

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes. The flag is oriented vertically, with the stars in the upper left and the stripes extending downwards. The colors are vibrant, with a deep red and a bright blue. The text is overlaid on this background.

**An Initiative to Support Student  
Veterans  
Servicemembers and Family Members**

**Green Zone Professional Development**

# Green Zone Program

A training program designed to create awareness about experiences and issues faced by student veterans and servicemembers as they transition from military life to campus life.

A Green Zone Supporter pledges to be supportive and encouraging of veterans/servicemembers and family members on campus.



# Commonly Used Terms

- Servicemember (SM)
  - Generic term which encompasses Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserves personnel
- Veteran
  - Any individual who served in the U.S. military regardless of length, time, and/or location of Service
- OEF- Operation Enduring Freedom
  - War in Afghanistan
- OIF- Operation Iraqi Freedom
  - War in Iraq



# Who is a Student Veteran/ Servicemember?

Student Veterans and Servicemembers are a diverse group of individuals.

They are:

- From all branches of the military
- Range in age, race/ethnicity, and gender
- Have served during times of war and peace
- Have different education goals
- More likely to have families





# The Military Experience

# Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Military Experience

Separation from family or loved ones

Relocating away from family and friends



# Military Experience - Deployments

- Deployments last from 2-18 months
- Multiple deployments
  - Some serve more than one deployment before being discharged from the military
    - More than 1,000,000 SM have experienced two or more deployments
- Emotional Cycle of Deployment:
  - Pre-Deployment, Deployment, Sustainment, Re-Deployment, Post-Deployment

# Pre-Deployment

Physically present  
and  
Psychologically absent

Faber, AI, Willerton, EI, Clymer, S., MacDermind, S.M., Weiss, H. (2008). *Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(2), 222-230.



# Pre-Deployment

- Campus Concerns
  - ✓ Notification
  - ✓ Possible class withdrawal
  - ✓ Coping with unit preparation v. class responsibilities
  - ✓ Loyalties to friends, family and unit
  - ✓ Romantic relationships
  - ✓ Challenges “outside the norm”



# Deployment

Psychologically present

and

Physically absent

Faber, A.I., Willerton, E.I., Clymer, S., MacDermind, S.M., Weiss, H. (2008). *Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime.* Journal of Family Psychology, 22(2), 222-230.



# Deployment

## Tough Realities About Combat

- Fear in combat is pervasive
- SM may be injured and killed
- There will be communication breakdowns
- Combat impacts everyone mentally and emotionally
- Combat has lasting mental health effects
- SM are afraid to admit that they have a mental health problem
- Deployments place a tremendous strain upon families
- Combat environment is harsh and demanding
- Combat poses moral/ethical challenges

WRAIR Land Combat Study Team



# Challenges of OIF and OEF

- No clearly defined "front line" or rear areas (FOB)
- Highly ambiguous environment
- Complex and changing missions
- Long deployments



- Repeated deployments
- Environment is very harsh



# Post Deployment

Physically present

and

Psychologically absent

Faber, Al, Willerton, El, Clymer, S., MacDermind, S.M., Weiss, H. (2008). *Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(2), 222-230.



# Post-Deployment Challenges

Physical

Cognitive

Social

Emotional

Spiritual



# Post-Deployment Challenges

- **Physical**
  - ✓ Traffic
  - ✓ Crowds
  - ✓ Unarmed
  - ✓ Access to alcohol
  - ✓ Sounds



# Post-Deployment Challenges



## Cognitive:

- ✓ Loyalty issues to family vs unit
- ✓ Secrecy vs disclosure
- ✓ Boredom
- ✓ Regrets
- ✓ Thoughts of losses
- ✓ Simplicity to complexity



# Post-Deployment Challenges

- **Social**

- ✓ Separated from buddies
- ✓ Overwhelmed or misunderstood by family
- ✓ Feelings of alienation

- **Emotional**

- ✓ Grief
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Feeling unsafe
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Withdrawal from war "rush"
- ✓ Numbness



# Post-Deployment Challenges



## Spiritual

- ✓ Asking why buddies died
- ✓ Lack of purpose
- ✓ Changed faith
- ✓ Conflicting values



# Transitioning from Base to Campus

# Common Experiences While in the Military

Military culture and battlefield skills can be deeply internalized by many Service Members. Sometimes, core beliefs and principles learned through military service can conflict with the beliefs and principles underlying higher education. For example, following orders and respecting rank and formality may run counter to the independent thinking and informality encouraged in many classrooms.



# Transition Strengths

- Veterans/ Servicemembers transitioning out of the military onto college campuses bring a unique perspective
  - Military training
  - Life experience
  - Established Identity
  - A more worldly view
- Skills taught in the military help students to be successful
  - Leadership
  - Motivation
  - Time Management
  - Work Ethic
  - Stress Management



# Transition Difficulties

Military skills



New profession

Switching gears



Non-military

Skills and training



College Credit

GI Bill



College Tuition



# Transition Difficulties

- Things to keep in mind about Student Veterans in the classroom:
  - May have difficulty relating to classmates
  - May find loud noises to be disturbing
  - May become anxious with changes in the classroom
  - May have excessive absences
  - May have symptoms of trauma from military experiences

# Invisible Wounds

- Can impact the ability to concentrate and complete assignments
- PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury
- MST – Military Sexual Trauma



