complete.

Around the House

When a spouse is on leave, most household responsibilities will fall upon the spouse left behind. To make tasks easier, keep organized:

- Have a monthly budget.
- Know when bills are due, and keep receipts filed.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers.
- Know the location of utility (water/electricity/gas) shut-off valves.
- Keep a list of repair people to call in the event of an emergency.

Communicating

When your spouse is thousands of miles away on deployment, it can be difficult to communicate. However, it is important to remain in contact with each other as much as possible and not let each other begin to speculate about what is happening. Share your thoughts and feelings:

- Make time every day for each other, whether or not it is possible to communicate directly. Write letters or emails to each other.
- Arrange times to chat online, if possible.
- If Internet connections are possible, schedule time to play a game online.
- Send packages to each other. Include photos, homemade gifts and special items.
- Call each other as often as possible. Be positive during the conversations. Do not bring up situations that will cause frustration or guilt. Understand that deployment can make military personnel tired and sometimes depressed. Do not be offended by conversations where the person deployed is not engaging.

Life at Home

Waiting for a spouse to return from leave can be lengthy and lonely. It is possible to keep connected, even when the spouse is not in the house:

- Make different-sized prints of a variety of photos, and put them around the house, including places like the bathroom, kitchen and other more unusual locations.
- Take the time to learn about the area of deployment and a spouse's assignment. Use the Internet to find photos of locations. "See" what he or she sees on a day-to-day basis. Ask for photos of the people in his or her unit so you can associate faces with names.
- Start a "countdown" ritual until the next time you are scheduled to be together or talk.
- Keep busy with activities. Volunteer work often makes spouses feel needed and more fulfilled.
- Seek comfort in military spouse support groups and from friends and family.
- Keep a daily journal (not necessarily to be shared). Writing down thoughts and feelings can be therapeutic.
- Consult with a therapist if necessary.

Resources

- Military OneSource: www.militaryonesource.mil
- U.S. Department of Defense: www.defense.gov

When a Parent Returns Home From Deployment

Men and women who return from deployment to meet a new infant son or daughter for the first time or a toddler who may not recognize them can be overwhelmed. Not only is it an emotional experience for them, but for the other parent and the infant.

At-home Parent

When the other parent of your child returns home, you may have certain hopes and expectations. Use these tips to guide you.

- Do not simply thrust a crying infant into the arms of the returning parent. Give him or her time to adjust to the reality of seeing you again and the child for the first time.
- Infants and toddlers typically do not recognize the returning parent even if they are old enough to recognize photos. Realize that your child may become uneasy and be patient. Have the returning parent participate in play time with both of you so your child will become more comfortable and develop trust.
- Recognize that you have become accustomed to taking care of your child alone and operating as a single parent. Make a special effort to now include the other parent in decisions and day-to-day tasks.
- Be flexible and manage your expectations about how involved the other parent will be. Allow him or her to adjust to being at home and the new parental responsibilities. Keep a good line of communication open with your child's parent so you can understand his or her concerns and issues of readjustment.

Returning Parent

Mixed emotions in the moment you first see your loved ones and your child are common. Here are some tips as you make the quick transition from military personnel into parenthood.

- Know what to expect. Before returning home, educate yourself on the basics of child development. Learn about skills children have at various ages and know what your child will and will not be able to do.
- Before going home, it is good to take photos of the people in your unit and locations where you were stationed. Then, either before returning home or when you first return home and your memories are fresh, put together a journal for your child. Include information about what you were doing while deployed. You can keep this for your child and when he or she is old enough, share the information with them. This allows you to develop a means of connection with your child even though you were not there from the beginning of his or her life.
- Do your best not to be angry, regretful or resentful about the childhood milestones you missed during your deployment. Connect with your child upon your return and recognize the relationship you can develop moving forward.
- Do not feel rejection if your child will not come to you at first or tries to wriggle away when put in your arms. Give your child some time to adjust. Children need time to develop trust before they feel comfortable with adults in their lives.
- If your child is at the toddler stage, note that some children will keep their distances from the returning parent for a while. In addition to needing time to develop trust, toddlers may be confused about a second parent coming into the picture. They have become accustomed to only having a mother around. Because children like consistency, it may take a while for your child to adapt.
- Also be prepared should your child become a "clinger." Once you come into his or her life, he or she may not want you out of sight. Children do not grasp the concept of time until they are older. When a toddler sees you leave the room, your child may equate that with you leaving again. Thus, your child may follow you everywhere and also ask to be held. After a while, this may become frustrating, but be patient. It is a phase that will pass as he or she becomes more comfortable with you being home.
- Once you become settled at home, make an effort to spend one-on-one time with your child. Get acquainted with your child and learn to interact in ways that are comfortable for you. Do not feel like you must spoil your child to develop a good relationship.

