



15 Things Veterans Want You to Know

Online Course

- [For health care professionals \(1 CE credit available\)](#)
- [Shorter/15 minute version](#)

Course Notes

Description:

“15 Things That Veterans Want You to Know” is a course created to educate anyone who works with, lives with, or cares for veterans. PsychArmor asked hundreds of Veterans what they want civilian employers, health care providers, and therapists to know about them. There were hundreds of comments and patterns. We took those comments and broke it down into 15 things Veterans want civilians to know. This course will teach you 5 questions you should always ask veterans, 1 question you should never ask veterans, and 15 facts that will make your more culturally competent.

Objectives:

1. List 3 questions you should ask a Veteran to learn more about his/her experience in the military.
2. Recognize the one question you should never ask a Veteran.
3. Discuss some of the challenges faced by family members of military personnel .

Background:

Question posed to Veterans: *What is the one thing you would want your doctor, nurse, therapist, employer, etc. to know about you as a Veteran?* From responses, 15 categories that Veterans want non-military people to know plus 5 questions that Veterans would like to be asked was created.

15 Things that Veterans want YOU to Know:

1. We are not all soldiers

- Each branch of U.S. Military have their own mission
- Each have different services, different ranking, different uniforms, and perform difference missions expertly
- Each have their own ‘mini-culture’
- Only army personnel are soldiers
- Need to state “military personnel” or “Veterans” as reference, and not generalize all as “soldiers”

2. Reserves are part of the military

- There are two ways to serve in uniform in our country
 - Active Duty – full time job is to serve in the active duty forces of the military

- Reserves – are trained to serve and have day to day civilian jobs; may have previously served as active duty
 - Training includes:
 - 1 weekend per month
 - 2 weeks per year
 - Remain ready and serve together as a unit
 - Mobilized as needed
 - Can be disruptive to work and family life
 - Often don't have the resources and support when return back from missions as active duty military personnel
 - All branches of the military have reserves
 - Some military personnel make the choice to stay in the reserves after leaving active duty to stay ready and remain in the military
 - Have their own unique challenges since living day to day as a civilian, then can have an immediate and abrupt change to their life, then return back to their community where they may not be understood
- Both Active Duty and the Reserves balance and complement each other

3. Not everyone in the military is infantry (in tanks, on patrol, etc.)

- Active duty is made up of 1.4 million Americans among the 5 branches.
- Reserves have 800+ thousand.
- Range from infantry to technicians, mechanics, cooks, administrator, lawyers, doctors, musicians.
- Expertly trained for months and years to get specialty ratings.
- Jobs have different physical and mental requirements and demands.

4. Military has leaders at every level in the chain of command

- Different rank structure in all branches.
- Leadership in place at every different level.
- Military culture prides itself on this.
- Responsible and accountable for others is what gives pride.
- Less important to know what rank that person was, most important to know the person followed orders and was responsible for other.

5. Military is always on duty

- Live their work 24/7.
- Readiness is a full time, around the clock job.
- Takes its toll on military personnel and their families.
- There is no off day.
- Even when on leave, can be called by immediately, at a moment's notice.

6. Take pride in appearance and conduct

- All military services have standards for the way people look in uniform.
- Takes physical fitness seriously .
- Held to a standard of conduct and are held accountable .

7. We did all not all kill someone

- Those who have do NOT want to talk about it.
- This is a question that should not be asked EVER.

8. We do not all have PTSD

- Combat can be traumatic and can cause PTSD that may require treatment.
- PTSD can occur with normal people who have lived through something horrible and need help.
- PTSD can be caused by many different types of trauma, including combat - All plays into the development of PTSD.
- Most people who experience a trauma DO NOT go on to develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.
- The majority have naturally recovered and are doing fine.
- There will be individual difference in how people respond.
- Inquire about what the worst day in military service and the best day (for healthcare providers).

9. Those of us who do have invisible wounds of war are not dangerous or violent

- Invisible combat wounds include:
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Traumatic Brain Injury
 - Depression
 - Substance Use Disorder
- Invisible wounds are real – and are injuries.
- Not mental illness or psychiatric condition.
- Deserve the same treatment as with visible injuries.
- The majority of people with invisible wounds are not prone to becoming dangerous or violent.
- Unfortunate myth has developed.
- The majority of these Veterans do not display violence.

10. It's hard to ask for help

- Military has long standing history of promoting emotional and physical perfection.
- Stigma is better, invisible wounds are more validated now.
- Just understanding that it is hard to ask for help, you are one step closer to being closer to them.

11. Our military service changes us

- The military changes people. The change is permanent and that's okay.

12. We differ in how much we identify with the military after we leave active duty

- How much military service is played out day-to-day is different from person to person.
- Ask a Veteran: *How do you define yourself now? How has your military service shaped you?*

- We integrate our military experiences in different ways.

13. Our families serve with us

- The military family's experience is unique and challenging.
- Frequent separation from loved ones.
- Some military families move every two or three years.
- Difficult to establish school and work employment.
- Changing family dynamics and responsibilities.
- Here's the good part: resilient, adaptive and flexible.
- Stop and think about the sacrifice the families have made.

14. We would die for each other and our country

15. We all made this sacrifice for one reason: to serve something more important than ourselves

- Defines our culture
- Honor, Commitment and Duty...people make this choice

5 Questions to Ask:

1. Did you serve in the military?

- Veterans want to be asked about their service.
- It starts the conversation.

2. If yes, which branch?

- By asking this question, it shows that you know there is a difference.
- Don't need to know all the specifics of each branch, most important to know that there are differences within each branch and not to generalize.

3. What was your job in the military?

- There are literally hundreds of things a person could have done in his or her military service.
- Acknowledgement and validation of knowing all the difference things a person could have done in the military.
- Making gap smaller.
- Ask what a person did in the military, it matters.

4. What was your worst day in your military service – or on deployment? (For Healthcare Providers)

5. What was your best day in your military service – or on deployment? (For Healthcare Providers)

- There will be individual responses in how people respond to their military service.

1 Question NOT to Ask:

1. Did you kill someone?

- See notes under #7 (15 Things that Veterans want YOU to Know)

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