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- PTSD is a type of anxiety disorder. It can occur after a person has gone through an extreme emotional trauma that involved the threat of injury or death.
- PTSD is experienced by some, but not all Student Veterans/Servicemembers
- Have some knowledge of PTSD, BUT DO NOT expect that every Student Veteran/Servicemember will have these symptoms

# PTSD in the Classroom

- Student Veterans may:
  - Sit in the back of the classroom so they can have a clear view of everything around them
  - Be easily startled by noises (pens dropping, shuffling in a backpack, whispering or other noises from classmates)
  - Be withdrawn from class discussion
  - Have difficulty maintaining emotional control during difficult topics
  - Have a service dog

# Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- A blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain.
  - Severity of injury can vary
    - Mild: brief change in mental status or consciousness
    - Severe: extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury
- Some, but certainly not all Student Veterans, may have experienced a TBI
  - Have some knowledge of TBI, BUT DO NOT expect that all Student Veterans/ Servicemembers will have experienced a TBI

# Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
  - Includes sexual assault, sexual threats, bullying, and unwanted touching or grabbing that occurred while in the military

# Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- Some Veterans of OIF/OEF have PTSD symptoms.
- Some have mild TBIs.
- Some have physical injuries.
- Some of these veterans are coming to our campus.
  
- May be experiencing a disability for the first time
  - Unaware of services on campus with a documented disability
  
- May not want to identify as having a disability
  - Stigma
  - Implications for future in the military
  - Active service members

\*\*\* (Jones, Young, & Leppma, 2010; Thomas et al., 2010)

# Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- **What we should know:**

- Do not ask or suggest that the Student Veteran/ Servicemember has a disability, but inquire about the issues they are experiencing to better provide the appropriate resources
- Become familiar with information provided on your Disability Support Services website for those who may request such services. Students may need extra help navigating the system and understanding what help is available to them
  - Provide the student with contact information if requested for Disability Support Service Office
  - Assist in making an appointment, if needed

# Easing the Transition

- Have an open dialogue about frustrations
- Provide them with information about various services and resources available as seems appropriate
  - Veteran Certification (Your POC for VA who SM can talk to)
  - Job Center
  - Counseling Services
  - Disability Support Services Office
  - VA Hospital
  - Wounded Warrior Project/DAV/VFW/American Legion
- Remember that each student is unique in their experiences



# Easing the Transition

- What Student Veterans want us to know:
  - "We are having normal reactions to an abnormal experience."
  - "No two veterans are alike."
  - "Each of us has had different experiences."
  - "Do Not assume that you know my politics or beliefs just because I was in the military."
  - "I may or may not be ready to talk about my experiences."
  - "Trust can be an issue for me."
  - "Being friendly and listening can go a long way toward building trust."
  - "Do Not be afraid of me."
  - "We are accustomed to being successful and may be too proud to ask for help."

# Suggested Questions To Ask The Veteran

- What is your branch of service?
- How long in the military?
- How has your experience been at school?
- What was your job and where were you stationed?
- What are your career goals?
  
- ***Do not ask if they have killed someone***
- ***Do not ask how/if they were injured***

# Questions To Ask The Veteran

**IF A SERVICE MEMBER OR VETERAN OPENLY  
DISCUSSES HIS OR HER EXPERIENCE: DO  
NOT INTERRUPT, DO NOT MINIMIZE, DO  
NOT OFFER YOUR POLITICAL BELIEFS  
ABOUT THE WAR.**

**JUST LISTEN**

# Things to Remember

- Students veterans are a unique population with different experiences.
- There are numerous ways to help Student Veterans/Servicemembers just as there are for other student populations.
- Developing trust with our population is important.
- Following-up with the Student Veterans/Servicemembers and carrying out what you say you will do is essential.



# HOW CAN I HELP?

- Faculty members are often the only point of contact for student Veterans. Faculty can help student Veterans in many different ways.
- Find out how to make your syllabus Veteran friendly, and how to understand and help with specific classroom behaviors.



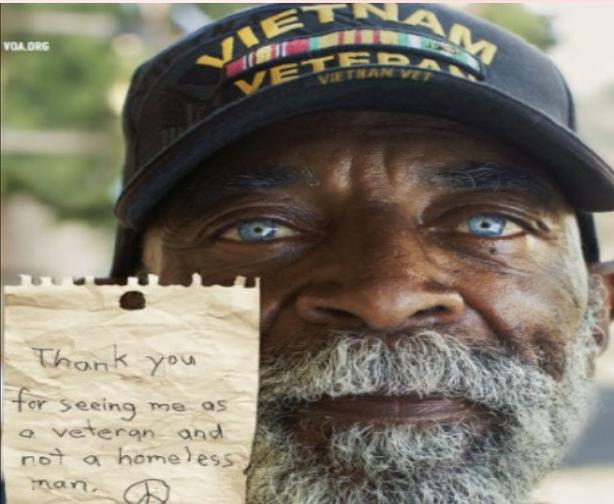
# Privacy

- Some Veterans may not want to bring attention to their service. There may be many reasons for this, one of which is that he or she may not wish to speak of his or her experiences.
- **What can I do?** Be respectful of a person's desire to disclose or not disclose his or her Veteran status.
  - If you are a veteran perhaps on the first meeting/day of class introduce yourself to the group/class – or -
  - If you are interested in providing Veterans in your class an opportunity to covertly disclose his or her status, you could hand out note cards during the first class to gather information about the students (Tell us about yourself).
-

# Why I believe

“Let’s find solutions to help our students be more successful”

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=10202842147799402&set=vb.1372724079&type=2&heater>





Questions?