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Via Chat or E-mail**



**Tier One:
Introduction to Military Culture and the
Military-Connected Experience**





Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.



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Learning Objectives

- Evaluate the importance of military cultural competency and areas of common internal biases around military culture.
- Distinguish elements of the military experience and lifestyle integral to military culture.
- Explain the operational demands of the military and the importance of assimilation into military culture for service members and their families.



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Learning Objectives

- Analyze unique aspects of military roles and identities that may contribute to strengths and vulnerabilities among military-connected individuals and families.
- Appraise elements of intersectionality as they apply to military service members, military subcultures, and military family life experiences.



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Disclaimer

This presentation contains personal stories, videos, and photographs that some people may find emotionally disturbing.

Please feel free to take a break during these portions of the presentation or speak to staff.



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Training Overview

Military Culture

Expanding boundaries of competence

The United States Military

How is it organized? Who is in it?

Military Lifecycle

Initial Entry → Sustainment → Veteran Transition

Strategies to Enhance Military Cultural Competence



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Why talk about military-connected populations?



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class August V. Clawson. Public Domain. DVIDS.

1,273,382
Active-Duty Members

767,238
Selected Reserve Members

2,416,781
Military Family Members



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How can military connection impact mental health practice?



U.S. Air Force photo by Brian Lee Clark/Megan O'Leary, Public Domain, 2005.

Perception of
Symptoms

Initiation of Care

Maintenance of Care



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What is culture?

Customs Feeling Ceremonies Clothing
Orientation Race Behaviors
Social Values Nationality Roles
Beliefs Traditions Religion Courtesies
Hierarchy Appearance Priorities
Language Ethnicity

"Culture is the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgements about their world."

Chamberlain (2005)



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What is military culture?

Ceremonies Command Mission
Motos Respect Duty Acronyms
Custom Unit Bearing Rank Readiness
Camaraderie Courtesy Uniform Language Ethos
Appearance Loyalty Cohesion Occupation
Discipline Standards

"Culture is the values, norms, and traditions that affect how individuals of a particular group perceive, think, interact, behave, and make judgements about their world."


Chamberlain (2005)




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In Their Own Words... "It's important"





SSgt Alma Sanchez, USMC



Military Culture Variability

- Assimilation will vary
- Experiences can be branch or subculture specific
- Strengths and vulnerabilities can vary depending on a person's lived experience







Salute Bearing
Uniform Rank

Service Creeds Core Values

Hidden:
Ethos, Warrior Values and Beliefs

Beliefs about Military Service:
Discipline
Teamwork
Loyalty
A higher calling
Self-sacrifice
Fighting spirit

When I think about working with service members, I feel...



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Expanding Military Competence

What comes to mind when you think about...

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Military Service | Service Members |
| Military Families | Veterans |

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Expanding Boundaries of Competence



Military Culture:
Self-Awareness
Exercise

Military Culture:
Core Competencies for Healthcare Professionals

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Expanding Boundaries of Competence



Military Culture
Self-Awareness
Exercise

- Break up into small groups (6-10 members per group)
- Evaluate beliefs and assumptions using a case vignette



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Expanding Boundaries of Competence

Consider ...

1. What assumptions did you make about the case presented?
2. How might this affect your perceptions of this individual?
3. How can you use the Self-Awareness Exercise to explore your own perspectives and biases?



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Expanding Boundaries of Competence

- What patterns of assumptions did your group notice, if any?
- How did implicit bias show up in the case conceptualization of your vignette?
- What did your group find helpful about using the Self-Awareness Exercise?



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Martin A. Corry/Released 2008



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Military-Focused Care



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Apontasi, Gagar, Public Domain

- Military-connected communities are seeking care with civilian providers at unprecedented rates
- Perceived gap between military members and civilian providers
- Increasing awareness is essential in improving communication and connection



10,000 Foot View

How is the military part of the federal government?

Image courtesy of DVIDS, SSgt Trevor McBride photographer

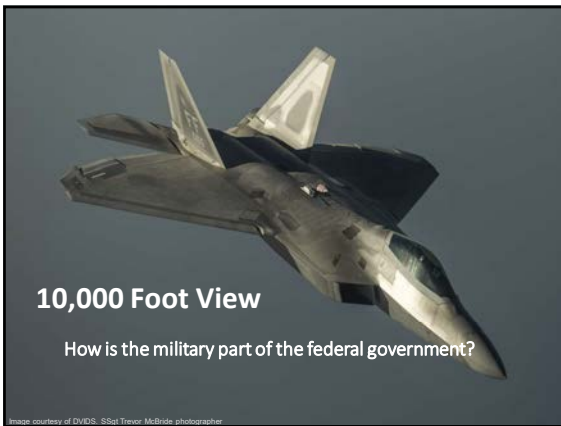





Image courtesy of DVIDS, PFC Jonathan Reed photographer


Organizational Structure: Perspective from the Top
The Armed Forces: Who runs it? How is it organized?








The United States Constitution...



Ultimately rests responsibility for the nation's defense upon the shoulders of the President



Congress has no direct constitutional authority over the conduct of war








President
Commander-in-Chief of the
Military

Secretary of
Defense

Combatant Commanders

CHAIN OF COMMAND



**United States
Military**

- Eight federally established uniformed services
- Four departments:

DHHS



DOC



DOD



DHS





Noncombatant Uniformed Services



Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)

↓



U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (PHSCC)



Department of Commerce (DOC)

↓









National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Corps (NOAA Corps)




The “Armed Forces”

Department of Defense (DoD)



 *United States Army (USA) – Jun 14, 1775*
 *United States Navy (USN) – Oct 13, 1775*
 *United States Marine Corps (USMC) – Nov 10, 1775*
 *United States Air Force (USAF) – Sept 18, 1947*
 *United States Space Force (USSF) – Dec 20, 2019*



The “Armed Forces”

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)





 *United States Coast Guard (USCG)
August 4, 1790*

FACT:
The Coast Guard also operates under the Department of Defense during wartime and in military operations.




Army





SOLDIER

To fight and win our Nation's wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders.



Navy



SAILOR

To maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression, and maintaining freedom of the seas.



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Marine Corps



MARINE

Responsible for providing power projection from the sea, utilizing the mobility of the U.S. Navy to rapidly deliver combined-arms task forces to global crises. To conduct amphibious operations and develop amphibious doctrine.



