

Presentation Materials

- Chart paper or dry erase board
- Plain paper/copy paper
- Markers (colored or dry erase)
- Computer with projector or video monitor
- Resilient Transition PowerPoint presentation*

*There is no participant guide for this course. Encourage participants to photograph slides and charts for information they and their family members will need during their transition.

Agenda

- What are your concerns?
- Military vs. Civilian Life--is there a difference?
- What can you do about stress?
- Is your family transitioning with you?
- Is communication really that important?
- What resources are available during and after transition?



Facilitator Introduction

Introduce yourself. Be aware of demographics and use this knowledge to relate to the participants. To engage the participants, you will need to explain why you are qualified to teach this class and what they will receive by attending and being engaged. Even if you were the facilitator for the previous module (possibly Transition Overview), explain why you are qualified to facilitate this course as well.

[LEAVE ON AGENDA SLIDE OR BLACK THE SCREEN BEFORE PROCEEDING]

Why do we do resiliency training during transition?

To gain buy in from the participants, relate the information below. SM receive resiliency training throughout their military careers and many may find this topic redundant.

According to a study published by the VA in July 2016, the suicide rate among Veterans has risen in the past few years to an average of 20 Veteran suicides per day. The first year after transition has been shown to be a particularly difficult time as Veterans adjust to civilian life. This class is intended to assist with the effort to reduce the number of Veterans who commit suicide. It will allow you to voice your concerns; learn the differences between civilian and military life; and explore de-stressing, communication with family and friends, and resources available during and after transition.

[LEAVE ON AGENDA SLIDE OR BLACK THE SCREEN BEFORE PROCEEDING]

What are your transition concerns? Do others have the same concern?

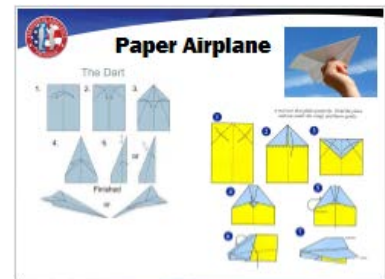
All SM have concerns associated with transition. However, the military culture is one in which sharing those concerns is not strongly encouraged. The following activity allows the SM to express their concerns when it comes to transition without having to vocalize or self-identify their specific concern.

Activity: Concern Airplane

This activity will begin the course. After you introduce yourself and explain the reason for the course, give each participant a plain piece of paper. While doing so, explain that it is normal for SM going through the transition process to have concerns about life after the military. Explain the two kinds of transition: planned and unplanned. Planned can be retirement or a separation that was made through a conscious, thoughtful, decision-making process; unplanned may be due to medical or involuntary separation. An unplanned separation can be more stressful since the SM may not have had time to mentally process or plan for their transition. (Do not ask participants to share if their separation was planned or unplanned.) Regardless of the type of separation, there are many unknowns as to what to expect. To start thinking and planning for transition, the class will make a list of concerns SM may have. Begin by having SM write down on the paper you provided **one or two** concerns they have regarding their transition (Full activity instructions below.).

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Provide all participants with a full piece of paper and instruct them to write down **one or two** concerns they have about transition. Display the airplane slide as a guide and instruct participants to make their paper into a plane after they finish writing. Allow them to work together on making the planes, if they need assistance.
- Asking service members to write down their transition concerns may increase their level of anxiety. Assigning them to make a paper airplane after writing their concerns shifts their thinking from an emotional state to an analytical state and can lessen anxiety. Frequently, it reminds them of a childhood memory that they will share with those around them.
- After folding is complete, tell the participants to stand up, turn to face the center of the room, and fly their planes on the count of three; instruct them to pick up a plane (not their own), throw it again, and pick up another plane.



- Ask for a volunteer to be a scribe. (If no one volunteers, the facilitator can be the scribe. Never force a participant to read, write, or share during a workshop.) Have participants open their planes and take turns reading what is written. (Limit them to **two** items; encourage them to read ones that haven't been shared previously. If all have been read, it is acceptable to repeat a concern.)
- Have the scribe write the topics on a large piece of paper or white board, making a tic mark when one is repeated.