- Realize your child's other parent has become accustomed to operating as a single parent. It may take some time to adjust to having help and being receptive to your input. Make an effort to be included in decisions and day-to-day tasks and let him or her know you are willing to be involved.
- Keep a good line of communication with your child's other parent so he or she can understand your concerns and issues of readjustment. Tell him or her if you feel overwhelmed with sudden parental responsibilities.

Getting Support

Depending on your service branch, Fleet and Family Support Center, Marine Corps Community Services, Airman and Family Readiness Center, or Army Community Service Center can provide information and support as you make the adjustment to home life.

You might also consider taking parenting classes or seeing a therapist—on your own or with your child's other parent—as you work to adjust.

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Treating Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Survivors and witnesses of traumatic events, such as war veterans and abuse victims, often have a difficult time resolving disturbing memories and anxious feelings. If you have experienced a life-jarring event that continues to trouble you and interferes with your ability to function and enjoy life, you may have a condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This disorder can be treated successfully. Do not be afraid to seek help.

Understanding PTSD

PTSD is a psychological condition that can occur after a terrifying event, such as a harrowing combat mission, earthquake, car crash, kidnapping, rape or near-death encounter. Whether the person was affected directly by the event, observed someone else's suffering or witnessed a mass disaster, the calamity has been ingrained in his or her consciousness. Typically, the person also has suffered some degree of physical trauma, but psychological scars often prove to be the hardest to heal.

People with PTSD continue to relive their horrifying experiences through recurrent memories, nightmares, persistent anxious thoughts and disturbing symptoms.

They also may experience flashbacks: out-of-reality episodes that can last from seconds to hours in which the person seems to relive the traumatic event.

Intense fear and feelings of loss of control and helplessness continue to resurface, especially around anniversaries of the event or exposure to stimuli that are reminders of the incident. Often, PTSD symptoms can be unprovoked, triggered by no apparent cause. When the symptoms are strong and frequent enough, the individual is usually unable to live a normal life and may not overcome the condition without professional treatment.

Symptoms of PTSD May Include:

- Repeatedly reliving the event through persistent memories, nightmares and flashbacks
- Avoidance of feelings, thoughts and activities that are reminders of the trauma
- Emotional numbness
- Detachment from family and friends
- Depression
- Increased lack of interest in favorite pastimes and activities
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and loss of control
- Sudden or unprovoked anger or aggressive behavior
- Nervousness, jumpiness or irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating

It is important to understand that every person who has PTSD experiences it differently. Symptoms can vary in frequency and severity. Not every traumatized person experiences PTSD.

Symptoms can appear immediately after the traumatic event or be delayed by six months or longer. Sometimes the illness does not surface until years following the event. Though it can affect anyone at any time, PTSD can be especially common among young children and elders who have lived through disturbing experiences. The symptoms also can be complicated by substance abuse.

Treatment

Some people with PTSD find that their symptoms subside naturally and are able to recover without professional help. Others find that they are not able to get better without treatment. If you have survived a traumatic event and are experiencing any of the symptoms associated with PTSD, it is best to seek help.

Physicians treat PTSD differently than from other related conditions, such as phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Several treatment options exist, and medication may be prescribed as an adjunct to therapy. Your involvement in treatment will require patience and diligence. Anxieties take time to resolve. The more you learn about the condition and recognize your patterns of thought and behavior, the better chance you may have of effectively managing the disorder.

One treatment option is cognitive-behavioral therapy. Approaches include:

- Habituation exercises: Supervised by a therapist, this approach can help one to confront fears and learn to diminish the level of anxiety.
- Systematic desensitization (also called exposure and response prevention): These exercises expose the patient to the frightening thought or situation, such as returning to the scene of the trauma, in an effort to overcome the anxiety.
- Deep-breathing exercises and relaxation techniques: Progressive muscle-relaxation exercises teach the patient to tense, hold, focus on and slowly release different muscle groups to reduce the symptoms of anxiety.

