

RESOURCES

Military Cultural Awareness Training

Reintegrating into civilian life can be a challenge for returning service members, colleagues and loved ones. Understanding the challenges and turning to supportive resources can help make the experience better. These links may be of help.

Military One Source

www.militaryonesource.mil

Information and resources to help deal with the unique aspects of military life.

Military Health System: Psychological Health Center of Excellence

www.realwarriors.net

A part of the Military Health System, DCoE works to promote resilience, rehabilitation and reintegration for warriors, families, and veterans with psychological health concerns and traumatic brain injuries.

Psychological Health Resource Center

www.health.mil/PHRC

866-966-1020

Free service available 24/7 by phone, online chat, or email. Psychological health information and resources related to combat stress, depression, reintegration, treatment and other concerns for service members, veterans, and family members.

Military Health System: Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence

www.health.mil/TBICOE

Find extensive information and resources for patients and families.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

www.esgr.mil

ESGR is a Department of Defense office established to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component service members and civilian employers.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

www.iava.org/index.php

Supporting and empowering our newest vets.

NAMI Support

www.nami.org/Find-Support/Veterans-and-Active-Duty

Support and education for veterans, service members, and those who care about them. Includes link to NAMI Homefront education program for families, friends and caregivers.

National Center for PTSD

www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp

Gain a better understanding of what PTSD is, how it can be treated, and resources that can help.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: Mental Health

www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Information, resources and links to programs for veterans and their families, including substance use disorder, PTSD, and suicide prevention.

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org/topics/military-veterans

Mental health information for service members, veterans, families and other loved ones.

Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 then press 1

Text: 838255

www.veteranscrisisline.net

Professionally trained clinical staff. Can provide referrals to other services, such as substance abuse treatment, marital counseling, treatment for depression and PTSD.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text **988** (also chat on website)

988lifeline.org

Lifeline provides live crisis center services by phone in Spanish and English. Translation services available in over 250 languages.

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TALKING TIPS

Military Cultural Awareness Training

Service members return from an experience that most of us can't imagine. They, and their family members, have lived with extraordinary amounts of stress. Being home doesn't make it magically disappear. Whether you are interacting with a vet at work or in the community, it can be helpful to follow a few basic "do's and don'ts."

For friends, family and coworkers

Thanking a service member for his or her service is a polite acknowledgement of the magnitude of the job and his or her role in keeping our country safe. However, understand that service members don't consider themselves to be heroes. It is alright to believe that and value his or her service and sacrifice, but avoid using "hero" language as it can trigger feelings of guilt or shame for some service members.

Be aware that they do not see themselves as victims, even if they have sustained injuries or are struggling psychologically. Rather, most service members consider themselves to be strong warriors. This is a source of strength for them, but recognize that it can make it very hard for them to reach out for help.

Be ready to communicate the support that is available. It may be something that you could offer on a personal level – taking the kids for a weekend to give them some R & R time with their partner, for example. Or, you may be in a position to share information on company benefits or services available to them. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is one such supportive service. Available 24/7, the EAP can put a vet or family member in touch with resources, practical help and emotional support services.

Sharing political views about the conflicts is not helpful. Political views vary widely among service members. Please don't assume they are for or against the war. No matter what their opinion is about the war, they can't say anything negative about their commander in chief. Their role is to execute their orders.

Understand that many want to go back to the war zone. This may be hard to understand. Many feel a sense of duty to finish the mission and to support their buddies. Some miss the intensity and clear sense of purpose. They may also feel like they don't fit in back home. Try to see through their eyes.

Don't try to "talk the talk." Civilians can't imagine or truly understand the experience of service members. Using the "lingo" and aligning with their experience in other ways is not a way to earn their respect. It is helpful to have an understanding of the wars, the geography and some of the common military shorthand.

Stay away from insensitive or intrusive questions or comments. For example, "Did you kill someone?" Some wish they had; others wish they hadn't. If they did, maybe it was on purpose, maybe it was an accident. No one takes killing lightly. This is not a topic for casual conversation. Making comments such as, "You're lucky that you made it out alive" can also bring up painful emotions like survivor's guilt.

Each individual will be different in terms of wanting or not wanting to discuss his or her experiences.

Take your cue from them. It is also important to know that for newly returned vets, a reluctance to talk may be due to profound exhaustion. Most service members are deeply weary when they get home and may not have energy to speak for long periods of time. Communicate your support, but give them time.

When you do talk, don't press for details, but listen if they are offered. Listen with empathy and without judgment. As you listen, be alert for cues that they may need more help.

Understand that nothing is the same after a deployment. A veteran and his or her family members are going through an adjustment that touches all aspects of his or her lives. While this can present daily challenges, many service members also say they have returned with a greater sense of gratitude, purpose and confidence, as well as improved problem-solving skills. The bottom line is: treat them with respect and dignity. Be understanding of the magnitude of this transition. Help them identify their strengths, build resilience and set new goals in their new normal.

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