

“Green Zone”

A Safe Place for Veterans



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- **Modeled on the “Safe Zone” program, volunteers in the *Green Zone* program receive training about issues potentially facing student veterans. They then agree to display the *Green Zone* sticker outside their office doors to let others know they are available to provide support and information about resources for student veterans, active service military students and their family members.**



Who is a Green Zone Volunteer?

- **Staff and faculty who identify themselves**
 - as someone who knows something about the issues and concerns faced by student veterans/active military students
 - as someone who is available to assist the veteran student
 - they are not expected to be experts who can “solve” the problems
 - a sympathetic ear
 - someone who can help the student find the appropriate resources for problem resolution.



Commonly Used Terms

- **Veteran**
 - Any individual who served in the U.S. military
- **OEF- Operation Enduring Freedom**
 - War in Afghanistan
- **OIF- Operation Iraqi Freedom**
 - War in Iraq



Who is a Student Veteran

- **Student Veterans 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**



Military Experience North Carolina Statistics

- **Home to the largest military base in North America, Fort Bragg. With the number of Navy and Marine Corps bases here it also has the largest concentration of Sailors and Marines in the world.**

Veteran Population as of 9/30/2014			
Female	84,073	Male	690,947
Wartime		592,699	
Peacetime		182,321	
Gulf War		290,642	
Vietnam Era		248,793	
Korean Conflict		54,712	
World War II		25,601	



Military

- **Separation from family or loved ones**
 - **Most are leaving home for the first time**
 - **Separation from extended family and close friends**
 - **Separation from boyfriends and girlfriends**
 - **May be assigned to a base in a different part of the country**
 - **Adjustments to new climates and culture**

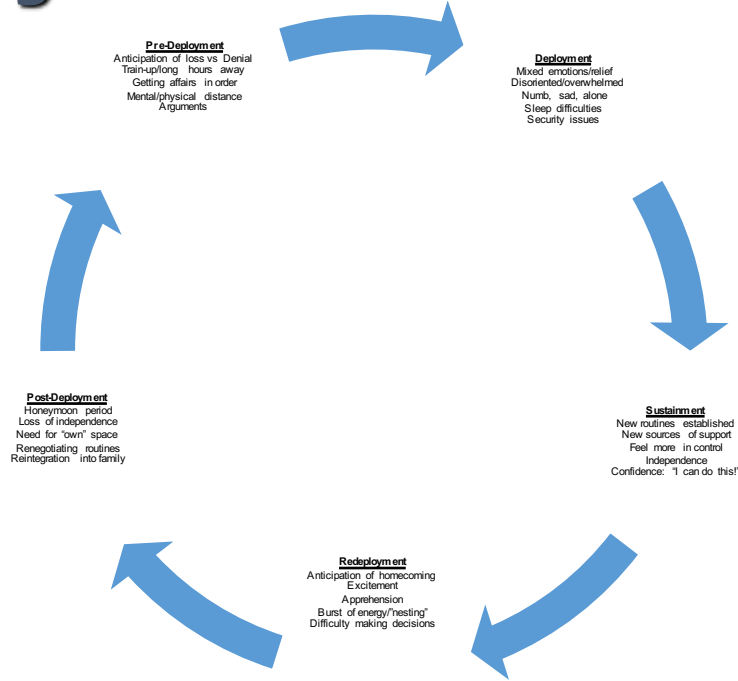
Military Experience Deployments

- **Deployments last from 6-18 months**
- **Multiple deployments**
 - **Some serve more than one deployment before being discharged from the military**
 - **Over 350,000 have experienced two or more deployments**



***(Savych, 2009)

Emotional Cycle of Deployment



*** (Franklin, 2009)

Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Pre-Deployment

- **Training with long hours away**
 - **Spending more time in the field to prepare for deployment**
 - **Separation from family and friends before deployment**
- **Getting affairs in order**
 - **Preparing a living will and assigning a power of attorney**
- **National Guard and Reservists**
 - **Added stress during semester due to anticipation of deployment**
 - **May be called to duty while enrolled in classes**
 - **Having to file paperwork to withdraw from classes and stop G.I. Bill payments**



