

Military Culture and Moral Injury in Veterans

Mid-Atlantic Regional Community of Practice
Professional Training Event
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EveryMind strengthens communities and empowers individuals to reach optimal mental wellness

- Counseling and Case Management for Children, Youth and Families
- Crisis Phone/Text/Chat Line
- Service Coordination for Veterans, Service Members and their Families
- Community Education



Regional Community of Practice

- EveryMind serves as our Regional Community of Practice Champion for the Mid-Atlantic Region
 - **ServingTogether**, National Capital Region
 - **Mission United**, South Hampton Roads
 - **PA Serves**, Greater Pittsburgh
- Conducting these trainings based on feedback we receive from you
 - More to come soon
 - We need your feedback!



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Your mental wellness.
Our mission.

Today's Presenters

Military Culture Competency and Transition Awareness

Jonathan Patrick

Veteran Justice Specialist, Virginia Veteran & Family Support
Virginia Department of Veteran Services

Moral Injury in Veterans

Paula Domenici, Ph.D.

Director, Training and Education
Center for Deployment Psychology





Military Culture Competency and Transition Awareness

**Working with Servicemembers, Veterans &
Families**

Virginia Veteran and Family Support



Presenter: Jonathan Patrick "Pat"





Military Culture Competency

This training provides an overview of military culture to include organizational structure, rank, branches of service, core values, and demographics as well as similarities and differences between the Active and Reserve components, National Guard and Military Family awareness.

It also provides awareness of transition and reintegration needs for veterans and members of the National Guard and Armed Forces Reserves and their Families.



Learning Objectives

- Describe the military organizational structure, rank, branches of service, core values, and demographics
- Identify differences between the Active and Reserve components and National Guard
- Identify characteristics of military transitions from active duty, deployment and reintegration to civilian life and the challenges that arise
- Identify best practices to enhance behavioral health, treatment options and resources for military servicemember veteran family (SMVF) in community settings
- Identify resources for SMVF, caregivers and providers
- Discuss the prevalence and characteristics of suicide among military service members, and veterans according to Federal and State data sources



Military Active Duty Population

- 1,429,995 active duty members
- More than half of these are 25 years old or younger
- Approx. 54% are married
- Approx. 42% have children

Approx. 7% are single parents

- 7% of active duty are dual military couples
- Approximately 3 million troops have served in support of OIF/OEF/OND





Demographics in the U.S. Military

Deployed around the world, the armed forces are a pillar of U.S. power and influence abroad

