

Student Veterans and their stories of growth

Interviewee1: I needed, somethin' to go do every day. I needed some sort of structure like what I had had when I was in the Marine Corp.

Interviewee2: When I started school, I didn't really have any idea of what I wanted to do. I just knew I had to do somethin' now that I was out of the military and G.I. Bill was fantastic 'cause it got me in school.

Interviewee3: You could say I went immediately from combat to classroom because it was weeks before I got out and then, maybe several months and I was in the classroom physically, with college students who maybe just graduated high school. It was very interesting.

Interviewee4: I'm almost 30 so the majority of them are getting out of high school or even if they're not getting out of high school, they're pretty early 20s. And, so their views on life are completely different.

Interviewee3: I took it very seriously because my last job was being in combat, so I took that same intensity into the classroom with me and put it towards the books and studying and what have you and the guy sitting next to me was obviously not as serious or focused.

Interviewee5: You have people that don't seem to—they take for granted the things that you like no longer take for granted, i.e. being subordinate to your professor, being on time, doing things just for the sake of getting them done. And I think the hardest thing with transitioning is that you want to be a civilian, you want to have the freedom but then you also want to have that underlying structure.

Interviewee4: Unfortunately I couldn't focus at school so I was not paying attention to my grades, I stopped caring about my grades, I stopped caring to go to school, and at that point I realized I was like, wait, my goals are not going to be able to be achieved. I need to go see somebody because there is something I'm not paying attention to.

Interviewee6: I ran into another guy who was about the same age and we just kinda looked at each other and he was like Army? Marine? and he was like, I was in the Marines and we were instantly good friends and so I kinda started building that support network up.

We were leaving class one day and he was like, hey dude, by the way you should probably check out student services for their—they have counseling. I go to it from time to time.

Interviewee3: The most important thing it did was bring us together as a group of like-minded people. It didn't matter Army, Air Force, Marines, but the fact that we were military, we were a little bit older, we were feeling our way through the educational system and, with that came the help, emotionally, with guidance for careers and, there were other things.

Interviewee5: I eventually sought help through my school, because I thought there was more issues than just me transitioning.



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Interviewee6: I started with, started with counseling on campus and that helped, for a little bit and then it was just—I realized that I needed to go to the VA.

Interviewee2: When you go down there, when you go down to the VA and you talk about whatever is bothering you—you're one of 30,000 Vets down there that are having the same issues. There is no better place to get help for a Veteran than a place that is employed by Veterans, run by Veterans, and is designed to work around Veterans.

Interviewee5: It makes it much easier to be able to talk to people about what I was and not just come up to them and be like, oh, I was in the military, you know like kinda reformulating your identity again, which has definitely helped through therapy so the personal—intrapersonal relationships have definitely strengthened.

Interviewee3: This generation of Soldiers has so many empathetic people around that there's no reason to fall through the cracks. It's detrimental to yourself, keeping it inside. Anything, you're having trouble with whether it be getting a student loan or whether it be PTSD...there's no difference, you need to just say it. You need to ask somebody for help.

Interviewee2: When I am a student and people say, what are you doing? What are you doing with your life? I say, I'm going to school full time and they say, good job, congratulations, good for you. And that made it a lot easier to be a civilian.

Interviewee4: So now I can be me. I can enjoy life, period. I can do school. I can be focused on that. I know the direction which I want to go, and if we remember that us helping ourselves will actually help everyone else, then we can actually pull each other up at the same time.



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