

Supporting the Employment Success for Wounded Warriors



Brian Nichols - Warriors to Work

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Imagine...



A generation of Wounded Warriors who:

- Are not unemployed or underemployed
- Have the opportunity to pursue their education, a meaningful career, or own a business
- Possess the skills to make informed and educated decisions about their future
- Are economically empowered...



Objectives



- Identify the skills and traits shared by wounded warriors
- Discover how these skills and traits translate to the civilian workforce
- Eliminate the barriers to employment success
- Gain a better understanding of service-connected injuries
- Determine your personal Call to Action



HOOAH Quiz

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Hooah is a(n)

- a) Adjective
- b) Adverb
- c) Noun
- d) Verb
- e) Conjunction
- f) Interjection
- g) Exclamation

**ALL OF THE
ABOVE**



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Hooah defined:

- Referring to or meaning anything and everything except "no".
- *What to say when at a loss for words.*
- (a) Good copy; (b) Roger; (c) Solid copy; (d) Good; (e) Great; (f) Message received; (g) Understood; (h) Acknowledged.
- (a) Glad to meet you; (b) Welcome.
- "All right!"
- "You've got to be kidding me!"
- You've taken the corrective action.
- (a) I don't know the answer, but I'll check on it; (b) I haven't the foggiest idea.
- "That is enough of your drivel; sit down!"
- Yes.
- Thank you.
- Go to the next slide.
- I don't know what that means, but I'm too embarrassed to ask for clarification.
- Squared away (He's pretty hooah.)
- Amen!

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By virtue of having served in the military...



...almost every service member has, to some degree, acquired the following traits and skills:

- **Loyalty**
- Selflessness
- **Respect for procedures and authority**
- Discipline
- **Leadership training at a young age**
- An accelerated learning curve
- **Training in new technology**
- Working in teams and in diverse environments
- **Performing under pressure**
- *The ability to overcome adversity



Three Barriers to a Successful Transition



1. Translation of Military Skills
2. Knowledge Gap - Lack of Employer Education and Awareness
3. Stigma



Barrier #1: Translation of Military Skills



- Translating military experience into language that can be easily understood by civilian HR professionals is a difficult task
 - Therefore, many separating military members have trouble getting their resumes to “the top of the pile”



Military Culture

- Emphasis on unit cohesion
- Emphasis on the mission
- Devotion to duty
- Strict chain of command

Civilian Culture

- Emphasis on individuality
- Individual achievement
- Personal freedom
- Fluid social relationships

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11B - Infantry (Army) - Operate weapons and equipment in ground combat operations.

Duties include:

- operating and maintaining weapons, such as rifles, machine guns, mortars, and hand grenades;
- locating, constructing, and camouflaging infantry positions and equipment;
- evaluating terrain and recording topographical information;
- operating and maintaining field communications equipment;
- assessing need for and directing supporting fire;
- placing explosives and performing minesweeping activities on land;
- participating in basic reconnaissance operations.



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Military strengths DO translate



Military Strength	Translation	Organizational Outcome
Team driven/ highly structured	Trust and faith in team/leadership	Increased organizational cohesion, morale, performance
Focused on contingency planning	Flexible, adaptive, problem solver	Adaptation to changing priorities, goals, tasks, etc.
Requires world travel	Tolerance, cultural sensitivity, ability to work in highly diverse environments and teams	Adapt to globalized business environment and demographic changes



Writing Effective Position Descriptions



When drafting and reviewing position descriptions, consider the following:

- Does the description clearly describe the position's purpose and **overall contribution** to the company?
- What are the **essential and non-essential functions** of the position?
- When including non-essential, marginal, or less-frequent duties, consider:
 - **Physical skills** (e.g., standing, walking, lifting, bending)
 - **Learned skills** (e.g., equipment proficiency, industry experience)
 - **Job duties** (e.g., travel, hours, shifts)
 - **Behavioral skills** (e.g., communication, leadership, time management)



Writing Effective Position Descriptions



- Identify or describe the **physical environment** and working conditions.
- What level of education and/or experience is needed to successfully accomplish the essential functions of the job?
- **How might military experience equate?**
 - Duties are just half of the equation.
- What do other employees, departments, and customers count on this person to do?
- **Include expectations** relating to deadlines, customer service, and company success.
- Linking responsibilities to company goals helps the prospective employee see how the position fits into the “big picture.”



Barrier #2: Lack of Employer Education and Awareness



- **73%** of employers either agree or don't know that USERRA is NOT the main law covering veterans with disabilities in the workplace
- **More than half** of employers don't know where to find information about accommodations AND believe it's costly to accommodate workers with disabilities such as PTSD or TBI
- **Almost 2/3** of employers surveyed believe that workers with PTSD are more likely than others to commit acts of violence in the workplace.

Barrier #3: Stigma



- When the Society for Human Resource Management surveyed its members (June 2010), **46%** said they believed post-traumatic stress and other mental health issues posed a hiring challenge.
 - Just **22%** said the same about combat-related physical disabilities.
- Although media attention has helped make the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and traumatic brain injury a government priority, veterans say it has also contributed to the stigma associated with these wounds.