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Coast Guard



COAST GUARDSMAN

To save lives, protect the environment, defend the homeland, and enforce Federal laws on the high seas, the nation's coastal waters, and its inland waterways.



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Air Force



AIRMAN

To fly, fight, and win in air, space, and cyberspace.



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Space Force



GUARDIAN

Responsible for organizing, training, and equipping Guardians to conduct global space operations that enhance the way our joint and coalition forces fight, while also offering decision makers military options to achieve national objectives.



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USA

• Corps > Division > Brigade > Battalion > Company > Platoon > Squad

USAF

• Wing > Group > Squadron > Flight > Section > Element

USMC

• Division > Regiment > Battalion > Company > Platoon > Squad > Team

USN

• Operating forces: consisting primarily of combat and service forces
• Shore establishments: provide support to operating forces

USSF

• Field Commands > Deltas (or Garrisons) > Squadrons

USCG

• Headquarters, Areas (Pacific & Atlantic), Districts, Sectors, Individual Units (cutters, air stations, small boat stations, marine science units, electronic support detachments, etc.)

Organizational Structure: Branches



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Image courtesy of DVIDS. Photographer Staff Sgt. Fred Brown



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Why did they join?

benefits college trouble
travel family community legal
tradition serve country friends
healthcare stability support
structure purpose finances



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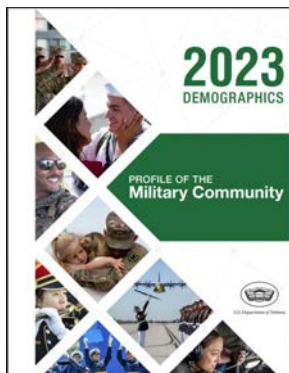


Image courtesy of DVIDS, SGT Vincent Leveley, photographer

Demographics



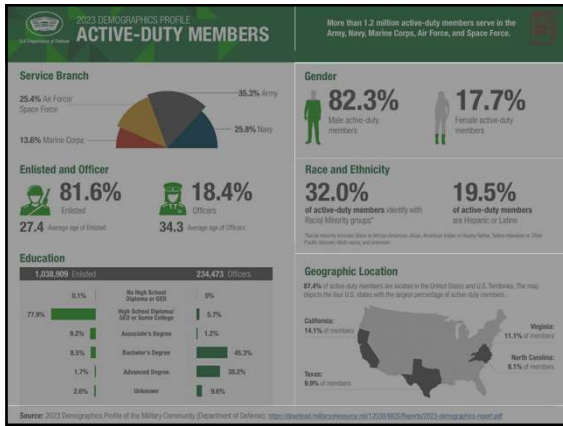
51

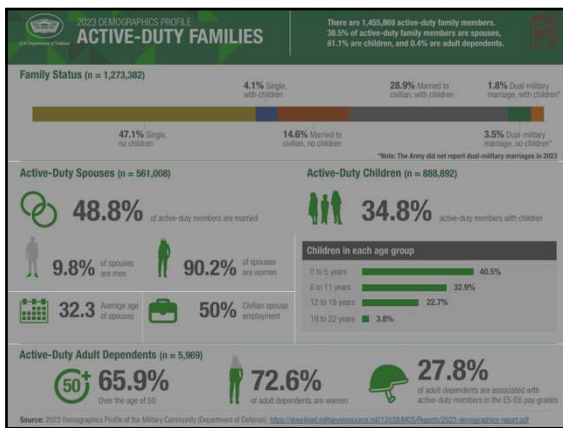


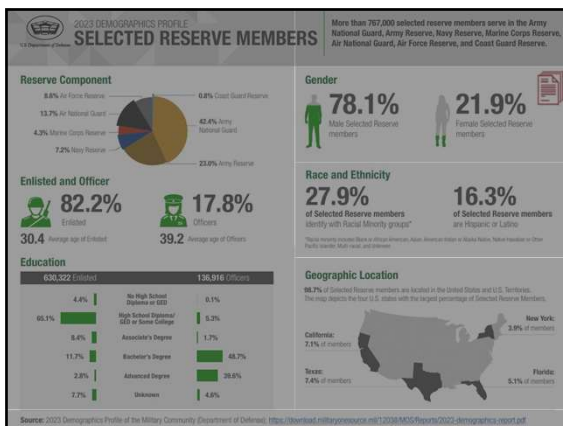
(Department of Defense, 2024)

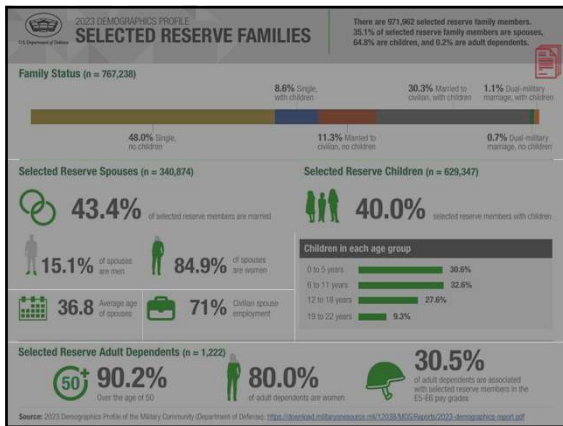


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SBHP OVERVIEW



Overview




STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Training Tiers

Blue Tier (3 days, unless noted)
Evidence-based psychotherapies

Tier S: Special Topics (2 to 4.5 hours)
Special topics on military-related behavioral health

Tier Three (2 days, unless noted)
Evidence-based psychotherapies

Tier Two (1 day)
Overview of Military-Related Behavioral Health Challenges

Tier One (1 day)
Introduction to Military Culture and the Military-Connected Experience

Prerequisite: Completion of Tier One and Two and Secondary Membership

STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS





Image Courtesy of DVIDS, Photographer Petty Officer David Isaacson, USNavy

Initial Entry into Military Service

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Signing on the Dotted Line....

MEPS

Oath of Enlistment

Ship Day




Image Courtesy of DVIDS, Photographer Petty Officer David Isaacson, USNavy

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The Healthy Warrior Effect

The Healthy Warrior Effect (HWE) is a selection bias in military research:

Healthier individuals are more likely to enter, remain in, and be deployed by the military



Day 0



Basic Training



Foundational
Military Skills

Regulatory
Training

Life Skills
Training

Customs and
Courtesies

Leadership
Skills



The Patch



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U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Christopher M. O'Grady, Public domain, via DVIDS.

Assimilation into the Military



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What elements of IET assist most in assimilation?



