



Veterans in the Workforce

Veterans make up nearly [one-third of the federal workforce](#) and [7% of the civilian workforce](#). It is likely that you work with veterans, or even that you are a veteran yourself. This month, Jocelyn Bos-Fisher, LMSW, a CFS EAP Counselor trained in mental health and occupational supports for veterans and military families, shares some common myths about veterans in the workplace and gives advice for supporting a colleague whose loved one has been deployed.

Combatting Myths about Veterans

Veterans face a unique challenge when they transition back into the workforce: how do they deal with misconceptions and myths about what it means to be a veteran? Below are some of the most common myths:

Every person with military experience has PTSD.

10 to 15% of military personnel experience PTSD, a rate that is slightly higher than the average general population rate of 7 to 9%. Not everyone who witnesses or experience a traumatic event will develop PTSD.

Veterans are invincible.

Training can put unrealistic expectations upon a service member to be strong and not seek support when struggling, but life stressors can be tough on everyone. Veterans are not immune to stress, and they might need supports just as any employee might.

Veterans don't want to discuss their experiences.

While some veterans do not want to discuss their experiences, even with their friends or family, some do want to—and might even appreciate opportunities to do so. If you would like to try and start that conversation, begin with general questions: for example, how long was the trip? How was basic training? Feel them out to see if the conversation should continue.

Supporting Your Co-Workers with Deployed Loved Ones

Another common myth about veterans is that military involvement only affects the service member. In fact, WNY has one of the largest reserve components in New York State. It is very likely that some of your co-workers have family members or friends that are involved in the military in some way, through deployments, out-of-state trainings, or reintegration. Here are some simple ways in which you can show your support and help your co-workers through these stressful experiences.

- **Check in regularly.** Just asking how your co-worker is doing can help them feel supported and less alone.
- **Talk about the deployed person.** It is common to feel like not bringing up the deployed person might help the person still stateside, but in actuality it is not helpful. Ask questions about how their loved one is doing and if they have been able to make contact.
- **Avoid political discussions.** Politics is always a charged topic, and it can be especially difficult when someone is associated with military personnel.
- **Celebrate mail or communication.** If your co-worker has received correspondence from their loved one, celebrate with them. At times, people can go weeks and even months without hearing from their deployed family member depending on where they are or if they are on mission.
- **Remember and be sensitive to special days.** Birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays can be stressful or emotional times for those left stateside. Help remember the deployed individual during these times and be sensitive to your co-worker's feelings.
- **Offer to put together an office care package.** Showing your support for the deployed person is also showing your support for your co-worker. Offering to get together a work care package can help show that you are thinking about your co-worker and willing to support them through this difficult and stressful time.

Are you facing anxiety or stress due to a military deployment or civilian reintegration?

You can meet with a counselor as part of your EAP benefit. There is no cost for you or anyone in your household to access this totally confidential service. Call (800)888-4162 to set up an appointment today.