***(Franklin, 2009)

Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Deployment

- **Adjusting to being in a combat zone, on a ship, or aircraft**
- **Adjusting to new climate, terrain, and language**
- **Dealing with emotions regarding separation from family, friends, and partners**
- **Maintaining a strong sense of awareness**
 - **Hypervigilance**
- **Must maintain some level of emotional control**
 - **May not be able to react immediately to loss/trauma but are encouraged to deal with loss/trauma while deployed and upon return**



***(Franklin, 2009)

Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Deployment

- **Persistent hypervigilance and arousal**
- **Sleep deprivation- fatigue**
- **Periods of intense boredom**
- **Some have experienced**
 - **Firefights**
 - **Buddies wounded or killed**
 - **RPGs: Rocket Propelled Grenades**
 - **IEDs: Improvised Explosive Devices**
 - **Car bombs**
 - **Suicide bombings**
 - **Crowd control**

Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Post-Deployment

- **Homecoming**
 - **The “honeymoon” stage is when first returning home to family and friends**
 - **Difficult adjustment phase for both ASM and family**
 - **Family has adapted to life without ASM and now has to re-establish roles**
 - **Adaptive behaviors for war are maladaptive at home**
 - **Aggressive driving = Road Rage**
 - **Tactical Awareness = Hypervigilance**
 - **Develop a “New Normal”**
 - **Adjusting to life after it has changed**
 - **Dealing with the emotions of war**

***(Franklin, 2009)



Emotional Cycle of Deployment: Family Members/Dependents

- **Family members or dependents of Veterans/ASM may need support too**
 - **They may be experiencing**
 - **Separation from a loved one**
 - **Difficulty concentrating**
 - **Difficulty transitioning**
 - **Difficulty adjusting to role changes**
 - **Loss or injuries of a loved one**

Transitioning from Base to Campus

Student Veterans Experience is Non-traditional

- **Education is one of the greatest investments a person can make in their lifetime.**
- **The pride and sense of accomplishment that comes from earning a degree stays with them.**
- **Most veterans are non-traditional students, and as such, they face certain challenges to degree-completion:**
 - **Today's modern military**
 - **They often put their education on hold for personal issues**
 - **Likely to have family responsibilities**
 - **Work a full-time or part-time job**

Student Veterans Experience is Non-traditional

- **Having the resources to navigate many unique obstacles can make the critical difference when it comes to graduating. [Student Veterans of America \(SVA\)](#) is the voice for veterans pursuing postsecondary education, and they work to support the transition from warrior, to scholar, to leader.**
- **Of student veterans who first completed a certificate, 31.3 percent continued on to higher levels of education; of those who first earned a two-year degree, 535.8 percent continued on; and 20.7 percent of veterans who first earned a baccalaureate-level degree went on to earn another degree at a high level.**

Transition Strengths

- **Veterans/ASMs 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

- **Issues that may arise during the transition process can become barriers to success**
 - **Difficulty translating their military skills into a new profession**
 - **Difficulty switching gears with a new focus that is unrelated to military experience**
 - **Military skills & training may not translate into college credits**
 - **Difficulty deciphering transfer credits for those who have started and stopped higher education at multiple institutions**
 - **Difficulty using the GI Bill**
 - **Late fees due to late payment of VA Benefits**
 - **Late payment can prevent them from registering for classes, applying for graduation, and receiving transcripts**

Transition Difficulties

- **Being an older student**
 - **Freshman 21+ years old with 18 year old classmates**
- **Alienation**
 - **Veterans/ASMs may find it difficult to integrate on campus because their life experiences within the military differ significantly from most other students and faculty.**
- **Insensitivity of classmates, faculty, and others on campus in regards to discussion of war and military**
 - **Veterans/ASMs may not agree with discussions or may feel attacked when asked about their experience**

