From military life to college life

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“I think the faculty needs to know who we are”
BATTLE MIND is the Soldier’s training in combat skills and facing fear and adversity to sustain survival in the war zone
Buddies (cohesion)
Accountability
Targeted Aggression
Tactical Awareness
Lethally Armed
Emotional control
Mission Operational Security
Individual Responsibility
Non-Defensive Driving
Discipline and Ordering

Battle mind injuries can occur to a Soldier when combat skills and mindset are not adapted to the “home zone”
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“I believe that I being a soldier will always be a part of me, but I think that I have become a student again.”
Buddies (cohesion) vs withdrawal

“The first few weeks were very difficult for the transition. . . . For a year I had a very close-knit support system that was just gone. That made it difficult, being surrounded by strangers instead of people I knew.”
“I have a lot of responsibilities as a parent, a husband as well. . . . I find it difficult...I’m still trying to balance family life, more than anything else.”
Tactful awareness vs hyper vigilance

“There was a practical experiment, a hydrogen and oxygen mix . . . that created quite a loud boom and set me on edge that entire day because it brought back a little bit of panic. I wanted to drop down and duck for cover. Literally panic. I’m breathing fast. My heart’s beating. I’ve got my hands clenched on that desk.”
Emotional control vs anger/detachment

“I definitely went through kind of a year-long feeling out of place here combined with being sad about the state of the world and feeling like I wasn't doing well in school. That I didn't belong here. That was all a function of just being bummed out about what I'd seen and deep and depressing thoughts about the world. . . . It was just something I brought with me here.”
Individual responsibility vs guilt

"Hey man, I'm a 30-year-old grown-ass man. I don't need you to hold my hand."
"In the military you either do what you’re told or you tell other people what to do, so it’s really cut-and-dry. Out here in the real world, it’s not."

“It benefits you to not be a free thinker in the military. You actually go less crazy if you just do what they say. . . . And then transitioning into being a student, it’s totally the opposite.”
Adapt combat skills to be just as effective in “home zone” as they were in combat

Build upon strengths
“One thing that being in the military does teach you is that you can really withstand a lot more than you think. . . .”
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Remember:

A lot of transition will be happening outside of student experience
  • Relying on family, friends, and comrades
  • Readjusting to old roles and connecting to new ones

There are many reasons why veterans choose to come to school
  • To take advantage of G.I. Bill
  • Disability that prevents continuing service
  • It is expected
  • Lack of job opportunities
  • “I want to do something with my life.”

Never make assumptions
Faculty and staff on the “front lines”

You may be the first point of contact on campus

Work to provide a sense of control and hopefulness
Create a safe space

- “Vet friendly” insignia
- No backs to the door

Provide connection and develop relationships

- Assess and understand own biases
- Do not fake interest or your own experience
- Do not say you understand how they feel
- Ask questions focusing on college experience
- Be dependable and authentic
  - Be confident and competent in what you do and do not know
- Perform and do things fully
Give protocol

- Have clear educational objectives (mission) and expectations
- Utilize motivational interviewing
- Teach/Advise using a more prescriptive technique
- Be direct and directive
- Be prepared:
  - Know the benefits
  - Have resources at hand
  - Competent information and referrals
Challenge and support

- No special treatment
- Perform and do things fully
- Work to continue to build organizational skills
- Challenge to be proactive rather than reactive
- Work to distinguish between what is and is not important
Be an advocate for the creation of visible resources and support staff

- Seek resources for continued training
- Partake in mentor programs
- Support student groups
- Serve on SERVS
References


Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. (2013). Battlemind training: Transitioning from combat to home. Silver Spring, MD.