Wearing the uniform
Weapons qualification
Regimented schedule
Team building
Field exercise



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More than a Uniform

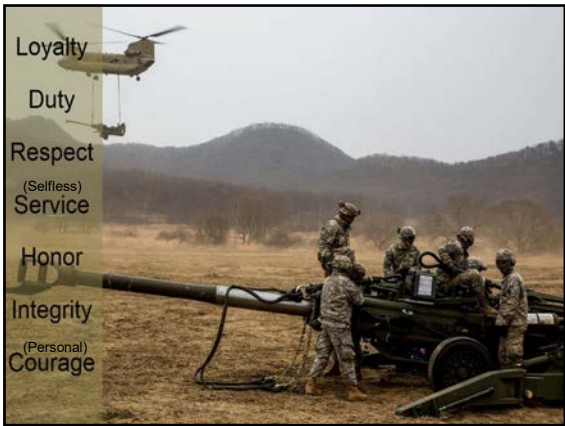
Military culture can be defined as the sum total of all knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, habits, and capabilities acquired by service members *and their families* through membership in military organizations.





Military Values

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Col. Dallas Johnson



Loyalty

Duty

Respect

(Selfless) Service

Honor

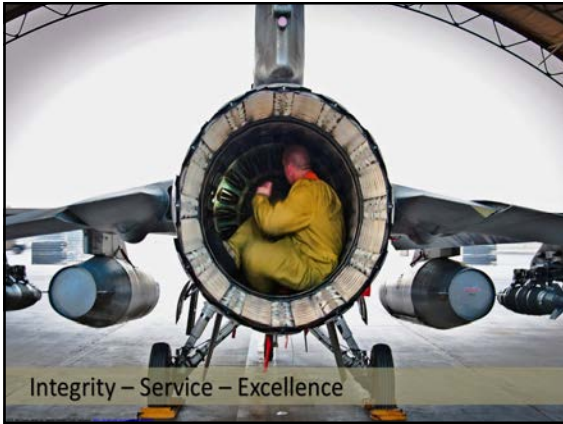
Integrity

(Personal) Courage













Soldier's Creed

I am an American Soldier.
I am a Warrior and a member of a team.
I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values.
I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.
I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.
I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.
I am an expert and I am a professional.
I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.
I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
I am an American Soldier.



Image courtesy of DVIDS. Photographer Samuel King



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The Creed of a U.S. Marine

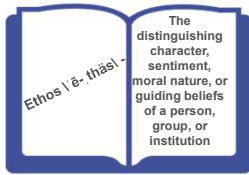


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Warrior Ethos

Warrior Ethos



- Ancient and largely unchanged through the millennia
- A world, self, and other view that imbues and colors everything the service member is and does
- Provides the service member with the **context, support, and framework** needed to endure and perform with dignity and honor



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Acquiring Military Ethos

- Oaths of enlistment of commissioning
- Service branch core values
- Creeds
- Professional training
- Military decorations
- Punishing violations of codes of behaviors



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Military Ethos

- Selflessness
- Loyalty
- Stoicism
- Moral Code
- Excellence



Deck photo by Capt. Mondo Lencow, U.S. Marine Corps. (Released) (Photo domain), via Wikimedia Commons



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How You Train

Trust their training

Think under pressure

Adapt to adversity

the mission and team

It's not just what you train, but how you train

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Training the Warrior Ethos

| Training Area | Methodology | Psychological Effect & Warrior Ethos Connection |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Discipline & Obedience | Drill & ceremony, immediate corrections | Instills attention to detail, fosters instant obedience to orders |
| Stress Tolerance | Controlled stress exposure (gas chamber, sleep deprivation, physical exhaustion) | Builds composure under stress, reduces fear responses |
| Mental Toughness | Endurance events (The Crucible, ruck marches, field exercises) | Develops grit, resilience, and emotional control under extreme conditions |
| Teamwork & Unit Cohesion | Squad-based exercises, shared hardships, collective rewards/punishments | Strengthens reliance on others, reinforces "leave no one behind" mentality |
| Decision-Making Under Stress | Land navigation, marksmanship under pressure, combat scenario drills | Improves cognitive processing in high-stakes situations |
| Confidence & Competence | Progressive skill-building (small tasks to complex maneuvers) | Creates self-efficacy, reinforcing the Warrior Ethos' focus on mastery |

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A photograph of a Marine band marching down a city street. The band members are in dress uniform, carrying rifles. They are carrying a large American flag and a Marine Corps flag. The background shows city buildings and trees.

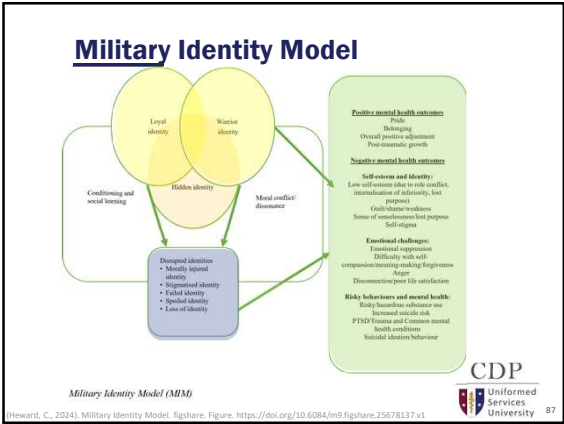
Military Identity

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- Military Culture → Military Identity**
- Voluntary adoption of group norms
 - Pressure to conform
 - Hypermasculine “warrior identity”
 - Military training
 - Breaks down and rebuilds individuals into warriors
 - Rituals and routines
 - Symbolic elements that reflect core values and purpose, reinforce military identity
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Mental Health and Identities

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>DISPUTED:</p> <p>FAILED: guilt, shame, emasculation, perceiving oneself as weak</p> <p>MORALLY INJURED: shame, guilt, self-stigma, poor self-compassion, struggles with meaning making and forgiveness, anger, withdrawal, interpersonal, PTSD, suicidal ideation and behavior, SUD</p> | |
| <p>LOYAL & WARRIOR:</p> <p>Good Mental Health Outcomes: feelings of pride, belonging; feeling confident, capable, and resilient</p> <p>Negative Mental Health Outcomes: Risky or hazardous alcohol use; self-esteem due to weight scrutiny</p> | <p>HIDDEN:</p> <p>Negative Mental Health Outcomes: emotional suppression, anger in response to hiding</p> <p>Women: hiding femininity (harassed, threatened, betrayed, and excluded); Substance use to cope</p> <p>Good Mental Health Outcomes for Women: resilience, optimism, and pride (despite hiding femininity)</p> |