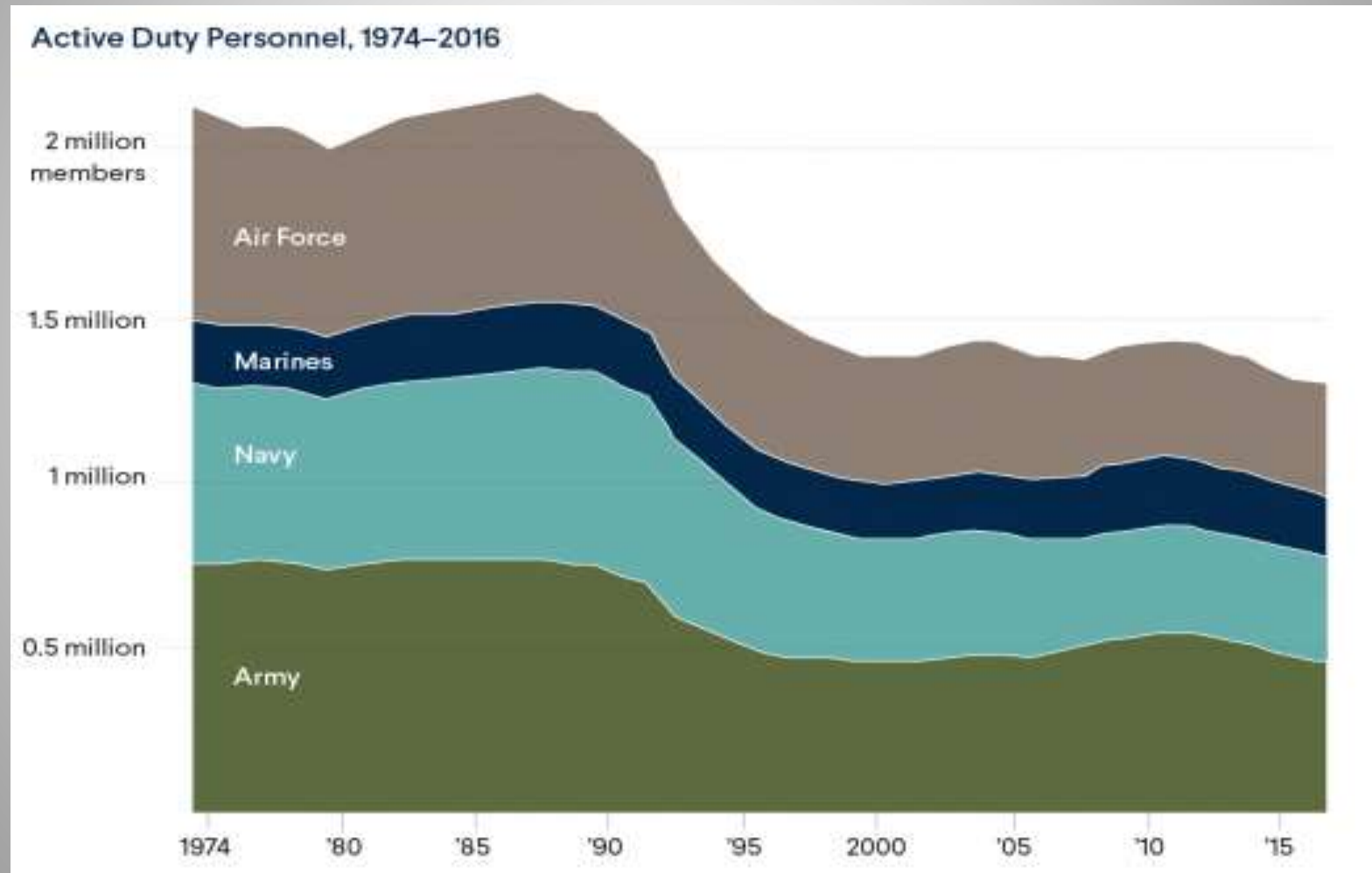
How much does the military resemble U.S. society at large?

1973 - The United States ended the draft for military service, transitioning to the all-volunteer force that exists today

At the time, the active component of the military comprised 2.2 million men and women, that's now under 1.2 million



Active Duty Personnel 1974 - 2016





6 Facts About Diversity in the Military

- The Army remains the largest branch of the U.S. military. In 2015, 36% of all active-duty military personnel were serving in the Army
- The active-duty force remains largely male-dominated, but women have made inroads in recent decades
- As the country has become more racially and ethnically diverse, so has the U.S. military
- The active-duty military has grown older in the past 40 years.
- Military officers have considerably higher levels of educational attainment, on average, than enlisted personnel and U.S. adults
- There is much more to the U.S. military than the active-duty force



“The armed forces pride themselves on being leaders in diversity. In addition to providing equality, diversity gives the military more strength by ensuring that it reflects the very same population it’s called to defend.”



