

VETERAN SUICIDE

For nearly a decade, the veteran community has called for action by our nation's leaders to respond to the 20 veterans a day suicidal rate. The issue of veteran suicide is now its conversation in media coverage, national conversation, and a surge of government support.

Yet, the problem of suicide continues. According to recent VA data, post-9/11 veterans between ages 18 to 34 have the highest rate of suicide. Though not always an indicator of suicide, mental health injuries continue to impact the post-9/11 generation. Surprisingly, 65% reported PTSD, and 58% anxiety, and 56% depression. The nation and VA continue struggling with mental health care and providers' demands, two of the top VA staffing shortages.

SOLVING CHALLENGES

Psychologists are looking for ways to prevent military suicides by looking for outside of military solutions. According to the 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the suicide rate of veterans receiving recent VA care increased by 1.3%, while the suicide rate among veterans who were not receiving current VA care increased by 11.8%.

Veterans experiencing any mental health emergency should contact the Veteran Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and select option 1 for VA staff personnel. Veterans or their family members can also text 838255 or visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net) for assistance.



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Cannabis use for PTSD Among Veterans

Marijuana is a top treatment for veterans' pain and PTSD, but the cost is a barrier.

According to recent survey data, military veterans are using cannabis to treat chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression, among other ailments.

But the cost of medical marijuana is a barrier since it is not covered by insurance, even though veterans are using cannabis as an alternative to pharmaceuticals.

Results from the 2019 Veterans Health and Medical Cannabis Study, which looked at 201 veterans in Massachusetts and 565 respondents nationwide, were presented at the Cannabis Advancement Series.

The study performed from March 3 through Dec. 31 was conducted by Marion McNabb, Steven White, Stephen Mandile, and Ann Brum.

Over half of the 201 Massachusetts veterans who completed the survey through outreach by veterans' groups, marijuana dispensaries, and social media sites were 50 or older. Most, 54 percent, had served in the Army. The sample was overwhelmingly male; 90 percent and 84 percent were white and non-Hispanic.

Chronic pain, anxiety, and PTSD are the top medical conditions facing veterans. Nearly one in three, 30 percent, of the veteran participants, were currently or homeless in the past.

Ninety-one percent of participants reported using medical marijuana. Recreational marijuana was used by 59 percent.

Many veterans responded to the survey reporting that cannabis provided relief for their primary medical troubles, and 77% said that they were actively trying to reduce the use of their over the counter or prescription medications with medical cannabis.

The top symptoms being treated with medical cannabis included: pain, 51 percent; sleep problems, 50 percent; depression or mood, 45 percent; anxiety or panic attacks, 41 percent; and aggression, 24 percent.

"It surprised me, but it is not that surprising," McNabb stated. "They are consumers of medical cannabis. They are finding relief in medical cannabis."

The survey's findings brought additional attention to previously published research on medical marijuana by Staci Gruber.

Gruber stated that almost all research on the impact of cannabis on the brain and cognitive functioning comes from recreational users, most of whom began using the drug as teenagers while their brains were still developing.

Studies conducted by Gruber have found that after three months of treatment, medical marijuana patients demonstrated an improvement in task performance accompanied by changes in brain activation patterns measured in imaging. Further, after treatment, brain activation patterns appeared more similar to those in healthy controls, who weren't using marijuana than pretreatment with medical marijuana.

Gruber said her research suggested that medical marijuana use may affect the brain differently compared to the brain impacts among recreational marijuana users.

Consistent with the veterans' survey, Gruber's study also found medical marijuana patients reported improvements in how they felt and notably decreased their use of prescription drugs, predominantly opioid and benzodiazepines, after three months of treatment.

Mandile became an advocate for medical marijuana after being seriously wounded in Iraq while deployed in 2005. His Veterans Affairs doctors put him on 57 medications, which included nine opioids. In 2013 he attempted suicide.

In 2014, his wife's goal for Mandile was to wean himself from prescription drugs by using marijuana, which he accomplished in only five months.

He formed a nonprofit organization called the Alternative Treatment for Veterans to advance awareness of medical marijuana and work with dispensaries to offer discounts to veterans who have been rated 100 percent disabled by the VA. The product 11 marijuana dispensaries across the state have picked up the product discounts testified on proposed legislation, H. 4274, that would allow veterans to use their VA paperwork to qualify for a medical marijuana card instead of paying hundreds of dollars for the state-required card.

