

Overcoming transition challenges

Darren: I had a lot of apprehensions when I got out of what I was going to do, where I would fit in, what kind of job I would get, and what I found out is that the skills that you bring out of the military, the leadership skills, the organizational skills, the commitment, the work ethic and all of that is highly valuable in civilian life, but you have to also realize that civilian life is not military life.

Stephanie: It was scary going from being in the military to being a civilian. You've been in this one way of life for however long, four and a half years in my case, and everything's set. Then all of a sudden you can do whatever you want but you don't have the security either. It was an extra challenge trying to figure out how I was going to go from this very rigid life to something altogether different.

Owen: When you get deployed I tell all my soldiers this, that it changes you, whether it be good for bad it doesn't matter, it's going to change you.

Jake: I think it's just something that you have to accept. If you go to war and you do two deployments and you see everything that a guy in the infantry sees, if you're not changed when you come back then there's something wrong.

Nicole: I think the biggest challenge for me was just the new perspective that you have. Once you've gone once, subsequently you know that the same person is not going to come back, but the people you leave behind, they don't know that. They don't realize that and they expect to be able to pick up right where you left off, and that's not the case.

Casey: The way of life on a deployment, it's life or death and every little thing you don't look at or you do look at or if you turn your head the wrong way you could miss something and every little thing, if you're not alert and you miss it, it could cost not just your life but someone that you should be looking out for, their life, and when you get back from a deployment it's not like that here. You can settle down and things aren't life and death. Here there's all this other stress that other people have that you don't feel because you don't feel that it's life or death.

Justin: Getting shot at, going through stuff that you go through and really just kind of being on the front lines of that and then coming back to life it's, like, "Really? Is this it?"

Nicole: You bring back this perspective of the horror that people can do to each other, the living conditions that others are in, and when you hear your girlfriend going off about her lip gloss is too shiny or she burnt the chicken it's, like, "I know some people who would eat that chicken," and it just becomes irritating.

Jake: Coming back you kind of you lose the brotherhood. Suddenly you go from having this very tight-knit group that you trust with everything, that you share everything and that you've been through everything with, and now suddenly they're just gone.

Scott: The first few months after I came home it was nice, it was fun, everybody comes up and it's, like, "Hey, nice to be home, good job," and you're, like, this big war hero, and then after everybody's done that to you it's all of a sudden now I'm just every other guy on the street, you know? And that's when things started to really kind of hit me.



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Justin: You go from being America's hero and really doing something that you felt really mattered to going to college classes and then getting a job.

Jake: You need to find someone that you can talk to, someone who can identify with what you're going through, and it doesn't have to be a Veteran. It often will be but it doesn't have to be, and just find someone whom you trust and just talk about it. They don't even have to say a word, all you have to do is just talk, and all they have to do is listen.



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