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(Neward et al., 2024)
90



Military Family Acculturation

U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Ralph Branson

Military Spouse Acculturation

Acculturation:

Cultural and physical adaptation to a new lifestyle

Marginalization

- Alienation from both cultures

Separation

- Retain civilian identity, resist military culture


Assimilation

- Fully adopt military culture

Integration

- Balance both civilian & military worlds

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(Berry, 2020; Page et al., 2024)
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Family Acculturation Process

- Dependents “acquired” during SM’s time in service
- Begins with stress, evolves through skill-building or detachment
- Orientation
 - Spouses clubs
 - Family readiness groups
 - Building community
 - Mentorship

“I have become half-military ... changed all but the core values of who I am. I’m not sorry or resentful. But, I am different.”
– Respondent 159



(Berry, 2020; Page et al., 2024)

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After SM Leaves for Training

- Initial shock/despair/loneliness
- Possible delays to benefits/pay
- Thrown into “mission first” mentality

Top 5 areas of life impacted:

Parenting responsibilities

Household responsibilities

Spouse mental health

Childcare challenges

Child mental health



(Blaisure et al., 2024; Blue Star Families, 2024)

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Benefits of Military Life

- Financial & educational benefits
- Health care
- Housing
- Recreational benefits
- Cultivating strength
- Friendships & community
- NG/Reserves: Ability to serve with greater stability



(Britikos et al., 2020; NASEM, 2019)

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Service photo by Crista Mary Miller, Public Use/DVIDS

Day-to-Day Functions

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Day-to-Day Military Functions

| <u>Active Duty</u> | <u>Selected Reserves</u> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Serve full time | • Part-time service |
| • On base or deployed | • Greater flexibility |
| • Structured daily routines | • Challenges balancing dual careers |

Commonalities = military training & readiness requirements

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Military Readiness

- Medical
 - Physical
 - Mental health
- Occupational
 - Promotions
 - Assignments
 - UCMJ
- Family
 - EFMP

“The Healthy Warrior Effect”

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Military Stressors

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Normative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs for most SM & families Expected |
| Normative Military | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occur for most military members & families Expected |
| Catastrophic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not occur to most families Unexpected |

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Normative Military Life Stressors


- Relocations
- Spouse unemployment/underemployment
- Long work hours/work schedule
- Family separations
- Military/civilian divide
- Transitioning out of the military



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(Blaisure et al., 2024; Blue Star Families, 2024)

Relocations



| | |
|---|--|
| Active Duty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 1/3 of SMs move each year Opportunity to “see the world” Can be very disruptive for families | NG/Reserve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally drill close to home – but not always! If they want to move: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must find new unit Travel to drill |
|---|--|

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Separation Experiences



Nation of Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan N. Vasquez Garcia Public Use (DVIDS)

Normative Separations



U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 1st Class Nathan Leland Public Use (DVIDS)

Training Exercises

Military Schools

Unaccompanied Tours

Temporary Duty Assignments (TDY)

Voluntary vs. Involuntary

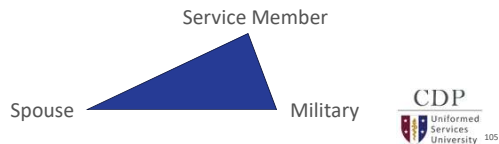
- Impacts on SMs and families
- Career advancement
- Professional development



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Peter Hibbard Public Use (DVIDS)

Military Couples

- Balance between relationship demands and the requirements of military life
- Marital quality is often related to the **nonmilitary** experiences of the military spouse

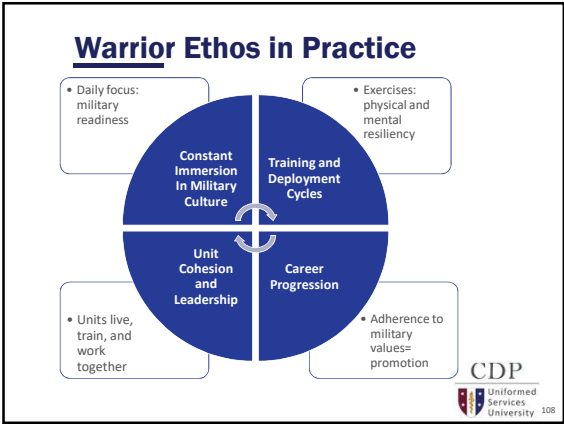


Military Children

- Influence of military life stressors mediated by family functioning
- Have access to numerous resources



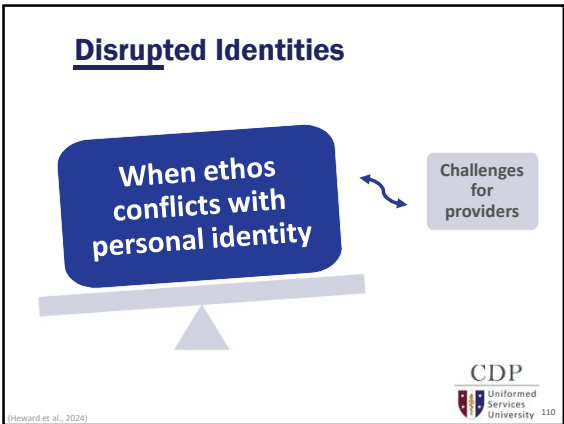




How the Warrior Ethos Evolves

- Career progression
- Warrior ethos becomes more ingrained over time
- Day-to-Day impact
- Duty expectations & operational demands reinforce mindset

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Warrior Ethos vs. Personal Identity

SMs who value emotional expression may feel alienated

Mental health struggles may be seen as weakness

Cultural clashes may occur

Consequences:

- Low morale
- Mental health difficulties
- Withdrawal
- Burnout
- Difficulty in their civilian life

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Warrior Ethos vs. Well-Being

Warrior ethos emphasizes stoicism & resilience **yet** also relies on cohesion & camaraderie

Understanding is essential to bridging the gap between these competing demands.