DEBRIEF: NEVER ask who wrote which comment. If they volunteer, that is fine – but NEVER ask. The success of this activity lies in the opportunity for SM to share their concerns anonymously.

EXAMPLE LIST:

- Getting a job
- Moving or relocating
- Being with my spouse 24/7
- Having enough money
- Dealing with VA
- VA Benefits
- Healthcare
- Housing
- In-laws
- Entering civilian life

Read the list aloud. Be sure to discuss the concerns that were written down more than once. Point out that many of the same concerns were shared by multiple participants, if applicable. Next, ask the following questions:

What was the purpose of this activity? (Solicit suggestions.)

Possible answers: You are not alone in your concerns; others have the same or similar concerns; someone else's concern made me realize I hadn't thought about a, b, or c, and now I have time to prepare before I transition.

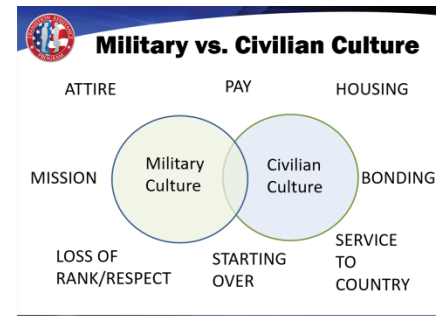
How does this help you?

Do shared concerns relieve some of the pressure?

This debrief ends the activity. Be sure you have covered all the questions above and solicited answers from the participants. Explain how sharing concerns can help you realize you are not alone with your concern and is one way to decrease stress.

Military vs. Civilian Culture--is there a difference?

This broad topic can cover many different aspects of transition. The SM need to be aware of all the different aspects of transition although some may never affect them. They need to be prepared for, or at least understand, the culture change. Some changes to consider that may occur after transition include personal perceptions in the workplace, family dynamics, figuring out how to be a student if going back to school, etc. To highlight these changes, the group will make a chart detailing the differences between the military culture the SM have become accustomed to and possible civilian workplace and life perceptions.



Activity: Differences in Civilian and Military Culture chart

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **Before the workshop begins:** Prepare a sheet of charting paper or white board by dividing it into three sections labeled TOPICS, CIVILIAN, and MILITARY. Have the topics from the Military vs. Civilian Culture slide already listed in the TOPICS section; leave room for more to be added.
- Ask for a volunteer to be the scribe.
- Reveal the Military vs. Civilian Culture slide.
- Ask participants to describe what the differences will be in each topic area listed on the slide while the scribe captures the answers on the chart.
- Ask participants if there are any other differences not shown on the slide. Have the scribe add the new topics to the chart.
- Point out to the class that just like the circle overlaps on the slide, there will also be some similarities in military and civilian culture.

This is all about the perception of the participants; do not expect consensus. The chart on the following page is an example. Your class list may have different responses.

EXAMPLE CHART:

TOPICS	CIVILIAN	MILITARY
Attire	Anything goes; may have dress code but may not be enforced	Uniforms
Pay	Everyone is different; asking about pay can be a firing offense	Able to see/know what everyone else makes
Housing	Live anywhere, any housing you want or can afford; Home Owners Associations (HOA);	Base housing by rank or at least everyone knows BAH; may be required to keep certain standard;
Starting Over	At bottom, pay cut, less respect	
Bonding	“Out for themselves” mentality	More of a “good for the group” mentality
Mission	May not be well known or even known/understood;	Generally, why they are there; firmly believe in the mission and is reason for working
Loss of Rank/ Respect	No respect for what is done; no respect for rank or seniority; previous experiences don’t count	Lots of respect by those who don’t know you; respected because of rank
Service to Country	Most jobs don’t have the thanks of the nation	Citizens respond with “thanks for your service”

The purpose of this exercise is to point out that there will be differences. After the list is complete, ask participants:

- *Which changes do you see as being the most difficult to make? Why?*

To end this section on a better note, ask participants:

- *From the list of topics, which one do you think will be the easiest to adapt to and will cause the least stress? Why?*

This should be a funny, lighthearted discussion on the topic they choose. Try to lighten the mood. *Even with preparation, expect some aspects of your transition to produce stress.*

[DISPLAY THE BLANK SLIDE WITH THE TITLE “WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS” UNTIL AFTER ACTIVITY.]

What do you do about stress? Or what should you do?

SM have been trained to deal with stressful situations and stress in general throughout their military service. This section is intended to utilize their existing knowledge of stress for a discussion on how to de-stress.

Activity: Name that Stress Relief

INSTRUCTIONS: Choose one of the following activities.

A--Charades: To prepare for this activity, print the “Ways to Relieve Stress” slide, cut into 13 individual pieces of paper and remove “BE FLEXIBLE” from the group. Ask for 12 volunteers to come to the front of the room and have each one draw a piece of paper with a stress relief on it. Allow them to choose other participants to help them with the acting. Have each person/group act out their stress reliever while everyone else guesses. After all groups have presented, reveal the slide.

B--Competition: Break the students into groups and give each group one piece of copy paper and a marker. The military teaches SM basic ways to de-stress. This exercise will draw from their prior knowledge and training. Allow them 3-5 minutes to write down all the ways they know/use to relieve stress. Once the time expires, reveal the slide, have the groups compare their list to the slide. Ask them to share any ideas that were not on the slide and recognize the group with the most items.

This list below and on the slide is not complete, but it includes topics used in the activity. Your list may be more comprehensive and have different ideas.

- **Eat Well, Drink Water** - Would you put water in a gas tank and expect it to run? No. Then don't put junk in your body, skip meals, drink excessive alcohol, or overuse energy drinks. Rather, eat proper food, and drink plenty of water.
- **Get rest** - Sleep is important to help your body repair itself, but sleeping the day away isn't helpful.
- **Exercise** - It releases endorphins, clears your head, and releases muscle tension.
- **Maintain a schedule** - Build time for work, play, family time, and spiritual needs. Get up, get dressed, go to work, and then go home and take care of the rest of your life.
- **Break tasks down into small pieces** – Just as you can't eat a 10lb hamburger in one bite, large tasks should be broken down into manageable pieces and shared or delegated, if possible.



- **Let your friends be friends** – Reach out to a friend to chat for 10 minutes and afterwards, you may feel better about yourself and about life in general. CALL a friend, reach out, and let them help.
- **Acknowledge and accept your feelings** – Accept this process with the understanding it can be hard and stressful; acknowledging this will provide some relief.
- **Surround yourself with positivity** – Positive people spread positivity! Being around those who are positive makes you more likely to view a situation in that manner.
- **Take breaks** - One of the most effective stress management techniques is to simply take a break.
- **Listen to music** – Listening to slow-paced instrumental (classical) music can induce relaxation by helping to lower your blood pressure.
- **Breathing/meditation** – Forcing yourself to slow down and concentrate on your breathing will help slow down your heartrate which will make you feel more peaceful and relaxed.
- **Laugh** – Laughing brings more oxygen into your body/organs and relaxes your muscles.

Debrief: Ask participants: *What is your preferred way to de-stress?* Allow participants to share their de-stressing stories.

Have you ever heard the expression “Be the willow, not the oak?” Do you have any idea what that phrase means? [Allow them time to think and to suggest a meaning.]

Ever notice how a willow tree bends with the wind? It has a limber trunk and branches which bend but do not break even in a hurricane. An oak tree, on the other hand, stands tall and strong—until it faces heavy forces like a tornado or a hurricane and then it breaks.

There are willow people and oak people. The willows bend nearly double, but do not break. They suffer hardship and yet, they stand back up when it’s over. The oaks, on the other hand, fight to stand firm and don’t give an inch until a strong force hits them—then they are devastated.

During your time in the military, your training has focused on planning and preparation—in other words—controlling the situation and outcome. During transition, there will be situations that you cannot control, and trying to impose your will on something out of your control will create stress.

*Can **flexibility** be used as a stress management technique? Even with the most careful planning, circumstances rarely turn out exactly the way we expect, and having the ability to adapt is an important tool. Flexibility is the key to resiliency. The more an individual relies on control and rigidity as a coping mechanism, the more severely impacted they are when their control is taken away. Let’s add one more way to relieve stress. [Click to have “BE FLEXIBLE” load onto the screen.]*

Here’s a strategy for when you find yourself stressed out. Ask yourself, “Can I change this situation?” If the answer is “yes,” make a plan and execute it. If the answer is “no,” accept it.

Remember...be the willow, not the oak.

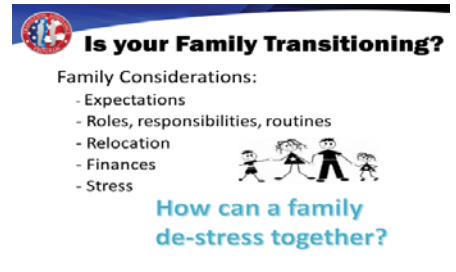
Flexibility for the Service member will be critical to transition. If family members are part of the transition process, they will also need to be flexible.

Who else in your life needs to be flexible during transition? I know you understand that stress can cause major issues personally. Let's discuss how it can impact your family. (Two-part slide—list loads first for discussion; load graphic and question to introduce activity.)

Is your family transitioning?

This section is intended to provoke thought about how the transition will affect others in their lives. Start a discussion with the following questions:

- *How many of you have a family?* (Expand their thinking beyond spouse and children to parents, siblings, etc.)
- *Is it possible that your family has different expectations about the transition?*
- *How will roles, responsibilities, and routines change during and after transition?*
- *Is relocation a possibility?*
- *How will transition affect the family finances?*
- *Will this be a stressful time for the family?*
- *What signs might indicate stress in family members?*
- *What assistance can be provided during this potential stressful time?*



Refer to the list from the previous activity – will any of these stress relievers work in a family situation? A common way for families to de-stress is to do an activity together.

Family Resource: Sesame Street for Military Families

- *Videos and pdfs to help young children cope and understand the transition*
- *SesameStreetforMilitaryFamilies.org*

Activity: Family Activity Brainstorm

INSTRUCTIONS: Ask for suggestions on activities a family can do that are little or no cost:

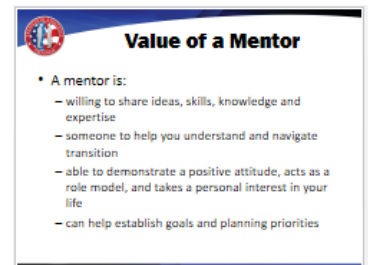
EXAMPLE LIST:

- Hiking
- Walking
- Reading
- Watching TV or movie
- Camping
- Family game night
- Talking
- Free concerts
- Community activities

Is communication really that important?

From the brainstorming activity above, focus on TALK. Emphasize that the key to a successful post-transition is to communicate with family, friends, coworkers, and mentors.

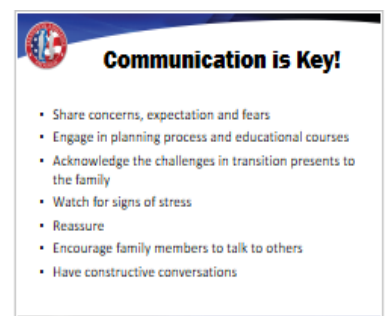
- Mentorship
 - Mentorship is nothing new to SM. Most SM can name at least one person who has been influential in their personal or professional life. Unfortunately, this does not always translate to the need for a mentor as SM transition into civilian life. A mentor is a trusted counselor, teacher, or an influential senior sponsor.
 - A mentor can be an excellent resource as they transition into the civilian sector.
 - Ask SM, *would it be beneficial for you to find a mentor who has already transitioned?*



Communication is Key!

(Slide loads one bullet at a time. Discuss each one before clicking.)

