



COMMON CHALLENGES DURING RE-ADJUSTMENT

Civilians may not be aware of the unique challenges that separating from military service and returning to civilian life can present. In this handout, we highlight some of these challenges. Veterans may find difficulty:

- Relating to people who do not know or understand what military personnel have experienced (and many civilians don't know that they don't know!).
- Reconnecting with family and re-establishing a role in the family.
 - o Families may have created new routines during absences and both the family and the Veteran will have to adjust to changes.
- Joining or creating a community.
 - o 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. The Veteran and their family may have to find new ways to join or create a social community.
- Preparing to enter the work force.
 - o 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. These are new skills he or she will have to learn and master.
 - o In applying for a job, a Veteran will have to determine how to translate his or her military skills and duties into civilian terms and create a resume.
 - o A Veteran may have never created a resume. Instead of a resume the military uses a Field Service Record to detail qualifications, training, and experience.
- Returning to a job.
 - o If deployed with the National Guard or Reserve, a service member will have to adjust to resuming their previous job or another similar job at the same company. For some recently returning Service Members, they may find themselves behind a desk in as little as 3 days after leaving a combat zone.
 - o Returning to the job may include a period of catching up, learning new skills, or adjusting to a new position. It will also include adjusting to social changes that may have occurred in the workplace.
 - o During the transition back to work, some Veterans also experience worry and fear about possible job loss.
- Creating structure.
 - o The military provides structure and has a clear chain of command. This does not naturally exist outside the military. A Veteran will have to create his or her own structure or adjust to living in an environment with





more ambiguity.

- Adjusting to providing basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, housing).
 - o In the military, these things are not only provided, but there is often little choice (e.g., you eat at determined times in a certain place, duty station determines your dress).
 - o Given the lack of choices while in the military, the vast array of choices in the civilian world can sometimes be overwhelming.
- Adjusting to a different pace of life and work.
 - o In the military, personnel do not leave until the mission is complete. In a private sector business, an employee might be expected to stop and go home at 5pm, whether the “mission” is complete or not. This may not be apparent to all Veterans.
 - o Given the direct nature of communication in military settings, there may be subtle nuances in conversations and workplace lingo that are unfamiliar to Veterans.
- Individualistic culture versus a culture of service and teamwork.
 - o For example, civilian workplaces may be competitive environments, as opposed to the collaborative camaraderie of the military.
 - o Putting one’s own needs first, as opposed to the needs of friends, fellow Veterans, or family, may be difficult.
- Establishing services.
 - o A Veteran may have to learn how to get a doctor, dentist, life insurance, etc. These services were previously provided by the military.
 - o A Veteran may also need to navigate the paperwork and process of obtaining benefits and services from the Department of Veteran Affairs.

More information can be found in this article online, Five Ways to Make a Military to Civilian Life Transition Easier, <http://www.eioba.com/a/xc7/five-ways-to-make-a-military-to-civilian-life-transition-easier#ixzz1PwbxBplj>.

Want to learn more about survival skills that were helpful to military personnel during deployment or while in a combat environment that may cause challenges when readjusting to civilian life?

Visit the, 8 Battlefield Skills That Make Reintegration Challenging website at http://www.realwarriors.net/active/afterdeployment/combat_skills.php. You can educate yourself about what some common reintegration challenges are for returning service members. (Note that this material is written for families.)