This duality creates a culture clash

Service members are trained to uphold stoic values = avoidance of mental health support

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The Way Forward

A new framework for well-being

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mindfulness/Awareness | Leads to emotional regulation and fewer outbursts under pressure |
| Connection | Builds community bonds, fostering teamwork and supportive relationships |
| Self-Insight | Increases recognition of the need for support and reduces emotional suppression |
| Purpose | Fosters self-care & reconnection with identity |

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(Dahl et al., 2020)



Image courtesy of DVIDS. Photo by Lt. NSWG-3 PAO

Subcultures

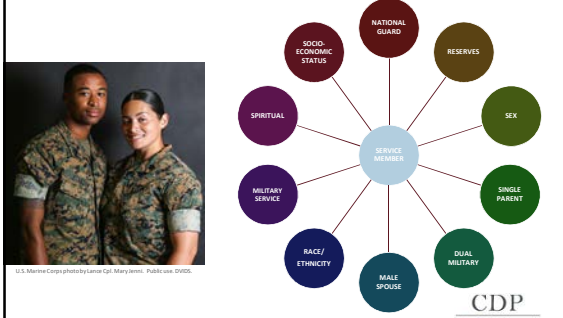
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In Their Own Words... Subcultures



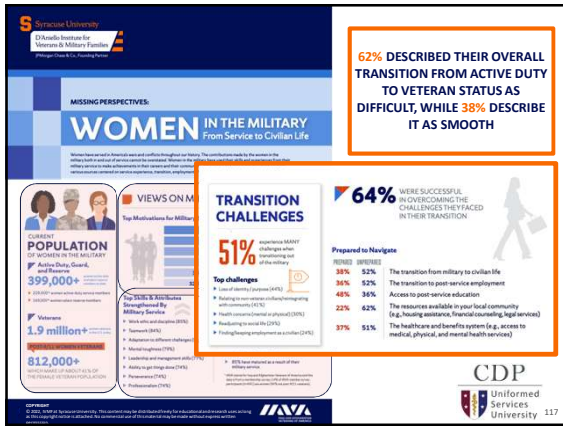
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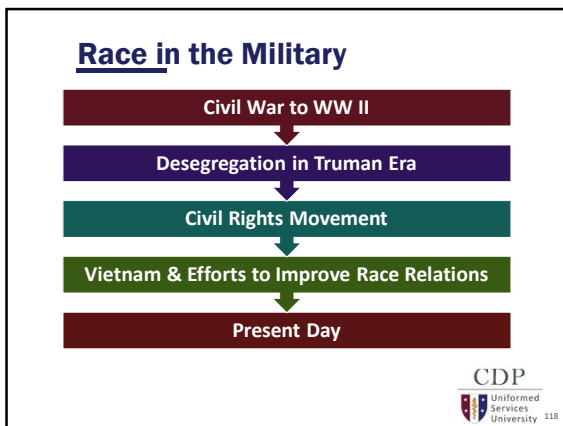
Intersectionality

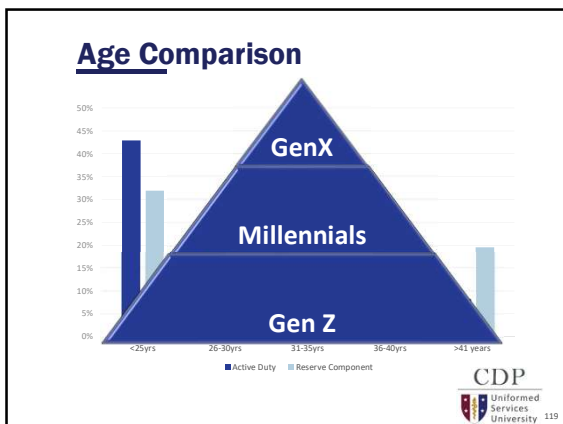


U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Mary Joann. Public use DVIDS.

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Adaptations to Generational Change



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. James Fritz. Public domain. DVIDS.

- Purpose-driven leadership
- Shifting notions of loyalty
- Communication styles
- Training and motivation methods
- Mental health & resiliency programming



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Military Spouses

- May struggle with “military spouse” identity
- Unique needs of male military spouses



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Lauren Cobin. Public domain. DVIDS.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Michelle Chang. Public domain. DVIDS.



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Dual Military

- Both partners serving
- Balancing work schedules
- Geographically separated
- Family & work conflict



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Michael Brown. Public domain. DVIDS.



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Single Service Members

- Unique stressors
- More likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors
- Quality of Life programs



Guard and Reserve



Stressors for National Guard

 **Research Report**
Addressing Stressors
for National Guard
Personnel
Insights From Leadership



https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4202-1.html

- Overseas operations ↓, domestic demands ↑
- Family separations & duty status switches
- Lack of interpersonal connectedness
- Gaps in health care coverage

Subcultures

- Be aware of military subcultures
 - Infantry
 - Pilots
 - Special operations
 - Medical providers
- Culture differs among branches, units, and teams
- Diversity variables and identity

Subcultures influence individuals' military experiences differently!



Ask and don't assume...



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U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman J. Michael White/USAF

The Deployment Experience

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Why talk about deployment for military-connected populations?



U.S. National Guard photo by Steven Age. Army/Forrest. Public Use/USDA.

Impact on Service
Members

Impact on Families

Impact on Military
Readiness


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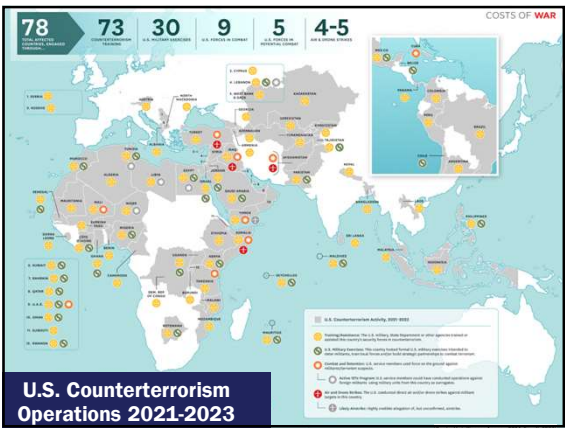
Types of Deployments

```
graph TD; A[Types of Deployments] --> B[Combat Deployments]; A --> C[Non-combat Deployments]; A --> D[Rotational Deployments]; A --> E[Humanitarian Missions]; A --> F[Training Deployments]; A --> G[Peacekeeping Operations]; A --> H[Rear Detachment]
```

The diagram illustrates the various types of deployments for the Canadian Armed Forces. It is organized into a hierarchical structure with a central title and seven categories of deployment, each represented by a blue rounded rectangle. The categories are arranged in two columns, with a seventh category centered below the first column.