Another widely used treatment method is psychotherapy, or “talk” therapy: working with a therapist to identify and resolve your fears and problems. A therapist may help you uncover the reasons behind your PTSD and suggest coping techniques. In psychotherapy, you learn to recognize how certain thoughts can provoke anxiety symptoms and how to change these thought patterns to decrease future anxiety episodes.

Do not let PTSD control you. Learn to control it by seeking help and educating yourself on the topic. Get involved in a support group. Ask friends and family to help you get through this difficult period. When you feel anxiety emerging, attempt to rationalize your fears and relax. Try breathing exercises, imagery techniques and meditation to calm down.

Resources

- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov
- American Psychiatric Association: www.psych.org
- Freedom from Fear: www.freedomfromfear.org
- National Anxiety Foundation: www.lexington-on-line.com/naf.html
- National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): www.ptsd.va.gov



For Veterans Returning From Active Duty

If you've recently returned from deployment, you may find that your transition to civilian life is more challenging than you expected. Once the joy and distraction of being back home subsides, a new struggle to adjust begins. While you probably won't ever go back to being the same person you were before deployment, there are things you can do to reach the point when you feel you're really home. The Department of Defense's Military OneSource program and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs offer the following advice:

Give yourself time to readjust

Every returning service member needs time to readjust. It's not possible to leave an environment where you've witnessed death, been exposed to life-threatening events or suffered personal losses without bringing intense feelings and memories home with you. Even if you didn't experience combat first hand, you're still making an extreme transition. After months of working long hours in high-stress conditions, you may find yourself bored with civilian life and missing the clear objectives of military duty.

It's important to recognize that the mental journey back to civilian life takes longer than the physical one. During this transition, experts suggest that you:

- Focus on your physical, emotional and spiritual health.
- Get back on a regular schedule, get plenty of rest and eat well.
- Keep active and fit.
- Talk about your experiences with fellow veterans, supportive family and friends or a professional counselor.
- Engage in activities that help you to reconnect with loved ones and co-workers.

Here when you need us.

Call:

TTY: 800.697.0353

Online: [guidanceresources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com)

App: [GuidanceNowSM](#)

Web ID:

Section 2

Resources for Managers and the Wider Workforce

- Understanding PTSD
- Easing Veterans' Transition Back to Civilian Employment

Understanding Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Survivors and witnesses of traumatic events, such as war veterans and abuse victims, often have a difficult time resolving disturbing memories and anxious feelings. These life-jarring events can cause a condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This disorder can be treated successfully.

Understanding PTSD

PTSD is a psychological condition that can occur after a terrifying event, such as a harrowing combat mission, earthquake, car crash, kidnapping, rape or near-death encounter. Whether the person was affected directly by the event, observed someone else's suffering or witnessed a mass disaster, the calamity has been ingrained in his or her consciousness. Typically, the person also has suffered some degree of physical trauma, but psychological scars often prove to be the hardest to heal.

People with PTSD continue to relive their horrifying experiences through recurrent memories, nightmares, persistent anxious thoughts and disturbing symptoms.

They also may experience flashbacks: out-of-reality episodes that can last from seconds to hours in which the person seems to relive the traumatic event.

Intense fear and feelings of loss of control and helplessness continue to resurface, especially around anniversaries of the event or exposure to stimuli that are reminders of the incident. Often, PTSD symptoms can be unprovoked, triggered by no apparent cause. When the symptoms are strong and frequent enough, the individual is usually unable to live a normal life and may not overcome the condition without professional treatment.

Symptoms of PTSD May Include:

- Repeatedly reliving the event through persistent memories, nightmares and flashbacks
- Avoidance of feelings, thoughts and activities that are reminders of the trauma
- Emotional numbness
- Detachment from family and friends
- Depression
- Increased lack of interest in favorite pastimes and activities
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and loss of control
- Sudden or unprovoked anger or aggressive behavior
- Nervousness, jumpiness or irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Difficulty concentrating

It is important to understand that every person who has PTSD experiences it differently. Symptoms can vary in frequency and severity. Not every traumatized person experiences PTSD.

Symptoms can appear immediately after the traumatic event or be delayed by six months or longer. Sometimes the illness does not surface until years following the event. Though it can affect anyone at any time, PTSD can be especially common among young children and elders who have lived through disturbing experiences. The symptoms also can be complicated by substance abuse.