Armed Forces Reserve

Performing duties one weekend per month, plus two weeks of training per year, members of the Reserves and National Guard are considered part-time



Reserve Components

- 1.5 million in the Reserve Components
- Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard
- Reserve components are subordinated to the Federal government (four are Dept of Defense and **one Dept of Homeland Security**)





Individual Ready Reserve

- IRR is a category of the **Ready Reserve** of the Reserve Component of the Armed Forces of the United States.
- Composed of former active duty or **reserve** military personnel
- All members of IRR may be subject to Recall





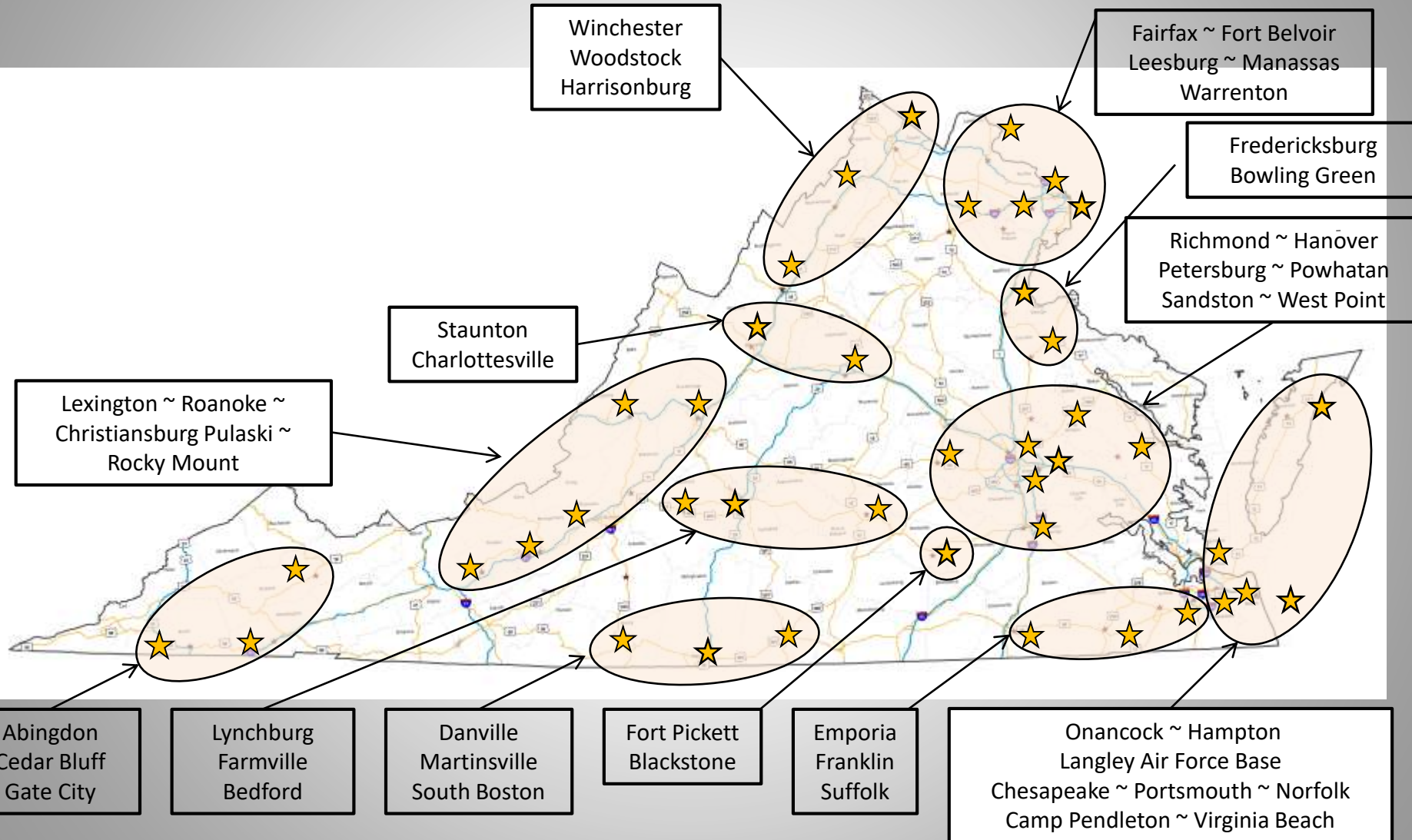
Virginia National Guard (Army and Air)