What we know about injured returning service members



- **>36,000** service members return with significant **physical** injuries.
- **Signature injuries** of the current overseas conflicts are **unseen**.
- According to a 2008 RAND study, 546,000 military service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan have PTSD, TBI or post-concussion syndrome (PCS).
 - **1 in 4** report a possible TBI (\approx 220,000 since wars began).
 - **1 in 5** currently living with depression or stress disorder.



Barriers to treatment



- The medications that might help have too many side effects (45%)
- It could harm my career (44%)
- I could be denied a security clearance (44%)
- My family or friends would be more helpful than a mental health professional (39%)
- My coworkers would have less confidence in me if they found out (38%)

2008 Rand, Invisible Wounds - Mental Health and Cognitive Care Needs of America's Returning Veterans |
Weighted percentages of those reporting barriers to care among those with a possible need for services
| http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9336/index1.html



A Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain.

- Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI.





Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a psychological health injury that can develop in response to exposure to an extreme traumatic event.

- The event directly experienced or witnessed by another person involves actual or threatened death, serious injury or threat to one's physical integrity.





ANYONE who has gone through a life-threatening event can develop PTSD. These events can include:

- Combat or military exposure.
- Child sexual or physical abuse.
- Terrorist attacks.
- Sexual or physical assault.
- Serious accidents, such as a car wreck.
- Natural disasters, such as a fire, tornado, hurricane, flood or earthquake.



PTSD is a *prolonged* reaction to stress

The recollection of a memory increases the stress for the moment - and may cause a *temporarily* increased response in the form of signs and symptoms.

Sensory
Input



Triggered
Memory



Increased
Response

**Signs and symptoms are typically not as exaggerated as what we see in the media.*

Intrusive memories
Avoidance/emotional numbing
Anxiety/emotional response

TBI and PTSD in the workplace



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Potential Impact a of Brain Injury



Symptoms that result from TBI are known as post-concussion syndrome (PCS). Few people will have all of the symptoms, but even one or two of the symptoms can be unpleasant.

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE (mental)	EMOTIONAL (feelings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache• Feeling dizzy• Being tired• Trouble sleeping• Vision problems• Bothered by noise and light	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memory problems• Trouble staying focused• Poor judgment & impulsivity• Being slowed down• Trouble putting thoughts into words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression• Anger outbursts/quick to anger• Anxiety (fear, worry, or feeling nervous)• Personality changes

Most people with a mTBI will be back to normal by 3 months without any special treatment. Even patients with moderate or severe TBI can make remarkable recoveries.



Examples of Accommodations for functional limitations often associated with TBI



- Permit flexible scheduling, allow longer or more frequent work breaks
- Provide additional time to learn new responsibilities
- Allow for use of supportive employment and job coaches
- Provide for job sharing opportunities
- Encourage the employee to use daily 'to-do' lists and check items off as they are completed
- Provide a special calendar to mark meetings and deadlines
- Assign a mentor to assist employee in determining goals and provide daily guidance
- Provide written as well as verbal instructions



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PTSD - Signs Symptoms Stressors



Signs & Symptoms

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Grief
- Hyperalertness
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Memories
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling abandoned
- Frustration
- Feeling out of control
- Feeling vulnerable
- Racing heart beat
- Pain or Muscle tension

Potential Stressors/Triggers

- An argument
- Seeing a news article that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Watching a movie or television show that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Seeing a car accident
- Certain smells
- The end of a relationship
- An anniversary
- Holidays
- A specific place
- Seeing someone who reminds you of a person connected to your traumatic event

Examples of Accommodations for functional limitations often associated with PTSD



- Use a daily or weekly task list
- Reduce distractions in the work environment
- Allow the employee to play soothing music using a headset
- Divide large assignments into smaller goal-oriented tasks or steps
- Assign a supervisor, manager or mentor to answer employee's questions
- Use stress management techniques to deal with frustration
- Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for needed support
- Allow for a flexible start time or end time, or work from home
- Allow time off for counseling and medical appointments





The Face of TBI and PTSD

What does it look like?
Will I know it when I see it?



SSG Megan Krause



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Given the Choice



Given the choice between work and idleness, people will almost always choose work.

Regardless of our station in life, the conditions of our bodies and minds, or the amount of money in our bank accounts, the need to work remains one of our strongest drives. Work is central to our lives, and as such, gives a large measure of structure to our days. Common sense tells us that we feel better about ourselves when we are working regularly.

- Robert E. Drake, M.D., Ph.D.



Final Thoughts...



- Workplace supports and accommodations, as well as good management practices, create a **welcoming** and **productive** environment (for all employees).
- You do not need to have all of the answers! **Trial and error** is often the best practice.
- People **living** with TBI and/or PTSD can and do have very successful careers.
- Consider the **Power of One**
1 employer | **1** wounded warrior | **1** opportunity to succeed



Thank you
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