Treatment

Some people with PTSD find that their symptoms subside naturally and are able to recover without professional help. Others find that they are not able to get better without treatment. If you have survived a traumatic event and are experiencing any of the symptoms associated with PTSD, it is best to seek help.

Physicians treat PTSD differently than from other related conditions, such as phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Several treatment options exist, and medication may be prescribed as an adjunct to therapy. Your involvement in treatment will require patience and diligence. Anxieties take time to resolve. The more you learn about the condition and recognize your patterns of thought and behavior, the better chance you may have of effectively managing the disorder.

One treatment option is cognitive-behavioral therapy. Approaches include:

- Habituation exercises: Supervised by a therapist, this approach can help one to confront fears and learn to diminish the level of anxiety.
- Systematic desensitization (also called exposure and response prevention): These exercises expose the patient to the frightening thought or situation, such as returning to the scene of the trauma, in an effort to overcome the anxiety.
- Deep-breathing exercises and relaxation techniques: Progressive muscle-relaxation exercises teach the patient to tense, hold, focus on and slowly release different muscle groups to reduce the symptoms of anxiety.

Another widely used treatment method is psychotherapy, or “talk” therapy: working with a therapist to identify and resolve your fears and problems. A therapist may help you uncover the reasons behind your PTSD and suggest coping techniques. In psychotherapy, you learn to recognize how certain thoughts can provoke anxiety symptoms and how to change these thought patterns to decrease future anxiety episodes.

Resources

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- National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): www.ptsd.va.gov

How can employers help veterans returning to the workplace?

Although most service members will have successfully navigated deployment stressors by the time they return to work, the difficulties of readjustment to civilian life are not to be underestimated. The vast majority of service members and veterans are resilient and adaptable and will transition to civilian and workplace life with little or no difficulty. Others, especially those carrying physical or emotional wounds from their service, may need help adjusting. The Veterans Administration offers the following advice for employers, managers and co-workers of our veterans:

Common Challenges During Re-adjustment to Civilian Life

Civilians may not be aware of the unique challenges that separating from military service and returning to civilian life can present. Veterans may find difficulty:

- Relating to people who do not know or understand what military personnel have experienced.
- Reconnecting with family and reestablishing a role in the family.
- Joining or creating a community. When moving to a new base or post, the military helps military personnel and families adjust. This structure is often not automatically in place when someone separates from the military.
- Preparing to enter the workforce. A veteran may have never looked for, applied for or interviewed for a civilian job, especially if he or she had a career in the military.
- Returning to a job. If deployed with the National Guard or Reserve, a service member will have to adjust to resuming his or her previous job or another similar job at the same company. Returning to the job may include a period of catching up, learning new skills, or adjusting to a new position.
- Creating structure. The military provides structure and has a clear chain of command. This does not naturally exist outside the military.
- Adjusting to providing basic necessities such as food, clothing and housing. In the military, these things were provided.
- Adjusting to a different pace of life and work. Civilian workplaces may be competitive environments, as opposed to the collaborative camaraderie of the military. Given the direct nature of communication in military settings, there may be subtle nuances in conversations and workplace lingo that are unfamiliar to veterans.
- Establishing services. Veterans may have to learn how to get a doctor, dentist, life insurance, or other needs on their own. A veteran may also need to navigate the paperwork and process of obtaining benefits and services from the Department of Veteran Affairs.

How to Help?

The best way to support an employee who is a veteran or Reserve or National Guard member is to create a culture that helps people feel comfortable discussing different challenges they face in the workplace. This includes discussing problems that may interfere with productivity or performance. Veterans may have mental health concerns, physical disabilities or other personal issues that can impact their productivity or performance at work. As an employer, manager or supervisor, or human resource professional you have a unique opportunity to help veteran employees in your workplace.

Be aware of resources available to your employees. These include GuidanceResources, your company's Employee Assistance Program, which offers free, confidential counseling and other resources for health, wellness, family, work-life financial and other issues. GuidanceResource's counseling, support and information are free to your employees and dependents, confidential and available all day, every day.

Encourage use of these resources and make them known to all employees. You may not always know if your employee is a veteran, so we suggest that you provide information more broadly to all employees. Also, encouraging the use of resources, especially in a consistent and public way, can reduce any stigma they may feel in using the resources.

