

## Veterans, PTSD, and the Workplace



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The adjustment back into a normal lifestyle after veterans sever from the military can be a tough transition. It is particularly overwhelming if you're one of the 20% of veterans returning from recent war with post-traumatic stress disorder. Most veterans—more than 4 in 5—are fortunate to escape without it. However, six million Americans deal with it each year.

PTSD has a multitude of levels of severity, but in almost every case, there are ways to cope with the condition and still be a productive and competent member in the workplace. Below are some [tips](#) to make the transition a little more manageable.

### **Identify and Recognize Triggers**

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that develops from experiencing a traumatic event. Signs include having unwanted, vivid recollections of the event, panic attacks, irritability, sleep loss, trouble concentrating, and remaining on constant alert. Being able to understand what causes these symptoms to occur can be a tremendous step to re-enter a work environment. To learn more, a veteran should ask:

- What types of environments cause my symptoms to flare up? Take into account elements that affect your senses, such as light, noise levels, as well as the layout of the workspace and stress levels.

- How do I react when I'm experiencing symptoms? Do I find it hard to concentrate or remember tasks, lose my temper on the people around me, or become physically ill?
- When I'm experiencing symptoms, can I implement coping strategies like deep breathing, taking a walk, or calling on someone for support?

Not only is it important to learn what arouses symptoms, determining how you react and learning different coping mechanisms can help you decide which work environments will be most appropriate.

### **Choosing a Civilian Career Path**

There are several things to consider as a veteran with PTSD looking for work. Factors to take into account are determining which positions are a good fit based on your work history and evaluating which career fields and industries will be supportive. This may mean finding something different than the field you worked in during your service, but it doesn't mean it won't be a good fit for your personality and talents. [Here](#) are a few different options:

- **Outdoor Work:** Sometimes the transition helps when your job doesn't involve dealing with the public. Working in nature can be peaceful, relieving stress while still emitting the feeling of productivity and accomplishment. Different jobs include being a nursery owner (like with gardening or yard work), a gardener or landscaper, or a park ranger.
- **Working with Animals:** Petting animals can reduce stress levels, lower blood pressure, and increase energy levels. Plus, it makes you happier. Find a job at a shelter, groomer, or as a trainer. Or be your own boss by starting your own dog [boarding](#) or dog [walking](#) business through Rover.com. Not only will it feel rewarding, it will be emotionally healing as well.
- **Advocacy:** Chances are, if you worked in the military, you care about others. There is an abundance of opportunity to get involved in philanthropy at home. Assisting others might come in the form of working with children, the disabled, the elderly, or any disadvantaged group. Working in the capacity of others may help you see your own problems from a different perspective.

### **Speak With Your Employer**

It is up to you to decide on disclosing your position with your boss, but PTSD is considered a disability and is covered under [Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#). Under the act, employers are restricted from treating you unfavorably, and that you are entitled to reasonable accommodations in order to perform your job. Accommodations include modified equipment or devices, reconfiguring a workspace, permission to work from home, or restructuring complex assignments into smaller, separate tasks.

There is no doubt that veterans bring incomparable skills to any work environment. Just demonstrate these skills in conjunction with developing a plan to combat your conditions, and you will be successful in your position.