Transition Difficulties

- **Things to keep in mind about Student Veterans in the classroom:**
 - **Some may**
 - **Have difficulty relating to classmates**
 - **Find loud noises to be disturbing**
 - **Become anxious with changes in the classroom**
 - **Have excessive absences**
 - **Have PTSD or TBI**



***(Pfeffer, 2010)

Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- **It is estimated that 23% to 31% of Veterans/ASM of OIF/OEF have PTSD symptoms and 20% have mild TBIs.**
 - **New Disability**
 - **Student Veterans/ASMs may be experiencing a disability for the first time in their life**
 - **May not want to identify as having a disability for various reasons**
 - **stigma**
 - **may have implications for future in the military for those who are still active service members**

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



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- **PTSD occurs after an individual has seen or experienced a traumatic event that involved the threat of injury or death**
- **PTSD is experienced by some, but certainly not all Student Veterans/ASMs**
 - **Have some knowledge of PTSD, BUT do not expect that every Student Veteran/ASM will have these symptoms**



*** (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)

PTSD Symptoms

- **Repeated "reliving" of the event, which disturbs day-to-day activity**
- **Flashback episodes, where the event seems to be happening again and again**
- **Avoidance**
 - **Emotional "numbing," or feeling as though you do not care about anything**
- **Arousal**
 - **Excess awareness (hypervigilance)**



*** (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)

PTSD in the Classroom

- **Possible behaviors:**
 - **Sit in the back of the classroom to 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**

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- **Remember: although many Veterans/ASMs may have stressful or traumatic experiences, not all develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

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/ASMs will have experienced a TBI**



***(Traumaticbraininjury.com, 2010)

Traumatic Brain Injury

- **Combat experience is one of the main risk factors for sustaining a TBI**
 - **Exposure to blasts through explosions and roadside bombs**
- **Improvements in body armor and helmets have increased the occurrence of TBI**
 - **Likelihood of survival from blasts due to sophisticated equipment, unlike from previous wars**
- **TBI often goes undiagnosed because symptoms may not appear until weeks later**
 - **Especially emotional or personality changes which are difficult for strangers to identify**
 - **Difficult to differentiate between TBI and PTSD because they have several overlapping symptoms**



***(Traumaticbraininjury.com, 2010)

TBI Symptoms

- **Cognition**
 - **Motor/Sensory Disturbances**
 - **Impairments in:**
 - **Language**
 - **Communication**
 - **Attention**
 - **Concentration**
 - **Memory**
 - **Learning New Information**
 - **Speed of Information Processing**
 - **Judgment**
 - **Decision-Making**
 - **Problem-Solving**
 - **Insight**

TBI Symptoms

- **Mood**

- **Apathy/Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Irritability**
- **Emotional Liability**
- **Insensitivity**
- **Egocentricity**

- **Behavior**

- **Lack of Initiation**
- **Disinhibition**
- **Impulsivity**
- **Restlessness**
- **Aggression**
- **Agitation**

TBI in the Classroom

- **Possible behaviors:**
 - **Have difficulty expressing themselves (tongue tied)**
 - **Show restlessness**
 - **Example: Constant fidgeting and tapping pens or feet**
 - **Show inappropriate reactions to discussion**
 - **Example: Becoming aggressive, easily irritated, agitated, or insensitive to others in the classroom**
 - **Be withdrawn or not participating in class discussion**

Other Wounds of War

- **Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)**
 - **A spinal cord injury occurs when trauma or disease damages the spinal cord and results in partial or complete paralysis**
- **Military Sexual Trauma (MST)**
 - **Includes sexual assault, sexual threats, bullying, and unwanted touching or grabbing that occurred while in the military**



*** (Spinal Cord Injuries, 2010; VAMST, 2010)

Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- **What the Green Zone volunteers should know:**
 - **Do not ask or suggest that the Student Veteran/ASM has a disability, but inquire about the issues they are experiencing to better provide the appropriate resources**
 - **Become familiar with information provided by the students with disabilities support office on campus 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 office serving students with disabilities**
 - **Assist in making an appointment, if needed**