7500 soldiers, 1200 airmen, and maintains 67
armories in 50 communities

Units and Formations


- U.S. 29th Infantry Division (Light)
- 116th 'Stonewall' Infantry Brigade Combat Team
- 329 Regional Support Group
- Maneuver Training Center, Fort Pickett
- 91st Cyber Brigade
- 34th Civil Support Team
- 183rd Regiment (RTI)
- 2-224th Aviation Regiment







Activation of National Guard

- **Title 10** – *President* orders National Guard to active duty – can be voluntary or not, total amount of time can not exceed 365 days
- 
- **Title 32** – Ordered by the *Governor with the approval of the President* – for various purposes including homeland defense, operational activities (airport security, riot control, natural disasters, etc). Funded by **the Federal government**
 - **State Active Duty** - for emergency response, ordered by *the Governor*; *funded by the state*



Military Language

Similar to other cultures, the military (and each subculture within the military) has its own language and terms.

This “language” serves two important purposes:

1. It has a utilitarian function that makes communicating to other service members easier and more efficient
2. It helps to create an identity and sense of belonging for military members (an “us” and “them” so to speak).





Military Lingo Examples

“MOS”

“Chow”

“Squared Away”

“In Theater”

“Cover”



Culture of the Military

- Abides by own set of rules and norms (UCMJ)
- Unique set of traditions – service specific
- Own language/Alphabet
- Organized hierarchy/rank structure
- Defined roles (Occupational Specialties)
- Consistency across units/organizations
- Command and Control Model
- Strong work ethic, accountability, personal responsibility
- Stoic, pride in being able to handle adversity
- Clearly-defined career progression





Core Values

USN: *Honor, Courage, Commitment*

USMC: *Honor, Courage, Commitment*

USAF: *Service Before Self*

USCG: *Honor, Respect, and
Devotion to Duty*

USA: *This We'll Defend*



Duty, Honor, Country



Army - Soldier

- **Mission:** To fight and win our nation's wars with sustained land dominance across full-range of military operations
- **Oldest and largest branch; main ground force**
- Built to execute large-scale and long-term ground operations

www.army.mil





Navy - Sailor

- **Mission:** The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.
- **Second largest branch, main naval force**
- Provides naval security, ensures sea transport and allow for U.S force projection

www.navy.mil





Air Force - Airman

- **Mission:** To fly, fight and win—in **air**, space and cyberspace. We are America's Airmen
- **Youngest branch**
- Controls air and space operations and is in charge of two-thirds of our nuclear triad

www.af.mil





Marine Corps - Marine

- **Mission:** Marines are trained, organized and equipped for offensive amphibious employment and as a "force in readiness."
- A rapid deployment amphibious force. (Shorter but more deployments)
- Particularly skilled in counterinsurgency, small unit tactics (Fallujah, 2004-05)

www.marines.mil





Coast Guard – Coastie

- **Mission:** A multi-mission force: protection of U.S. coastlines, waterways and territorial seas, defense readiness, search and rescue, port security, aids to navigation, fisheries patrols, drug interdiction/law enforcement
- The oldest continuing seagoing service in the US and the **only military service with arrest authority**
- Operates under the Department of Homeland Security but can be transferred to the US Navy by the President in times of war

www.uscg.mil





Service Force Population



Since Jun 14,
1775

482,264

Reserve:
205K

National Guard:
358K



Since Oct 13,
1775

328,162

Reserve:
108K



Since Sep 18,
1947

310,996

Reserve:
71K
National Guard:
106K



Since Nov 10,
1775

328,162

Reserve:
108K



Since Aug 4,
1790

39,639

Reserve:
8,100K



Rank Structure



Enlisted

“E”

- An enlisted member is one who has joined the military or "enlisted." A minimum of a high school diploma is required. Paygrades E-1 through E-9

