Understanding Military Culture

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Learning Objectives/Agenda

• Identify each branch of service, mission and core values of each branch
• Cultural Competency as it applies to the Warrior Culture of the Military
• Oklahoma National Guard-specifics
• Behavioral Health Concerns in the Military
• Suicide Prevention in the Military
• Military Culture Resources
• Military Suicide Prevention Resources
Military service is not a job, it’s a lifestyle

• Culture: knowledge, experience, values, idea, attitudes, skills, tastes and techniques that are passed on from more experienced members of a community to new members

• Ceremony, ethics, health and medicine, myths, gender roles, gestures, grooming and presence, recreation, relationships, rewards, and privileges
Who are We?

• Structure & Branches
  • Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard
  • Each branch has a mission, motto and core values
  • Not everyone is a soldier!
• AC (Active Component) vs. RC (Reserve)/NG (National Guard)
  • Full time vs. “weekend warrior”
• OKNG has more than 10,000 members
  • OKARNG (Army) /OKANG (Air)
  • “Always Ready, Always There”
Why the Services Can’t Work Together

One reason the Services have trouble operating jointly is that they don’t speak the same language.

• For example, if you told Navy personnel to “secure a building,” they would turn off the lights and lock the doors.
• Army personnel would occupy the building so no one could enter.
• Marines would assault the building, capture it, and defend it with suppressive fire and close combat.
• The Air Force, on the other hand, would take out a three-year lease with an option to buy.
U.S. Army Values

- Loyalty: Bear trust, faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit and other soldiers
- Duty: Fulfill your obligations
- Respect: Treat people as they should be treated
- Selfless Service: Put the welfare of the nation, The Army, and your subordinates before your own
- Honor: Live up to all the Army values
- Integrity: Do what’s right, legally and morally
- Personal Courage: Face fear, danger, and adversity (physical or moral)
The Soldier’s Creed

• I am an American Soldier
• I am a warrior and a member of a team
• I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values
• I will always place the mission first
• I will never accept defeat
• I will never quit
• I will never leave a fallen comrade
• I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills
• I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself
• I am an expert and I am a professional
• I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat
• I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life
• I am an American Soldier
What is a Veteran?

• A Veteran is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount of up to and including their life.
Today’s Military Population

- Proud Men & Women, who volunteered to serve their nation
  - Difficult population to ask for and accept help
  - *Selfless service*
- 2 million+ currently serving in the military
- 1.6 million+ deployments since 9/11
- 33,000+ deployed from Oklahoma since 9/11
- 1 in 4 Americans have a connection to the Military
- Most of us know someone who has been injured or killed
- 30% coming home from deployments with PTSD, TBI or depression
- Nearly half have experienced multiple deployments
- Psychological issues rise with repeated deployments

_Army One Source Fact Sheet_
OKARNG

• Who is the Oklahoma Army National Guard/OKARNG?
  • 87% male
  • Age: **Under 27, 49%,** 27-37, 29%, 38+ 22%
  • OKARNG soldiers are in all 77 counties in Oklahoma
  • Most have deployed
  • Medically ready soldiers for foreign and domestic operations
Cultural Incompetency?

• Equal employment
  • Gender, Disability, Age, Pregnancy
• Freedoms
• Mental/Behavioral Health Recovery
• People First Language?

Please don’t get caught up in semantics
Please don’t worry about offending us
Females in the Military

• Male dominated population
  • 15% female

• Violence
  • Engage and destroy America’s enemies
  • Violence is trained and desensitized
  • Dehumanize the enemy

• Changing military culture with combat roles
• Female service members and veterans
  • *Homefront* by Kristin Hannah
Why Can’t Everyone Go To the VA?

- Not all service members are eligible for VA services
- Difficulties with VA Medical Center
- VA and Vet Centers are important partners in continuum of care
A Few Items to Remember

• Express thanks, not sorrow, when discussing upcoming/past deployments
• Individuals need support, regardless of support for/against war/President
• Service members are skilled at telling you what we think you want to hear
Most Common Behavioral Health Issues

• Adjustment Disorder
• TBI
• Depression
• Moral injury
• PTSD
  • DSM-5 included in new chapter on Trauma- and Stress-or-Related Disorders, instead of anxiety disorder
  • PTS/PTSI
• Substance Abuse
  • A study of army soldiers screened 3 to 4 months after returning from deployment to Iraq showed that 27% met criteria for alcohol abuse and were at increased risk for related harmful behaviors.
    • Opiates and Benzodiazepines
• ALL exacerbated by Family and/or Economic Stressors
Suicide in the Military

• More than half of military suicides have a firearm in the home or immediate living environment.
• According to a Veterans Affairs report this spring, a service member or veteran commits suicide every 62 minutes.
  • 23 per day
  • Most likely underreported for those who have discharged
• Oklahoma Army National Guard has 18 soldiers to suicide and 19 KIAs since 9/11
  • All male, 17 enlisted
  • 15 27>
  • 9 deployed, 0 multiple deployments
I wasn’t strong enough
I am a failure
I should have been the one who died, not…
I didn’t do enough, I should have done more
I am a bad person because I killed ….
I should have been able to stop what was going on around me
I don’t deserve to feel happy
Even when I know I’m safe, I still feel in danger
I have no control over these memories/behavior, I’m losing it!
I can’t trust anyone anymore; never let your guard down
If I get close to someone I’ll hurt them
My family won’t accept the person I’ve become
Perspectives from Veterans

• “The True Cost of Blind Patriotism: Despair and Veteran Suicide”
  
  • Despair vs. Depression
  • Despair is a fundamental lack of hope and complete inability to see meaning in life
  • Sense that so much of one’s life was given for so little purpose
  • There are many depressed people who are not suicidal
  • Sense of being outnumbered and isolated
  • Healthy mind and body
  • Continued service
  • Involvement

• “A Veteran's Suicide on 60 Minutes: Lessons Learned?”
  
  • Haunted—unprocessed traumatic residues, or ghosts, literally haunt and consume the present.
  • No silver bullets/laundry lists to extinguish inner emotional pain
Military Culture Resources

- Center for Deployment Psychology
  - http://www.deploymentpsych.org/
  - http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html
- Citizen Soldier Support Program
  - http://www.citizensoldierssupport.org/
Military Culture Resources

• National Center for PTSD (VA)
  • [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/professional/ptsd101/course-modules/military_culture.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/PTSD/professional/ptsd101/course-modules/military_culture.asp)

• Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), Real Warriors Campaign
  • [http://www.realwarriors.net/healthprofessionals/militaryculture](http://www.realwarriors.net/healthprofessionals/militaryculture)
Local Suicide Prevention
OKLAHOMA NATIONAL GUARD
Resources

Resources

- Directors of Psychological Health (DPH)
  Vickie Kerlin LPC  405-365-0256  vickie.l.kerlin.ctr@us.army.mil
  John Dixon  918-513-1992  john.dixon@ngphp.com

- Chaplain  405-228-5167/5178
Easy-access system for information and referral to community services for those who need help and those who provide help.

**THIS IS NOT A CRISIS LINE!**
The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
Free downloads to Iphone and Android systems, it is designed to:

--Encourage people to reach out for help when they are having suicidal thoughts.

--Help those who are concerned about family members, spouses, or fellow service members who may be suicidal.

--Provide a personal contact help center.

--Provide activities to help people who are depressed stay connected to others.

QUESTIONS?

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