The 2017 state law legalizing the adult-use of marijuana called for the Cannabis Advisory Board to make recommendations to the Cannabis Control Commission on related costs associated with the purchase of medical marijuana by U.S. military veterans insured through the VA, and to make recommendations on improving cost-effective access. But the study and recommendations were never made by the Sept. 2018 deadline, Mandile said.

VETERAN SCAMS!

Veterans deserve many things: Praise, Honor, Security, Respect. Here's what they don't deserve: attempts to take advantage of their service. Yet every day, scammers attempt to swindle our veterans of their hard-earned benefits, steal their identity, take their life savings, and worse.

According to an AARP survey, veterans are twice as likely to fall victim to scams as the population at large. Some scammers offer veterans the opportunity to refinance Veterans Affairs (VA) loans at extremely low rates. Others will pose as government agencies in order to access personal information, or offer lump sum payments up front, in exchange for signing over all their future monthly benefit checks. There have even been instances where scammers will create fake charities that target veterans or pretend to be old friends offering "sure thing" investments.

Why are veterans so susceptible to these particular scams?

For starters, veterans implicitly trust fellow members of the military, making them vulnerable to imposters claiming to be veterans themselves. Sometimes, because of their military experiences, veterans also find it more difficult to recognize and combat the emotional manipulation used by scam artists.

That's why the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and AARP joined forces to create [Operation Protect Veterans](#), and provide valuable information and resources that veterans, their loved ones, and their friends can use to help protect against scammers.

Together, we can fight back and take one small step to repay our veterans for the service they've given and the sacrifices they've made.

Here are you should never do in these situations:

- Don't give personal information
- Don't give any personal information over the phone. This includes bank account numbers, credit card numbers and your Social Security number.
- Don't send money
- Don't send/wire money or gift cards to anyone you don't know well.
- Don't feel pressured
- Don't be pressured to act immediately. If you are dealing with a legitimate outfit, they won't try to pressure you to act before having a chance to check it out and think about it. If they do, just say "no" and hang up.



Since the pandemic is finally concluding, employment has been one of the number one issues for many people. This is a significant issue for many veterans as they transition into the civilian sector. As veterans, we feel we are very marketable in the job market, but new employers can misinterpret that attitude. Therefore, we must change our approach to turn rejections into job offers. Here are some ideas on how to do this.

Regardless of whether you find out early or at the end of the hiring process that you did not get an offer, it is a mistake not to change your approach going forward. If you keep taking the same approach, you will likely keep getting the same results.

And rejection is not the worst thing to have happen. When you do not get a job offer, it is easy to lose faith in yourself and doubt your value. However, your value is not related to rejection—it is your inability to communicate your value that is usually the issue.

So, to make sure you are taking the right approach in your job search, here are four tips to help in effectively communicating your skills, knowledge, and experience.

1. Be clear about what you want

Do you know precisely what you want? If not, that needs to come first.

Many professionals put together a resume and cover letter when looking to make a job change and start submitting to dozens of online listings. However, each listing is uniquely different, requiring different skills, knowledge, and experience. This means your applications need to be individually tailored to each listing.

Of course, it is challenging to please everyone—and there is no way that you can! But it is simple to target a specific audience. After deciding what you want and who you are marketing yourself to, it is best to research the market and understand exactly what companies are looking for. So, before beginning your job search, make sure to do all of the following:

- Narrow your search down to the desired industry
- Narrow down to the desired companies

- Narrow down to the desired position(s)
- Understand the responsibilities of the desired positions
- Understand the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to get those positions
- Understand the requirements and selected preferences of the target companies

2. Strategically position and differentiate yourself

Now you need to formulate your strategic position as a perfect fit.

Your resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile are used to market and sell your professional value as the solution to employers' recruiting problems (this is what gets the interview). This will show the employer that you bring exactly what they are looking for.

Review your strategic positioning and marketing documents (resume, LinkedIn, cover letter) with three questions in mind:

- What does the specific target audience want?
- What relevant skills, knowledge, and experiences do I offer?
- How am I currently positioned for my specific desired opportunities?

Answer these questions honestly, then review, update your marketing materials, and interview preparation.

3. Start networking

What is your strategy for pursuing career opportunities?

Most people are unaware that approximately 85 percent of positions are filled through networking. This is because a company fills a role through referral, which results in a faster-recruiting process that is a less expensive recruiting process, and a better chance of hiring someone who is a long-term cultural fit. The entire cost for a position's recruiting process can be costly, ten percent more than the position's annual salary.

Eighty-five percent of positions are usually filled through networking, leaving only fifteen percent for online applications. These positions are the most competitive and the least effective approach for landing your desired job.