Non-Commissioned Officer

“NCO”

- An NCO is an enlisted member who has risen through the ranks **Officer** through promotion. NCOs serve as the link between enlisted personnel and commissioned officers. They hold responsibility for training troops to execute missions. Training for NCOs includes leadership, management, specific skills, and combat training. Paygrades E-4/E-5 through E-6/E-9

Warrant

“W” or “CWO”

- A warrant officer is a highly trained specialist. One must be an enlisted member with several years of experience, be recommended by his or her commander, and pass a selection board to become a warrant officer. Paygrades W1 through W5

Officer

“O”

- A commissioned officer's primary function is to provide management and leadership in his or her area of responsibility. Requires a bachelor's degree and later, as one progresses through the ranks, a master's degree for promotions. Specific commissioning programs exist (e.g., military academies, Officer Candidate Schools, and Reserve Officer Training Corps [ROTC]). Paygrades O-1 through O-10



Military Rank to Civilian Job Translation	
Officer: O5-O7	CEO, COO, Administrator
Officer: O4	Operations Manager, Vice President
Officer: O1-O3	Project Manager, Supervisor
Commander	Program Manager, Senior Director
Enlisted: Warrant Officer	Senior Technician, Technical Advisor
Enlisted: Senior NCO (E7-E9)	Technical Advisor, Division Supervisor
Enlisted: NCO (E5-E6)	Manager, Foreman, Technical Supervisor
Enlisted: (E1-E4)	Assembler, Specialist, Technician
First Sergeant	Director; Vice President
NCOIC	Senior Supervisor,
Platoon Sergeant	First Line Supervisor



Strengths Resulting From Military Service

1. Leadership

2. Team Work

3. Diversity

4. Flexibility/Adaptability

5. Systematic Planning and Organization

6. Work under pressure/ meet deadlines





Normal Stressors of Military Life

Frequent Moves:

For children: changing schools, loss of friends, new routines

For spouses: change of jobs, periods of un/under-employment, search for new doctors, loss of friends



Separation Due to Deployments: spouse becomes single parent, children- loss of parent, uncertainty, worry.

Financial: inability to sell home, unforeseen moving costs, additional day care costs

Limited Support System: separation from extended family, constant loss of friends





OIF/OEF/OND Conflicts

Operation Iraqi Freedom	Feb. 2003 – Sept. 2010
Operation New Dawn	Sept. 2010 – Dec. 2011
Operation Enduring Freedom	Oct. 2001 – Dec. 2014

- **52,010** U.S. service members wounded in hostile action the beginning of OIF and over **6,809** service members have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Approx. **600,000** NG and Reservists have deployed since the beginning of U.S. military operations in Iraq



Characteristics of OIF/OEF/OND and Differences with Past Conflicts

- Heavy dependence on National Guard & Reserve
- Longer deployments with multiple combat deployments and infrequent breaks in between
- High intensity guerilla warfare
- Chronic threat of IEDs and RPGs
- New advancements in body armor, tactical vehicles
- Fewer fatalities and more wounded survive than ever before ("Invisible Wounds")



Additional Stressors of Combat

Combat Stress: transitional period before and after combat deployments

For Guard and Reserves: changes in monthly income, employment concerns, unemployment

Serious Injuries with long lasting impact, some leading to medical discharge

Cycle of Deployment: Pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, post-deployment



Emotional Cycle of Deployment





Other struggles in Combat Veterans

- Loss of identity/meaning (I was a soldier)
- Survivors guilt
 - “If I would’ve done that differently, maybe...”
- Moral Injury: the Trauma of killing:
 - A. “I still don’t know” (if he was an insurgent)
 - B. “Knowing” (civilians that appeared to be threats were killed)
 - C. Collateral damage
 - D. Children





The Paradox of Coming Home

“Honeymoon period”: a few hours to a few weeks.

Changing combat zone responses to appropriate responses in civilian community.

Reference: Resiliency (previously Battlemind) link for training for mental health providers <https://www.rto.wrair.army.mil/bhr.html>



Everyone is changed by war





Moving from this....





















Federal Veteran Definition

What is a Veteran?

Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines a veteran as; “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.”



Our Veteran Population

- 19,998,799 million veterans in the U.S.
- 5.1 million are between ages of 25-50
- 5.2 million are between ages of 50-65
- 9.4% of veterans are women
- 7.2 million Gulf War Veterans



Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

www.va.gov/vetdata



Virginia Veterans

Virginia's Population	Virginia has approximately 720,000 veterans
NOVA Population	<i>NOVA Region has 165,000 veterans</i>
National Ranking	Virginia currently has the 8 th largest veteran population in the nation, however by 2023, Virginia is projected to be ranked 5th
Young	Virginia ranks fifth in younger veterans (age 17 – 39) 33% of the Virginia veteran population is under the age of 50
Female	Virginia has the largest percentage of women veterans to total veterans, 14% (Nationally, females are 9% of the vet pop)

Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

www.va.gov/vetdata




Stressors of Separation from Military Life

- Finding a new identity
- Forming a new support group
- Choosing a permanent home
- Healthcare
- Employment
- Residual impact of military lifestyle on veteran and family members





- Often more challenging for members of the Guard and Reserves
 - Transition Challenges:
 - family life
 - work/work life
 - daily pace and/or routine
 - environmental factors
 - finances
- 





Readjustment to Family Life

- Difficulty communicating
 - Unsure what to share about their deployment/or can't share at all
 - Lack of sensitivity toward partner
 - Minimizing partner's stressors and challenges

Irritability and anger

Emotional numbing

Intimate partner violence

Decreased sex drive

Emotional numbing

Role changes

Infidelity

Instant marriages prior to deployment



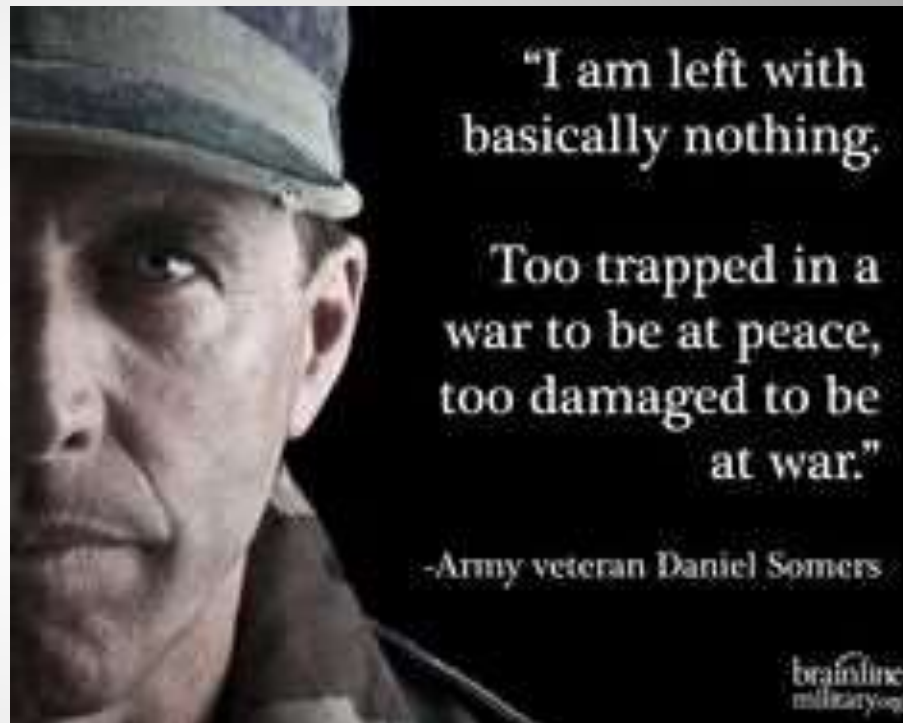
Common Transition/Adjustment Responses

- Feeling irritable, jumpy or sometimes NUMB
- Becoming easily annoyed or frustrated
- Feeling disconnected from friends and family
- Experiencing sadness or guilt
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Being uncomfortable with physical or emotional intimacy
- Having intrusive thoughts, flashbacks or nightmares
- Having trouble concentrating or remembering