Wounded Veterans

In addition to re-entering and adjusting to civilian life, many veterans returning from military service, especially those who have been exposed to combat situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, are challenged by physical and emotional issues. While physical wounds may be easy to see, other injuries may not. The two most common combat-related mental health conditions experienced by veterans are traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Knowing the facts about these disabilities will help you recognize the symptoms when and if they occur so you can more effectively support a veteran employee.

- **PTSD:** Previously known as “battle fatigue” or “shell shock,” PTSD is an anxiety disorder that develops after a person experiences or witnesses an extremely distressing event involving actual or threatened death or physical harm. While common among combat veterans, PTSD can be experienced by anyone who has survived a traumatic event.
- **TBI:** Traumatic Brain Injury is caused by some type of trauma to the head, such as a sudden blow or jolt, a violent shaking or penetration by a foreign object. A TBI acts much like a concussion and can be mild, moderate or severe. With proper treatment and healthy behaviors, TBI symptoms are likely to improve over time.

Cultural and Workplace Considerations

There are many things you can do to help wounded veterans transition into civilian culture and your work environment. Some possibilities:

Create an environment where veterans can work comfortably

- Do not initiate discussions of war or related controversial subjects.
- Allow employees the opportunity to sit facing doors and windows.
- Be mindful that some need frequent movement due to chronic pain.
- Acknowledge military holidays.
- Respect medication-related ups and downs.

Implement supportive workplace practices

- Acknowledge military experience during employment interviews.
- Offer a flexible schedule when possible.
- Practice patience in employee and customer interactions; let the veteran disclose information regarding his or her experience only as he or she is comfortable.
- Write down or repeat instructions for employees with cognitive impairments.
- Support the Wounded Warrior mentorship program, a six- to 12-month partnership between a seasoned leader and a veteran that helps support the transition into our culture and corporate environment. More information is available online, at www.wwmp.us.

Assist a veteran who needs or wants to acquire additional skills

- Provide support to learn new skills or technology.
- Include veterans and persons with disabilities in career fair activities.
- Inform veterans about educational opportunities and resources available within the organization.
- Be familiar with programs, services and resources for veterans; for example, AllThingsMilitary.com has information on military-friendly colleges for those wanting to further their education.

Preparing Staff to Work with a Wounded Warrior

Adding a wounded veteran to an organization can enrich the diversity of your workforce and promote a positive image. Hand in hand with this opportunity is a responsibility to educate your workforce about the associated issues and potential impact of PTSD, TBI and other impairments. Some of the ways you can promote an environment of understanding are:

- Learn and practice proper etiquette toward persons with disabilities.
- Emphasize respect and inclusive practices.
- Do not tolerate offensive jokes and remarks.
- Honor disability-related infrastructure norms, such as not using parking spaces, toilet stalls, ramps or other aids that are specifically designated for special-needs persons.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: www.va.gov
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: www.eeoc.gov
- Veterans' Crisis Line: 1.800.273.8255 or www.veteranscrisisline.net
- U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Hiring Toolkit: www.dol.gov/vets/ahaw

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.



How can employers help veterans returning to the workplace?

Veterans may be ready to reenter civilian life, but picking up where they left off can be difficult. Employers who have men and women returning to work from active military duty can play a large role in easing his or her transition back into the workplace.

Here are tips for employers:

- **Returning to work:** As soon as your employee's tour of duty is completed, he or she should contact you via email or phone. Talk with the human resources department to make them aware of the employee's return and the role he or she will have in your department. Tell your employee to contact you again when he or she returns home so you can set up a personal meeting.
- **Meet in person:** Once your employee is home, have a personal meeting to establish a start date and provide information on projects and update him or her on policy or personnel changes that may have occurred during his or her absence. Be clear about the role your employee will play when he or she returns. Set objectives and goals if possible. Explain how a transition will occur if his or her position was temporarily filled by someone else.
- **Welcome back:** Once the employee has returned to work, consider having a department meeting or informal party with cake to reintroduce him or her to the office and show your support of his or her return.
- **Readjustment:** Returning to work after military work is not like returning from a vacation. Getting back to a work routine may be difficult. Your employee will need time to adapt to civilian life again. Keep the lines of communication open. Suggest EAP options or other therapeutic assistance to help him or her handle their transition and any situations that cause them difficulty. Remind your employee of all the benefits your company provides.
- **Reevaluate:** After a month, have a meeting with the employee to see how he or she is adjusting. Plan another meeting at the three-month mark to evaluate progress.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: www.va.gov

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Call:

TTY: 800.697.0353

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: