

## The Quiet Strength: How Veterans' Resiliency Benefits the Workplace

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For employees and teams — what veteran resiliency looks like, why it matters, and how coworkers and managers can support and leverage it.

### What veterans bring to the workplace

Veterans bring more than technical skills to civilian jobs. They bring resilience shaped by experience, training, and a culture of mission-focused problem-solving. When recognized and supported, that resiliency improves team stability, problem-solving, and workplace well-being. Veterans can be the backbone of an organization, bringing stability and loyalty to all the organizations they are employed by. They are an example of resiliency due to their experience and training from the military.

### What we mean by “resiliency” in veterans

Resiliency commonly refers to the ability to adapt, recover, and continue functioning in the face of stress, change, or setbacks. For veterans, resiliency is often the product of specific military training (stress inoculation, mission focus, structured teamwork) plus lived experiences that require rapid adaptation. Importantly, research shows that veterans do not form a single monolithic “resilient” group. Resilience in veterans varies by cohort, service era, and individual resources.

### Why veteran resiliency matters to coworkers and employers

- **Reliable problem-solving under pressure.** Many veterans are trained to break big problems into clear priorities, apply procedures quickly, and act decisively. These are skills that transfer to fast-moving business environments. This makes them valuable during crises, tight deadlines, and process breakdowns.

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- **Teamwork, leadership, and follow-through.** Military service emphasizes both leading and following as needed. Veterans often bring a bias toward accountability, clear communication, and completing tasks. These are traits that boost team performance and morale.
- **Positive effects on retention and well-being (when supported).** Studies and workplace survey results indicate that employment contributes to veterans' overall well-being; conversely, meaningful work and supportive workplaces help veterans translate resiliency into long-term performance. Employment programs and employer engagement have documented impacts on veteran outcomes.

### Common workplace barriers (so you know what to watch for)

- **Stereotypes and stigma.** Veterans may face misconceptions (e.g., assumptions about PTSD, difficulty adjusting, or “too rigid”) that lead to exclusion or underemployment. These biases can prevent teams from benefiting fully from veterans' strengths.
- **Skill translation gaps.** Military roles and titles don't always align neatly with civilian job descriptions; veterans can be overlooked if hiring teams don't thoroughly probe for transferable experience.
- **Offer flexible support.** As research shows veterans' resilience varies, some transition smoothly while others need accommodations, training, or mental health support. One-size-fits-all approaches fail.

### Practical ways employees can support veteran coworkers (everyday actions)

- **Ask open, respectful questions about experience.** Use plain language to explore what a veteran did (e.g., “Tell me about projects you ran” vs. military jargon). This helps translate skills into the team's language and uncovers leadership and logistical strengths.
- **Avoid assumptions.** Don't assume vulnerability or incapacity. If a coworker discloses a challenge, ask how the team can help rather than making decisions for them.
- **Recognize mission-orientation.** Veterans often appreciate clearly defined goals, roles, and timelines. When possible, state expectations plainly and provide feedback that is anchored to specific outcomes.
- **Buddy up in onboarding.** Pair new veteran hires with a peer who can help translate culture, acronyms, and processes. Informal mentoring reduces friction and accelerates impact.
- **Connect employees to resources.** Point veterans to government and nonprofit services that support career development (for example, VA vocational programs and Department of Labor veteran employment services). These resources are practical complements to in-company support.

## Conclusion

Veterans' resiliency is an asset, but it requires recognition, translation, and supportive workplaces to benefit teams fully. When coworkers and managers understand what resiliency looks like in practice and remove barriers (such as stigma, miscommunication, and skill-translation gaps), organizations unlock dependable leadership, calm under pressure, and mission focus that improves outcomes for everyone.

## Selected references (for employees and HR to read next)

- Gonzalez, J. A., et al. (2020). The workplace integration of veterans: Applying diversity frameworks. Journal article.
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- Nordstrand, A. E., et al. (2024). Differences in resilience profiles between military veterans. Stress & Health.
- Kalvesmaki, A. F., et al. (2024). The Impact of Resilience on Employment Among Post-9/11 Veterans. Military Medicine.
- U.S. Department of Labor — Veterans Employment Services (overview of programs and hiring resources).
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs — Veteran Readiness and Employment (vocational rehabilitation resources).

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