Veteran Employment:

How to change your approach.

Every problem should provide a solution, and your rejections should only provide growth!

So, if you are primarily relying on online applications, you must start networking. It is not a should or maybe but an absolute must.

If you are already networking, but it is not working, you will need to change your approach. Your job relationship must come first; everything else comes after.

4. Articulate how you can add value

How are you communicating your value in interviews?

You can compare the interview process of going on dates with someone before committing to a long-term relationship. We naturally want to ask ourselves two questions:

- Does this person align with what I am looking for?
- Do I honestly like this person?

Questions are similar in the interview process:

- Do you bring what they are looking for?
- Do you provide the energy that fits into their team and atmosphere?

Take these two questions and begin writing down bullet-pointing reasons for what you bring to the company and how you align with their values, team, energy, and atmosphere. You will then begin to alter your interview prep and begin to see the difference in your interviews.

A final note

Every problem should provide a solution, and your rejections should only provide growth. So, start reviewing and analyzing your job-search approach, and you'll be well on your way to solving this frustrating (and common) problem.





Veterans Resource & Transition Guide

Introduction

Veteran reintegration is a topic that has become more concerning due to the recent operational tempo that our soldiers have endured since 2001. A study was recently conducted by myself in 2020 on “Veteran Reintegration” that has some very relevant and interesting facts for this book.

The topic for this study was on the dynamics of veteran reintegration after military service separation—current research centers on supporting the veterans, primarily post-deployment, while on active-duty status. The support mechanisms available to veterans become less utilized upon exiting military service. Sayer, Carlson, and Frazier (2014) show that over 25% of veterans experience major social functioning issues related to combat trauma.

This study explored the critical challenges of reintegration in coping and resilience. This focus established the relevant social issues that challenge veterans with reintegration back into normal mainstream society without traditional military support systems. Although it may not have encompassed every situation for every individual soldier,

it did capture quite a few situations and scenarios that challenge soldiers during reintegration. This guide’s primary focus is to educate, provide knowledge and research, and provide resources to soldiers and civilians on topics that revolve around veteran reintegration. These topics include military lifestyle and culture, background, and research, making the transition decision, transition preparation, making the transition leap, difficulties/mistakes/obstacles, common transition challenges and statistics, resources, VA benefits, survivors benefits handbook, survivors guide, military rank, military 101 presentation, and veteran reintegration dissertation.

Perspective

My perspective on this book is to take everything I have learned from the time I transitioned out of the military until the time I graduated with my Ph.D. in Psychology. It was not an easy, smooth, seamless transition. I thought I had it all planned out, and it would be an easy transition. My resume was good, and I had a decent education level. I had an excellent military background that I thought would transition seamlessly to civilian life. Then reality set in, my plan fell apart, and only after three months, I almost became homeless. I had submitted over 200 job applications so

it wasn’t for lack of trying. My expectations, though, may have been too high, which is something the military does a great job at building up over a 22-year career. I found out that my resume was written wrong, I was not representing myself the proper way on paper or at interviews, I also did not prepare far enough out like I should have (1-year at least). I also should have got out with little to no bills, which would have made the transition a lot easier and less stressful. I was so lost and stressed from this experience that I made it my mission to learn as much as I could about the transition process and resources available to veterans. My dissertation topic for college was on “Veteran Reintegration.” I wanted to know about the challenges that influence and affect veterans during reintegration. There were too many individualized challenges, so I had to reduce it down to just a few primary and common influencers for my study.

This book is intended to educate those civilians who may be ignorant to the military and what veterans go through, help veterans who are thinking about transitioning out of the military, help veterans who transitioned, veterans who need help with resources, or spouses who have had the unfortunate loss of a veteran and need help with resources.

EYE ON IT

Healing PTSD with Ayahuasca

As clinical trials for MDMA move forward in the hopes of making it an FDA-approved medication for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by 2021, some veterans are taking off to the Amazon to treat their condition with the jungle brew ayahuasca. While the empathogenic MDMA is better known, more common, and less intimidating of an experience than a full-on ayahuasca ceremony, for those who feel ready for it, the Amazonian concoction has the potential to dive much deeper, healing not just combat trauma but also the underlying childhood and ancestral traumas lurking beneath it. Such a profound journey of self-healing can be quite daunting, but with the bonds of brotherhood and mutual support before, during, and after the ceremony, these veterans are making leaps and bounds in attitude, physical and mental health, and general outlook on life.