- Combat Deployments**
- Non-combat Deployments**
- Rotational Deployments**
- Humanitarian Missions**
- Training Deployments**
- Peacekeeping Operations**
- Rear Detachment**

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Canadian Deployments Program
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Selected Reserve Considerations



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Rachael Underwood, Public Use.

"Suddenly Military"

Period of adjustment to full-time military life for Selected Reserve members and their families.



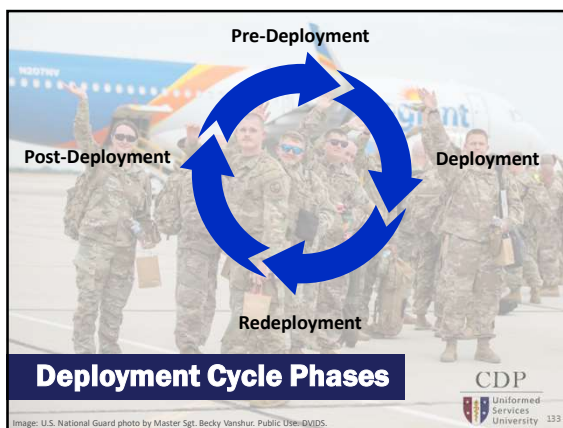
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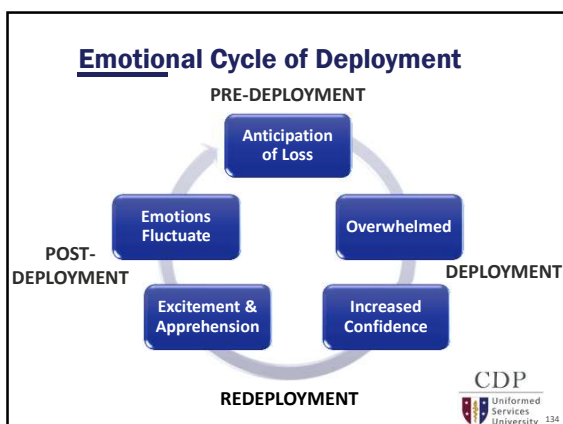


Period of adjustment to full-time military life for Selected Reserve members and their families.

[illegible]







Pre-Deployment

Pre-Deployment

Notification
Preparation
Training



Deployment Readiness

- Pre-deployment mental health matters
- Most diagnoses occur early in training
- Selective deployment fuels the "Healthy Warrior Effect"

*"The Healthy
Warrior Effect"*

Pre-Deployment Preparation

- Prepare mentally
- Increase in training and work hours
- May feel torn between the military and other priorities



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. John Allen, Public Use/20105.

In Their Own Words... **Pre-deployment**



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<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/949350/990th-engineer-vertical-construction-company-departure>

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Pre-Deployment Family Stress

Lack of
preparation
time

Shifting
expectations

Perception of
mission

Lack of
information

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Practical Preparation



Designed by Freepik. From www.

- Power of attorney/will/financial plan
- Location of important papers
- Emergency contact procedures
- Childcare arrangements
- Communication plans



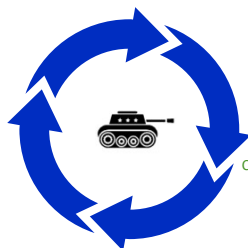
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In Their Own Words... Deployment is **not** a Casual Word



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Deployment



Deployment
Departure
Sustainment
Combat and Conflict



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Deployment

- Combat vs. non-combat
- Varies in length and location
- Preparation and training changes with the needs of the mission
- Diverse missions



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[Messacar, 2017]

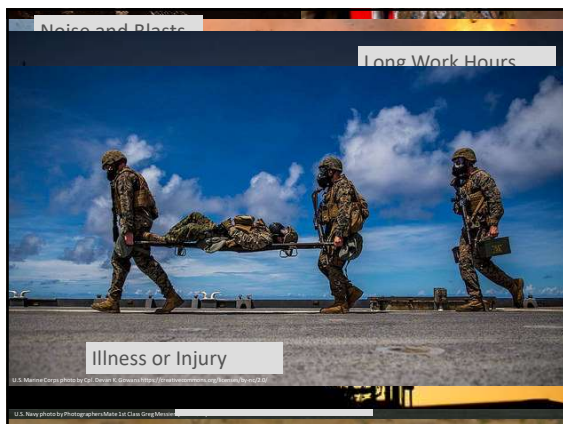
Deployment Challenges

- Physical Strain
- Emotional Stressors
- Isolation and Disconnection
- Operational Fatigue
- Moral and Ethical Dilemmas
- Uncertainty and Risk



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman David Rappaport
Public Domain

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In Their Own Words... Deployment





Challenges for Families

- Emotional Strain
- Increased Responsibilities
- Communication Barriers
- Children's Adjustments
- Social Isolation

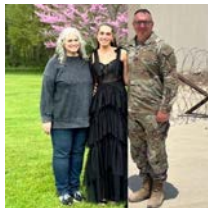


Photo shared with permission by CPT Jamie Phipps

Changes During Separation

- Parental absence
- Responsibilities
- Routines
- Milestones



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Early Childhood (0-5)

Behavioral

- Fussy/eating difficulties
- Clinginess
- Tearfulness
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Withdrawal
- Tantrums

Emotional

- Confusion
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Stomach aches



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(Aranda et al., 2011; Barler & Berry 2009; Chartand et al., 2008; Hilde-Gorman et al., 2015; Lester et al., 2016; Strong & Lee 2017)

School-Aged Children (6-11)

Behavioral

- Aggression
- Defiance
- Irritability
- Nightmares
- Avoidance
- Attention difficulties
- Tantrums

Emotional

- Apprehension
- Anger
- Vulnerable
- Resentful
- Headaches/stomach aches



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Adolescence (12-18)

Behavioral

- Risk taking
- Sleep disruption
- Attention difficulties

Emotional

- Emotional dysregulation
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger



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Redeployment



Redeployment

Anticipation
Transition
Demobilization



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Redeployment



Preparing to return home



Push to finalize responsibilities on deployment and at home



Increased stress and preparation



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Tasks of Redeployment

- Training incoming personnel
- Medical and mental health evaluations
- Mental preparations to return to active duty or reserve component roles



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Family Preparations

- Preparing for the SM's return
- Shifting expectations
- Wide range of emotions
- Lack of information



