Veterans in Your Classrooms:

*Successful Strategies and Interventions*
Issues that May Affect Veterans

1) Returning to School After Many Years
2) Cultural & Linguistic Differences
3) Logistical and Family Issues
4) Reserve & National Guard Obligations
5) Mental Health Challenges
National survey of 362,000 first-year students and seniors attending 564 US colleges and universities by NSSE (2010) found:

- Student Veterans perceived lower levels of campus support than non-Veterans
- Interacted less with faculty members
- Spent twice as many hours per week working
- Six times as many hours on dependent care
- Twice as likely to report at least one disability

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 2010
Returning to School after Military Service

Think of student veterans as 2\textsuperscript{nd} Career Students

- Returning to school may be the first time in a very long time that they do not feel highly competent and confident.

- Previous military career demanded high levels of expertise, discipline and responsibility.
Before they were in your class, they were...
Instilling Discipline
Providing Nutrition
Managing Millions of $$$ in Equipment
Saving Lives
Maintaining Security
Averting Disaster
USING YOUR GI BILL
EXACTLY HOW IT FEELS
Cultural & Linguistic Differences

• The transition from military to civilian culture is not as simple as it might seem and can lead to stress, frustration and conflict in a classroom environment.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military</th>
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Cultural & Linguistic Differences

*Other Examples:*
- Frustration over specificity on syllabus
- Assignment goals *appear* unclear
- Language misinterpreted
Cultural & Linguistic Differences

• **Suggested Strategies**
  – Be aware of cultural & linguistic differences
  – Consider your own cultural style
  – Give direct & specific feedback when necessary
  – Include “welcome text” on syllabus
Different Learning Styles

• Practical vs. theoretical
• Objectives specific vs. diffuse
• Directions concrete vs. abstract
A contrast in teaching style

• The following period of instruction is designed to teach you the rules of conduct related to playground activity.

• Upon completion of this course, you will be able to...
What you need to know

• Please note the rules

• Your ability to master these rules will determine your grade in this class.
A contrast in teaching style

The objective of this class to UNDERSTAND the concepts of authoritarian vs. permissive parenting styles, using the playground as a metaphor for diverse human interaction.
A contrast in style

If you were visiting a community that valued authoritarian than permissive values, which sign would you be more likely to see at a local playground? Give support for your answers from the reading and the lecture material. **Extra credit:** If you were designing a sign to reflect authoritative values, what sign might you make?
Golden Rules

✓ Do be gentle
   Don’t hurt anyone
✓ Do be kind and helpful
   Don’t hurt other people’s feelings
✓ Do be polite
   Don’t be rude
✓ Do listen to people
   Don’t interrupt
✓ Do be honest
   Don’t cover up the truth
✓ Do play co-operatively
   Don’t spoil other people’s games
✓ Do look after property
   Don’t waste or damage things

PLAYGROUND RULES

DO NOT USE EQUIPMENT WHEN WET

NO RUNNING, PUSHING OR SHOVING

DO NOT USE PLAY EQUIPMENT IMPROPERLY

NO BARE FEET, WEAR PROPER FOOTWEAR

ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED FOR USE
PLAY CAREFULLY!
Maintaining Consistent Attendance

- Logistical and Family Issues
  - 38% Women & 44% Men in active duty have children
  - Female veterans more likely to be single parents
  - Veterans may have little experience coordinating multiple INDEPENDENT systems.
  - High levels of stress from deployments + medical and mental health consequences.
Maintaining Consistent Attendance

• Medical & Mental Health Appointments
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  – VA appointments typically offered between 8am-3:30pm
  – Important for recovery from wounds of service
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- National Guard & Reserve Commitments
Maintaining Consistent Attendance

• National Guard & Reserve Commitments
  – Often interfere with classes.
Maintaining Consistent Attendance

• National Guard & Reserve Commitments
  – Often interfere with classes.
  – Veterans only have certain amount of choice.
Mental Health Issues

• Mental health issues such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury can have a negative impact on class performance, and can lead to frustration and conflict in the classroom.
Common Symptoms – mTBI & PTSD

**Cognitive Problems**
- Memory
- Concentration & attention
- Learning Difficulties
- Following complicated directions
- Language problems
- Impulse control
- Slowed or cloudy thinking

**Affective / Behavioral Problems**
- Frustration or irritability
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Reduced tolerance for stress
- Sleep problems
- Numbing out or flipping out
- Inflexibility
- Feeling guilty
- Denial of problems
- Social appropriateness

**Somatic Complaints**
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Poor balance
- Dizziness
- Changes in vision, hearing, or touch
- Sexual problems
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Mental Health Issues

• Concentration can be impaired
• Assignments & class activities can be triggers
• Class discussions can be difficult
• Group work can be especially challenging
• Attendance can be affected
Mental Health Issues

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Assignments & class activities can be triggers

• Consider if a workaround is possible
  – Can traumatic or violent scenes that can be skipped?
  – Give “trigger warnings”
  – Start after a break
  – Are there other similar things you can do that do not have violent or traumatic elements?
  – Can the student do an alternative assignment?
Review

• Cultural, mental health & physical issues can make it difficult for veterans to adapt to the requirements of campus life.

• For those veterans who have disabilities, many are new to navigating their disabilities – or seeing themselves as disabled. Some will struggle with asking for help.
How to Help Veterans Help Themselves

“This is not a handout, it’s your civil right, that you defended”

“Stay focused on the mission – to succeed in school”

“No one is going to do the work for you – don’t worry, that’s still on you”
Recommendations

• Be *specific and methodical* when giving instruction.

• Give *direct and honest feedback*

• **Refer** for treatment *and/or* assessment

• Consider adding *reasonable accommodation text* to every syllabus.
Recommendations

• *Warm handoffs* make a HUGE difference. Whenever possible, make personal and specific referrals.
Recommendations

• Have a **contact person** on campus who is familiar with veteran related issues. Know how to reach that person.
Thank You

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