Exploring this growing connection between veterans and ayahuasca is a new feature-length documentary called *Soldiers of the Vine*, an independent film that follows a small group of ex-soldiers on a journey of healing to Peru. Organizing the trip is Ian Benouis, a veteran and plant medicine activist who brings the group to a retreat center in the Amazon for a full 10-day dieta with 3 ayahuasca ceremonies guided by Shipibo shamans. As someone who has himself received immense healing from ayahuasca, Ian hopes to encourage his fellow veterans to experience how ayahuasca can help break the cycles of depression, prescription antidepressants, suicidal thoughts, and the burden of chronic PTSD. After attending a *Soldiers of the Vine* screening in Austin, Texas, we sat down with Ian to discuss his story.



Resource Monthly Picks

WaypointVets.org

Waypoint Vets is a 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization with the Mission of Uniting and Empowering Veterans through Activities and Adventure. We facilitate unique opportunities of Camaraderie and Healing for Military Veterans across America at no cost to them.

Waypoint Vets adventures combine mental and physical intensity with the stillness and beauty of nature. Our participants engage in a variety of unique activities and challenges during the day, and evenings are spent reflecting and enjoying camaraderie. We strive to deliver meaningful and lasting experiences that our Veterans can look forward to and reflect upon.

This Month’s Q&A Veteran Tips

Q: MYTH: I don’t deserve disability pay. Other Veterans need compensation because they are worse off. Should I make a claim?

A: Filing a VA disability claim lets the VA know you have a health condition that is a result of serving in the military. The Department of Veterans Affairs gives you a rating decision on one or more conditions, depending on the strength of evidence that is presented.

By achieving a VA rating of 10% or more, you receive monthly disability compensation and access to VA Medical Care. Generally, the earlier you file your claim, the easier and sooner you get coverage for your condition(s). Usually, conditions will worsen over time. Your disability claim exists to help you cover the costs of your healthcare needs as time goes on.

Filing a VA disability claim does not mean that you are taking away from Veterans with more severe conditions. It also does not mean you are taking unfair advantage of the system. Instead, you are simply seeking a benefit that you are potentially eligible for after your time in the military.

Q: I left active duty years ago and now it’s too late to file a claim.

A: You can file your disability claim at any time after your service. People wait to file their claim for various reasons, but there’s no deadline for submitting a claim. Typically, it’s easier to file a claim shortly after your time in the military has come to an end. However, certain conditions may not occur until years after leaving military service. Therefore, it is never too late to file a claim or seek an increase in your rating.



Professional Development

After transitioning from the military, veterans often question what their next career move should be. Should they go back to school? Explore a new career path? How do they translate their learned experiences from their time of service into skills they can use in a professional setting?

Veterans who have established themselves in a new civilian role shouldn't stop there! It's important to seek out professional development opportunities to learn new skills, broaden relationships in a current or desired industry, and help improve new employers' organizations.

Upcoming Local Events

- **Kline Veterans Fund Salute to Veterans Charity Golf Tournament – November 7, 2022**
Your fellow SNVCC member and excellent veteran community advocate, **The Kline Veterans Fund**, is looking for TWO more foursome teams for the annual Salute to Veterans Charity Golf Tournament on November 7!
- **Social Veterans Club @ HUDL Brewery - November 10, 2022**
Founded and led by our brother in the community, a US Navy veteran, and also a co-founder of the Southern Nevada Veterans Chamber of Commerce, TJ Henderson... the Veteran Social Club is a new and fast-growing organization in our community. It is quickly positioning itself to provide outstanding exclusive VETERAN ONLY EVENTS to our community throughout the year.
- **Veterans Day Ceremony @ NDVS - November 11, 2022**
Join us after the annual downtown Las Vegas Veterans Day Parade! Veterans and Veteran Supporters of the Month Will Be Honored Nevada State Veterans Memorial, Grant Sawyer Building, 555 E. Washington Ave., Las Vegas, 89101
- **Aligned Mortgage VA Loan Seminar – November 12, 2022**
Come and learn about the details of the VA Home Loan Benefit from a veteran-owned mortgage firm, one of the strongest supporters of the Southern Nevada Veterans Chamber of Commerce, one of our PLATINUM SPONSORS, **Aligned Mortgage!**
- **Project Healing Heroes Charity Golf Tournament – Canyon Gate Country Club - November 14, 2022**
Project Healing Heroes is a non-profit, veteran-led organization. Our mission is building the armored shield of resilience for the fight against Post-Traumatic Stress for those who proudly serve America at home and abroad. All funds raised will go directly toward programs for veterans and first responders who suffer from the invisible wounds of war and trauma.

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