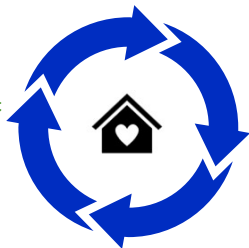
Photo: Sgt. S. Moore/Getty Images/Lance Cpl. Nan Yang/Reuters/2005



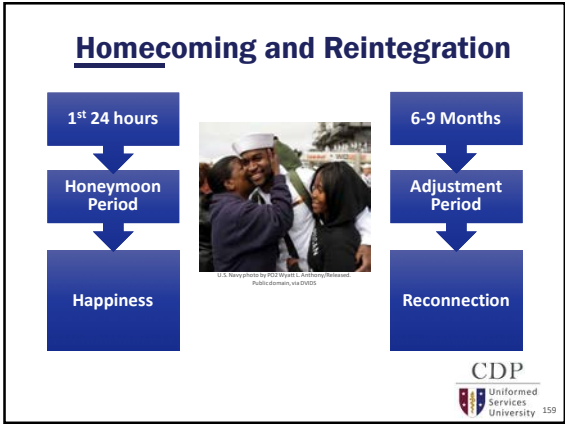
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Post-Deployment

Post-Deployment
Reunion
Reintegration



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Challenges for Service Members

- Adjustment to civilian/garrison life
- Mental health considerations
- Physical recovery
- Re-establishing relationships
- Career transitions
- Social reintegration
- Social disconnect from peers
- Emotional regulation difficulties

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Reintegration Challenges

- Reintegration stress
- Children's emotional reactions
- Communication and relationship changes
- Managing expectations

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In Their Own Words... Reintegration



Deployment and Mental Health

- Who is at risk?
- What are the outcomes?
- Mental health selection effect

*"The Healthy
Warrior Effect"*



Resilience is the Rule



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Stephanie Black, Photo Domain: DVIDS

- Families establish new routines
- Adjustments to roles/responsibilities are integrated
- New norm is found





U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Omar N. Rabi. Public Domain.

Military Transitions

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Transition/Retirement

- Each year, over 200,000 members leave the military
- Universal experience
- Major life change
- Impacts families as well as the active-duty members



U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Lance Cpl. Rosemarie Ortiz

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Separation vs. Retirement

| SEPARATION | RETIREMENT |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Can happen anytime after joining | • 20+ years of service |
| • Legal or medical reasons | • Medical reason |
| • End of commitment | • Continued pay and benefits |
| • May receive benefits | |

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Additional Military Transitions


| Release from Active Duty (REFRAD) | Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) to Inactive Duty Training (IDT) | Federal or State Activation to IDT | IDT to Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Separation from AD with an additional military service obligation• Move from AD into RC or IRR• Can occur upon completion of AD commitment or due to other circumstances | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition from full-time AD under the AGR program to part-time service• IDT consists of scheduled drills, typically one weekend per month and annual training | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moving from active duty under federal (Title 10) or state (Title 32) orders back to part-time status (drills and annual training) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transitioning from part-time status to the IRR• IRR members do not have regular training obligations but can be called back to active duty if needed |

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Reserve Components Considerations



Lower level of transition support


Benefits (education, medical, legal)





Social/Unit support

"Veteran" status



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(Neward et al., 2024)

Clinical Assessment

- BH symptoms
- Connection/support
- Sense of purpose
- Problematic anger
- Substance use
- Relationship functioning

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Illu: Star Families, 2024; US Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Barbara L. Fales

Suicide Risk

- The “Deadly Gap”
- Highest risk demographics and military characteristics
- Time period of greatest risk
- Important to address limited access to care & increased risk factors
- Risk for RC veterans may be delayed



(Ravindran et al., 2020; Sokol et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020)

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Impact on Military Identity

- Loss of structured military environment
- Redefining personal and professional identity
- Challenges in adapting to civilian norms



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Dominick Smith. Publication: OASD.



(Howard et al., 2025; Williams et al., 2018)

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Gaining the Veteran Identity

- Identity work begins post-service
- Role of veteran communities (VFW, American Legion, etc.)



Official Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Bryan Hyland. Public Use Only.

Social Belonging = Identity Continuity

Veteran identity is strengthened when connected to meaningful **social roles, rituals, and peers**



(Williams et al., 2018)

Military Family Transition

- Creating stability post-military life
- Shift in identity
- Loss of support programs for families
- Loss of connection to the military community
- Finding employment



82nd Airborne Division Fellowship Retirement Ceremony by SSG Joshua Harris, Public Domain (2005)



(Blue Star Families, 2025; Conry et al., 2022; Karre et al., 2024; Keeling et al., 2020)



“You don’t have to have walked a mile in my shoes, but you have to know I don’t wear shoes... I wear boots.”

Engaging the Culture with Confidence



Got Cultural Competence?


Screening for Military Service

Culturally-Informed Assessment and Treatment Planning

- Client’s military experiences
- Perceptions of the problems they are facing
- Key past and present stressors
- Present and future concerns

Culturally- Informed Assessment and Treatment Planning

- Which branch of service are you in?
- What is your occupation?
- Were you ever enlisted?
- Why did you join the military?
- Why did you choose a specific branch of service that you did?
- Why did you choose the Guard? (Reserves?)




Military-Connected Assessment

- Can you tell me about your family's connection to the military?
- Has your family experienced any recent or past deployments? What was that like for you?
- How has military life impacted your day-to-day routines or family roles?
- Are there frequent relocations or separations? How do you or your children adjust to those changes?
- How does your family typically manage stress during deployments, relocations, or reintegration?
- What support systems do you currently have – military or civilian?



Culturally- Informed Assessment and Treatment Planning

- Tell me about joining ...
- How was it?
- What did you do?
- Where were you stationed? Did you deploy?
- Were you close with your unit?
- Were you/are you a Reserve or Guard member?
- What was your rank/grade?
- Tell me about leaving ...
- Are you from a military family?



Culturally- Informed Assessment and Treatment Planning



At this time, what is the role of your military service in your identity?



What is/was your role in the military? When did you serve?



Is there something specific about your military service that influences your concern?



Has anything prevented you from getting the help you need?



How would you describe your problem to other service members, veterans, or their family members?



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paula Christie. Public Domain



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Understanding Veteran Status



- Veteran status varies by definition and discharge type.
- VA mental health services are increasingly accessible, even for OTH discharges.
- Legal reforms continue to expand benefits at federal and state levels.