Considering the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities

- **Services on Campus**
 - **Veterans Education & Training Services**
 - **Disability Services in our Counseling Department**
 - **Financial Aid Certifiers**

Easing the Transition

- **Have an open dialogue about frustrations**
- **Discuss career goals**
- **Provide individuals with information about various services and resources available as seems appropriate**
 - **Student Services for Advising, Counseling and Career Services** <http://www.rccc.edu/student-services/>
 - **Continuing Education for Personal Enrichment and Job and Skills Training courses** <http://www.rccc.edu/corporatecontinuing/>
- **Remember that each student is unique in their experiences**

Talking to a Veteran

- **Express appreciation for their service**
- **What branch of service**
- **What was your job or specialty (MOS)**
- **What are some of your “good experiences” during your time**
- **How has your experience at the college been**
- **Remember women are veterans too**
- ***Do not ask if they have killed someone***
- ***Do not ask how they were injured***
- ***Do not tell them the war is a waste of dollars***
- ***Do not stare and do not stereotype us***
- ***Did you ever get Shot***

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

JUST LISTEN

Easing the Transition

- **What Student Veterans want faculty 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.”**



***(Pfeffer, 2010)

Things to Remember

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

Veterans Administration Resources

- **GI Bill**

- <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>

- **Provides the veteran with information regarding his or her tuition assistance benefits**

- **US Department of Veterans Affairs**

- <http://www.va.gov/>

- **The US Department of Veterans Affairs provides patient care and federal benefits to veterans and their dependents.**

Veteran Associations

- **Wounded Warrior Project**
 - www.woundedwarriorproject.org
 - **Mission “To honor and empower wounded warriors.”**
- **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**
 - www.vfw.org
 - **Its mission is to *“honor the dead by helping the living”* through veterans' service, community service, national security and a strong national defense**

Veteran Associations

- **Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America**
 - www.iava.org
 - **Providing assistance, advocacy, educations, and support to veterans of both conflicts**
- **Disabled Veterans Association**
 - www.dav.org
 - **DAV is an advocacy group that helps ensure that active duty and veterans receive the benefits and compensations that were guaranteed to them when they enlisted**

PTSD Resources

- **The National Center for PTSD**
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/resources/>
- **After Deployment is a mental wellness resource guide for soldiers.**
<http://afterdeployment.org/>
- **PTSD and Women**
http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/wha/wha_ptsd_bha.htm

TBI Resources

- Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center <http://www.dvbic.org>
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control information on TBI
<http://www.cfc.gov/ncipc/tbi/tbibook.pdf>
- Soldiers with Traumatic Brain Injury brochure
<http://www.neuroskills.com/veterans/soldierswithtbi.pdf>

SCI Resources

- **VA Spinal Cord Injury**
 - www.sci.va.gov
- **National Spinal Cord Injury Association**
 - www.spinalcord.org

Substance Abuse Resources

- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>
- Alcoholics Anonymous <http://www.aa.org>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse <http://www.nida.nih.gov>
- National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information <http://www.health.gov>
- Army Center for Substance Abuse Programs with links to world-wide ASAP locations <http://www.acsap.army.mil>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration <http://getfit.samhsa.gov/Drugs>
<http://getfithsa.gov/Alcohol> 1-800-662-HELP

Military Sexual Trauma Resources

- **VA MST information**
 - www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp
- **MyDuty.mil**
 - www.myduty.mil
 - **Provides information and guidance on reporting MST**
- **Military Rape Crisis Center**
 - **Has a chart for off-base rape crisis centers located near military bases**
 - www.stopmilitaryrape.org/local_resources

Suicide Prevention Resources

- **The National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1 800-273-TALK (8255)**
 - **Press 1 for Veterans**
- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** <http://www.afsp.org>
- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center** <http://www.sprc.org>

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