Problems which Persist

- PTSD
- TBI
- Anxiety/Depression
- Substance Abuse





Post Traumatic Stress

- Different from Combat Stress
- Now classified as a “trauma and stressor-related disorder” (DSM V) that occurs after exposure to a traumatic or stressful event



PTSD

“A Normal Reaction to an
Abnormal Situation”



PTSD by the Numbers

Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF):

About 11-20 out of every 100 Veterans (or between **11-20%**) who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year

Gulf War (Desert Storm): About 12 out of every 100 Gulf War Veterans (or **12%**) have PTSD in a given year

Vietnam War: It is estimated that about 30 out of every 100 (or **30%**) of Vietnam Veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime

* *From the National Center for PTSD*



Traumatic Brain Injury

TBI is a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain

Blast injuries caused by exposure to improvised explosive devices, rocket-propelled grenades, land mines, mortar/artillery shells, Motor vehicle crashes, falls and assaults

Even those who were not obviously wounded in explosions or accidents may have sustained a brain injury

Mild TBI is most prevalent





Combat Traumatic Brain Injury

- Closed brain injuries – most common
- May not exhibit physical wounds
- Many will not report the incident



PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury Symptoms

IMPACT ON COGNITION AND MEMORY

IMPACT ON EMOTION

IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR





PTSD and mild TBI symptoms

TBI

Insomnia
Memory Problems
Poor concentration
Depression
Anxiety
Irritability
Headache
Dizziness
Fatigue
Noise/Light intolerance

PTSD

Insomnia
Memory Problems
Poor concentration
Depression
Anxiety
Irritability
Emotional numbing
Avoidance
Intrusive symptoms



Common Coping Mechanisms for Veterans with Combat Stress, PTSD and TBI

- Alcohol abuse
- Weapons Security or Perimeter Control at home
- Isolation
- Issues in the home, intimate partner violence
- High adrenaline risk behavior (speeding, etc.)
- Overspending