- Share concerns, expectations, fears, and opportunities
- Engage family members in the planning process
- Include family members in educational opportunities
- Invite family members to attend training and classes, share handouts and notes with them, explore resource websites together, and delegate transition tasks so everyone feels they are a contributor
- Acknowledge the challenges your transition presents to the family
- Look for signs and symptoms of stress
- Reassure family members that these are normal experiences associated with transition
- If family members are not comfortable discussing issues with you, encourage them to talk to friends, family, or professionals who can answer their questions and relieve their concerns
- Conversations should be constructive and inclusive, not venting; venting should be reserved for friends or a counselor--someone who is not emotionally invested.



Conclude this section by telling the following true story shared by a fellow facilitator or a similar one of your own:

When her father retired, his vision of retirement included never getting up before 10 a.m. His wife, who was still employed full time, had a different vision—one that included her husband working on an extensive “honey do” list while she was at work. Since they had not shared their visions with each other, you can imagine the conflict and stress they encountered those first weeks after his retirement. For a successful (peaceful) transition, they needed to talk and tell each other about their expectations. Only through communication could they resolve their differences and find common ground.

Failure to share your vision with others will result in a stress-filled transition.

If you are having trouble communicating, seek assistance. There are many resources available both during and after transition.

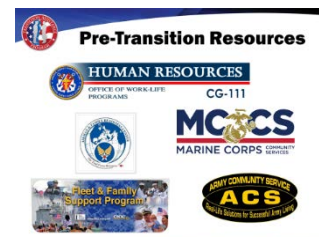
[Facilitator: You may want to add your local resources to the Pre-Separation Resources and Post-Transition Resources slides.]

Resources

Discuss the support available from the family support centers then change to next slide to show what is available after transition.

Pre-Separation Resources

- Family Support Centers
 - Fleet and Family Support Centers, Airman and Family Readiness Centers, Army Community Service, Marine Corps Career Resource Centers



Post-Transition Resources


- Military One Source (eligibility ends 180 days after retirement or separation)
 - A one-stop online shop for transitioning SM. This site provides confidential assistance online and over the phone on a variety of issues to include: military crisis line; financial counseling; and non-medical (face-to-face, online, telephone) and specialty consultations (education, health and wellness coaching, spouse relocation)
 - There is an area specifically dedicated to transitioning SM under the Deployment & Transition tab—Separating from the Military.
- In Transition Program
 - from the Defense Centers of Excellence (DCOE) for Psychological Health



- voluntary program to provide behavior health care support to SM and veterans as they move between health care systems and/or providers
- works to maintain continuity of care across transition
- Toll free number: 800-424-7877
- <http://intransition.dcoe.mil>
- VA
 - Use the eBenefits website to apply for and use benefits
 - The Veteran Crisis Line (800-273-8255) provides Veterans in crisis with qualified VA responders; provides the signs to look for, and how to locate the nearest veteran facility.
 - SM who do not have post-transition transportation or housing arrangements will receive a warm handover to the VA. This is a requirement so the VA can provide services for the SM and prevent homelessness in our veteran population.
- VA Medical Treatment Facilities
 - There are 1904 VA medical facilities available to Veterans which provide necessary medical services.
- National Resource Directory (NRD)
 - More than 17,000 organized and vetted resources for service members, veterans, and families
 - NRD provides information on a variety of topics, including benefits and compensation, education and training, family and military caregiver support, health, homeless assistance, housing, and other services and resources.
- American Job Center (AJC)
 - A Department of Labor local resource to assist with unemployment benefits, employment and training, job search assistance, and at some locations, financial counseling provided by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Reminders (Slide loads one bullet at a time. Discuss each one before advancing.)

- Understand and acknowledge your concerns.
- There are differences between the military and civilian cultures.
- Stress can be a normal part of the transition process-- manage it or it will manage you.
- Your family is transitioning and needs to be included.
- Mentors are a valuable resource during and after transition.
- Remember, there are abundant resources available to support both you and your family throughout the transition process and beyond.



Reminders

- Understand and acknowledge your concerns.
- There are differences between the military and civilian cultures.
- Stress can be a normal part of the transition process, manage it or it will manage you.
- Your family is transitioning and needs to be kept in the loop.
- Mentors are a valuable addition to your team to help accomplish a successful transition.
- Remember, there are an abundant of resources available to support both you and your family through the transition process and beyond.