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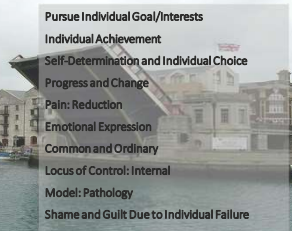
Culture Clash – Bridging the Gap

Military Culture

Collectivistic
Interdependent/Self-Sacrifice
Fulfill Role Within Group
Group Achievement
Hierarchical Decision Making
Maintain Tradition
Pain: Increased Tolerance
Emotional Suppression
Unique and Separate
Locus of Control: External
Model: Strength Based
Shame and Guilt Due to Failing Group

Behavioral Health Culture

Pursue Individual Goal/Interests
Individual Achievement
Self-Determination and Individual Choice
Progress and Change
Pain: Reduction
Emotional Expression
Common and Ordinary
Locus of Control: Internal
Model: Pathology
Shame and Guilt Due to Individual Failure



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Double-Edged Sword of Ethos

| Strength | Guiding Ideal | Vulnerability |
|--|---------------|--|
| Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare | Selflessness | Not seeking help for health problems because personal health is not a priority |
| Commitment to accomplishing missions and protecting comrades in arms | Loyalty | Survivor guilt and complicated bereavement after loss of friends |
| Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint | Stoicism | Not acknowledging significant symptoms and suffering after returning home |
| Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong" | Moral Code | Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code |
| Becoming the best and most effective professional possible | Excellence | Feeling ashamed of (denial or minimization) imperfections |

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Alignment with CBT Practices

| Military Culture and Values | CBT Practices |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Emphasis on daily structure | Agenda-setting |
| Prioritization of mission success | Explicit goals for treatment |
| Adherence to chain of command | Directive stance of therapist |
| Need for personal responsibility | Clear expectations between therapist and patient |
| Development of strengths | Focus on skills training |
| Inclination toward action | Emphasis on behavior change |

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Military-Informed Assessment

Client: I just recently got out of the military and I'm having a difficult time.

Therapist: Is today's visit related to your military service?

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Military-Informed Assessment

Client: I just recently got out of the military and I'm having a difficult time.

Therapist: What branch of service were you in?

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Military-Informed Assessment

Client: I just recently got out of the military and I'm having a difficult time.

Therapist: Is this your first time going through a deployment together?

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Military-Informed Assessment

Client: I just recently got out of the military and I'm having a difficult time.

Therapist: Performing successfully on the mission is the most important thing to you.



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Leverage the Strengths

- Recognize **ability** to engage with adversity
- Structure treatment as a **health mission**
- Use language consistent with a **team** approach
- Foster **active engagement**
- Identify **meaningful reasons** to address symptoms and health
- Identify existing **support and resources**



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Culture Training

If veterans or service members do not feel understood by their health care provider, they are less likely to pursue treatment or adhere to treatment recommendations.



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In Their Own Words... Parting thoughts



Next Steps

What is one thing you will do differently as a result of this training?



Questions?



Additional Resources

Learn more about Military Culture
www.deploymentpsych.org/military-culture

Military Family Resources:
<https://deploymentpsych.org/MilFam-Resources>

Monthly Webinar Series:
CDP Presents
<https://deploymentpsych.org/webinars>



deploymentpsych.org

- Blog updated weekly with a range of relevant content
- Articles by subject matter experts related to deployment psychology, including PTSD, suicide prevention, depression, and insomnia
- Other resources and information for behavioral health providers
- Links to CDP's Facebook page and Twitter feed
- CDP Podcast Series



Provider Support

CDP's "Provider Portal" is exclusively for individuals trained by CDP in evidence-based psychotherapies—Tier Three Trainings (e.g., CPT, PE, CBT-I, etc.)

- Consultation resources
- Printable fact sheets, manuals, handouts, and other materials
- FAQs and 1:1 interaction with answers from SMEs
- Videos, webinars, and other multimedia training aids



Participants who complete Tier Three will automatically receive an email instructing them how to activate their username and access the "Provider Portal" section at deploymentpsych.org.


To view Tier Three training opportunities, visit: starproviders.org/providers-home





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 Website: deploymentpsych.org
 Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/DeploymentPsych>
 Twitter: @DeploymentPsych

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Completing Tier One 


Share Your Contact Info with Your State's NG Behavioral Health Team → Scan the QR Code or Click the Link to Opt-in 

Post-Training Survey & CE Evaluation Survey → Please complete, sent via email


Continuing Education (CE) Credits → Login to SBHP Provider Portal

For non-portal users, CE's will be emailed within 30 days


STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS 202

Feedback & Ongoing Improvement 

To effectively serve military-connected clients

Pre-and Post-Tests → Follow-Up Surveys → Directory Surveys → 

- Pre-and Post-Tests: Measure reactions to and knowledge gained at trainings
- Follow-Up Surveys: Measure skills gained from trainings
- Directory Surveys: Track military clients served by SBHP providers

Share Your Contact Info with Your State's NG Behavioral Health Team 

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Joining the Directory

Requirements

- ★ Have an Active License
- ★ Master's Degree or Higher in a Behavioral Health Discipline
- ★ Accept New Client Referrals from the SBHP Directory
- ★ Complete Tier One

How to Join

- ★ Log in to the SBHP Provider Portal
- ★ Create Directory Listing:
 - Upload License(s)
 - Enter Practice Information

Learn more at: <https://starproviders.org/join-the-directory>

Share Your Contact Info with Your State's NG Behavioral Health Team

STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Benefits of Joining the Directory

- ✓ Serve the military-connected community
- ✓ Receive military-connected referrals
- ✓ Attend free high-quality CE trainings
- ✓ Connect with National Guard Behavioral Health Staff
- ✓ Receive Resources

Share Your Contact Info with Your State's NG Behavioral Health Team

STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Next Steps

Army Reserve Officer's Training Corp. Photo by Ken Buck. Public Use.

Visit: starproviders.org

1. Complete the Post-Training Surveys
2. Join the Star Providers Directory
3. Build Your Skills by Attending More Free Trainings
4. Engage in the Community of Practice
5. Consider Becoming a TRICARE or Give an Hour Provider

Providers who accept TRICARE receive priority enrollment at certain trainings.

Share Your Contact Info with Your State's NG Behavioral Health Team

STAR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

Contact and Follow Us

 **Support Email:** sbhpsupport-ggg@usuhs.edu

 **Facebook:** [@StarBehavioralHealthProviders](#)

 **LinkedIn:** [@StarBehavioralHealthProviders](#)

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