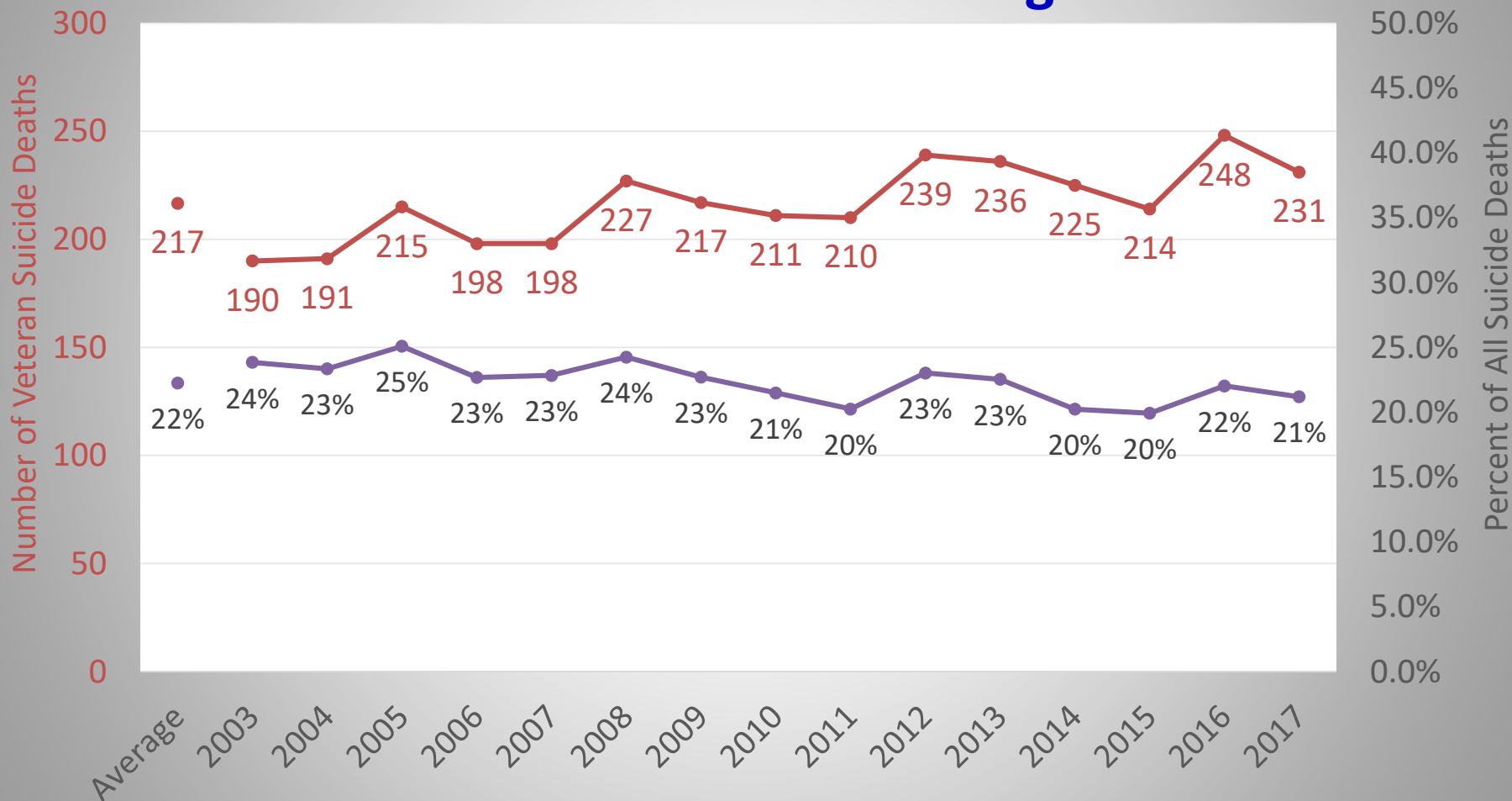
Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

- “Sexual assault or repeated, unsolicited, threatening acts of sexual harassment that occurred while a veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training”
- 1 in 5 female veterans
- 1 in 100 male veterans





Military Service Member and Veteran Suicide Deaths in Virginia





Suggestions for Working with Veterans

- Connect the service member with other veterans - help them develop a peer support network
- Be Military Culture Competent
- Differentiating between transition and military operational stress and PTSD and where to refer if needed
- Do not share your personal views on war or politics –ACTIVELY listen to the veterans needs
- Focus on transition and ongoing re-integration – structure may be best
- Consider loss of identity/meaning (I was a Soldier/Marine)
- Refer to Peer Support and other services/organizations



Suggestions for Working with Combat Veterans

- Avoid use of diagnostic labeling early on (i.e. “you may have PTSD”)
- Do not say you understand what they have experienced unless you have experienced combat or military yourself
- Involve the veteran’s primary support system
- Long term- recognize importance in discussing grief and survivors guilt and the impact of experiences on the veteran’s spirituality and belief system
- Refer to other professionals as appropriate



Questions?

Jonathan Patrick
Veteran Justice Specialist

Virginia Veteran and Family Support
Virginia Department of Veteran Services
9300 W Courthouse Rd, Suite 305
Manassas VA, 20110

Office: 703-479-7392

Cell: 571-235-6583

Fax: 703-479-7425

Email: Jonathan.Patrick@dvs.virginia.gov